

QUESTION of the MONTH: 'How has studying the priesthood issue helped you deepen your understanding of and faith in Buddhism?'

It's difficult for me to answer this question without talking about related issues. I am a member of 22 years and have painfully witnessed and struggled through persecutions of SGI President Ikeda and us members by the priesthood in the 1970s, and since 1991. Studying this issue has enabled me to deeply appreciate all that President Ikeda has done for me on a profound level.

It has also enabled me to look at people, events, ideas and the world from many perspectives, with a keen eye. From this standpoint, I have made choices about the direction of my life, based on my values, boldly and confidently.

I also exchanged my Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon for a Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon and have since experienced remarkable changes in my life. This includes breaking through an eight-year deadlock at my job and getting a wonderful new position with a great company, establishing a strong financial base, moving into a beautiful new apartment, creating family harmony and opening doors to use my creative abilities in rewarding ways.

— CAROL DALY, Jackson Heights, N.Y.

The priesthood issue has been an impetus for me to read with greater interest SGI President Ikeda's speeches. I realize, as President Ikeda so often emphasizes, that appearance, position and titles have little to do with true character and ability. This is true for me from my personal experiences in society as well.

My understanding is that real power, the power gained from faith, practice and study of Buddhism, is the ability to transform suffering into joy.

— PAMELA SELEY, San Marcos, Calif.

I was thrust into the priesthood issue right away when one of the members of our district became confused and chose to go with the temple. So I had to be on top of this issue right away. The temple in Etiwanda, Calif., was sending me information on their side of the story, and I was reading the special inserts in the *World Tribune*. This helped me develop my ability to see true from false.

But what really made me understand this issue was reading the Gosho "The Opening of the Eyes." Even though it was written 700 years ago, it was as if Nichiren Daishonin himself was commenting on the issue right now. He was warning us to be wary of corrupt priests.

Furthermore, SGI President Ikeda has said in the "clear mirror" guidance that when you fight evil, you have to fight the evil within yourself. It taught me to check my behavior and ask myself: "Am I acting any better than a corrupt priest? Am I acting like President Ikeda's disciple?"

Eventually, the member saw things clearly and came back to the SGI.

— JOHN PAPA, Van Nuys, Calif.

Nowadays, especially preparing for the Entrance Exam, I feel so much joy and pride when I read about the keen insight that the leaders of this organization (President Toda, especially) have shown when they detected the erroneous beliefs that the priesthood always held. I feel a lot of appreciation for their struggle, a struggle that has allowed me to practice

Title: Question of the Month: How has studying the priesthood issue helped you deepen your ...

Subject: World Tribune 06/06/97 n.3142 p.2 WT970606p02

Author:

Keywords: deepen faith helped issue Issue Month Opinion priesthood Question still studying Temple Tribune understanding World your

what the Daishonin truly intended us to practice: Buddhism, based on the Three Great Secret Laws....

Also, I am thrilled when I read that this third and most powerful enemy is in reality a good sign; it actually means that the organization's efforts are bringing up those elements, the circumstances that prove the actuality of kosen-rufu.

— FRANCISCO PALACIO, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

I have been involved in the priesthood issue since 1991 when a third of my district went over to Nichiren Shoshu. This caused me to deeply study both sides and break through my own small-mindedness. I learned to open my heart to other opinions and respect the individual. This experience solidified my resolve to reform SGI-USA from within. "By the people, for the people" — this is the spirit of Buddhism!

— DON ROSS,
San Diego, Calif.

Recently I was telephoned by a priesthood follower. She wanted me to go to the temple and meet their "wonderful new priest." In the past, my conversations with temple members have always turned sour. This time, I remembered recent articles I read in SGI publications and decided to get to the heart of this whole priesthood issue by asking her if she knew that the Buddha is her, the Buddha is me, the Buddha is life itself. She replied with shock that she could not chant if she believed that. I told her that this is not an SGI invention, but the words of Nichiren Daishonin himself. I encouraged her to read "On Attaining Buddhahood" (written years before any Gohonzon were inscribed) and "On the Treasure Tower." I hope she will.

— CARSON NICHOLS,
Woodbridge, Va.

Title: Question of the Month: How has studying the priesthood issue helped you deepen your ...
Subject: World Tribune 06/06/97 n.3142 p.2 WT970606p02
Author:
Keywords: deepen faith helped issue Issue Month Opinion priesthood Question still studying Temple
Tribune understanding World your