

397. Hulled Wheat

HOW grateful I was for your wife's visit, something I had not imagined while awake or in dreams! It was an act of the greatest kindness. And taros at this time of year¹ are as rare as bamboo shoots in winter—as rare, in fact, as summertime snow!

Background

The year and recipient of this letter are unknown, but the woman who visited Nichiren Daishonin with offerings of food apparently lived in a place not very distant from where he was staying. The Daishonin is especially pleased

I have duly received one sack of hulled wheat, one basket of taros, and two bamboo shoots that you sent.

The twenty-eighth day of the fifth month

with her gift of taros, which he says are as rare as “bamboo shoots in winter” or snow in summer. From the nature of the offerings it seems that the Daishonin resided at Minobu at the time.

Note

1. The date of this letter, the end of the fifth month in the old lunar calendar, would correspond to late June or early July

by today's calendar. Taros are usually harvested in autumn.



398. Reply to Sadashige

AS I have stated many times before, the scholars in the world today assert that they have studied the Buddhist doctrines and acquired wisdom. But their whole lifetime is wasted, passed in a dream, as it were, simply because they fail to understand “this one great reason.” You should be abso-

lutely clear on this point, absolutely clear! Take care, take care.

Nichiren

The twentieth day of the twelfth month

Reply to Sadashige

Background

Addressed to a believer named Sadashige, this letter bears no year but is thought to have been written at Minobu in 1276. Little is known about the recipient. The “one great reason” is a phrase from the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, where it refers to the reason why the Bud-

dhas appear in the world, namely, to cause living beings to acquire the Buddha wisdom. In other writings Nichiren Daishonin identifies this “one great reason” with the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and his reference to it here suggests Sadashige's deep knowledge of Buddhism.