

Letter to Five Followers in Prison



For all five of you

Nichiren

WHATEVER happens, please have the young priest stay with you. I say this because it is a pity that Shirō¹ should be all alone.

On the seventh day of this month I am to leave for the province of Sado. Because all of you are reading the entire Lotus Sutra with your lives, this will bring benefit to you as well as to your parents and your brothers and sisters, both living and dead. Concerning the cold this evening, there is no way I can tell you how painful it is to me as I keep thinking, not about myself, but about all of you. If you have been

released from prison, you must be sure to come to Sado in the spring of next year. Let us meet again!

It will be a shame upon you until the day you die if not one of you thinks it inconsiderate to want to have Shō's only son stay with you.²

Also, I have various instructions for Āchārya Daishin. And I will have him remain in Kamakura to make sure of your safety. I will write to you in more detail without fail.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The third day of the tenth month

To all five of you



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the third day of the tenth month in 1271, three weeks after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. He was being held under guard at Homma Rokurō Saemon's estate in Echi of Sagami Province after surviving an execution attempt at Tatsunokuchi. It was during his stay in Sagami that the shogunate decided he should be exiled to Sado Island. The Daishonin sent this letter

to five of his followers who had been arrested and imprisoned in an earthen cave in Kamakura. The five followers are thought to have been Nichirō, later designated one of the six senior priests by the Daishonin, Nisshin, the lay priest Sakabe, the lay priest Izawa, and the lay priest Tokugyō-ji. The Daishonin informs them that the date of his departure for Sado Island has been set and assures them that their reading the

Lotus Sutra with their lives will benefit not only them, but also their parents and siblings. He commiserates with them on the nighttime cold of their

prison in early winter, and looks forward to a reunion on Sado upon their release.

Notes

1. Shirō is thought to have been a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin, but no details

about him are known.

2. No details concerning Shō are known.