

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA LIVE OUT YOUR LIVES WITH THE SGI

‘Live out your lives together with the SGI, the organization acting in accord with the Buddha’s decree,’ SGI President Ikeda says in this essay on March 16, 1958. ‘If you stay true to your mission and boldly walk the great path of faith your whole life long, you will have no regrets.’

My eyes were focused unflinchingly on the future. Yet, seeing the frail condition of my mentor in life, Josei Toda, a deep pain tore through my heart, as if the floodgates of all the sorrow and apprehension I had long harbored had suddenly burst.

On that bright spring day, for some reason a heavy cloud settled over me. My heart sank, and I felt the dimness closing in around me.



The weather was fine on March 16, 1958. Six thousand of Mr. Toda’s proud young disciples had gathered joyfully in the courtyard in front of the Grand Lecture Hall at the head temple. Burning with faith, conviction and passion, they gazed up at Mount Fuji shining under a blanket of snow. A lively buzz filled the air, like a new wave rising from the depths of the sea. Everyone was excited and brimming with life.

Their sights set on the future, these young heroes had stood up like true seekers of the Way, like the champions of truth that they were. Their awareness of their noble mission, the glorious flower of their youth, glowed with a noble, heroic pride on their faces. Smiling as they stood shoulder to shoulder, their hearts were one. Nothing could destroy their sense of unity with their mentor or their spirit of comradeship transcending life and death.



Six years and 10 months had passed since Mr. Toda’s inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president. In that time, he had waged a fierce struggle to propagate Nichiren Dai-shonin’s Buddhism, achieving his cherished goal of 750,000 member households. Now he sensed that the end of his life was approaching.

At the grand ceremony of March 16, with the last remnants of his strength, Mr. Toda showed us all the fighting spirit of a life absolutely dedicated to kosen-rufu. It was a spiritual ceremony, in which he transferred the mission for achieving kosen-rufu to his true, direct disciples, the young lions who were to inherit his mantle.

At the beginning of March, the Japanese prime minister notified Mr. Toda that he wanted to visit the head temple on the 16th. Mr. Toda then said to me, “Let’s conduct a ceremony [on that day] that will serve as a trial run — a dress rehearsal — for kosen-rufu, in preparation for the future.”

Mr. Toda wanted to give the youth a foretaste of what it would be like when the ideals and philosophy of the Dai-shonin’s Buddhism had spread widely throughout society and the world. At that time, the Dai-shonin says, the tutelary gods of Japan, Bonten and Taishaku, come to pay their respects (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022). In a ceremony held in conjunction with the prime minister’s visit, Mr. Toda sought to demonstrate this prediction that one day even society’s top leaders, who embody the function of such protective forces as Bonten and Taishaku, would respect — and even eventually come to embrace faith in —

the Gohonzon.

This vision can also be interpreted as leaders from all around the world, sympathetic to Buddhist humanism, gathering together, forging strong ties of friendship and pledging to achieve peace and happiness for all humanity.

Today, this is happening. Leaders around the world from all spheres, including politics, business, education, culture and the arts—transcending differences of race and nation—are supporting and praising the ideals and activities of the SGI. They visit us to acknowledge and honor the achievements of our organization, which is striving in accord with the Buddha's will.

Each and every ceremony conferring recognition or honor upon us embodies the spirit of the ceremony of March 16.



In the days leading up to the event, Mr. Toda was already having difficulty walking, but he repeatedly insisted that he would lead the ceremony himself. As a result, I had a fellow member build a litter to carry him. This idea came to me from a scene in the historic novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, where the ailing general Chuko K'ung-Ming leads his troops in battle from atop a four-wheeled cart.

However, when Mr. Toda saw the completed litter, he declared: "It's too big! This would be useless in battle!" Though he could no longer walk unaided, he was always on the battlefield in spirit, dashing about fearlessly as sparks flew from clashing swords.

He was an exceptional mentor, who trained me for the future with every ounce of his strength until the very last moment of his life.

The litter made its way slowly through the thronging crowd of thousands of youth. "It's Sensei! It's Toda Sensei!" Joy spread among the youth. Right to the very end, Mr. Toda loved the youth. Several days later, Mr. Toda said to me, "Daisaku, when I recover my strength, I'm going to travel all over Japan giving guidance from that litter!" He had understood the sincere intention of his disciple all along.

The prime minister, our guest of honor, canceled his visit at the last minute. But nothing mattered to Mr. Toda other than that the youth, to whom he could entrust the future, were there.

Speaking to the thousands of young disciples gathered outside, Mr. Toda declared with a mighty lion's roar, "The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world!"

Truly, March 16 was the coronation ceremony of the youth, when they received their royal crowns and royal swords. As disciples, we must never forget the profound significance of that day.

Today, I want to place a crown on the head of each noble youth division member, each of my young disciples, who are striving so hard to achieve kosen-rufu.

It is only by triumphing in various struggles, however, that one earns the right to receive that glorious successor's crown.

In doing so, the first, most important thing is to live out your lives together with the SGI, the organization acting in accord with the Buddha's decree. If you stay true to your mission and boldly walk the great path of faith your whole life long, you will have no regrets. As the great Chinese historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien says, "Though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret would I have?"

Second, it is vital that you take full responsibility for achieving kosen-rufu. It is important that you have the awareness of being a key player—in other words, not to

merely regard yourself as part of the SGI but to view the SGI as an integral part of yourself.

I have done this from my youth. Even when I was a very junior frontline leader in the organization, I still regarded the entire Gakkai as my responsibility. And I agonized, pondered and prayed about how to advance kosen-rufu. In tackling any undertaking, I always tried to put myself in the shoes of my mentor, a great leader of kosen-rufu, asking myself: “What would Mr. Toda do in this situation? What approach would he take?” This is the courageous path of a champion of kosen-rufu.



I was the master of ceremonies at the March 16 gathering. When Mr. Toda’s 6,000 youthful disciples heard his impassioned cry, they were simply overjoyed. When he had finished his address to them, the ceremony came to a close amid a rendition of Gakkai songs.

That day, for some reason, my mentor’s life seemed to me like a tenuous flame on the brink of extinction. I could not dispel a heavy feeling of sadness and grief. I painfully sensed that this would be his last journey in life. The joyous struggle that we had shared when he was still strong, the wonderful happiness we experienced in propagating the Law together, now seemed bathed in the last traces of light of the vanishing sun at dusk.

I resolved to walk the lonely path of a lion alone.



David Rossi, the hero of the novel *The Eternal City*, set in Rome at the turn of the 20th century, declares: “In every true cause someone is called to martyrdom. To die for [what is] right, for humanity...is a magnificent duty, a privilege! And I am ready.” This has been my personal credo, ever since I was a young man.

Youth, my life’s treasure, who will shoulder the full responsibility for the 21st century! Stand up with me! Even if it’s just one of you, stand up and be a lion! Stand up resolutely where you are now, from this moment on! Steadily work to raise the flag of the people’s victory here, there, and everywhere!

The Eternal City of the SGI will rise from your fighting spirit.