

SIGNIFICANT DATE APRIL 2, 1958—PRESIDENT TODA’S DEATH

April 2 will be the 42nd anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s death. Although he died young—at the age of 58—President Toda was able to fulfill his mission in rebuilding the Soka Gakkai after World War II. When he became the second president in 1951, he determined to take the membership, then at 3,000 households, to 750,000 households. “If [this goal] cannot be achieved in my lifetime, please do not hold my funeral,” he said at the time. “Just dispose of my body off the coast of Shinagawa.” Before his death, the Soka Gakkai surpassed his goal of 750,000 households.

Also before he died, President Toda raised his successor, SGI President Ikeda. The ceremony at the head temple on March 16, 1958—just 17 days before he died—was symbolic of President Toda’s passing his responsibility as the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth on to the young Daisaku Ikeda and the youth division.

President Ikeda remembers his mentor’s death in his “Epilogue” to *The Human Revolution*, volume 12: “Cherry blossoms dance in the wind, as if bidding a final farewell. The day of my mentor’s funeral, and how I stood, with a thousand emotions in my heart, gazing up at the blue sky spreading out beyond the delicately falling cherry blossoms, remains indelibly etched in my memory. On April 2, 1958, my mentor, Josei Toda, passed away peacefully at the age of 58. His life had been as pure, noble and fresh as those cherry blossoms. My mentor had struggled against the cruel oppression of the military government and stood alone in a war-ravaged, defeated Japan to build a citadel of peace for all humanity. He took up the cause of kosen-rufu in exact accord with the will of Nichiren Daishonin, bringing the Daishonin’s Buddhism to life in an age when it was on the verge of perishing. He dove into the anguished, suffering masses of the people. Talking with them, sharing their laughter and their tears, he lit the torch of happiness for 750,000 households” (June 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 43).

The growth of the SGI that we see today can be traced back to President Toda’s determination. His propagation efforts in the 1950s led to the current SGI membership—12 million people in 148 countries.