

EDITORIAL: 'Establishing' Begins In Us

This month, 737 years ago, Nichiren Daishonin wrote a seminal essay that explained why embracing his teachings would bring peace and security to the Earth. His Buddhism, it is often said, begins and ends with this thesis, the “Rissho Ankoku Ron.”

The writing takes the form of questions and answers between a host, meant to be Nichiren Daishonin, and a traveler, meant to be Hojo Tokiyori, a powerful governmental official. Central to his argument is the oneness of life and environment, that suffering comes when people act based on mistaken beliefs and that harmony results when people behave according to the fundamental law of the universe.

The Daishonin’s conclusion — “Therefore you must quickly reform the tenets you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle...” (MW-2 [2nd. ed.], 40) — has become one of the most quoted phrases from this writing.

It is also one of the most far-reaching, for it applies to those, like the “traveler,” who are unfamiliar the Daishonin’s teachings and to us who already chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

By urging the traveler to “reform the tenets” he holds and “embrace” the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin is making clear the crux of his teachings.

Mechanically chanting daimoku and doing gongyo are not enough. We must also change the fundamental beliefs that cause us to suffer and truly embrace all of the Daishonin’s teachings. “Embracing the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of the Lotus Sutra]’ means, in one sense, abandoning all prejudiced and partial views of life and humanity and returning to a respect for the supreme dignity of life,” SGI President Ikeda writes in *The New Human Revolution*. “It means doing away with egoism and living by the rule of compassion, basing ourselves on true humanism” (vol. 2, p. 237). Daimoku helps us do all that.

We all live by our beliefs, the principles or tenets we hold dear. Depending on the nature of those beliefs, the results can be tragic or heroic. Timothy McVeigh’s actions based on deeply held beliefs had a horrific result. Others, like the recently deceased Jacques Cousteau, live up to their principles and inspire millions with their positive example. In Cousteau’s case, he stood up to friend and French president Jacques Chirac and resigned from a national committee to protest the resumption of French nuclear testing.

What beliefs do *we* have to reform? We all look at the Daishonin’s teachings through the lenses of our own experience. We find within it principles we find easy to accept because we already embrace them. That it has something for everyone is the beauty of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and why our organization is so diverse, attracting people of all colors, political stripes, education, backgrounds, etc.

The difficulty comes when we encounter Buddhist truths that challenge our (sometimes mistaken) beliefs and it comes time to “reform the tenets” we hold. That’s another name for human revolution. What those tenets are differs for each of us, which is where study, a seeking mind, self-reflection and prayer come in.

Rissho can be translated as “establishing or solidifying the truth,” the truth here obviously meaning Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. *Ankoku* means “peaceful land.” The title of this essay is often broadly interpreted to mean that as more and more people accept and embrace the Daishonin’s teachings, then the land or the country as a whole will become peaceful.

We can also interpret *rissho ankoku* from a more personal point of view. The more we’ve reformed our tenets, the more we’ve embraced the Daishonin’s teachings as our

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own, the more secure and peaceful our immediate surroundings will be. It all begins with one person. As SGI President Ikeda writes: “What is the surest way to bring peace to the land, to transform society that is weighed down with misfortune and suffering? Nichiren stresses that it begins with one person establishing the truth in his or her heart” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 236).

While it is always important to spread these ideas among our friends, we must “establish the truth” in ourselves first, developing the will to reform our beliefs and to act accordingly.

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