

Fuel for Growth
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In the Latter Day of the Law, the votary of the Lotus Sutra will appear without fail. The greater the hardships befalling him the greater the delight he feels, because of his strong faith.... The currents of hardship flow into the sea of the Lotus Sutra and rush against its votary. The river is not rejected by the ocean; neither does the votary reject suffering. (“A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 9)

When I was growing up, my mother used to say, “Faith equals daily life.” At the time, I took it as a kind of Buddhist nagging — like telling me to do my homework or clean my room. I would chant for five minutes and expect something immediately, like candy or money. As I got older and started practicing Buddhism more seriously, I was encouraged to see my life as an expression of my practice. People directed me to this passage as encouragement when I encountered hardships.

As this letter expresses, Nichiren Daishonin was a man whose sole purpose in life was to propagate Buddhism. And because of this determination, he encountered great difficulties. As much as this passage inspired me, though, part of me always felt that it didn’t really apply to me. While I was practicing Buddhism as sincerely as I could, my life was not like the Daishonin’s. When I was in trouble in school, it was because I didn’t finish the work I was supposed to. It was hard to see my problems as “persecution” when they were of my own making.

As “the currents of hardship” continued to rush into my life, though, and as I kept praying with this passage in mind, I came to realize that if it weren’t for these difficulties, I could never show actual proof. I may not have experienced persecution because of my faith, but my problems are still the fuel for me to learn and grow in my Buddhist practice.

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