

TRAILBLAZERS

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At some point in our lives, we've all sat down at least once and pondered over all of our problems — whether with school, relationships or financial difficulties. But have you ever thought about all those things that you do have, such as good health, a harmonious family or good friends? Well, sometimes it's easier to focus on the bad rather than on the good.

For myself, I decided to try something new and start appreciating those things that I do have in my life. I started by chanting with appreciation for my mom, dad and sisters. I felt my life condition rising as I was praying. Wow! Then, I started chanting to appreciate the Gohonzon and our SGI organization. Like a ray of sun shining through the clouds, I realized that everything I have in my life is because of the efforts of the SGI organization, which has taught me how to correctly practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Without SGI President Ikeda's guidance and the support of the organization to help me during times of suffering by always leading me back to the Gohonzon, I would not be as happy as I am today. After recognizing how much I've gained, I asked myself what have I personally done to give back to the SGI, President Ikeda and the Gohonzon. I thought, "How can I repay my debt of gratitude?"

Through chanting, I found the answer. Nichiren Daishonin writes: "It is a time when...truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 126).

I will repay my debt of gratitude by chanting and taking action toward our Soka Spirit movement. Throughout the history of Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai organization, it's clear that Nichiren Daishonin and Soka Gakkai presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda have all dedicated their lives to ensure that the common people correctly practice this Buddhism for the sake of their own happiness.

After recently studying the importance of March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, I could feel President Toda's great compassion for the youth when he gathered together with them on that significant day, declaring that they each possessed the great mission to correctly carry on the Daishonin's teachings.

Even though President Toda was in frail condition and near death at that time, he summoned the life force deep within him to talk to these youth. I think this demonstrates President Toda's fighting spirit to do anything for the sake of the Mystic Law and for people's happiness.

After reading how much the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai have fought to correctly carry on the Daishonin's spirit, how can I turn the other way when the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is trying to destroy the Daishonin's teachings? I can't. I won't. I never will.

I think the biggest challenge is not so much recognizing the fact that Nikken is manipulating the Daishonin's teachings for his personal gain, but rather overcoming my passiveness and indifference. It's so easy to get caught up in saying that someone else will do it or that the priesthood issue will eventually pass. But it's been 10 years

since Nichiren Shoshu excommunicated the SGI. This issue is not going to just fade away.

I was born here on this earth at this time for a reason—it's the perfect time. It's the time when "truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder." If I don't help those individuals who are suffering because they are incorrectly practicing the Daishonin's teachings, then who will? Nichiren Daishonin also states: "When one has had the rare good fortune to be born a human being, and the further good fortune to encounter the teachings of Buddhism, how can one waste this opportunity?" (WND, 60)

At this time, we have been given the rare opportunity to fight side by side with President Ikeda to ensure that the Daishonin's teachings remain pure throughout eternity. Who could ask for anything more?