

## Questions & Answers on Faith: What Is the Correct Way To Pray?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA Study Department Chief

### Q: What is the correct way to pray to the Gohonzon?

A: In “Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins,” Nichiren Daishonin states, “I am praying that, no matter how troubled the times may become, the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters will protect all of you, praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood or to obtain water from parched ground” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 74). Based on this passage, we can say that a strong determination on our part is vital when offering prayers. The type of daimoku that comes from the deep resolve that “I will make it happen” or “I will win” constitutes the essence of correct prayer to the Gohonzon.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the law of life — the pure, boundless energy of life — which permeates oneself and the universe. When a river runs to the ocean, its waters merge with the tide, becoming one with the vast abyss. In a similar way, when we express our resolve by wholeheartedly chanting daimoku, we harmonize our innate Buddhahood with the infinite life of the universe. At that moment, the cause for our prayers’ fulfillment has been made.

This is explained in Buddhism as the simultaneity of cause and effect. Once we wholly understand this, we can strengthen our resolve to overcome any problem or accomplish any goal.

The critical factor, then, becomes our ability to continue praying until we make our prayers come true. Making them come true requires more than just positive thinking — continuous prayer is necessary. Buddhism teaches that we have the power within us to attract all the positive forces in the universe, which protect and nurture life, through continuous prayer.

Nothing is more important in this regard than strengthening our inherent enlightened nature. We strengthen it by praying not only for ourselves but for others, too. Praying for others “as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood or to obtain water from parched ground” elevates our lives. By thus solidifying our compassion and wisdom, we enrich our lives to the point where we positively influence our environment. We become people whose personal desires are naturally realized. SGI President Ikeda thus stresses that “prayer in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism means to chant daimoku based on a pledge or vow. At its very core, this vow is to attain kosen-rufu....” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 250).

The fulfillment of our prayers always depends on the strength of our determination, the condition of our lives. In the Daishonin’s famous phrase “Faith alone is what really matters” (MW-1, 246), *faith* denotes the condition of our minds, lives and hearts. Do we have a strong determination or not? When we approach life from this Buddhist perspective, immense joy and appreciation cannot help welling up from the depths of our beings, even under the most difficult circumstances.

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Author: Ted Morino

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