

**DISCOVER JOY AND STRENGTH IN YOUR LIFE
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Thank you very much for attending this most significant meeting for the men's division throughout the world as we celebrate the 53rd anniversary of SGI President Ikeda joining the Soka Gakkai.

August is also the month when President Ikeda first met his mentor, Josei Toda, and formed a mutual and almost instant affinity with him based on his profound instincts that he had at last met a person in life whom he could fully trust.

In his well-known poem that he presented to Mr. Toda at his first meeting, President Ikeda said, "I spring up from the soil/To drive the darkness from my mind/To find a tall tree no storm can bend."

I believe now is the time, without any hesitation, for each of us to "spring up from the soil," to "emerge from the earth" and realize the profound mission we have. Through discovering, or rediscovering, the joy and strength in our lives, let's be ready to go forth with President Ikeda as he puts the final touches to the kosen-rufu movement from the United States.

President Ikeda has said that men are the "golden pillars for kosen-rufu." As pillars, we should always protect and foster the other divisions. But President Ikeda did not just say, "be pillars" but rather "be golden pillars." *Golden* means to shine based on winning at work, developing a happy family and carrying out activities for kosen-rufu. *Golden* means to have a high life-condition based on having appreciation for the Gohonzon, for being part of the SGI family and for being able to practice together with our mentor.

Golden also means to have great pride that as men we are, as President Ikeda said in his essay to us, "the cornerstones of the Soka Gakkai... the last runners in the relay race of kosen-rufu, the runners who determine our victory or defeat." He goes on to say, "At last, our time has come."

I am praying that you will use the opportunity of these gatherings to renew your determination toward welcoming President Ikeda back home to the United States with a high life-condition based on victory in every facet of your life. Thank you very much.