

# **SIGN POSTS: APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE**

## **Be Your Own Priest**

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**If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death..., you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life. (“On Attaining Buddhahood,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3)**

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, there is no place for a priest as an intermediary between a practitioner and his or her enlightenment. In this letter, the Daishonin explains that the goal of our Buddhist practice lies in revealing our inner truth, that is, our innate Buddhahood. Since the solution to overcoming all our suffering lies within, we do not have to go elsewhere to find happiness. Nor do we have to seek something or someone outside through which to attain enlightenment. This is a self-reliant practice.

This point, however, is easier to understand than to act on. Having a priest as an intermediary is an attractive option. We simply do whatever we are told by the priest, and we are virtually guaranteed enlightenment. We do not have to make decisions. We assume no responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Even when something goes wrong, we can paint ourselves as victims.

To deny the role of an intermediary in our practice, however, strikes at our deepest fears and insecurities. We must tackle the tough questions ourselves. We must make a choice, and with that comes responsibility for the consequences of our choice. There is no one to blame or depend on but ourselves. Self-reliance is a more difficult path. In this letter, however, the Daishonin admonishes us against choosing the easier one.

Recognizing the divinity within all people, Walt Whitman states: “There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done.... Every man shall be his own priest.” Having been excommunicated twice — in 1991 and 1997 — by the priesthood, we SGI members have proven that there is no need for a priest as an intermediary in the Daishonin's Buddhism. As Whitman says, we have become our own priests.

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