

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 12 MESSAGE IT IS YOUR TIME

In his message to the youth culture festival participants in Saitama, Japan, SGI President Ikeda encourages all SGI youth that 'it is time for you, my disciples, to join together as one, to take full responsibility for our movement and go on to achieve victory on the great stage of the 21st century.'

To my beloved youth division members, the world's foremost champions of justice and truth: My wholehearted congratulations on this momentous general meeting, a celebration of the advancement of kosen-rufu and the promotion of peace, culture and education!

My profound gratitude also to our fellow members from abroad attending this event.

And my deepest congratulations on the holding of the World Doctors Division General Meeting today.

I am certain that President Makiguchi and President Toda would be overjoyed at today's youth gathering.

I have received a full report on the phenomenal results of the propagation campaign conducted by the Saitama youth. You have achieved a magnificent victory! There is no doubt that the Buddhas and heavenly deities throughout the three existences and 10 directions are ecstatic, heartily applauding your efforts.

I am now at Soka University, greeting an important guest. From the new Central Tower of Soka University, I can see the gleaming white dome of the stadium in Tokorozawa in the distance, where you—35,000 youth division members—are gathered.

Today, I have deliberately chosen not to attend your meeting. Joining you are Soka Gakkai President Akiya, SGI General Director Wada, Soka Gakkai Doctors Division Leader Morita and Saitama Prefecture General Leader Hamano. Youth division leaders Mr. Tanigawa, Mr. Sato, Mr. Sakomoto, Mr. Takanabe, Ms. Terashima, Ms. Igeta and Mr. Yumitani are also there. I want you—the youth who will shoulder the 21st century—to confidently hold today's meeting on your own. Through your youthful energy and efforts, make it the crowning event of your activities this century.

To give you invaluable training, I chose not to attend today. I want you to understand this. United as disciples, please make today's gathering one that will go down in the history of kosen-rufu.

The time has come for my disciples to take their place at center stage. It is time for you, my disciples, to join together as one, to take full responsibility for our movement and go on to achieve victory on the great stage of the 21st century.

It is impossible for young people who practice this profound philosophy to be slowed down by any impasse.

To commemorate today's meeting, I want to share with you some favorite quotes from my youth.

First, "Misfortune it is simply the fire that tests gold." These are words by the Russian author Tolstoy from his work *Walk in the Light*. The problems and sufferings you experience in life, my sensitive young friends, are all the trials that serve to temper and forge you into pure gold.

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Buddhism puts us into an everlasting orbit of eternal happiness. As Nichiren Daishonin writes, “It is the power of the Buddhist Law that enables the deities of the sun and moon to make their rounds of the four continents [the entire world]” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 164). The Mystic Law is the great law underlying all things in the universe. There is no power greater than this. It is absolutely impossible for young people who pursue and practice this profound philosophy to be slowed down by any impasse.

Chuko K’ung-ming, one of the protagonists of the Chinese classic Romance of the Three Kingdoms, says, “Genuine friendship neither flowers simply because circumstances are favorable nor loses its leaves simply because circumstances are adverse; regardless of circumstances it is never diminished, growing only stronger through good times and bad.”

With such sincerity and loyalty, I have developed circles of genuine friendship throughout the world. All endeavors to promote peace and culture begin with—and must return to—the one ultimate humanistic philosophy that encourages interaction with our fellow human beings and that, through the power of dialogue, opens their hearts, linking them together in friendship.

I hope that you will live with an unwavering loyalty and devotion to your friends and comrades, like that which existed between Rossi and Bruno in Hall Caine’s novel *The Eternal City*. You must never, under any circumstances, become a coward who backslides in faith or a traitor who betrays one’s fellow members, ending up with a miserable, morally bankrupt existence.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is the Buddhism of youth.

Today, Sept. 12, is the anniversary of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution [the unsuccessful attempt by the ruling authorities to execute the Daishonin in 1271]. No amount of oppression by the arrogant authorities or scheming on the part of evil priests could topple the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. The Daishonin declares, “It is because the heavenly deities came to my aid that I triumphed even through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 843).

Similarly, the Bontens and Taishakus of the world [Buddhist gods who represent powerful protective forces in Buddhism] have united and worked together on our behalf, providing us with their benevolent support and protection. As a result, we of the SGI—an organization directly linked to the Daishonin and carrying out the Buddha’s will and decree—have resolutely triumphed over the three powerful enemies of the Buddha.

I want to make three suggestions to you, my beloved youth.

First, I want you, the youth division members, to develop into capable leaders active in each area and realm of society in the era of dramatic change that will be the 21st century. President Toda always strongly urged the youth, “Strive tenaciously to become a person who excels at something!”

Second, as a certain philosopher says, “Champion justice and your strength will be doubled.” Ours is a struggle championing the highest justice and truth. It is essential, then, that you thoroughly fight evil and falsehood, and win without fail.

Buddhism is a struggle to be victorious. Buddhism is concerned with refuting the erroneous and revealing the true.

In the letter “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,” the Daishonin states: “‘The practice of the Lotus Sutra is shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines.’ True to

the letter of this golden saying [from T'ien-t'ai's Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra], the believers of all provisional teachings and sects will ultimately be defeated" (MW-1, 101). Should youth lose this spirit, they can no longer be called youth.

Third, I want to propose that, through your united efforts, you create a mounting tide of 8 million youth division members in your time. The Chinese character for eight also means to open. In Buddhism, there is also the eight-petaled lotus.

The Daishonin's Buddhism is the Buddhism of youth. The Daishonin writes to Nanjo Tokimitsu, who was filled with youthful vigor: "Because it is you, my young friend, I am telling you this" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1507). In other words, the Daishonin urges young people, since they brim with vitality, to use their power and passion to spread to other youth the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the supreme teaching of unlimited hope.

Uphold in your hearts the slogan 'Adamantly Fight Back!'

It is estimated that the population of Saitama will increase by a million in the next 25 years, making it the third largest prefecture in Japan by the year 2025.

The 21st century will definitely be the age of the Soka Gakkai. May our Saitama members take their place on that grand new stage!

Mighty Saitama, light a beacon to signal the dawn of kosen-rufu for the 21st century! Hold your torch high! With your strength and energy, Saitama, I'm counting on you to secure complete victory for the whole Kanto region! With your iron unity, become a driving force for all Tokyo! Saitama, as solid as steel, be forever an unconquerable pillar of the Soka Gakkai! This I call out to you with boundless trust and expectation.

Never forgive the base enemies of the Buddha, never! Be unremitting in your battle against them! Fight through to the end against the scheming verbal violence that seeks to undermine the kosen-rufu movement, upholding in your hearts the slogan "Adamantly Fight Back!"

I am praying from the bottom of my heart that all of you who have gathered for this meeting—Bodhisattvas of the Earth endowed with a noble mission—will, without exception, enjoy the best of health, the utmost prosperity and wisdom, and lives adorned with peerless glory and triumph.

Long live the Saitama youth division, the foremost in the world!

Long live the SGI youth division around the globe!

SGI President Ikeda's message to the Saitama Youth Division Cultural General Meeting, held in conjunction with the SGI 25th Anniversary Youth Festival and the World Doctors Division General Meeting, at the Seibu Dome in Tokorozawa, Japan, Sept. 12.

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