

## STANDS TO REASON: Until the Very End

By JEFF FARR

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**Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-myoho-  
renge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment  
of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in  
your life.... (“Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren  
Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 25)**

As this letter progresses, Nichiren Daishonin moves from talking about how the people united can inherit the Law to how individuals can — and must — do it. And to what Sairen-bo, the recipient of this letter, must do as an inheritor.

Part of Sairen-bo’s motivation in asking the Daishonin about the inheritance of the Law was his questioning of his former role as a Tendai priest, someone supposed to be an intermediary between the people and the Law. The Daishonin thus makes it clear to him that no one needs priests to inherit the Law — this may have been a relief for Sairen-bo — but then moves on to Sairen-bo’s individual responsibility, the duty we all have as individuals, to inherit the Law. Sairen-bo wasn’t off the hook; none of us are.

“With the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death” — crucial to Sairen-bo fulfilling this responsibility is that he practice the Law to the end of his life, the Daishonin says. To his very last breath. And it’s the same for each of us.

Nichiren Shoshu, when it comes to inheriting the Law, emphasizes “secret transmissions” of the Law between successive high priests, and says that “there is no reason to expect that we [ordinary people] would understand” these things (*100 Questions and Answers*). Inheriting the Law in their world has nothing to do with us as individuals.

The Daishonin’s view of the lifeblood/heritage is simple, practical, un-secret and individual: Inheriting the Law is for *you* to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith. It is for *you* to become part of a family of people practicing correctly. It is for *you* to never give up, to continue your faith to the very end.

Inheriting the Law is up to you.

The Daishonin’s view of inheriting the Law is, interestingly, something like a how-to guide — how to get the most out of practicing this Buddhism. He says: 1) Chant with faith; 2) Chant with friends; and 3) Chant your whole life. Inherit the Law and completely fulfill yourself. It’s simple.

This point about chanting your whole life is one that the Daishonin emphasizes in many places. He teaches that the end of your life sets the stage for your next life — ending victoriously equals beginning victoriously once more. SGI President Ikeda likewise speaks of the “supreme orbit of Buddhahood inherent in the cosmos”; at your life’s end, you want to be securely in this orbit, thus starting your next life in orbit, too.

Seven hundred years after his death, the Daishonin’s thinking is still fresh, clear, revolutionary — in orbit with people’s aspirations today. In 700-plus years, he has gone from being Japan’s most dangerous priest (in the eyes of most of his contemporaries) to the most internationally influential of all Japanese Buddhists. In the emphasis he places on independence — on how the Law is in us, on how we depend on ourselves to be in orbit with it — he offers hope to all people seeking spiritual fulfillment today.

*All people.*

*Eighteen in a series*

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