

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 5TH GRADUATING CLASS OF SUA, CALABASAS CROSS THE RAGING SEA

'A life lived in pursuit of a grand ideal can be likened to a passage across a raging sea; the days of peace and quiet may be few indeed,' President Ikeda tells the SUA graduates. 'Whether you lead an ordinary or an extraordinary life hinges entirely on your ability to take life's difficulties and setbacks as a springboard for new advancement and growth.'

To my beloved friends, the members of the fifth graduating class, the Class of 1999, who have set out on the hope-filled venture of the next phase of your lives, bathed in the rays of dawn of the third millennium. First let me offer my heartfelt congratulations for this brilliant achievement, which crowns your diligent study and research efforts.

I am fully aware that, given your abilities, you had the choice to study at virtually any graduate school you wished and could have, had you so desired, gone to any of the many long-established, renowned institutions of higher learning in the world. And yet, you chose to study here, at Soka University of America, Calabasas, still in its infancy, and to join in the work of creating a new, magnificent tradition here. As founder, I offer you my deepest respect, appreciation and gratitude. Each of your names will shine eternally in the history of Soka University of America.

I also express my sincere thanks to Mary Norton of the University of Delaware and all our distinguished guests, many of whom have traveled great distances, despite their many other commitments, to be here today.

At the same time, I wish to thank, from the bottom of my heart, the faculty members, who have cared for and encouraged the graduates, putting body and soul into the work of fostering their learning and personal development.

Finally, I wish to share my sense of profound joy with all the family members and friends of the graduates who have joined us on this occasion.

As you set out on the journey of life, I encourage each of the graduates to commit yourself to the bold adventure of creating a new era of education. I was delighted to learn that all the members of this year's graduating class will be taking the first steps of their new lives as educators.

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the passing of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the father of Soka education, who died a martyr to the cause of peace. I can only imagine how pleased he would be today, and the hope and affection with which he would view the sight of our graduates.

As you know, Mrs. Norton's husband, the late Dr. David Norton, was a renowned philosopher who also taught at the University of Delaware. We shall always be indebted to him for his invaluable support and contributions through which the publication in English of Mr. Makiguchi's *System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* was realized.

What first sparked Dr. Norton's interest in Soka education? On one occasion, he stated that he felt it contained philosophical elements that could resist and ultimately transform the unhealthy trends we see everywhere in the world.

In the kind of age in which we live—an era of profound and sometimes violent transition—it is children and youth who are most exposed and vulnerable to these

unhealthy trends. The responsibility for this lies entirely with adults and adult society.

For this reason, we must challenge head-on the fundamental pathology that undermines and destroys human happiness. And we must do so by upholding a philosophy rooted in commitment to the inviolable dignity and sanctity of life.

Mr. Makiguchi described this spirit thus: “A genuine educator, in order to respond to the society’s expectations, must never be contented with mere passive goodness but must be a person of commitment, capable of taking courageous, active steps for good.”

The year 2000 has been declared by the United Nations the International Year for the Culture of Peace. Nothing is more vital to the construction of a culture of peace than education, which, rooted in a robust humanism, can bring forth the positive qualities inherent in all people, thus allowing us to overcome and transform the barbaric realities that surround us.

Dr. David Norton was dedicated throughout his entire life to the grand spiritual adventure of creating a new era of education—an era in which all people, without exception, can fully realize and fulfill their natural, innate aspiration to learn, grow and develop their capacities. Mrs. Norton was his inseparable comrade in that adventure. She has inherited and since his death continued to carry out this adventure.

Education is the sacred, eternal endeavor of defending humanity. It involves supporting people’s efforts to grow, guiding and enabling them in that process, and fostering their development. The life of one who lives as an educator is eternal and undying.

Dr. Norton believed that education, more than anything, is the work of offering models and exemplars. I fully agree with this view, and, since the days of my youth, have always sought to study, learn and act with intentness and sincerity.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, standard-bearer of the American Renaissance, said of the importance of action: “Without it thought can never ripen into truth.” I know that, besides through our own examples, it is impossible to win the trust of the young, who can see through all ruses.

A life lived in pursuit of a grand ideal can be likened to a passage across a raging sea; the days of peace and quiet may be few indeed. Hardships, large and small, are an inevitable part of the long process of living.

Whether you lead an ordinary or an extraordinary life hinges entirely on your ability to take life’s difficulties and setbacks as a springboard for new advancement and growth.

Nobel Prize–winning novelist Pearl Buck, who raised a severely disabled daughter, offered these words of encouragement to mothers sharing the same struggle: “Not out of fullness has the human soul always reached its highest but often out of deprivation.”

I close by encouraging each of you to learn from the example of Dr. and Mrs. Norton, to be people of intellect and action who continue with confidence, cheer and vitality to create the “value of good” in human society. It was with tears of gratitude and appreciation that I learned Dr. Norton wore with pride to the last moments of his life, the Soka University faculty pin he received as an honorary doctor of the university.

I will continue always to pray for the happiness, good health, success, glory and victory of you, my dear friends, more precious to me than my life.

To the eternal prosperity of the Class of 1999!

December 14, 1999

Daisaku Ikeda, Founder