

**SIGN POSTS: An Assumption**  
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**More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238)**

A little less than three years ago, a friend of mine was killed. He was an active SGI member and someone whom other members looked to for a smile. He smoked too much, led a great gongyo, and had a great laugh.

When I heard the news of his death, I was in shock. I had known members who had died, but this was different. It was too close, too sudden, and I didn't know how to handle it.

I had made an assumption, an equation, if you will: practice Buddhism, go to a lot of meetings, and you'll automatically live to be old. That was a mistaken assumption. The reality is that none of us know what the next day will bring. None of us know what the causes we have made will uncover. None of us know if the next time we see our friends will be the last.

In this Goshō passage, Nichiren Daishonin is encouraging Shijō Kingo in his battle to win the respect and favor of his patron, Lord Ema. He encourages Shijō Kingo to stand firm in his convictions, to stay true to his honor. And he points out that material things can never equal the value of respect and friendship.

Just because we chant and belong to an organization that works for world peace does not exclude us from pain and loss. Reality is often very harsh. It was true in Nichiren Daishonin's time, as it is for us today. Losing a friend is painful. Saying goodbye to someone is not easy. But it's part of life.

I was glad to have had the chance to practice with my friend. I was glad to have had the chance to see him fight through difficult situations and try to win over his demons. He taught me to never take for granted that people will always be around. He taught me that even though friends may die, their friendships never fade.

It's a treasure I will have.

Always.

**WT**