

## MAY 3 FOREVER

*SGI President Ikeda gave this speech at the 21st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, held at the Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, April 20.*

**In his speech marking May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, President Ikeda says that continuing undaunted toward the goal of kosen-rufu — the happiness of the people — is what's most important.**

I'd like all of you to sit back, relax and make yourselves right at home as I speak. There is no need for formality or pretentiousness at Gakkai gatherings.

Earlier today, a scholar in the United States, having heard that we would be holding this leaders meeting to commemorate May 3, sent me a congratulatory fax. He cited these words of Socrates: "There is no other possession that can compare with a good friend." Yes, friends are indeed the greatest treasure.

Also quoted was the French author Romain Rolland (1866– 1944): "True greatness is shown in this power of rejoicing through joy and sorrow." A truly great person can advance with joy under any circumstances.

The Soka Gakkai's goal is kosen-rufu — realizing human happiness and world peace by widely spreading the philosophy and ideals of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We will continue to strive earnestly for this goal, undaunted by criticism, slander or malicious attempts to hinder our progress. That is because what we are doing is the will and decree of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. I proclaim that all who energetically exert themselves for the cause of kosen-rufu are genuine disciples of the Daishonin and genuine members of the SGI.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's guidance was always extremely strict concerning believers who failed to undertake practical activities for kosen-rufu, including those whose families had belonged to the temple's lay organization for generations. Once when discussing the kind of faith that is devoid of action or inconsistent with the Daishonin's teachings, Mr. Toda declared:

A person with such faith is like a cat that sneaks into the kitchen and eats the leftoverscraps of someone's dinner. With such faith, it will be possible to obtain the great benefit of enlightenment or lasting happiness. It is robber faith — lowly, self-centered and base.

He used the term robber faith to describe the faith of those who, though they had the good fortune to encounter the Gohonzon and hear about the Daishonin's teachings, used the Soka Gakkai for selfish ends, doing everything they could to avoid persecution, hardship or criticism, playing it safe, protecting themselves at all costs.

President Toda, as I said, was strict. If he caught a young person in a lie, he would thunder: "Since when have you become a liar? Is that any way for a youth to behave?!" Even Mr. Toda's son once exclaimed in surprise, "When my father goes to the Gakkai Headquarters, he's blasting people from morning till night!" What an exacting taskmaster he was.

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## **Sadness at Treachery**

I dedicated my youth and my life entirely for the sake of the Soka Gakkai and the cause of kosen-rufu. Setting aside all personal ambition, I wholeheartedly served my mentor, Mr. Toda.

And, if I may say so, as president of our movement, I worked together with all of you to make material contributions to the priesthood and the head temple of a quantity and quality unprecedented in the 700-year history of the Daishonin's Buddhism. We also worked together in Japan, you and I, despite great hardships and obstacles, to launch many individuals into the political arena. This was out of concern for the peace, security and prosperity of the country.

Unfortunately, many people have betrayed us. I know that many of you share the same sadness and regret as I at their treachery. Nevertheless, I can declare with confidence that each of you who bravely exerts yourself in doing Gakkai activities and taking leadership for kosen-rufu, calmly overcoming every obstacle along the way, will enjoy immeasurable benefit. I can state with certitude, too, that each of you is in perfect accord with the Daishonin's spirit. Your efforts win his unrestrained applause and approval.

What a contrast this is to those who have betrayed and sold out their mentor for base profit and gain!

The most noble and respectable are the true followers of Nichiren Daishonin, those who are committed to the path of faith equals life, and life as an expression of Buddhism. In other words, all of you.

Moreover, you have been the driving force behind the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism to more than a hundred countries. In the 3,000-year history of Buddhism, you are the only ones to have achieved the wide propagation of the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. It is an immortal accomplishment. I hope you will regard this as your greatest source of pride.

## **No One Mentioned World Peace**

Not many people know this, but first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi once taught at what is today's Shibaura Institute of Technology in Tokyo. From April to October 1938, one day a week, he taught an ethics class in the Department of Applied Chemistry at the Tokyo Higher Technical School, as the institute was then known.

When introducing Mr. Makiguchi to his students, the educational affairs director said: "Mr. Makiguchi is a great educator. I advise you to study intently and not miss a single word he has to say!" Mr. Makiguchi discussed the relative strengths and weaknesses of Eastern and Western ethics and confidently offered insightful perspectives on ethics.

That April, when Mr. Makiguchi began his lectures, the National Mobilization Law was promulgated, enlisting all citizens to work toward Japan's war effort. Almost overnight, the entire country was geared for war. The Japanese army was continuing its atrocities in China, and its "sworn allies" the Germans were preparing to launch their Jewish genocide. Nevertheless, Mr. Makiguchi pointed out to his students, who despised and denigrated China, how erroneous and misguided their prejudice was.

Mr. Makiguchi always dressed formally in a traditional kimono and stood with a dignified posture. On the final exam, there was only one question: "What is the purpose of life?" Out of the possible grades of excellent, good and fair, all the students were graded good. Mr. Makiguchi had been stern in class, but in grading his students he was very generous, always thinking of his students' future.

Here, I think, we see the heart of a true educator. But it's interesting that no one received a mark of excellent. Why was that? In explaining this to the students, Mr. Makiguchi said

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with a disappointed expression: “It’s because there was not one person who mentioned world peace on the exam.”

How frustrated he must have been! “Don’t you know the concept of world peace? That’s what I wanted to teach you. That’s what I hoped you’d write about in your answer!” — we can surmise that his feelings were something like this.

The Daishonin’s Buddhism is concerned with the whole world, with eternity. Mr. Makiguchi’s focus was the same. What is the purpose of life? Mr. Makiguchi believed that one’s life must encompass a commitment to world peace. This he wished to teach.

At a time when the entire Japanese nation was advancing down the path of nationalism, Mr. Makiguchi urged his young students to dedicate their lives to bringing a lasting peace to the entire world. What a remarkable teacher he was.

Because Mr. Makiguchi and his disciple, Mr. Toda, were people of such immense caliber, tiny, parochial Japan with its equally small-minded mentality didn’t know how to deal with them. Japan tried to get rid of them by throwing them into prison.

Unchanged to this day, the Soka Gakkai’s focus remains on the world, on eternity. Let us serenely extend the glorious path of value-creation to all corners of the globe, emulating the spirit of the Daishonin, who put Japan and the military government of his day into proper perspective when he described them as the “rulers of this little island country” (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 176).

To all our fellow SGI members gathered today from around the globe, comrades from the distant past: Please accept my warmest welcome. Thank you for your extraordinary efforts. How overjoyed the Daishonin would be to see you, noble Bodhisattvas of the Earth from all parts of the world!

Welcome also to the members of the arts division.

And let me further extend my deepest appreciation to our uncrowned heroes, the deliverers of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper, representatives of whom are present today. You are the truest, most steadfast heroes of faith. Thank you for your hard work and day-to-day efforts.

Delivering newspapers is the most laborious work. Many shun it. Yet, you, our deliverers, have happily volunteered to take on this onerous task for the sake of *kosen-rufu*. How admirable and precious each of you is! Because you are up and active from early in the morning, you are healthier by far than others. You begin each day in a fresh, vigorous state of life. I reiterate my deepest gratitude for all your tireless efforts.

Today, incidentally, is the 47th anniversary of the first issue of *Seikyo Shimbun*.

### **The Timid Doom Themselves**

The Daishonin always had a vast, all-encompassing view of the world and humanity, and always manifested an immense state of life that seemed to embrace the entire planet from the height of the heavenly constellations. This is an important point. This is why he could calmly look on the sound and fury of Japan as something infinitesimally small and insignificant.

He further declared that all the base, craven individuals whose incorrigible disbelief prevented them from taking faith in the Mystic Law and caused them to slander Buddhism had proliferated to the point that they became the people of this tiny island country. He asserted that Japan resembled a land where all the people from throughout the universe who had committed any of the five cardinal sins had converged.

In “Letter from Sado,” Nichiren Daishonin writes, “The slanderers of Buddhism who were people of incorrigible disbelief...proliferated until they became the people of Japan today” (MW-1, 38). And in “Letter to Horen,” he observes, “It is as though all the persons

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throughout the worlds of the ten directions who are guilty of committing any of the five cardinal sins [killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, injuring a Buddha and causing disunity among believers] were to be gathered together in a single spot" (MW-7, 120).

The people of Japan have gone through history meekly obeying the dictates of the ruling elite, never developing true religious faith. Wars have been waged at the slightest provocation, and people of moral integrity and conviction have been constantly targeted for persecution. This has been the norm. It was to begin his mission for the happiness and peace of all humanity from this most woeful of countries that Nichiren Daishonin was born here.

In a letter dated May 1279, the Daishonin writes:

Only I, of all the 4,994,828 men and women in Japan, am thought strange, and the other 4,994,827 persons all regard me as their enemy.... They curse and strike me, drive me away, and, by resorting to slander, cause me to be sentenced to exile or execution. It is the way of the world that the poor fawn upon the rich, the lowly revere the eminent, and the few follow the many. So even those persons who chanced to put their faith in the Lotus Sutra are intimidated by society and fear others, and many of them fall into hell. This is most pitiful. (MW-7, 152)

Those who abandon their practice after the slightest criticism or attack are not people of genuine faith. There is nothing more foolish or shortsighted than abandoning faith.

President Toda declared sternly: "We don't need people like that to stay in the Gakkai. Cowards are just a hindrance to our movement." Today's Soka Gakkai was built by people who, just as Mr. Toda strictly instructed, carried through with never regressing faith amid many tough struggles over the years.

Please, never turn your back on your faith.

Courage is crucial. There is no room for faintheartedness in faith. The timid doom themselves to ridicule — from their partners, from their children, from their friends, from the world at large.

The Daishonin declares that there is no place for cowards among his disciples. President Toda said the same thing.

In "Teaching, Practice and Proof," the Daishonin writes, "Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly" (MW-4, 128).

And I am absolutely confident that there is not a single coward among the SGI members. President Toda used to proudly boast, "As long as I'm here and I have two or three genuine disciples, I know that, even should all those who are fainthearted abandon their faith, we can still build a monumental Soka Gakkai at any time." I know well what he meant when he said this.

### **An Even Stronger Reaction**

The Soka Gakkai is carrying out activities, is striving for kosen-rufu, in exact accord with the Daishonin's teachings. So, as in the Daishonin's time, we are subject to attack and opposition. It stands to reason.

The Lotus Sutra explicitly states that practitioners of the Mystic Law will encounter persecution, warning that they will be cursed and spoken ill of, that hatred and jealousy toward them will be even more intense after the Buddha's passing. It proclaims that even during Shakyamuni's lifetime, resentment and ill-feeling toward practitioners were rife.

It is only natural that this reaction will be even stronger and persecution even harsher in

the defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law.

The “Encouraging Devotion” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “There will be many ignorant people / who will curse and speak ill of us” (The Lotus Sutra, p. 193). And “The Teacher of the Law” chapter states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing” (The Lotus Sutra, p. 164).

The Daishonin repeatedly points out in his writings that he alone has been cursed and maligned for upholding the Mystic Law, that he alone has been attacked and persecuted by the authorities, and that, but for him, the Lotus Sutra’s prophecy would have been a lie.

In “The Opening of the Eyes,” the Daishonin writes: “Look around you in the world today — are there any priests other than Nichiren who are cursed and vilified because of the Lotus Sutra or who are attacked with swords and staves? If it were not for Nichiren, the prophecy made in this verse of the sutra [in the ‘Encouraging Devotion’ chapter] would have been sheer falsehood” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 100).

During the Daishonin’s day, Kamakura, the seat of government, as well as the rest of the country, was filled with priests of all conceivable Buddhist schools. Their number was huge. However, as the Daishonin says, not a single one was defamed or repressed like he was for practicing Buddhism in exact accord with the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni’s teaching. I hope that you will all ponder deeply the profound significance of this.

In his famous letter “The Selection of the Time,” the Daishonin states:

In China and Japan in the past, sages of outstanding wisdom and ability have from time to time appeared. But none, as an ally of the Lotus Sutra, has faced such powerful enemies within his country as have I, Nichiren. From the facts present before your very eyes, it should be apparent that Nichiren is the foremost person in the entire world. (MW-3, 161–62)

As direct disciples of the Daishonin, we have summoned forth the three powerful enemies of Buddhism. And defeating their schemes and repelling their onslaughts, we have carved out a great path of kosen-rufu.

This has been the unrivaled pride of Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda and myself as Soka Gakkai presidents. It is indisputable proof that the Soka Gakkai is the foremost organization in the entire world acting in accord with the Buddha’s will and decree.

### **Never Conceding Deadlock**

Attending today’s meeting are family members and relatives of President Makiguchi and President Toda. Thank you all for joining us.

Even during relentless interrogation sessions with prosecutors for the Special Higher Police, Mr. Makiguchi refused to be intimidated in prison. He kept his spirit to refute erroneous beliefs and to state the case of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, boldly telling the truth as it was and calling for a return to reason and justice.

Those who know what those times were like can appreciate the courage that this must have taken. According to the transcripts, Mr. Makiguchi gave the following response to a question on what kind of teaching the Lotus Sutra was:

Contrary to what many believe, Buddhism was not created by Shakyamuni Buddha. The Law is without beginning or end — extending from the infinite past without beginning and to the eternal future without end — and it is always in motion, unceasingly activating all phenomena in the universe. Acting in rhythm with this Law is Buddhism,

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is the Mystic Law.

Holding fast to Nichiren Daishonin's immortal life philosophy, Mr. Makiguchi fought to the end of his days with vibrant, burning conviction. This spirit never to concede defeat or deadlock — this is the heart of the Mystic Law and the essence of faith.

In response to another question on the relationship between the Constitution of the Empire of Japan and the great Law of the Lotus Sutra, Mr. Makiguchi stated succinctly:

The teaching of the Lotus Sutra is the great, underlying Law of the universe. It pervades the three existences of past, present and future, and is absolute and unchanging, eternal through the ages.

Fundamentally different from secular legal codes or structures that may be revised and abolished over time, it sets forth an everlasting model of behavior for humankind. Consequently, should humankind or nations go against this great Law, it would constitute an offense of the gravest kind. Serious consequences in accord with the workings of cause and effect will follow without fail.

What a courageous statement! What indomitable confidence he exuded!

I hope that you will always speak the truth boldly, saying what needs to be said, no matter whom you're addressing. When it comes to championing a just cause, you must never be cowardly, never fawn, never try to curry favor.

A nation that acts against the great Law and persecutes people of virtue and wisdom, people who are referred to in the Daishonin's writings as "sages and worthies," invites ruin. In light of the formula elucidated by the Daishonin, we can perceive the reality of the present and predict the future developments of such a nation. Japan today is a good example. Having attacked the correct teaching, it is on a steady path to decline. It has become a country without promise, without prospects for the future.

Though confined to a tiny, solitary prison cell, Mr. Makiguchi continued to declare the truth and the greatness of Buddhism until the last moment of his life. He cried out for the world to base itself on Buddhist humanism and pacifism, to transcend narrow-minded chauvinism and nationalism. He called for humankind to unite in a spirit of harmony and cooperation.

### **Toward Next May 3**

The Daishonin clearly proclaimed, "It is certain that kosen-rufu will eventually be achieved throughout the entire world" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 816). Seven hundred years went by.

Then, on May 3, 1951, under glorious skies, Mr. Toda was inaugurated the second president of the Soka Gakkai, an organization which has inherited the Daishonin's true spirit. On that same date, May 3, in 1960, I became the third president at age 32. I fearlessly and confidently embarked on leading our movement forward toward the realization of worldwide kosen-rufu. In the 38 years since, I have worked together with fellow members around the world and made the Daishonin's prophecy a reality.

The SGI has solidly opened the noble path of worldwide kosen-rufu, initiating the construction work on this noble undertaking. What, by contrast, has the Nikken sect achieved? It has done nothing but try to block the path of kosen-rufu and destroy all efforts to widely promote the Daishonin's teachings.

The stage is now set for the youth division members to make brilliant contributions to our movement in the 21st century. My life has been dedicated to preparing the way for

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those who follow. I firmly believe that the youth division's unity and growth will usher in a bright era in the next century. The SGI will come into its own.

The Daishonin declares, "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity" (MW-4, 272). For the SGI, May 3 will forever remain a day of fresh departure. It is a milestone from which we set out with courage and joy on a victorious, unending journey toward the future, ten millennia hence, into eternity. This will continue to be so.

Aiming toward next May 3, let us begin afresh our efforts from today.

By the way, allow me to introduce Dr. Setsu Kobayashi of Tokyo's prestigious Keio University, and his wife, Yumiko, who are attending today as special guests. I thank them both for joining us.

### **Let Our Bond Be Even Firmer**

A scholar in Europe also sent a congratulatory message for today's meeting. He cites the poem "Hermann and Dorothea" by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749– 1832), which stresses the importance of unity in a time of upheaval:

*Then let our bond...be so much the firmer in all this  
General chaos; let us endure and continue and hold fast  
To each other, and fast to the fine possessions we have here.  
For in an unstable time, if a man himself is unstable  
He will increase the unrest and spread it further and further*

The congratulatory message also contained a quote from the American poet and thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803– 82): "Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart! ... there is victory yet for all justice...."

I have received words of support and encouragement from all over the world. In another message, a well-wisher cited Goethe: "For what else constitutes barbarism than failing to recognize excellence?" There was also a quote from The Social Contract by French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78): "Base minds do not believe in great men." And another by Goethe: "I refuse to say another word about the negative attacks on me, lest I myself grow foolish from wrestling with foolishness!"

My dearest, dearest fellow members! Let's rise with the dynamic force of lions, exerting ourselves with courage to win the challenges that lie ahead with confidence and composure. And let's all strive to stay in good health and gather together in high spirits on May 3 next year. I am praying for your health and good fortune and for your magnificent endeavors.

Thank you.

**WT**