

**SIGN POSTS: Life is an Unending Battle**  
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**But still I am not discouraged.** (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 166)

The letter of which this passage is part is dated Aug. 3, 1276. By the time he wrote this letter, Nichiren had already gone through severe persecutions one after another. Immediately before this passage, he describes his stormy life in this way: “Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed” (MW-1, 166).

Shortly after his first remonstrance with the government in 1260, Pure Land sect zealots attacked him. In the following year, he was exiled to Izu Peninsula. In 1264, he was ambushed on his way to see his ailing mother. In 1271, after its failed attempt to execute him, the government exiled Nichiren to Sado Island and started to crack down on his followers.

Indeed his life was constantly assailed by hardship. Yet his spirit never broke. Thinking of his severe circumstances, I sense here the strength and resilience of a man who had gone through torment and agony yet triumphed. His is not merely the detached calmness of a saint.

When those of us who have been practicing for a long time face an unexpected obstacle, we may sometimes ask ourselves, “Why me after all these years of practice?” or “Didn’t I get rid of all my negative karma?” But no matter how many years we practice, we cannot say for sure that “I will no longer suffer from my karma.”

In this sense, our lives may be compared to an unending battle against destiny. After all, no one leads a life free of problems and worries. What is most important, then, is that we never allow our faith to bend before an obstacle. When we regard hardship as a chance to strengthen our faith and establish unshakable happiness, we can tap unimaginable strength and hope just as Nichiren did.

So when I face difficult circumstances and feel like giving up, I say this passage to myself over and over until my heart echoes back: “But still I am not discouraged.”

**WT**