

SIGNIFICANT DATES
JULY 16: ‘ON ESTABLISHING THE CORRECT TEACHING FOR THE PEACE
OF THE LAND’
ESTABLISHING BUDDHISM IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

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It may be difficult for us today to conceive of the climate for religious debate that existed when Nichiren Daishonin promulgated his teachings. When he authored “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” (Jpn “Rissho Ankoku Ron”) issues regarding religious belief were central to daily life.

Although his intention was always to serve the people, the Daishonin was treated as a renegade priest from the moment he first introduced the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in 1253. Seven years later, he was thought of as a notorious religious and political radical when he submitted this treatise on July 16, 1260, to a leading figure in the Kamakura shogunate government.

Writing this treatise was an act of tremendous compassion and courage. As such, it has served as a model of behavior for the three Soka Gakkai presidents. The spirit of this writing is a blueprint for our contemporary movement for world peace. Formally linking the Mystic Law to world peace, this document is religious revolution in action and is filled with far-reaching historical implications.

The Daishonin depicts here a conversation between a host (a person of correct faith) and a traveler (seeking correct faith). The guest begins by describing the deplorable conditions abounding in society—famine, natural disasters, pestilence and strife ruled the day. He wants to know why these conditions are occurring. “What is wrong? What error has been committed?” he asks (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 7).

The host answers that the sufferings plaguing society are the result of faith placed in erroneous teachings. This assertion was both provocative and compelled by deep conviction. The guest asks the host to cite passages of proof and, angered by the host’s response, disagrees, challenging him with passages of his own. The host remains patient, citing the documentary history of Buddhism while stressing the proof of actual fact. He then says, “If we do not admonish the evil priests, how can we hope to do good?” (WND, 12).

After considerable dialogue back and forth, the guest is convinced, abandoning his mistaken belief and at last taking faith in the Lotus Sutra. Throughout the dialogue, the host is thoughtful and lucid, demonstrating a mastery of what SGI President Ikeda calls “soft power.” We see this power beautifully exhibited in the openness and humility with which the host speaks to his guest: “Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of Mahayana. A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles...” (WND, 17).

We are all proverbial “blue flies.” By submitting his writing to a local official, the Daishonin was attempting to help all people become happy and to ensure that his teaching would be passed along to future generations. Since Buddhism allows for flexibility, one’s sense of personal mission may vary based on time, circumstance and the depth of one’s faith. It is unreasonable, perhaps, to expect a new practitioner to remonstrate with government authorities. However, the spirit of this treatise—compassion for others—and the courage with which the Daishonin lived are necessary both for the fulfillment of our own dreams and the creation of a culture of peace in the future.

Faith and practice based on this mission enable us to “cling to the tail of a thoroughbred horse” and bring forth our inherent enlightenment. When we do gongyo and chant daimoku, we “think globally”; when we participate in our local SGI-USA activities—creating trust and friendship, and showing actual proof in daily life—we “act locally.” All our activities for kosen-rufu are opportunities to manifest the spirit of “On Establishing the Correct Teaching.” We can become champion listeners, full of the courage of our convictions and the compassion to speak the truth.