

IN MY LIFE: I'm Not a Coward
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Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other.... The heart of strategy and swordsmanship derives from the Mystic Law. A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered. (“The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246)

Usually, people cite the last sentence in this quote about a coward not having his prayers answered. When I hear this, I think, somewhat egotistically, “I’m not a coward!” This then leads me to what would appear to be the logical conclusion — that my prayers will be answered only because I’m not a coward.

Consistently, though, I encounter a problem that I am unable to work through. I become frustrated, grappling within my head with all the possible options and actions I could take, realizing that nothing is working out as I had hoped. It is at this point that I realize, once again, I am employing the strategy of Ulisse Gallo and not that of the Lotus Sutra.

I’ve realized that it’s a pattern. I keep telling myself that I have to show actual proof at work and school while over-scheduling myself with activities. With time limited and goals in mind, I quickly shift into action first, trying to accomplish everything immediately, only to eventually reach a standstill. I begin to feel that maybe my faith is not as strong as I thought it was, and self-doubt sets in.

Nichiren Daishonin knew that we would encounter such difficulties as we practiced true Buddhism. So he tells us to employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before all others. In other words, chant to the Gohonzon first! To over-analyze all my options, then chant and think — *poof!* — my prayers will be answered is to be a coward. It is only when I chant *first* that the “heart of strategy and swordsmanship,” i.e., the correct action that I need to take, will come to me. It is only then that my prayers will be answered.

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