

Welcome. You've Got Mail.

Picture this... Nichiren Daishonin uses his last sheet of paper and his last bit of ink to write a letter. Freezing winds bite his fingers with each brush stroke. Hunger gnaws at his stomach and sleeplessness burns his eyes. Yet he writes warmly, passionately, earnestly responding to someone's question.

The letter clarifies the deepest mysteries of life and conveys a profound message of joy.

He rolls up the letter — an original, the only copy in existence — tucks it into a pouch and hands it to a messenger who travels on foot over miles and miles of rough terrain to deliver it...to *you*.

This may sound overly dramatic. But it's no exaggeration. Nichiren Daishonin's letters were written in dire circumstances, with urgency and for the sake of all humankind.

If you were to receive a personal letter from Nichiren Daishonin in the mail, you'd probably tear it open (carefully), devour its contents and call all your friends to share his message with them.

But in these days of information overload, it's easy to just let a volume of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* gather dust on a bookshelf. It's easy to forget the sense of urgency with which the letters were written and lose that excitement to talk with others about Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

At a recent meeting, General Director Fred M. Zaitso stressed three points for recapturing that spirit and re-energizing our movement: daimoku, education and dialogue.

Prayer is the foundation of everything. SGI President Ikeda has repeatedly urged us to chant for all members to be happy, healthy, accident-free and financially secure.

In light of the temple issue, President Ikeda has recently talked about prayer from another perspective. Strong prayer to perceive and oppose injustice — wherever one encounters it — should underlie all our prayers, he said.

Nichiren Daishonin's whole life was, in one sense, the temple issue. He took a stand against secular and religious tyranny, teaching that religions must serve the people, not the other way around. Mr. Zaitso thus emphasized educating ourselves and others about the essence of the Daishonin's teachings by studying the temple issue.

Many members have joined the SGI-USA since the temple issue arose seven years ago; it's our ongoing responsibility to educate ourselves and newer members about this issue so that everyone equally understands Nichiren Daishonin's heart, spirit and teachings.

Often, though, we feel the "urge to avoid." Sometimes it may seem best to avoid issues that bother us or pull away from people whose suffering or negativity overwhelms us. But the "urge to avoid" signals that we can benefit from having a dialogue about that particular issue or with that particular person. Dialogue is never a fruitless exercise. No one is a lost cause, a hopeless case. And more often than not, we run fastest and farthest from people who have something to teach us. By reaching out to all people — especially those beyond our comfort zone — we develop an expansive, generous life. Mr. Zaitso specifically asked us to talk genuinely and openly with people who are no longer coming to activities or who feel separated or alienated from the organization.

To be tolerant toward people yet strict toward the law is one of Nichiren Daishonin's core teachings. To embody his spirit — embracing everyone but never shying away from the temple issue — let's read and re-read his letters as if they were addressed to us personally. Doing our best at prayer, study and dialogue, we can relay the Daishonin's message to the entire world.

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