

## **SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 17 SPEECH WE WILL WIN IN THE END**

*SGI President Ikeda says that 'the person who is not defeated, who does not give up, no matter what happens, will win in the end.'*

Congratulations on holding this student division leaders meeting!

"If there is no path, I will open a path." These are the eternal words of Dr. Federico Villarreal, the illustrious Peruvian intellectual for whom the esteemed Federico Villarreal National University is named.

If you simply content yourself with following a path someone else has blazed, mindlessly moving along without putting forth any serious effort or hard work of your own, you have lost the spirit of youth. That is a foolish way to live.

Youth means to burn with hope, daring to face hardship and challenge, to forge a new path based on your own philosophy, passion and struggle. To steadily advance on your chosen path one step at a time, as you sketch the picture of your life — this is the essence of the struggle of youth.

### **Many great individuals have emerged from poverty and hardship.**

Dr. Villarreal, whose philosophy underpins the fine Peruvian institution that has honored me today, was a brilliant mathematician who brought the light of an original mind to science and education during the late 19th and early 20th century. Born into a very poor family, he began working at the age of 14, while at the same time struggling to pursue his studies.

How we spend our teenage years forms the foundation of our lives. Many great individuals emerge from poverty and hardship. Beautiful flowers and towering trees grow in the lowest reaches, in the muddiest earth.

Money alone does not bring happiness. The famous Japanese writer Eiji Yoshikawa says that people who eat too much good food and lead an easy life from a young age are unfortunate. They miss the chance to build character and can't enjoy the satisfaction of achieving their goals one step at a time.

Amid an intense intellectual, mental and physical struggle, Dr. Villarreal made an important mathematical discovery, today known as the Villarreal Polynomial. Some have declared his achievement more significant than that of Isaac Newton's.

How old do you think Dr. Villarreal was when he did this? He was 23—about the same age as many gathered here today.

I want each of you to make discoveries of your own. I want you to make lasting achievements. And they don't have to make the headlines; they can be ordinary things.

What matters is that you know what you have done. I hope that you will leave something behind, something of which you can proudly declare to the world: "This is my discovery!" "This is how I lived my life!"

What you do should not be false or pretentious. The news is sometimes full of flashy announcements—often outright lies—like those that came from the Japanese imperial headquarters during World War II. You cannot lie to yourself.

In any case, what incredible creativity is forthcoming from the lives of young people

who have been forged and tempered by continuous effort and challenge! And it is all the more important for us to remember that faith is the wellspring of creativity.

Where have we come from? Where are we going? The road into the 21st century, into the third millennium, lies yet untraversed. Who are the pioneers, the builders, who are constructing this humanistic road of peace, culture and education? Who is constructing this road throughout the world with a fresh, dynamic energy and wisdom and a new solidarity based on an unsurpassed life philosophy? I declare that it is you, the student division members who are my dearest pride.

Today, student division representatives from some 200 universities around Japan, including Soka University, are gathered. You are all young philosophers. As philosophers, I hope you will courageously dedicate yourselves to the pursuit of the highest truth and goodness, not letting yourself be swayed by the famous or the powerful, many of whom are shallow and lack any real substance.

I congratulate you on this auspicious beginning!

### **Universities must not be ivory towers, separate from society.**

Distinguished guests of Federico Villarreal National University, I have just been presented with an honorary doctorate from your pioneering institution of higher learning. I regard this as a great honor and source of tremendous pride. Thank you very much.

This April marks a full century of Japanese immigration to Peru. I feel unparalleled joy in welcoming you, outstanding scholars and educators of that South American country, who have specially made the long journey to Japan for this occasion, despite your busy schedules.

Let us give our honored guests a hearty round of applause in welcome and celebrate a new beginning into another century of warm friendship between our two nations.

A grand celebration commemorating 100 years of Japanese immigration is scheduled to be held in Peru next in May. Some 800 SGI-Peru youth division members, including student division members, will participate in the event, presenting a program of music and dance. My congratulations to them!

Federico Villarreal National University was born among the people in 1960. That same year, I was inaugurated as the third Soka Gakkai president at age 32 and embarked on my travels abroad for the sake of worldwide kosen-rufu.

The Peruvian school is well known for having produced many capable people dedicated to humanistic ideals, based on its commitment to raising truly humane individuals and putting students first. It has clearly articulated its mission in the 21 century as promoting democracy, freedom and plurality of thought, as well as international exchange, links between government and business, and the creation and spread of culture. These are wonderful ideals.

Federico Villarreal National University also emphasizes taking up the problems and challenges of the region in which it is located, believing in the importance of contributing to the local community. It stands firm in its conviction that a university's inviolable right is to participate in and offer guidance to society, to speak out against injustice.

A university must not be an ivory tower, separate from society. It is the right of a university to fight against injustice. We of Soka University and the SGI agree wholeheartedly with Federico Villarreal National University's ideals.

When a university or its students lose their interest in society and their local communi-

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ties, forgetting the spirit of contributing to them — or if they fail to get angry at injustice — the nation is stripped of a dynamic force for change and progress. The nation, then, can only decline. This, I'm afraid, is an accurate description of present-day Japan.

### **The human revolution of a single person is crucial.**

Federico Villarreal National University prides itself on being a university of the people, for the people. It is brimming with the proud spirit and tradition of taking on the most difficult challenges and working for the people's welfare. Complete devotion to the people — this is the same spirit that infuses Soka University and the SGI.

Graduates of this esteemed Peruvian university are active on the front lines of society in a wide variety of fields, including government, business, education and medicine. I especially want to pay tribute to the fact that of those graduates, there are many doctors, nurses, educators and technicians working to serve the people in the remotest areas of the country. It is said that whenever you go in the far-flung regions of Peru and ask professionals where they graduated from, quite often you hear the proud response "Federico Villarreal National University!"

Such a beautiful spirit of service has disappeared from Japan. Unfortunately, Japan is headed for decline. Many of the so-called elite of our society are self-centered; they don't care what happens to anyone other than themselves. What was the purpose, then, of their education? If such selfish individuals get into positions of power, what kind of society will they create?

Many people of conscience lament this sad state of affairs. Kyoto University professor Terumasa Nakanishi, a renowned authority on international politics, has offered some sharp observations on the decline and possible rebirth of Japan based on a grand theory of civilization. In his recent work *Why Do Nations Perish?* he touches on the late British historian Dr. Arnold Toynbee's theories of history, suggesting that even if a civilization were to disappear from the face of the earth, it could be reborn if "seeds" survived. Professor Nakanishi says that even if it were overrun by outside forces, as long as the foundation of a civilization survived, it could rise and flourish again, even from a single individual.

I agree. The individual is important. The human revolution of a single person is crucial. If an ember burns in the heart of even one true revolutionary, eventually the flames of victory will spread like wildfire.

Professor Nakanishi was one of the first to acknowledge the significance of my 1991 lecture at Harvard University, "The Age of Soft Power and Inner-Motivated Philosophy." Incidentally, the Tokyo-based think tank Dentsu Institute for Human Studies has selected *soft power* as one of the key words for Japan in 1999.

We must always look ahead and anticipate the future.

I once discussed the issue of European unification with Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, founder of the Pan-European Movement. That, too, is becoming a reality.

On April 15, I spoke with Nigeria's president-elect Olusegun Obasanjo about my vision of African unity and the creation of a United Nations for peace, culture and education that would transcend national interests. He evinced deep interest and accord with this proposal.

The world is changing minute by minute. The fresh ideas and activism of youth who keenly perceive the age and are prepared to lead the times are more and more vital. That's why each of you gathered here today is so important. You are the treasure of all treasures.

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Speaking of Dr. Toynbee, I fondly recall our dialogue, which was held over a total of 10 days. He had expressed a strong desire to meet me, but as he was in poor health, he couldn't make the trip to Japan. So I went to visit him in the United Kingdom.

Our dialogue began around 10:00 each morning and continued until about 5:00 in the evening. Each afternoon at teatime, Mrs. Toynbee would bring us cakes. She and my wife sat with us and listened to our dialogue.

I hope that all of you will read good books, such as those by Dr. Toynbee. You're the ones who will lose out if you read bad books.

In 1965, Dr. Toynbee visited Peru. He highly praised its beauty, calling it "otherworldly." I have also visited Peru and agree that it is a wonderful country. There is something about both its natural scenery and the hearts of its people that makes one feel at ease.

Dr. Toynbee focused his penetrating gaze on locating the center of the ancient Andean civilization. It was not among oases on the Pacific coastal desert. Instead, the greatest marks of this civilization were found in remote, forbidding regions that were exposed to the fearful attacks of enemies. Why was this? Dr. Toynbee's answer was crystal clear.

It is important to be clear. The SGI has come this far because we have always been straightforward and unambiguous. Nichiren Daishonin was a master of clarity. He reduced the enormous body of Shakyamuni's teachings — often referred to as the "80,000 teachings" — to a single phrase, the seven Chinese characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

## **Facing challenges leads to our growth and development.**

According to Dr. Toynbee, areas that always challenge and respond to the constant pressures and onslaughts of outside forces are where the energy to achieve great things is aroused. In other words, facing challenges, competing and winning over one's enemies, produces growth and development. It is then that victory and creativity are realized. This is a law of civilization and life.

A comfortable, easy atmosphere is nothing more than an illusion. It will fade like a mirage. Nothing will remain.

A person who undertakes no struggle will leave no mark in this world.

The Daishonin declares, "It is not one's friends but one's enemies who assist one's progress" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 186). A group or organization that faces challenges is one that grows and triumphs. When challenges disappear, an organization becomes slack and begins to fall into ruin. The SGI is strong because it fights against those who would destroy Buddhism. Without opponents, it would decline.

I hope that all of you, the student division members for whom I have such love and respect, will spend your youth courageously, boldly taking on society's challenges.

In his study of history, Dr. Toynbee also focuses his attention on people who are not defeated even when knocked down by adversity, people who rise up again stronger than before, and on those groups who use a defeat to spur themselves on, with increased determination, to further action. Such situations reveal the true strengths of an individual or group, he says.

It is only natural that in life's long struggle, we will sometimes encounter unexpected difficulties. But Buddhism is about being victorious. The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches us that we must triumph. The person who is not defeated, who does not give up, no matter what happens, will win in the end.

The weak will be defeated. Those who settle for defeat are sad, regardless of the excus-

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es they may make.

The strong, on the other hand, always enjoy life, whatever happens. They do not give up. They do not fall to pieces.

There is no need to fret and worry. Remain calm and dignified, and wait for the right time — make the right time. Never forget to have patience, courage and wisdom.

I want to see all of you, without exception, win in the end. I want you to take responsibility for our imperishable SGI.

Incidentally, Professor Manuel Rodriguez of Federico Villarreal National University, who is not here with us today, has used my dialogue with Dr. Toynebee, *Choose Life*, as a classroom text for 15 years. I wish to express my deepest respect and appreciation to him.

## **We must struggle against evil, until its roots have been eradicated.**

In 1821, right after he succeeded in liberating Peru from Spanish rule, South American hero José de San Martín established a public library in the Peruvian capital of Lima and donated his own precious book collection to it. Education is power; San Martín believed that spiritual awakening is far more effective than military might in sustaining independence. The power of the spirit, our unity, is stronger than any economic clout or authoritarian force.

Our ignorance, on the other hand, is an invitation to frightening despotism and dictatorship. This is what San Martín, humanistic leader that he was, feared.

Aware and informed people are warning that Japan is heading once again toward nationalism. We must clearly see evil for what it is. It is crucial that we put all our energy into education that enlightens the people and makes them wise.

The same goes for religion. A religion that has not evolved to a universal level of education will unfailingly lapse into self-righteousness. From that perspective, I hope you'll recognize that your activities as student division members are indispensable.

Peru experienced two-and-a-half centuries of the terror and unbelievable cruelty of the Inquisition. I visited the museum that now stands on the site of the Inquisition's tribunal in Lima. I shuddered at the horrors that had taken place there.

It is believed that more than 500,000 people were persecuted by the Inquisition — all in the name of religion, all because of the dictates of monsters in the guise of priests. How terrifying is the envy of priests who have grown twisted and perverse!

All the persecutions that the SGI has endured until now have also been the result of jealousy at our growth and development. We know this from painful experience, and we must never forget it.

Regarding jealousy, the Incas, whose empire extended throughout Peru and other parts of South America during the 15th century, had these sayings: "Jealousy eats away at a person from the inside and makes him rotten." "The jealous person brings on his own downfall." This is precisely what happens to those who, devoured by envy, seek to destroy the SGI, our beautiful alliance of the people.

One of the stanzas of the rousing Peruvian national anthem goes, "Lima keeps its glorious vow! / With fierce anger, she drove out the tyrant! The tyrant who long oppressed us is now powerless!"

We must never relax in our struggle against evil. We must never drop our guard. We must never forget our determination to defend what is right — until the roots of evil have been eradicated.

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## **In the time of your youth, give your all to speaking out for justice and propagating this Buddhism.**

A wonderful motto appears as part of Federico Villarreal National University's crest: "My words forge the human race." The spirit behind these words seems to say: "Through the power of education, through the power of words and culture, let us further strengthen humanity, leading it to greater wisdom! And let us link and unite humanity on an even wider, deeper level!" What a noble, magnificent motto Federico Villarreal National University has!

Buddhism teaches that "one's voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). I hope that all of you will boldly use your voices to inspire and touch the lives of friends and neighbors, one after another. This is what it means to be young, to practice faith and to lead a fulfilling life.

Now, in this time of your youth, give your all in the struggle to speak out for justice and truth and in the propagation of Buddhism. Doing so will definitely become one of your life's treasures.

I call on you to build an alliance of good. I call on you to defeat the negative forces that we find in society. I call on you to spread justice and happiness in society and combat the spread of egoism.

You are the ones who will lead the way in that direction. As you take your place on the stage of the 21st century, I want to hear you shout cheerfully, your voices ringing high into the heavens, "We have won!"

In March 1974, I visited Peru's beautiful green capital. At that time, I was fortunate to be the first private citizen to receive an honorary citizenship from the city. I wrote in the City Hall's visitors book: "From today, I will work for Lima! From today, I have that responsibility. I will pray harder than anyone for the increased development and prosperity of Lima and Peru!" My determination and commitment have not changed in the least.

I close my speech today with the humble promise that I will continue to pray all my life for the boundless development of my beloved new alma mater, Federico Villarreal National University. *Muchas gracias!*

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at a student division leaders meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, April 17.*

### **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

#### **The Voice Does the Buddha's Work**

##### **From This Speech:**

Buddhism teaches that "one's voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). I hope that all of you will boldly use your voices to inspire and touch the lives of friends and neighbors, one after another.... Give your all in the struggle to speak out for justice and truth, and in the propagation of Buddhism.

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Doing so will definitely become one of your life's treasures.

1. What does Nichiren Daishonin mean when he says that "one's voice does the Buddha's work"?
2. How have you used your voice to inspire others? To change someone's life?
3. What are some of the ways in which we can "speak out for justice and truth, and in the propagation of Buddhism?"

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