

Reply to the Wife of Nanjō



I HAVE received the two sacks of rice that you sent. I do not know how to thank you for your repeated gestures of kindness.

When the cold weather piles up, water turns to ice. When snow accumulates year after year, it turns to crystal. When evil piles up, one is destined for hell; when good piles up, one becomes a Buddha.

In the case of a woman, if jealousy piles up, she will turn into a poisonous snake. But if she gains repeated merit through offerings to the Lotus Sutra, then how can she fail to follow in the wake of the dragon king's daughter?

There are the mountains, the rivers, the horses, the men to attend them—the difficulties are so many, yet again and again you show your kindness by these gifts—how can I thank you?

The one who was ailing had correct faith at the time of death. Without doubt she has gone to the pure land of Eagle Peak. There can be no doubt about it.

Nichiren

The twenty-fourth day of the fifth month

Letter in reply



Background

This letter dated the twenty-fourth day of the fifth month is considered to have been written at Minobu in 1278. It is a reply to the wife of Nanjō Tokimitsu, one of Nichiren Daishonin's leading lay followers, who sent him the offering of two sacks of rice.

The Daishonin expresses gratitude for her repeated offerings and support. Citing the examples of water freezing with increasing cold, or snow piling up and turning to crystal, a common belief at the time, he emphasizes that repeated actions, evil or good, accumu-

late in one's life and lead one respectively to the state of hell or Buddhahood. The wife's merit of making offerings to the Lotus Sutra will enable her to attain Buddhahood. Finally, he mentions that the daughter of an older sister of Nanjō Tokimitsu who married Ishikawa no Hyōe died of illness, but was firm in her faith, and he declares that there is no doubt that she attained Buddhahood. Ishikawa was the steward of Omosu in Fuji District in Suruga Province.