

**Faith First**  
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**Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other.... The heart of strategy and swordsmanship derives from the Mystic Law. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246)**

I studied this Goshō recently because I needed to remind myself how important it is to “employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other.” As a young women’s division leader, I interact with many young women struggling with various aspects of their lives. They understand the Gohonzon works, but it can be hard for them to use the practice to solve their problems, to actually use faith first and “just do it.” And it’s sometimes equally hard for me to motivate them. So after much frustration and self-reflection, I wanted to once again study and develop my life with the Gohonzon so that I could convey what I have learned — not only with words but with my life.

Having faith first is not always easy for me, either. It seems much easier to dwell on my challenges rather than chant about them. However, time and again I have proven to myself that when I do go to the Gohonzon first, everything falls into place and I gain the courage to continue.

But why is it so difficult? Because sometimes I don’t trust that I truly have the power to change my situation. I think of strategies to “make things right.” I know the Gohonzon works, but I think maybe it won’t for me, or maybe it won’t work this time. I don’t doubt the Gohonzon’s power — I doubt my own powers of faith and practice. Unfortunately, it sometimes takes me quite a while to reawaken to my potential.

Commemorating SGI President Ikeda’s 50th anniversary of practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism recently, I once again took the time to appreciate all his efforts, how he has exerted his whole life for others. It is easy now to see the results of his diligent efforts. But as we know from *The New Human Revolution*, he faced many difficulties every day in making today’s SGI. Thinking of my mentor’s example, I’ve redetermined to study more diligently, exert more effort and, no matter the difficulty, go to the Gohonzon first. That way, I can encourage others to do so, too.

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