Concerning the Statue of Shakyamuni Buddha Made by Toki

WITH regard to the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha you have made, in fact you have made and revealed the Buddha of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which since time without beginning had never been revealed! I am eager to go at once and face it. This is what is meant by the words “The Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings,”¹ and “In truth the time since I attained Buddhahood [is extremely long].”²

Nevertheless, you had best lose no time in having Iyo-bō³ perform the eye-opening ceremony. Have him recite the Lotus Sutra in its entirety and imbue the six sense organs of the Buddha with it. And in this manner change the statue into the living body of the lord of teachings, Shakyamuni, and reverence and welcome and enshrine him. I also think that this will be impossible without the presence of you and your son. Regarding the Buddhist hall on your estate, Āchārya Daishin knows all about it. You must make absolutely certain to face the Buddha image in prayer and form a bond with the Buddha.

You once made offerings to the god Daikoku,⁴ and I wonder whether, after that, you encountered nothing to lament in your daily life. This time, please believe that your good fortune will increase, as the sea tide swells and as the moon waxes full, and that you will lengthen and you will be reborn on Eagle Peak.

Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the ninth month

Reply presented to Toki

Background

Nichiren Daishonin was forty-nine years old when he wrote this letter from Kamakura on the twenty-sixth day of the ninth month in 1270 to Toki Jōnin. Having heard from Toki that he had fashioned an image of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Daishonin praises him, suggesting that this must be the Buddha of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which had never yet been revealed. He urges Toki to quickly have the eye-opening ceremony per-
formed and to enshrine the image. He also assures Toki that his actions will enable him to reach Eagle Peak in his next existence.

“The Buddha of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which since time without beginning had never been revealed” is actually what the Daishonin later embodied in the mandala known as the Gohonzon. But here the Daishonin says the statue made by Toki Jōnin represents that Buddha. The Daishonin’s intention may have been not only to encourage his disciple, but also to teach him the true concept of the Buddha.

The words “The Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings” refer to “the Buddha of three thousand realms in a single moment of life,” and the words “In truth the time since I attained Buddhahood [is extremely long]” refer to “[the Buddha] since time without beginning.” The Daishonin cites these passages from the Lotus Sutra to clarify his concept of the Buddha.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. Ibid., chap. 16.
3. Nitchō (1252–1317), Toki Jōnin’s adopted son, who would later be designated by Nichiren Daishonin as one of the six senior priests.