

change what should be changed. I am very glad to see its determination to improve. Setting out from the starting point of the determination and decision you made today, I hope you will further your efforts towards *kosen rufu* and protect Nichiren Shoshu from outside.

The role of the priesthood is not as easy as may appear to laymen. Incapable as I am, I have been striving to educate and encourage every priest to develop the kind of personality and intelligence which will make them respectable as Nichiren Shoshu priests. The same efforts have also been made day in and day out at each local temple to build a strong foundation for its *raison d'etre*--to provide an ideal arena where believers can learn and deepen their faith.

Still young, however, many of Nichiren Shoshu priests may lack important capability in leadership. So you, as believers, may have felt discontented from time to time. But please mind you, both priests and temples can develop themselves soundly only when they receive their believers' warm support, understanding and consideration. The earnest wish of Nichiren Shoshu priests is to protect the Dai-Gohonzon under any adverse circumstances and advance the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. And mind you, again, we have no intention whatsoever of taking advantage of your broad-mindedness and society's tolerance. However, we have no choice but to rebuke the kind of movement in which the laymen, swayed by wicked criticism, go on to slander and oppress the temples of Nichiren Shoshu which can prosper only with their strong support.

We are very sorry deep inside as we see these things happening around us due to lack of understanding on the part of some people. Such slanderous words and actions against the temples and priests is indeed an act of breaking the harmonious unity between laymen and priesthood. And I can't help but assert that this sort of act runs counter to Nichiren Daishonin's teaching itself. I hope that the Soka Gakkai leaders will understand what I mean and resolutely exert your full effort to establish a correct relationship between priesthood and laymen. One of the priests will not hesitate to reply to your determined endeavor along these lines with his utmost sense of trust and appreciation.

During the last 30 years the Soka Gakkai has made astounding progress, thus bringing about the unprecedented rise of Nichiren Shoshu. This is a historical fact. The glorious accomplishments of the Soka Gakkai will definitely shine in the history of Buddhism. But, please remember that there were always the unanimous support and cooperation by the priesthood behind the spectacular advancement of the Soka Gakkai.

True, the structure of Nichiren Shoshu was not thus far perfectly advanced enough to keep up with the developing rhythm of the Soka Gakkai. So we have relied on the Gakkai in many aspects. But nowadays, fortunately enough, with lots of capable priests growing gradually, we, Nichiren Shoshu, are resolved to fulfill our responsibilities on our own feet.

At any rate, we should protect and hand down the essence of the tradition and teachings which have been cherished for 700 years since the days of Nichiren Daishonin. Unless you base your efforts upon this fundamental heritage, no matter how powerful you may become, it will only mean a superficial advancement of *kosen rufu*, only inviting criticism from future generations. I am concerned about this point. I must venture to point this out today because as High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu, it is my

responsibility to make my utmost effort so that all believers can carry on correct faith. I have long been trusting the faith of Daisaku Ikeda, whom I sincerely ask to help all believers deepen the correct faith of Nichiren Shoshu.

In the meantime, as far as those people who belong directly to local temples (leaving the Soka Gakkai) I hope each chief priest of these temples will responsibly guide them to the correct faith of Nichiren Shoshu. Again, I hope those who newly came to belong directly to their local temple (without ever belonging to the Soka Gakkai) will further develop their faith which they have been polishing tenaciously thus far.

On the condition that the Soka Gakkai will carry out the points I made today and follow the basic guide-lines we confirmed together, I would like you all to agree to put an end to the disturbance between Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai. I sincerely hope all of you will stop criticizing each other and, with a new determination, forge ahead toward the realization of the ideal relationship between priests and laymen. With the Dai-Gohonzon as the basis, let each of us help one another in sound unity.

Anyway, the past is the past. The important thing is how we can strengthen and develop Nichiren Shoshu and realize the ultimate goal of *kosen rufu*. The Gohonzon which we take faith in is meant to benefit us now and in the future. Without clinging to past history, I hope you will devote yourselves to protecting Nichiren Shoshu by realizing the true harmony between priesthood and laymen. I hope you all understand my intent.

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