

SOKA SPIRIT Q&A
WHY ARE WE REACHING OUT TO HOKKEKO MEMBERS?
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Q Why is it important to help Hokkeko members to leave the Nichiren Shoshu temples?

A The most unfortunate victims of the scheme to attack the SGI by Nikken Abe, the current high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, are the Hokkeko members, those practicing under the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Since 1990, when Nikken changed the rules and regulations of Nichiren Shoshu dramatically and started to promote the erroneous doctrine that the high priest is infal-lible in matters of faith, the Hok-keko members have been led further and further astray from the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and the chance to become truly happy.

This idea of the high priest’s infallibility completely violates the Daishonin’s teachings and is, in fact, one of the points that Nikko Shonin, his immediate successor, warns against in his “Twenty-six Admonitions.” Article 17 states, “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

This warning makes it crystal clear that the high priest is not infallible. The possibility for the arbitrary and authoritarian abuse of the position of high priest is precisely why Nikko Shonin cautions future believers in this way. With the betrayal and slander of the “five senior priests” after the Daishonin’s death, Nikko Shonin no doubt foresaw the very real potential for such abuse of power.

But the Hokkeko members are not the ones who have abused this power—they are the ones who have been abused. The Daishonin continuously states in his writings the importance of having compassion for those who have been deceived by authority and taking action for their happiness.

Therefore, as his direct disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, it is our mission to strive along the path of compassion that leads directly to enlightenment not only for ourselves but for everyone. The act of highest compassion that accords perfectly with Buddhism is to lead people who are unknowingly being misled by these priests to the correct path of faith.

The current high priest’s excommunication of the SGI in 1991 completely betrayed the Daishonin’s compassionate intent. Nikken Abe’s actions constitute the most serious offense in Buddhism—disrupting the harmonious body of believers in the Law. Why is this so bad? It blocks innocent people from the road to enlightenment. It confuses people about where their happiness lies, ultimately leading them down the wrong path. The Daishonin thus states, “It is the way of the great devil to assume the form of a venerable monk or to take the position of one’s father, mother or brother in order to obstruct happiness in one’s next life” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 81).

The Daishonin lived in a time of strife and confusion, when priests of heretical sects were confusing believers and destroying their chance for happiness. “At such a time,” he writes, “one must set aside all other affairs and devote one’s attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku” (WND, 126). To reach out to the Hokkeko members—to encourage them, to share the truth with them—is *shakubuku*. We “rebuke the slander of the Law” through our own human revolution and developing this kind of true friendship.

With strong faith and prayers for their happiness, let’s continue to engage patiently our friends who are being deceived by the false image of priestly authority.