

Times Like These
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At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 103)

It seems the trend in American society today is to avoid calling anything evil. There's this hesitancy to say what's good and evil, right and wrong, and those who do so are often labeled fanatics. But a society that's unable to recognize evil is cutting off its best defense against it, Buddhism teaches. The Daishonin says in this Goshō that "at such a time" — at a time when society is thus confused — we have to "rebuke slander," to clearly differentiate right from wrong.

Recently I faced my own predilection to take evil lightly. It happened in October when the Rev. Jisei Nagasaka of the New York Nichiren Shoshu temple authored a letter to all SGI-USA members. Similar to the head temple's re-excommunication letter to members in Japan, Nagasaka's letter said we all have to quit the SGI organization. When I read it, I laughed. Especially when I read that only if we practice with the priests can we "carry out the pure and genuine practice" of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Pure and genuine are the last things I would call the priests who are trying to destroy the SGI's movement for world peace.

But this funny letter, which the U.S. priests are now handing out and reading aloud at their meetings, wasn't so funny the more I thought about it. If an innocent person believed what it said, that pure faith is to be found with the temple, wouldn't evil be getting away with being evil? How potentially destructive the letter really is!

The Daishonin always tells us to beware evil friends who will try to destroy our mind of faith — that's what the letter is trying to do. Since I came to that realization, the thought of that letter has been fueling my prayers, now renewed, that no one will be swayed by what the priesthood says — and that I can deepen people's confidence that the SGI is right.

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