

**SIGNIFICANT DATES**  
**APRIL 28, 1253—THE FOUNDING OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN’S BUDDHISM**  
**THE DAY THE WORLD BEGAN TO CHANGE**  
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As the sun rose and warmed him on the morning of April 28, 1253, one young man began to change the world with his voice. No one in Kasamagori, nor in any other part of Japan, nor the rest of the world, knew it yet.

He was only 32 years old. He wasn’t famous. He had no political power and he was not from a family of wealth or high social status. Yet in just a few breaths he transformed his life and the lives of all who knew him, or would ever know of him. He was the first person to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. By doing so, he declared to the universe that he was the votary of the Lotus Sutra. He was no longer Zesho-Bo Rencho; he was Nichiren, Sun-Lotus. No longer a Tendai sect priest, nor a priest of any sect, he was alone in his determination to spread the essence of the Lotus Sutra and to correct the erroneous doctrines which abounded.

On April 27, he was just another priest as far as the world was concerned. To his teachers he was bright, sincere and scholarly. The Tendai sect, though not very common, was not unpopular. He could easily have stayed in the comfort of priestly seclusion, whiling away the years studying doctrinal issues and history. But just as Shakyamuni gave up the life of a prince, so did Nichiren Daishonin abandon the leisurely life of the Buddhist scholar for a more vital, and far more difficult, life.

Just how much more difficult was his life after the morning of April 28? At noon that day, he revealed the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to an audience of priests. By that night, he was a fugitive whose life was in jeopardy. By fearlessly declaring the superiority of the Lotus Sutra, he angered the adherents of every other teaching. He told them the Pure Land teaching was slanderous and incomplete, Zen was the work of devils and the True Word school would bring about the nation’s downfall. Surely he knew how dangerous it was to say these things, but he said them anyway. After all, he had already spoken the most rare and difficult truth that morning, making a determination not to begrudge his life for the sake of the Law.

From that day until the day he died, his life was never easy or safe. One might think he must have been insane to imperil himself so, but he could never have succeeded as the votary of the Lotus Sutra if he had been meek, subservient or self-serving. The greatness of his teaching was naturally met with great resistance, but with the heart of a lion he was never defeated.

For us, living so many centuries later, it might seem that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not quite as big a deal. Here in the United States, freedom of religion is a constitutional right, and chanting at this time will not endanger our lives. The Daishonin stood alone, and we now have many millions of members worldwide. But to think that to be a votary of the Lotus Sutra today is any easier, or the effects less potent, or the resistance less strong, is an illusion. The Lotus Sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this Sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more so will it be after his passing?” This applies equally to the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra today.

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we too are changing the world. Every day, with every daimoku, we take on new challenges and face new obstacles. We might not face the same magnitude of obstacles that the Daishonin did, but we should be as full of gratitude and pride for each other as we are for him. On April 28, we celebrate the day the world began to change. And through our faith and practice, we continue to change it.