

## A COLLECTION OF WISDOM

**The following is a compilation of guidance by SGI President Ikeda that we hope will be a resource for comfort and understanding following the recent tragedies in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.**

### **The Power of Prayer**

*(Learning from the Gosho, pp. 90–93)*

Daimoku is like light. As the Daishonin says, “A candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years.” Similarly, the moment we offer prayers based on daimoku, the darkness in our lives vanishes. This is the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. At that very instant, in the depths of our lives, our prayer has been answered.

The inherent cause (*nyo ze in*) of a deep prayer simultaneously produces a latent effect (*nyo ze ka*). While it takes time for this effect to become manifest, in the depths of our lives, our prayers are immediately realized. So at that moment light shines forth. The lotus flower (*rengé*), in blooming and seeding at the same time, illustrates this principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

Therefore, it is important that we offer prayers with great confidence. The powers of the Buddha and the Law are activated in direct proportion to the strength of our faith and practice. Strong faith is like a high voltage — it turns on a brilliant light in our lives.

Prayers are invisible, but if we pray steadfastly they will definitely effect clear results in our lives and surroundings in time. This is the principle of the true entity of all phenomena. Faith means having confidence in this invisible realm. Those who impatiently pursue only visible gains, who put on airs, or who are caught up in vanity and formalism will definitely become deadlocked.

In the SGI organization, the success of our activities or meetings, for example, hinges on whether the leaders have prayed thoroughly to give each person hope and for each participant, without fail, to leave the activity with a sense of profound fulfillment. Those who are only concerned with what others think of them are not qualified to be SGI leaders.

People who base themselves on prayer are sincere. Prayer cleanses and expands the heart, and instills character.

Daimoku is also like fire. When you burn the firewood of earthly desires, then the fire of happiness — that is, of enlightenment — burns brightly. Sufferings thus become the raw material for constructing happiness. For someone who does not have faith in the Mystic Law, sufferings may be only sufferings. But for a person with strong faith, sufferings function to enable him or her to become happier still.

Faith is inextinguishable hope. The practice of faith is a struggle to realize our desires. And the basis of this practice is prayer. Through prayer, hope turns into confidence. This spirit of confidence unfolds in three thousand ways, finally resulting in the attainment of our hopes. Therefore, we must never give up.

Even places that have been shrouded in darkness for billions of years can be illuminated. Even a stone from the bottom of a river can be used to produce fire. Our present sufferings, no matter how dark, have certainly not continued for billions of years — nor will they linger forever. The sun will definitely rise. In fact, its ascent has already begun.

Those who over long periods grow accustomed to being miserable may acquire the tendency to give up. But with the Mystic Law we need never resign ourselves to defeat.

To put ourselves down is to denigrate the world of Buddhahood in our lives. It is tantamount to slandering the Gohonzon. The same is true of setting your mind that absolutely nothing can be done about some particular problem or suffering.

Also, we must not decide in advance that a particular person or a particular area is a lost cause. It is precisely when faced with challenging circumstances that we need to pray. The key is to offer concrete prayers and take action — until results are produced.

For instance, until a few years ago no one could even have imagined friends of the Mystic Law active in the former Soviet Union and other communist bloc countries. But the age has now changed. The long period of darkness has been broken. The starting point for this change lay in prayers for the people of those countries to definitely become happy and to shine with hope.

Prayers based on the Mystic Law are not abstract. They are a concrete reality in our lives. To offer prayers is to conduct a dialogue, an exchange, with the universe. When we pray, we embrace the universe with our lives, our determination. Prayer is a struggle to expand our lives.

So prayer is not a feeble consolation; it is a powerful, unyielding conviction. And prayer must become manifest in action. To put it another way, if our prayers are in earnest, they will definitely give rise to action.

Prayer becomes manifest in action, and action has to be backed up by prayer. Only then can we elicit a response from the Buddhist gods and all Buddhas. Those who pray and take action for kosen-rufu are the Buddha's emissaries. They cannot fail to realize lives in which all desires are fulfilled.



## **In Times of Grief**

*(Learning from the Gosho, p. 171)*

On another occasion, Mr. Toda said: "It is not a given that you will be reunited as parent and child. It sometimes happens that the person is reborn as someone close by, though not in your immediate family."

We are connected by the invisible life-to-life bonds of the Mystic Law. We are the family of the original Buddha. We are eternal comrades.

Transcending life and death, time and again we will be reunited in the garden of our mission and renew our connection with each other. Life is hopeful and death is hopeful, too. Ours is a brilliant journey across eternity!

In any event, death is a certainty. No one can escape it. Therefore, it's not whether our lives are long or short, but whether, while alive, we form a connection with the Mystic Law — the eternal elixir for all life's ills — that, in retrospect, determines whether we have led the best possible lives. By virtue of our having formed such a connection, we will again quickly return to the stage of kosen-rufu.

The important thing is that surviving family and friends live with dignity and realize great happiness based on this conviction. Their happiness shows that they have conquered the hindrance of death and eloquently attests to the deceased's attainment of Buddhahood.



*(The New Human Revolution, vol. 3, pp. 53–55)*

Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "Then, is there a way for us to change our karma and realize happiness? The answer is yes. Nichiren Daishonin revealed the means by which we who live in the Latter Day of the Law can change our karma. This means is none other than chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon and teaching others about the True Law. This way of life represents the greatest possible good and accords with the law of life itself; it is the only way to attain a state of eternal happiness and abiding joy.

"When I say this, some of you may think to yourselves: 'But didn't Mr. Makiguchi, our first president, die in prison? Isn't that a wretched way to die?' Most important, however, is the state of mind with which we face death. The question is this: With his last breath, was he filled with suffering, trembling with terror and fear, or did he, despite imprisonment, die peacefully with a sense of profound joy? In one letter from prison, Mr. Makiguchi wrote of his immense delight at having lived in exact accord with the Buddhist scriptures.

"Again, some of you may be thinking that Soka Gakkai members die from illness or accidents, too. But even here, Buddhism clearly teaches that those who uphold faith until the end will transform the negative effects of past causes, experiencing them in a lightened form. That is, we can completely change our negative karma from the past — karma that might ordinarily have taken many cycles of birth and death and long, excruciating eons of suffering to gradually eradicate — and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime....

"In any event, those who have continually taken action for kosen-rufu throughout their lives as emissaries of the Buddha definitely will never sink into the depths of fear and suffering and experience the agonies of hell — irrespective of the circumstances under which they die. In the Buddhist scriptures, it says that after death, a thousand Buddhas will extend their arms and enfold us in their embrace. Having deep faith on the level of our innermost being at the moment of death in itself attests to our attainment of Buddhahood.

"Indeed, we are Buddhas in both life and death. Moreover, as proof of that, the surviving families and loved ones of members who have died will without exception become happy. So even if we encounter obstacles or persecution in the course of our practice — even when it seems that life is an endless succession of hardships — we must never abandon faith. Encountering difficulty is a chance to transform our karma."



*(The New Human Revolution, vol. 3, pp. 56–57)*

Shin'ichi Yamamoto went on to discuss the offering of prayers for the deceased. "Now, what happens to our ancestors who have died in the grips of great suffering? Well, some will already have been reborn and are suffering from their karma in their new lives, while others have yet to be reborn. Even if they have been reborn, there is no guarantee that it will have been as a human being. Depending on their karma, they may be reborn as beasts, animals. This is clearly stated in the sutras. It is actually far more difficult to be born a human being.

"However, irrespective of the form, place or suffering into which our ancestors may have been reborn, if we, their living descendants, uphold correct faith and chant for them to attain Buddhahood, our daimoku will affect their lives, removing their suffering and imparting joy. This is because Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental law of the universe that permeates the entire cosmos.

"Moreover, any ancestors reborn as beasts cannot chant daimoku themselves, so they depend solely on the daimoku we send them. At the same time, the daimoku we send our ancestors reborn as human beings will direct their lives to encounter and connect with the Daishonin's Buddhism and eventually practice faith. Therefore, chanting earnest daimoku is

the only way to lead our ancestors to happiness. Whether they attain Buddhahood does not depend on how many wood memorial tablets you buy for them [a common practice in Japanese Buddhism]. If that were the case, Buddhahood would be a purchasable commodity.

“On the other hand, those who have staunchly upheld faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism and attained Buddhahood in this life will, after death, immediately be reborn as human beings in places near the Gohonzon and once again savor the great joy of devoting their lives to kosen-rufu. The key to determining whether our ancestors have attained Buddhahood is, as I mentioned earlier, whether, we, their descendants have become happy through faith. That in itself is proof of our ancestors’ attaining Buddhahood.”