

IN MY LIFE: Offering My Life
By KEN SARAGOSA
SJI-USAYouth Division Study Committee

Since nothing is more precious than life itself, those who dedicate their lives to the Buddhist practice are certain to attain Buddhahood. If they are prepared to offer their lives, why should they begrudge any other treasure for the sake of Buddhism? On the other hand, if one is loath to part with his material possessions, how can he possibly give away his life, which is far more valuable? (“Letter from Sado,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 33–34)

I have read this passage in different ways in my life: as encouragement that dedication in faith will lead to enlightenment; to explain that making a financial contribution in support of kosen-rufu is to offer our own livelihood for the sake of our fellow members.

Lately, however, reading this passage leads me to think about what it means to “offer our lives.”

“Letter from Sado” was written by Nichiren Daishonin in March of his first winter on Sado Island. We have heard about the extreme difficulties he faced without adequate food, clothing or shelter. Receiving offerings was life-sustaining for him. They enabled him — and Buddhism — to survive.

But in this same letter, the Daishonin asks his followers for books, not food or money. He’s also clear that how we “offer our lives” depends on the age and the circumstances. To someone hungry, food is valuable; someone studying needs books. The significance of what we offer depends on the circumstances.

In my new professional situation, I don’t have difficulty contributing financially to the organization, but I have demands on my time that are taxing and emotionally draining. Spending time talking and sharing with members is an emotional expenditure that I am finding quite difficult now. But, despite my resistance, “offering my life” right now means to extend myself in this way to my fellow members.

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