

## Reply to Abutsu-bō



I HAVE carefully considered the contents of your letter.

The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment has said, “Birth, aging, sickness, and death; birth, abiding, change, and extinction.”

I have already undergone birth, and sixty years have now passed. And without doubt I have undergone aging as well. All that is left for me are the two terms “sickness” and “death.”

Since the first month until the first of this, the sixth, month, day after day this sickness has never once gone away.

Death doubtless awaits me.

The sutra says, “Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana.”<sup>1</sup> If then I can cast off this poison body and take on a diamond body, what cause could there be for lamenting?

Nichiren

The third day of the sixth month in the third year of Kenji [1277], cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

To Abutsu-bō



### Background

Abutsu-bō, a devoted follower of Nichiren Daishonin in Sado, had apparently written a letter expressing concern over the Daishonin’s deteriorating health. In reply, the Daishonin shares his attitude toward the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death, which everyone must face. He says, “Death doubtless

awaits me.” At death, he declares, he will discard this body, which is subject to the “poison” of earthly desires and suffering, and take on the indestructible “diamond body” of Buddhahood. Therefore, he concludes, “What cause could there be for lamenting?”

### Note

1. Nirvana Sutra.