

**WORDS TO WIN BY
THE SPIRIT TO GIVE ONE'S LIFE
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MID-ATLANTIC ZONE LEADER**

From "The Supremacy of the Law," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 612–17.

“One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.” Because my body is insignificant, I am struck and hated, but because the Law is supreme, it will spread without fail. If the Lotus Sutra spreads, my mortal remains will be respected, and if my remains are respected, they will benefit the people. Then I will come to be revered as highly as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman is now. You should understand that, at that time, the men and women who supported me will be honored as greatly as Takenouchi and Wakamiya. (WND, 615)

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin quotes from “The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra” by the Great Teacher Chang-an of China, which states: “One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.” The Daishonin proclaims that he has indeed lived up to the spirit of these words, risking his life to establish the Law that opens the path of Buddhahood for all humanity.

To be willing to carry out one’s practice even at the cost of one’s life is the fundamental spirit with which genuine Buddhist practitioners dedicated to the correct teaching should spread the Law. Buddhism has spread to the extent it has thanks to people who had this spirit.

The Daishonin, whose compassionate vow to save all people from unhappiness brought forth persecution by the three powerful enemies and put him in constant danger of losing his life, serves as the foremost example of practicing with this indomitable spirit.

Seven hundred years later, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s first president, upheld the same conviction, remaining resolute in the face of persecution by the Japanese military government during World War II. Refusing to compromise the true spirit of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, he died in prison from malnutrition. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, staunchly endured persecution together with his mentor, Makiguchi, following him to prison and emerging from its brutality two years later, awakened to the Buddha’s mandate.

And as the successor of this relentless spiritual struggle for the happiness of all people, SGI President Ikeda has been unbowed by a hail storm of criticism and slander heaped upon him by powerful forces in Japanese society, as well as insidious opposition by the third of the three powerful enemies in the form of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

Just as the three presidents have done, we can make the phrase “One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law” our own. Although at this time, we may not have to face the life-threatening persecutions that some of our predecessors underwent, by striving to practice and spread the true Law with the same fearless, uncompromising spirit, we, too, manifest the Daishonin’s sublime state of life.

It is none other than the SGI, under President Ikeda’s leadership, that has proven the Daishonin’s words “If the Lotus Sutra spreads, my mortal remains will be respected, and if my remains are respected, they will benefit the people” true. The Mystic Law has now spread to 165 countries and territories throughout the world precisely because the SGI has always correctly upheld the Daishonin’s teachings.