Letter to Jōkōmyō-ji

AN official announcement has been handed over stating that the emperor of the great Mongol Empire intends to seize the country of Japan. This occurrence fits exactly with what I predicted some years ago in my On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land. Privately I had thought that I would be singled out as the most praiseworthy person in all Japan as a result, but on the contrary I have not received the slightest word of commendation. This is because in Kamakura those who adhere to inferior teachings, such as those of the Precepts and Zen schools, “address the rulers and high ministers, slandering and speaking evil of”¹¹ me.

You should make haste to discard the two hundred and fifty precepts that you observe, place your faith in Nichiren, and thereby assure that you will attain Buddhahood. If you do not, you will be following a course of action that will lead you in your next existence to fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

I have sent letters explaining this matter to various other personages. It is my sincere hope that you will all come together in one place as soon as possible so that you may discuss the holding of a public debate. My aim is not simply to heap scorn on the other Buddhist schools. But how could the petty and niggling precepts of the Hinayana teachings hope to stand face to face before the great monarchial precepts of the Lotus Sutra? The situation is laughable, merely laughable!

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Bun’ei [1268]
Respectfully presented to the attendant of Jōkōmyō-ji

Background

One of eleven letters of remonstrance, this was sent to Jōkōmyō-ji, a temple built in 1251 by the regent Hōjō Naga-toki. Initially dedicated to the practice of the precepts and Nembutsu, the temple later became a center for the practices of four different schools, the True Word, Zen, Precepts, and Pure Land schools. At the time of this letter, the priest Gyōbin was residing at
this temple. In 1271, Gyōbin, on behalf of Ryōkan of Gokuraku-ji and some leading priests of the Pure Land school, sent a letter asking Nichiren Daishonin to meet with him for a debate. The Daishonin answered by saying that any debate must take place not in private, but in public, under government auspices.

**Note**