



1) Confidence in the Mystic Law Changes Despair Into Hope

Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring.

Hardship doesn't necessarily have to lead to despair. And it is despair, not hardship, which builds hell in our hearts.

The hellish state of life people experience is often the reflection of their despair— the loss of desire and expectation with which to change their lives for the better. In "Winter Always Turns to Spring," Nichiren Daishonin teaches us how to change despair into hope, hellish suffering into the authentic joy of living.

Nichiren wrote this letter to Myoichi, a sickly widow of a samurai warrior struggling to raise her children, one of whom was ill at that time. At the beginning, he acknowledges her difficulties: "Human beings have both a father and a mother. It is hard for children to grow up when even one parent is missing. Your husband had to leave behind a daughter, a son who is ill, and you, their mother, who suffer from a poor constitution" (WND, 535).

Myoichi and her husband were staunch disciples of Nichiren. When the shogunate government exiled Nichiren and cracked down on his believers, they stood by their

teacher while most of their fellow believers renounced their faith. As a result of their association with Nichiren, the couple had their land confiscated. Shortly after, the husband died. Despite the loss of her husband and her financial difficulties, Myoichi maintained her support for Nichiren and sent a servant to assist him on Sado— Japan's remote, northern island where he was exiled— and later at Mount Minobu where he lived after returning from exile.

Nichiren encourages Myoichi and teaches her the key to changing despair into hope, writing: "Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring. Never, from ancient times on, has anyone heard or seen of winter turning back to autumn. Nor have we ever heard of a believer in the Lotus Sutra who turned into an ordinary person. The sutra reads, 'If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.'"

"Winter always turns to spring"— for those who believe in the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and manifest their innate Buddhahood, the winter of life's hardship always gives way to the spring of deep, abiding joy. As with this undeniable seasonal rhythm, Nichiren teaches, we can always transform our difficulties into the source of supreme fulfillment by activating within ourselves the Mystic Law — life's innate rhythm of hope— through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

The key to transforming despair



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