

**SIGN POSTS: Applying Nichiren Daishonin's Writings to Daily Life  
A Year at a Time**

**By CRAIG GREEN  
SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee**

**Carry through with your faith in the Lotus Sutra. You cannot strike fire from flint if you stop halfway. ("Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 201)**

When the new year began, I started considering the things that I wanted to accomplish in the next 12 months. The No. 1 goal was simple: I wanted to feel better. I wanted to feel that in some small way I fit in.

I am, by nature, somewhat pessimistic. I find it difficult to trust, difficult to look at situations positively, and difficult to believe in myself. I wanted to change that. It's one of the reasons I began to practice.

The above comes from a letter written to Shijo Kingo in 1272, when Nichiren Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island. Shijo Kingo had not only risked his life by standing with the Daishonin a year earlier, he had risked his life and reputation to visit Sado Island during the Daishonin's exile. When I go over this scene in my mind, I gain glimmers of hope.

If Nichiren Daishonin and Shijo Kingo could continue to hold fast to their beliefs during unbelievable trials, I can at least try to overcome my self-doubt.

Winning, no matter what the goal, is much more than wishful thinking. It is a decisive resolve to carry on. Everyone faces struggles. Everyone must endure difficulties. There is no avoiding them, no way around them. But you must continue. And sometimes that means continuing even when everything around you is telling you that nothing has changed, and your mind is telling you that it never will.

The key is to hold strong with the Gohonzon and never give in.

I often wish I could say that I have achieved all that I set out to when I began to practice. I wish I could say that I always feel the joy and strength that this practice gives us. I honestly haven't reached that point.

But I *can* say that I feel more confident than ever that I will realize my goals. Even if it's simply feeling better for a year.

**WT**