

**WORDS TO WIN BY  
A MIND OF PERFECT FAITH  
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GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN'S LEADER**

*From "Letter to Akimoto," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 1014–22.*

**If a vessel is free of these four faults of overturning, leaking, being defiled, and being mixed, then it can be called a perfect vessel. If the embankments around a moat do not leak, then the water will never escape from the moat. And if the mind of faith is perfect, then the water of wisdom, the great impartial wisdom, will never dry up. (WND, 1015)**

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin employs an analogy explaining that a vessel free of the above mentioned four faults is a "perfect vessel," which can hold pure water without losing a drop. The Daishonin's definition of perfect faith, is not something distant and unattainable. President Ikeda has indicated the four conditions of strong faith. The first is consistent practice and study of the Daishonin's Buddhism. The second is to develop a humanistic character. The third is to never quit our practice, and the fourth is to demonstrate the validity of our practice in our lives. By striving in this way we become vessels of "perfect faith," filled with the Buddha's overflowing wisdom.

Shakyamuni Buddha challenged individuals to consistently question their own understanding: "Do not accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in our books, nor because it is in accord with your belief, nor because it is the saying of your teacher. Be lamps unto yourselves" (Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, p. 93). Faith is something we acquire through our own efforts. It is not something bestowed on us from the outside. It develops through life experience based on our consistent practice and study of Buddhism. Through this tenacious process, we are able to dispel doubt and maintain a "perfect vessel."

On the other hand, if we slacken in our efforts to grow in faith, the water of the Buddha's great impartial wisdom will then cease to flow. As our life grows weak, it becomes susceptible to the four faults that the Daishonin outlines above. Weak faith and lack of wisdom eventually lead to arrogance and self-righteousness, bringing misery and suffering upon not only ourselves but others as well. We are encouraged in this letter to strive against such stagnation through a seeking mind and continuous self-reflection.

The Buddha's great impartial wisdom is the wisdom to perceive that all phenomena are manifestations of the Mystic Law—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. The Buddha regards all people as equal and infinitely precious and relentlessly exerts himself or herself to help them overcome suffering and achieve eternal happiness. Through our strong faith and practice for *kosen-rufu*, we develop the awareness that *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is our life itself. Through such exertion for the happiness of others, the boundless water of the Buddha's life force flows forth endlessly from the depths of our lives.