

VOICES: Why is it important to continually study — and participate in dialogue — about the priesthood issue?

Members of Boston Joint Territory respond:

During 1990 to 1994 I was up on the priesthood issue, but as time passed my seeking spirit faded. The first step in my human revolution is realizing how crucial it is for me to understand not only the history but the essence of the issue. It is my responsibility to continually study for my education as well as to be able to dialogue with all members, active and inactive. More than anything I need to continually believe in my heart that I have the ability to stand up for the Law and not leave it up to someone else to defend my beliefs.

— JOEL CAROL BOWEN, Everett, Mass.

As a leader, as a disciple, I should educate myself about the priesthood issue, especially since there is no temple in New England. I believe that Nikken is the embodiment of the devilish function. Not to try to understand, or to be passive, and not fight against evil, is definitely not the attitude of a disciple. From the standpoint of dialogue, I feel I should bring up this subject, find out what issues people have, understand their questions and enable them to deepen their understanding. In our headquarters, we are beginning to work on this.

— LIZA SCHAEFFER, Wellesley, Mass.

Studying and participating in dialogue about the priesthood issue helps me become more confident about practicing correctly. The devilish function is always present: In Shakyamuni's time, in Nichiren Daishonin's time, in the lifetime of [first Soka Gakkai president] Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. For the sake of future generations, it is important to continue the fight today.... From repudiating ideas propounded by the priesthood, I have learned that this is a struggle within my life as well, an uncompromising battle within and without. A Gosho passage reads, "To seek enlightenment without repudiating slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 165)

— MEENAKSHI GUPTA, Marlborough, Mass.

It is a challenge for me even to think about the priesthood issue. It is a subject I have been avoiding for the past two years. A few days ago, however, I read how active the temple movement has become, and I am determined to study the subject to have a better understanding of it and not be swayed by it. I believe that in studying and engaging in dialogue, I can support SGI President Ikeda and his passion for world peace.

— ZENILDA BASTONE, Boston

Before the split with the priesthood, I was uncertain which aspects of the practice were ritual, which were mere formality, which were Eastern customs and which were the Daishonin's Buddhism. Reading the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* and studying other materials has helped clarify for me the essential elements of the practice. Also, previously much of my understanding of the Gosho was superficial, especially in light of the three powerful enemies. Now my understanding is much deeper and has real meaning for my life.

— MARSHA WESTROPP, Framingham, Mass.

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