

Flowering and Bearing Grain



I HAVE not heard from either of you since that time. But I was very pleased to learn that you had read at Kasagamori the two documents¹ I wrote in the Kenji era in memory of the late Sage Dozen-bo.

If a tree is deeply rooted, its branches and leaves will never wither. If the spring is inexhaustible, the stream will never run dry. Without wood, a fire will burn out. Without earth, plants will not grow. I, Nichiren, am indebted solely to my late teacher, Dozen-bo, for my having become the votary of the Lotus Sutra and my being widely talked about now, in both a good and bad sense. Nichiren is like the plant, and my teacher, the earth.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have four leaders. The sutra says, "The first was called Superior Practices . . . and the fourth was called Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices."² If Bodhisattva Superior Practices appears in the Latter Day of the Law, so must Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices.

The rice plant flowers and bears grain, but its spirit remains in the soil. This is the reason the stalk sprouts to flower and bear grain once again. The blessings that Nichiren obtains from propagating the Lotus Sutra will always

return to Dozen-bo. How sublime! It is said that, if a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell.

If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything. I will elaborate on this point later.

You should always talk with each other to free yourselves from the sufferings of birth and death and attain the pure land of Eagle Peak, where you will nod to each other and speak in one mind.

The sutra reads, "Before the multitude they seem possessed of the three poisons or manifest the signs of distorted views. My disciples in this manner use expedient means to save living beings."³

Understand these matters in the light of what I have stated thus far.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The fourth month in the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

To Joken-bo and Gijo-bo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this message from Minobu in the fourth month of 1278 for the second memorial service for Dozen-bo. Dozen-bo had been a senior priest at Seicho-ji temple, where the Daishonin entered the priesthood. The Daishonin studied under him from the age of twelve. The letter was addressed to his former seniors at Seicho-ji, Joken-bo and Gijo-bo.

When Nichiren Daishonin first declared the teaching of Nam-myohorenge-kyo at Seicho-ji in 1253, he strongly refuted the dominant Pure Land

school. Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of the village and an ardent Pure Land believer, became enraged and ordered his arrest. Dozen-bo helped the Daishonin escape. However, fearing the others, Dozen-bo remained a priest of Seicho-ji to the end of his life, but the Daishonin never forgot his former teacher.

In the seventh month of 1276, having learned of Dozen-bo's death, the Daishonin wrote *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude* in honor of his memory and sent it to Joken-bo and Gijo-bo.

Notes

1. "Two documents" here refers to the work *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude*, written in the second year of Kenji (1276), and its cover letter.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

3. Ibid., chap. 8. In quoting this passage, the Daishonin encourages Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, who had become his disciples but remained at Seicho-ji temple, to convert the people there.