

Repairing the Hermitage



ON the seventeenth day of the sixth month of the eleventh year of Bun'ei [1274], we cut down trees and built a temporary hermitage here in the mountains. But now nearly four years have passed, and the pillars have rotted and the fence and walls fallen in. They go unrepaired, and so even when no fire is lit at night, I read the sacred scriptures by the light of the moon, and even when I fail to rewind the sutra scrolls, the wind itself blows them back into place.

This year the twelve pillars tilted their heads in four directions and the

four walls tumbled down all at once. Because as an ordinary person dependent on other things for my existence I can barely survive, I have been praying that the moon stays bright and the rain stops. Because there are no men who do heavy labor, I have been urging my disciples who are here for study to make repairs. Because we ran out of food, we have been keeping ourselves alive with snow. And therefore the two horseloads of taros I received earlier from Ueno, and your one horseload, are more precious than jewels.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in 1277, when he was fifty-six years old. It is thought that he sent it to someone who was related to Nanjō Tokimitsu, also known as Ueno. The Daishonin describes the condition of his mountain quarters in detail and thanks his follower for his offering. The Daishonin's dwelling, built in the sixth month of 1274, when he entered

Mount Minobu, has become decrepit, he writes. As there is no one to do the heavy labor involved in rebuilding, he says that he must depend on his disciples, but now food has run out, making the situation dire indeed. Thus, he says, the offerings of taros made by Ueno and the recipient of this letter are more precious to him than jewels.