

## PILLARS OF FAITH

*If the Buddha did not plant the seed of Buddhahood in human beings, which makes the attainment of enlightenment possible, the teachings of Buddhism would not be inherited by successive generations and the True Law of Buddhism would not endure forever.*

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### **Principles for True Believers (the Hokkeko) to follow:**

1. Faith: persist in strictly conforming to the teachings.
2. Practice and Study: if you don't practice and study this faith, Buddhism will cease to exist.
3. Shakubuku: have the courage to convey just one word of the teachings of Myoho, the Mystic Law .
4. No matter what, do not forsake your faith.
5. Never seek personal gain through faith
6. Devote yourself wholeheartedly to aspiring to bodhisattva and Buddhahood.
7. Realize that you were born to chant Namu-myoho-rence-kyo .
8. Have an independent faith where you are not influenced by rumors, and do not appeal to the vanity of others.
9. Have an appreciation for the destiny that led you to true Buddhism, and believe in the search for the truth.

THE PRINCIPLES for Hokkeko (True Believers of the Lotus Sutra) to follow are related to the proverb cited above. When you believe in Buddhism there are three important pillars: faith, practice and study. The word “belief” connotes “truth. This means you should believe wholeheartedly without lying or looking away. If you don't truly believe, there is no need for you to pretend that you do. The fundamental premise is that you truly believe. You have to prove true belief by practicing and studying true Buddhism.

It is very hard to discipline oneself. It is hard enough to do a complete morning and evening Gongyo each day. Even if you do Gongyo, the Gohonzon will not speak to you or praise you. It will not give you anything. Nevertheless, you should do Gongyo no matter how difficult it may be. If you do, you will realize how very hard it is to believe with your whole heart, and how even harder it is to believe for an entire lifetime. But you will also come to realize that you can do Gongyo simply because you truly believe in it. Furthermore, you will understand that it is due to one's inability to deeply believe in Gohonzon that inclines one to want to abandon one's practice, or find petty excuses and quibbles for not practicing. If you truly believe in Buddhism, you will confront the Gohonzon straight on, pray and spend time reflecting on what the Buddha wants from you; what the Buddha expects from you; what the Buddha is trying to reveal to you. That is true practice. The reason you practice Buddhism is to discover the Buddha's heart, and to be aware and certain of your goal and mission in life. You study Buddhism in order to shakubuku non-believers, those who believe in Buddhism but have erroneous views, as well as yourself. That is why, if you stop practicing and studying there will be no Buddhism. It is within the power of anyone to utter a single phrase or a single word, such as, "Without Namu-myoho-renge-kyo no one can attain Buddhahood." To do this is your responsibility. This is your mission.

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I have chosen the above as the motto for this year. I often hear from you believers that you gave it your all when you belonged to the Soka Gakkai. If you were able to do that then, I wish you would do the same now. You can do it now, I believe, but I wonder why you aren't vigorously spreading the teachings and converting people. Did you exhaust your energy while you were in the Soka Gakkai? Did you lose your confidence to shakubuku? Are you afraid of it? Some of you have been accused by your children and grandchildren of "neglecting your work, your family and your children for the sake of your religion only to find, after you had missed the prime of your lives, that you were deceived by the Soka Gakkai." Your children further say, "even though you have left the Soka Gakkai and are now followers of the Shoshin-kai, and are encouraging us to become believers too, we are afraid we will be deceived again. To believe in Buddhism is to give up on your life. There is nothing good about it."

You can no longer talk to your children and grandchildren about your belief. It is probably true that you are hoping that if you continue with your faith in Buddhism, even if you are the only

member of your family practicing, your children and grandchildren will understand you someday. You probably expect your children and grandchildren to hold a Buddhist funeral and memorial service for you and otherwise carry out your belief when you die. You probably feel that you should avoid talking about Buddhism because it is likely to cause an argument in your family. You are very cautious with them, treating the whole situation like a festering boil that you are afraid to touch so as not to cause your family any more aversion towards Buddhism. This is all undoubtedly true. But will the boil heal naturally if it is not touched and pressed and drained? Isn't it true that to eliminate the lump of abscess in a boil you have to touch it by pressing it, and afterwards apply medicine to it? If it were possible to heal, for example, infectious boils or cancer without touching them, there would be no need for doctors, nor would there be any struggle or difficulty to endure. Is it really necessary for you to ask whether you should sow the seeds of Buddhism? To shakubuku is to sow the seeds of Buddhism. Sowing seeds of Buddhism means to pray earnestly that your children, grandchildren and people you encounter will attain enlightenment.

The Soka Gakkai's teaching was absolutely wrong. They taught that if you receive Gojukai and enshrine Gohonzon that's enough even if your practice deteriorates and you stop doing Gongyo. All the Gakkai tells you is that you can cure your disease and receive benefits for your efforts. They never propagated this Buddhism the way Nichiren Daishonin did, which is by teaching that all of us have the innate Buddha nature of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo in our hearts. Instead, their shakubuku tactics were based on threats and fear. Moreover, they told you, since their teaching is the correct teaching it didn't matter that they deceived you a little without giving any reason for it. They threatened that if you didn't listen to them you would incur punishment and suffering and go to Hell, but if you followed them you would receive benefits. In addition, they claimed that their practice was the simplest, fastest and most effective way to receive benefits from Gohonzon and to attain enlightenment. Their approach to teaching this Buddhism was completely self-centered. Their teaching never emphasized that anyone can attain Buddhahood, and they failed to bring peace to the hearts of believers. They only extolled the immediate and momentary joy of receiving benefits and rewards of this mundane world, but they never mentioned the joy of attaining Buddhahood. Theirs is the worst kind of propagation in that it has deviated far from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The Soka Gakkai continues to spread Buddhism in this way even today.

What will happen to Buddhism 50 or 100 years from now if we don't correctly propagate the true teachings? If you correctly sow the seeds of true Buddhism, even if they don't take hold and sprout at this moment, all those seeds will inherit the Buddha's teachings in the future. This is how the

teachings of Buddhism will be inherited by successive generations and how the True Law will endure forever.

In the book I was reading the other day, written by a zoologist, it stated, “When I walk in the mountains I sometimes find full grown cherry tomato plants in the middle of nowhere. Raccoons eat the seeds that human beings have sown, and then they leave their excrement. In time the first sprouts appear. This also happens to the ginkgo plant. At the intersections of animal trails you can find many different kinds of seeds along with raccoon droppings. It is by these droppings that raccoons can know in which direction they can find a particular food. These crossroads are important places for raccoons to exchange information. Among other things, they learn where they can move safely by where they find their droppings. Eaten by animals and spread through animals' droppings, plants consequently flourish.” There is nothing wasteful in nature.

True propagation takes courage. You will often be ignored, belittled and laughed at. This is the Way practiced by both Nichiren Daishonin and Bodhisattva Jofukyo. If you don't pursue this way of practice the teachings of Buddhism will not be inherited by successive generations, and the True Law of Buddhism will not endure forever.

Let's devote ourselves this year with this goal in mind. Let's have the kind of faith that will make the Mystic Law, Myoho, blossom and bear fruit far into the future, long after we are gone.