

Giorgio Marescalchi, Ferrara Overcoming My Arrogance

I started chanting in March 1984. At that time, I was very arrogant and believed that I didn't need to chant to live a happy life.

In November 1983, after many quarrels, I separated from my wife.

I remember one night I even grabbed her by her jacket and was to the point of throwing her down the stairs (I lived on the 4th floor). I was stopped just in time by my son Paolo, who was then 10 years old. He was watching us fight and was crying.

The first four months of my practice, I used to go to discussion meetings not because I wanted to practice this Buddhism but because I wanted to convince my friends that they were only wasting their time. That's how arrogant I was.

During that time, my wife started chanting. One night — I remember exactly, it was July 8, 1984 — my friends invited me to a jazz concert. But first, they asked, did I want to go with them to meet an American musician at his hotel?

The musician's name was Buster Williams, and he had been chanting for a long time. He asked us to do gongyo with him. Without really understanding the practice, I knelt in prayer...and this is how I began practicing.

Almost immediately, my wife and I started to see each other again. One reason for that is that she was responsible for teaching me gongyo and how to practice in the correct way.

After practicing for four months, we decided to receive the Gohonzon together (that was Nov. 11, 1984). Our home became a meeting place, and we took responsibility for our group.

Our challenge was to rebuild our family for kosen-rufu. Thanks to the practice, we experienced great joy for the next eight years.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1993, our faith was put to the test. The misunderstandings between us — the same we had faced in 1983 — were back. I started chanting two hours a day because I didn't want my family to be divided again, but the more I chanted the more I argued with my wife.

At the end of October 1993, the firm for which I worked for 30 years closed, and I was dismissed. In November, my wife applied for a divorce.

I felt my world falling apart. I was living alone (my son Paolo, by then 19, chose to live with his mother). But this time, my reaction was totally different. It was not a matter of arrogance any more — now it was a matter of confidence and faith in the Gohonzon. I was strongly encouraged by SGI President Ikeda's guidance, in which he reminded us that the darker the night, the closer the dawn. Persevere on the path of our human revolution, he said, and don't forget that many are experiencing sufferings much greater than yours.

During the first days of 1994, I was asked to join the drivers group to help during President Ikeda's visit to Italy. With my heart full of joy, I accepted. I volunteered as a driver in Florence and Bologna for 15 days. At the end of this period, I came back home. Two days later, Paolo phoned to say that he wanted to come live with me.

I soon received a retirement pension from my former employer, and eventually my wife — now my ex-wife — succeeded in starting a new family.

I hope she is as happy as I am. She deserves it, as we all do.

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