

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

What Can I Do for Temple Members?

Q: What effect will the priests' errors have on those who follow them, and what can I do for those people?

A: Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is clear when it comes to describing the strictness of the law of cause and effect. It expounds that great benefit and joy will accrue to those who uphold the Mystic Law, while great loss or punishment will be incurred by those who slander this Law or cause harm to its practitioners.

Even in the secular realm, those who disparage a person of true integrity and character ultimately do damage to their own integrity and character. This effect is even more profound in the realm of Buddhism, which deals with the deepest aspects of life. By disparaging those who uphold the Daishonin's spirit and work for the happiness of others, Nikken and his followers debase their own lives on a profound level, sowing the seeds for tragic loss and future misery. This has already become clear from the accounts of those who have come back to the SGI after practicing with the temple for a number of years.

According to the Daishonin's teachings, inconspicuous loss or punishment is the worst effect a person can receive from slandering the Law, though it is not immediately apparent. He describes this process as follows:

They are like men who have already been sentenced to execution and are awaiting their turn in prison. While they are in prison, regardless of what evil acts they may commit, they will receive no further punishment other than the death sentence already passed upon them. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 121)

In Buddhism, conspicuous gain or loss occurs quickly, making it easier for individuals to realize the correctness or error of their ways. Inconspicuous loss, on the other hand, is characterized by a gradual downward spiral. While the word *punishment* is used, it should not be viewed as retribution from an external force or function. It corresponds to a deterioration of one's inner state of life, which gradually comes to manifest itself externally.

Since the priesthood and its followers have committed or tacitly supported the great slander of trying to destroy the Daishonin's Buddhism, falsely accusing SGI members of all sorts of misdeeds and errors, they are surely accumulating inconspicuous punishment.

It is only natural that we feel compassion for those destined to suffer, even if they have denounced us. And it is only natural to want to help them escape such misery. Though the law of causality is strict, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is based on compassion. The Daishonin asserts, "It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander [the Mystic Law]" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1123).

Even Shakyamuni put more effort into saving Devadatta, his greatest betrayer, than anyone else, stating that parents are most concerned about their sick children. When we speak with great conviction and compassion about the reality of the temple issue, we eventually can convince temple followers to disassociate from the temple and its slander or even rejoin the SGI.

People who have returned to the SGI from the temple have reported experiencing a substantial revitalization of their faith, a deepened understanding of Buddhism and increased joy. Many have also become vocal about the priesthood's behavior they have personally experienced, so others will not make the same mistake they did.

In speaking with temple members, as with anyone, we of course need to use common

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sense and approach them with warmth and respect. There is no set way to talk to anyone, no best place or time. Each person is unique.

Through our strong and consistent prayer to save people from misery and lead them to happiness, we can arrive at the best way to approach them. Through this and ongoing dialogue, the wisdom we summon forth in the process will create benefit both for ourselves and the other person.

Twelve in a series

Key Points:

- **Those who follow priests who commit slander will wind up committing the same slander and ultimately suffer negative effects as a result.**
- **Out of compassion for those whose happiness is at risk because of this, we can encourage them to leave the temple organization. To do so, we have to touch their hearts through our words and actions.**

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