

**WORDS TO WIN BY
MENTOR AND DISCIPLE: A SHARED STRUGGLE
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MID-ATLANTIC ZONE LEADER**

From “Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 317–20.

In the “Teacher of the Law” chapter, the Buddha states that he will magically conjure and send the four kinds of believers — monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen — [for the sake of the teachers of the Law]. If the “laymen” mentioned here does not mean you, who does it refer to? You have not only heard the Law, but have taken faith in it and since then have followed it without turning aside. How wondrous! How extraordinary! If that is the case, then can there be any doubt that I am the teacher of the Law of the Lotus Sutra? Perhaps I also resemble “the envoy of the Thus Come One,” for I am carrying out “the Thus Come One’s work.” I have nearly spread the five characters of the daimoku that were entrusted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices when the two Buddhas were seated together within the treasure tower. Does this not mean that I am an envoy of Bodhisattva Superior Practices? Moreover, following me, you, as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, have told others of this Law. What else could this be but the transmission of the Law? (WND, 318–19)

Nichiren Daishonin here voices admiration for his courageous disciple, Shijo Kingo, and touches upon the purpose of his own advent. Kingo rushed to the scene when the Daishonin was facing execution at Tatsunokuchi, prepared to die at his mentor’s side.

And during the Sado exile, he rallied the believers in Kamakura, communicating to them the guidance he received from the Daishonin, which encouraged them not to yield to any threats from the authorities or to their own doubts.

Although the Daishonin propagated Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, and fulfilled the sutra’s predictions about the tribulations its votary would undergo, he nonetheless modestly refers to himself as merely “the envoy” of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. However, a closer examination reveals that Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who makes an appearance in the Lotus Sutra’s Ceremony in the Air, represents the Daishonin’s transient status. Elsewhere, the Daishonin clarifies that “the Buddha eternally endowed with the three properties is the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 752).

The Daishonin goes on to tell Kingo that by faithfully following the votary of the sutra and by having taught others about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Kingo has greatly contributed to “the transmission of the Law” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 850).

The tremendous compassion of the mentor for his disciple and the disciple’s determination to practice in perfect accord with the mentor’s teaching—it is here, in this shared struggle for the Law, that the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple lies. It is only because of the disciple’s courageous battle to practice exactly as the mentor teaches that the mentor’s true greatness can be proven.

As we continue to engrave the Daishonin’s writings in our lives, we are striving to practice with the same mind and sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu as the Daishonin himself. Through such determination—acting as Bodhisattvas of the Earth—we cannot fail to enjoy a constant flow of wisdom and joy gushing forth from our innermost lives.