

PUBLISHER'S COMMENTARY
VICTORY THROUGH TRUST AND FRIENDSHIP
BY FRED M. ZAITSU

I WISH every one of our readers and fellow SGI-USA members the happiest of New Year's, and thank each of you for your support and efforts, which have resulted in a meaningful and fulfilling 1998.

As we enter the new year, more and more people are becoming overwhelmed by fear of what might happen with the close of the millennium. The issues of warfare and political conflict face our country at this moment, but amid the turmoil, we possess an extraordinary light of hope. That light is Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, our faith in it, and this wonderful organization of the SGI.

In November 1998, I had the memorable experience of participating in the SGI Fall Training Course in Nagoya, Japan. The highlight of this course, for me, was the 18th World Peace Youth Culture Festival held at the huge Nagoya Dome. Spanning two days, with 100,000 total participants, the truly amazing thing was that 20,000 young people took complete responsibility for all performances, behind-the-scenes planning and operations. There was incredible energy and passion, the kind that only youth can create.

There were many new members and many teenagers, as well as those in their early 20s. Some had wildly colored hair or body piercings—it was wonderful to see all these different types of individuals. The energy, freshness and seeking spirit of these young people—most of them, as I mentioned, new members—convinced me that the statement by the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, that “the new century will be created by the passion and power of youth” is today becoming a tangible reality.

Witnessing this, I resolved to work harder to make our organization all the more attractive and embracing for the youth of today. I feel that fostering the next generation is the most important challenge for the twenty-first century. I also strongly sense that this is why SGI President Ikeda has declared that he is dedicating the remainder of his life to the task of education, for education is the process of raising and empowering youth.

This year, 1999, has been designated in the SGI the Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century. Victory, I feel, does not mean beating someone else at something, but rather to challenge and win over ourselves—over our own weaknesses—and to win trust by becoming people of the highest integrity and humanity. All in all, to win a victory in the community means to become people who are indispensable to and appreciated by our families, at work, in our neighborhoods and among our fellow SGI members.

Nichiren Daishonin often quoted the passage by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai that reads, “No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality.” If we take “ultimate reality” to mean the Gohonzon or the Law itself, then, as President Toda often said, we should cherish our work and our daily affairs and responsibilities as much as we cherish the Gohonzon. To deepen our sense of responsibility and self-challenge in these areas is a cause for growth and good fortune, and will engender trust.

Of course, chanting daimoku and participating in SGI-USA activities are great sources of unbeatable courage and confidence. And when our lives shine with courage and confidence, we can inspire hope in the hearts of our friends, colleagues and acquaintances. In addition, I am convinced that when we consistently pray with the resolve—“I want to share this wonderful practice and philosophy with someone. I want to help even one more person live a better life!”—we will discover the wisdom and courage to reach people's hearts. As I con-

tinue to chant daimoku with this prayer, I feel this desire and awareness becoming ever more deeply ingrained in my life. As a result, I find myself making friends more easily and sensing more naturally the right time and the best way to discuss Buddhism with them. Nichiren Daishonin describes the greatest kind of friend as one who leads another toward the Mystic Law and thus gives that person the opportunity to sever the bonds of karma and suffering, and to lead a life of hope and fulfillment.

Though removed from them by great distances, Nichiren Daishonin never forgot about his friends, and throughout his life, corresponded with and encouraged them with the utmost warmth and sincerity.

And today, President Ikeda is setting for us an excellent example in becoming the best of friends with those he meets, never forgetting them or allowing the human bond he has formed with them to weaken.

I, too, will challenge myself through prayer and action to become a trusted friend to all of you, so that together, as individuals and as an organization, we can become the most cherished and trusted members of our communities.

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