

Letter of Condolence



WITH regard to the news of the demise of Nanjō Shichirō Gorō: Once a person is born that person must die—wise men and foolish, eminent and lowly alike all know this to be a fact. Therefore one should not be grieved and alarmed by a person's death; I know it to be so and teach others to do likewise. And yet when something like this actually happens, I wonder if it is not a dream or an illusion.

And how much greater must be the grief of the mother! She had lost her parents, her siblings, and even her beloved husband had preceded her in death, but still she had her many children to comfort her heart. Yet now her youngest child, her darling, a son, surpassing others in features and form, devoted in heart, in whom his associates took such delight—now all at once he has been taken away, like a budding flower that withers in the wind or a full moon that is suddenly lost from sight.

I can scarcely believe that such a thing has happened, and cannot even think of what words to write, though there is much more that I would say.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixth day of the ninth month
in the third year of Kōan [1280]

Reply to Ueno

POSTSCRIPT: When I met him on the fifteenth day of the sixth month, I thought what a fine and spirited lad he was. How it grieves me to think I will never see him again! Nevertheless, he had devoted himself to Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, and he died in a fitting manner. I know that in heart he has gone to join his father in the pure land of Eagle Peak, where they will clasp hands and face one another in joy. How splendid, how splendid!



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter of condolence on the death of Nanjō Shichirō Gorō, the youngest brother of Nanjō Tokimitsu, to the Nanjō family

on the sixth day of the ninth month in 1280. It expresses his sympathy and sense of loss, while consoling the mother of the deceased young man.

LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

Though everyone knows that death is inevitable, he says, the mother's grief at the death of her beloved son Gorō is indescribable. The Daishonin's deep concern for her sorrow is seen in a number of letters he sent her over the

ensuing months. Shichirō Gorō had never known his father, Hyōe Shichirō, who had died before he was born, and hence the Daishonin's description of their joyful first encounter at Eagle Peak.