

## **General Director Fred M. Zaitso What Is The Best Way For Us To Grow?**

My heartiest wishes for a happy and healthy new year! I am looking forward to working with you as we individually and collectively make important strides this year. In the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century I hope each of us will grow in faith and expand our lives.

I believe one of the most important meanings of *advancement* is to resolve to grow as human beings. Philosophers agree that the spirit to continually learn, expand our viewpoints and polish our characters leads to a life of satisfaction and fulfillment.

What is the best way for us to grow? Buddhism teaches that a life of contributing to others is the noblest and, in the end, happiest life. As SGI President Ikeda says, “To do, create, or contribute something that benefits others, society and ourselves, and to dedicate ourselves as long as we live to that challenge — that is a life of true satisfaction, a life of value.”

On the other hand, when we focus only on our own problems, it is easy to become discouraged and lose the life force to overcome them. To expand our lives to care about others as if they were our own children, is the way of the bodhisattva, the loftiest way of life.

This kind of growth can be painful. Fortunately, we all practice in an organization full of people willing to help us along the way. And nowhere is this love and support more evident than in the districts. The relationships formed among district members are some of the most beautiful and lasting ones I know of.

The district is at the heart of our organization. It is here that we can learn to love and care for others. Here we learn a compassionate spirit that we can take back with us to school, work or our families. I hope that this year, more than ever, the members of each division will make the district their top priority.

Relationships aren't always smooth within the district, however, for a variety of reasons. One is our diversity, which will be one of our top challenges this year. I and the national divisional chiefs will be meeting monthly with the Diversity Committee formed last year. I hope that each of us can begin or continue to learn about racial, ethnic and lifestyle issues in our areas through dialogue. To support that dialogue, this issue of the *World Tribune* contains a special pullout reprinting some of my thoughts based on President Ikeda's view of diversity. With strong prayer, mutual respect, courage and honesty, the SGI-USA must lead the way in supporting diversity.

The SGI-USA is the hope of our nation. Each of you is a precious Bodhisattva of the Earth, destined to bring the light of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings to your communities. Based on our advancement as individuals, let us make this new year something special, always remembering President Ikeda's guidance that “a Buddha is somebody who continues to fight, continues to grow.”

With my prayers for your health, happiness, prosperity and safety, I wish you the happiest of new years.

**WT**