

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

Is It OK To Go to a Nichiren Shoshu Temple?

Q: I have been invited to visit a Nichiren Shoshu temple. Is it all right to go?

A: To visit or not visit a Nichiren Shoshu temple is each individual's choice, but the SGI encourages its members not to because the temple has diverged from the Daishonin's Buddhism and is actually trying to destroy it.

On the surface, there may seem to be little difference between attending activities at a Nichiren Shoshu temple or an SGI-USA community center. The temple might even seem aesthetically more attractive to some — the large wooden Gohonzon with gold lettering, golden decorations and ornaments around the altar, etc. At both places, people gather to chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and recite the sutra before the Gohonzon. But chanting to the Gohonzon alone is not all there is to the Daishonin's Buddhism — the philosophy that he espoused, which informs our prayer, is integral to correct practice. It is in this area that the priests and the temple have completely strayed.

The Daishonin writes in "The True Entity of Life," "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93). To be "of the same mind as Nichiren" means chanting with the same spirit and understanding as the Daishonin's. It means summoning the courage to practice for oneself and for others — to strive for kosen-rufu.

There is no better place to gain this understanding of the Daishonin's passionate resolve to help all people than in the SGI. All SGI activities are based on the Daishonin's own words, as preserved in the letters he wrote to his disciples. In addition, our activities are based on his spirit of "practice for others."

The direct connection we in the SGI have with the Daishonin's teachings and spirit helps us to practice correctly and most effectively. Without this philosophical and spiritual backbone, it becomes difficult to pray powerfully and summon the wisdom and energy to win in our lives.

It is therefore also essential that we avoid supporting the temple's efforts dedicated to destroying our movement. In "On the Buddha's Behavior," Nichiren Daishonin warns:

Those who endeavor to practice the Buddhist Law and who care about what happens to them in future lives should know what a fearful thing it is to slander the Lotus Sutra. (MW-1, 198)

Since many temple activities are occasions where temple members and guests make financial donations, the SGI encourages its members not to attend. If we make contributions to the temple — whether through physical, spiritual or financial support — it follows that we are supporting those who are slandering Buddhism, which means we ourselves are party to the negative cause they are creating.

In the past, SGI members made financial donations to the priesthood, trusting its faith and humanity. This act was definitely registered in their lives as a good cause. But the priesthood has now betrayed that trust and is using those funds to attack those who contributed them. The gravity of the negative cause committed by the priesthood is unfathomable. In any case, the sincerity shown all along by the SGI members will continue to shine in their lives as good fortune.

Temple members sometimes invite SGI members to participate in pilgrimages to the head temple in Japan, stating that they need not renounce their SGI affiliation to do so. Then, they say, they can see the Dai-Gohonzon, the Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin

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for all humanity. Those who have gone, however, have been approached by priests and others who vehemently denounced the SGI and SGI President Ikeda. In addition, they were required to offer a donation to attend.

There is no value to be created in seeing the Dai-Gohonzon if members must also financially support the temple's efforts to, in effect, destroy Buddhism. In fact, the priesthood has attempted to exploit its possession of this Gohonzon inscribed for all humanity, and the members' desire to see it, as a means to entice people to follow and support them.

The state of life Nichiren Daishonin manifested has been described as that of "The Buddha of Absolute Freedom." The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon so that all people could awaken to this absolutely free and unfettered state of life. It is therefore impossible to imagine that Nichiren Daishonin would expect us to be so constrained in our faith that we should feel we must blindly obey and kowtow to whomever might possess the Dai-Gohonzon, no matter how malicious or ill-intentioned they might be.

Nine in a series

Key Points:

- **In its attempt to mislead the faith of SGI members, the priesthood has, in effect, destroyed its own connection to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Therefore, there is no value in visiting the temple.**
- **The temple is committed to undermining the SGI's kosen-rufu activities; therefore, making contributions to the temple will further aid its efforts in this regard.**
- **To participate in 'tozan' — group pilgrimages to the Nichiren Shoshu head temple — requires making a financial contribution to the temple, and will subject one to slander of the SGI by priests and Hokkeko members.**

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