

**GENERAL DIRECTOR'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE**  
**Be An Example of Victory**

**BY FRED M. ZAITSU**  
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Turning the calendar to the first day of the first month of a new year is a time to take stock and make plans.

In so doing, I first want to thank each of you for the efforts you've made in past years to advance our movement of peace, culture and education in this country. I am especially appreciative of the great efforts you all made last year toward our geographic reorganization. Thanks to you, the SGI-USA is now more rooted in communities across the United States.

And now as we look ahead to this year, the Year of Victory of the People for the New Century, our aim must be to foster a true victory in our lives as outlined in the three focal points we adopted this year. As you may recall, they are to have happy members; to nurture and develop the youth; and to strengthen our families.

It's one thing to think of these challenges as slogans and agree with them. It is an entirely different matter to make them a reality. How do we do that? What steps should we take?

This holiday season has given me an insight on that question. The holiday season begins with Thanksgiving and is the busiest travel period of the year. It is a time when people converge from all corners of America and the world to join family and friends for dinner. Children and grandparents. Cousins, uncles and aunts. Neighbors and best friends come together, sit across a table from one another and share their laughter and tears, their accomplishments and disappointments.

The many celebrations each year provide opportunities to repeat the experience of connectedness. In some parts of America, I understand that traditional meals are prepared as a way to celebrate the new year. In Japan, it is a tradition to give gifts on New Year's. Family members, perhaps for the only time in the year, sit down together in one place at one time and share. Perhaps one way to focus on our goals for the year would be to create as many opportunities as possible to have such conversations among our families, friends and neighbors.

This year my wife and I experienced a holiday season with one son out of the country and another son out of state. And as our children (who are no longer children) go about establishing their lives, the chances are we may not be together during subsequent holidays. We are aware that we can't wait for the holiday season but must seek opportunities to maintain our connectedness. Seeking connectedness, after all, is the legacy of our organization.

When I think of this, the bonds that were formed between President Makiguchi and President Toda come to mind. And from the first time Mr. Toda met Daisaku Ikeda, he began to foster and raise the 19-year-old young man as if he were his own son.

On Jan. 2, SGI President Ikeda celebrates his 70th birthday. Yet his life, years after the death of his mentor, continues to resonate with the seeds planted through their deep "family" connection. This spirit was eloquently articulated by Federico Mayor, the director-general of UNESCO, when he said: "Nothing can replace the friendly words of a teacher, or the caresses and smiles of parents. The only real education is education by example...and love." In other words, as Nichiren Daishonin states, "Treasures of the heart

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are the most valuable of all” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238).

To achieve this connectedness in our organization, I am depending on the passion and growth of our youth as the driving force. If we sincerely believe that each young person is part of our “family,” I am also convinced that we will foster amazing youth eager to play their roles in the new century. If we do our work, we will, with great satisfaction and relief, be able to look into the eyes of our youth confident that the future is indeed in good hands!

“This is the era of youth,” says President Ikeda. “Youth do not depend on anyone. Nor do they hang on someone else’s coattails. ‘I will open the way forward myself. I will advance kosen-rufu. I will see to it that the SGI is victorious.’ This is the spirit of youth and the attitude of true successors who love and cherish the SGI.... Therefore I call on the youth of the SGI: Advance! Surpass your seniors! Accomplish kosen-rufu!”

I am convinced that we will achieve all our goals when we solidify the basics of our practice — abundant daimoku, practice for oneself and others, and a seeking mind to continually learn. At the last Headquarters Leaders Meeting of 1997, President Ikeda left us this motto: “Let’s advance joyfully with the spirit to exert ourselves bravely and vigorously for kosen-rufu.”

As we look forward to the days, weeks and months of 1998, I extend to each and every one of you and your family members my best wishes for a Happy New Year!

**WT**