

## **SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S LATEST SPEECH THE SOKA GAKKAI SPIRIT: TO GIVE ONE'S ALL**

Thank you so much for traveling here in such cold weather! Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Do not spend this life in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 173). These are immortal words.

As human beings, it is inevitable that we experience regrets of one kind or another in the course of our lives. We are bound to have some regrets. That is part of being human. That is part of life.

Many people live in pursuit of position or wealth. Perhaps as a result, most of humankind does exactly what the Daishonin warns against and "spends this life in vain, regretting it for all eternity."

In contrast, we, the courageous champions of kosen-rufu, live in such a way that we have no regrets — we advance unswervingly toward life's true goal, committed to the pursuit of real, lasting happiness. A life of no regrets: This is what the Daishonin teaches. How to live such an unsurpassed life: This is what we of the SGI are teaching the world. Let us advance with joy, confidence and courage in this knowledge.

No effort is wasted in Buddhism. Our work, our daily lives — all undertakings are Buddhism. If our efforts are based on faith, they will be transformed without exception into benefit.

I'm sure that many of you here today are extremely busy and have various challenges on your hands. Yet you have made the time and effort to attend this Buddhist meeting. The benefit you are accumulating as a result is immense. You are advancing on the path of the supreme Law.

All our efforts for kosen-rufu — even if they sometimes seem in vain, even if they are a struggle — have great meaning and value for our lives. They steer us in a positive direction. This is the power of faith.

### **Nichiren Daishonin teaches us to stand firm against evil.**

As a poet myself, please allow me to share the words of some renowned poets.

The English poet and playwright William Shakespeare notes: "Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile: / Filths savour but themselves" (*King Lear*, Act 4, Scene 2).

The Scottish poet James Thomson writes, "Ingratitude is treason to mankind."

The Persian poet Sa'di observes, "A grateful dog is better than an ungrateful man." It is said that if you keep and feed a dog for three days, the dog will never forget that debt. Consequently, this poet asserts, dogs far surpass people who forget their gratitude to others.

There is a well-known passage in the "The Sutra of True Requit," which the Daishonin addresses to Sennichi-ama: "If I were in error, they [the Buddhas and heavenly deities] would surely make that plain. We would certainly expect that much from the deities of the sun and the moon, which are shining right before our eyes. Moreover, all these deities not only listened to the words of Shakyamuni Buddha, but vowed to punish those who persecute the votary of the Lotus Sutra, saying, 'their heads will split into seven pieces' (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 310).

"What then do they intend to do?" the Daishonin asks. "Because I, Nichiren, strongly

called them to task in this manner, Heaven has inflicted punishment upon this nation of ours, and these epidemics have appeared” (MW-6, 254–55).

This is a very important passage, the meaning of which we should ponder deeply.

Buddhism is a battle. Everything is a battle. This is the essence of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Unless we fight to ensure the success of our kosen-rufu movement, no benefit will come. If we fail to take action, things may seem fine for a time, but in the end we will only suffer.

One has but to glance through the pages of history to see that corrupt societies — those in which lies and deceit prevail, and justice and truth are spurned — inevitably come to ruin. It is vital that we stand up to evil. If we leave it unchecked, we become part of that evil.

Remaining passive in the face of injustice is the same as silently endorsing it. Our silence and inaction let lies and deceit triumph.

The Daishonin teaches us to stand firm against evil.

### **You have every right to live true to yourself.**

We of the SGI live in direct accord with the Daishonin’s teachings. We live true to our convictions.

It is trivial to worry about appearances and others’ opinions or to complain that no one supports or understands you. Please live true to yourself, as you have every right to, and adorn your life with triumph, based on resolute prayer and action. Please become a person who powerfully activates the protective forces of the universe, the heavenly deities.

### **The benefit of making offerings to the Law is immense.**

Buddhism is a world where the subtle state of our heart or mind, our attitude at each moment, is all-important. The smallest things, therefore, can have momentous consequences.

The Daishonin writes: “He who offered a humble meal of millet to the *pratyekabuddha* became the Universal Brightness Thus Come One. He who offered a mudpie to the Buddha became the ruler of the continent of Jambudvipa. Though one may perform meritorious deeds, if they are directed toward that which is not true, then they may bring great evil but they will never result in good. On the other hand, though one may be ignorant in mind and his offerings meager, if he presents them to a person who upholds the truth, his merit will be great. How much more so in the case of persons who in all sincerity make offerings to the True Law!” (MW-6, 281).

A child who offered something as humble as a mudpie to the Buddha was reborn as one of the world’s foremost rulers, King Ashoka. But no matter how many offerings one may make to a villainous individual, ultimately they will result in great evil, never in good. The Buddhist Law is extremely strict.

The consequences are grave if one follows the wrong person or people. Even in second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s time there were corrupt, self-serving leaders. There were unscrupulous individuals. Those who followed such people were led astray and eventually discarded their faith.

On the other hand, the benefit of making offerings to the Law is immense. All of you

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are working energetically for kosen-rufu. You are making an offering of yourselves, of your lives.

In addition, you have courageously built the foremost global organization, the SGI, which is dedicated to realizing the Buddha's wish and decree. In light of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin, the benefit that accrues to such actions is boundless and immeasurable.

### **Phony disciples are many, and true disciples are few.**

Feb. 11 is Mr. Toda's birthday. Were he alive, he would turn 99 this year.

Because of my weak constitution, Mr. Toda constantly told me to take care of my health. My lungs constantly gave me trouble, and I came down with pleurisy a number of times.

Mr. Toda despaired: "I want somehow to help you live a long life, Daisaku. But, frankly, I'm worried. I don't know whether you'll make it to 30. If you die, Daisaku, who will be my successor? What will become of the Gakkai?"

He wept as he said this.

This was the spirit of Mr. Toda. How deeply he cared for the Gakkai. How deeply he cared for me, whom he recognized as his genuine disciple.

Phony disciples are many, and true disciples are few. I am confident that all of you are true disciples.

Mr. Toda was a warm mentor, a compassionate mentor. That's why I'll never forget him. If he had been arrogant and dictatorial, how could he have won the selfless loyalty and devotion of so many youth?

In those days, knowing the harsh reality of my physical condition, I was resolved to die giving my life to Mr. Toda and the Soka Gakkai. "Perhaps it's best that I die young in the course of our struggle," I thought. "That way I can leave an example of selfless dedication to kosen-rufu for future generations and perhaps inspire many youth division members who come after me." That was my sincere sentiment, and Mr. Toda was aware of my readiness to lay down my life.

Such are the bonds of mentor and disciple. This is the true Soka Gakkai.

### **To betray one's friends in faith is an immeasurably grave offense in Buddhism.**

I want to share some information about my life, just as it was, for the sake of posterity. As most of you know, I was inaugurated Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1960. A special ceremony was held at the Nihon University Auditorium in Tokyo.

In those days, my family and I lived in a house the size of a matchbox. We had purchased it for a low price, borrowing half the amount from my wife's family and paying off the other half in monthly installments. The front entrance was tiny, and the toilet was located unceremoniously right next to it. It was a very simple, humble abode.

Even after becoming president, I commuted daily by train to the Gakkai Headquarters. I would ride my bicycle to nearby Kamata Station, go to the bicycle parking area, pay the fee, leave my bicycle there and then take the train to the Headquarters in Shinanomachi [about an hour's train ride away].

There was an incident illustrative of that period: An eminent politician once stopped by

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our home to pay a courtesy call. It was during the day, so I wasn't there. I heard about it later. Anyway, our house was so small that he drove right past it. Naturally, if he were looking for a stately residence, he'd never find it! Apparently, he drove up and down the street a few times. He finally located our house after asking one of the neighbors, but even then he thought it must be a mistake.

On the day of my inauguration, when I returned home from the ceremony, there was no celebratory feast on the table awaiting me, none of the customary steamed rice with red beans.

With a strong resolve to stand alone, my wife said: "Today is a funeral for this family. As of this day, I consider my husband to have departed."

This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. This is the spirit of kosen-rufu. This is the spirit of mentor and disciple.

I wish to teach you this spirit — the spirit of giving one's all for the sake of kosen-rufu — through my example.

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and his wife, Madame Deng Yingchao, dedicated themselves to the construction of their homeland with the same sense of commitment.

There are people who, though they are leaders, take no action and instead do nothing but criticize. There are those who just try to look good.

Many of those who betrayed the Soka Gakkai wanted simply to grab unearned fame and fortune, to obtain social recognition and personal profit so they could lead lives of luxury. They were worse than common thieves. They were the basest people.

President Toda was really harsh on traitors, describing them as "worse than curs." He would denounce them with blistering anger.

To betray the Soka Gakkai, which has inherited the Buddha's decree, to betray one's friends in faith, to betray one's own vow to realize kosen-rufu — these are immeasurably grave offenses in Buddhism.

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 31st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 2. Part 2 will appear in next week's issue.*