

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP

*The following message was excerpted from the September 1984 issue of the Seikyo Times magazine.*

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to express my sincerest congratulations to you new believers who have just taken the first step in faith. I am convinced the day will soon come when you will quietly recollect that this was the beginning of a new life.

In any endeavor, the first step is of prime importance. An old saying goes: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Needless to say, it takes much more determination and preparation to set out on a journey of a thousand miles than it does on a journey of one mile, and the journey of faith you are beginning is far more arduous than either of those. Remember, the ultimate goal of our faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is to realize an ideal world where we can fully enjoy and share eternal, absolute, indestructible and unshakable happiness with each other.

Because it is a long journey to which we have devoted ourselves, the first step is of very great importance. I hope you, as a new member, grasp the true value of faith in the Gohonzon as early as possible in your practice.

Of course, in these early days of your faith, you may be wavering between doubt and belief. The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China said, “Even one whose motive of conversion is not pure will obtain many benefits if he exposes himself to the true object.”

In other words, no matter what motivates people to begin practicing this religion, they can obtain many benefits from their practice as long they take the first step with the resolution befitting such a long journey. From that humble beginning, their faith will deepen, and they will find the power of the Gohonzon to be truly great, all-encompassing and profound.

I hope in these early days of your practice you throw aside your preconceptions and examine Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism with an open mind to see its true value. Follow the guidance given you step by step, and you will never fail to find actual proof in your daily life. Through your own experience and those of your seniors, you will marvel at how noble and beautiful it is to practice this Buddhism.

—*SGI President Daisaku Ikeda*