

**SIGNIFICANT DATES**  
**APRIL 2, 1958—SECOND SOKA GAKKAI PRESIDENT JOSEI TODA’S DEATH**  
**ONE MAN STANDS ALONE**  
**BY JAMIE LIPTAN, STAFF WRITER**

Josei Toda decided to change the world. A man of humble origins in a tiny country devastated by nuclear war decided that he would, alone if necessary, alleviate humanity’s suffering and lead people to happiness. He seriously believed he could do it.

Guess what? He did.

Imprisoned during World War II along with his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, for refusing to bow to the Japanese military government, Toda devoted himself to his study of the Lotus Sutra.

“To experience the meaning of those passages,” he later wrote, “I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as Nichiren Daishonin taught. When I finished chanting 2 million times, I experienced something mystic, beholding a state of existence never known to me before. Trembling with joy, I stood in my solitary cell, proclaiming to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space, ‘I have shaken off my delusions five years behind Confucius but came to know my mission five years ahead of him’” (December 2000 *Living Buddhism*, p. 11).

After his release in 1945 after more than two years of imprisonment, Toda saw for himself the depths of human suffering. The people were ravaged by the war. Sick, hungry and grieving, they had lost all hope.

Imagine Toda’s state of mind. He realized that it was exactly as the Daishonin had predicted—in the Latter Day of the Law, when humanity was suffering the most, the Mystic Law would spread far and wide to alleviate human suffering.

And Josei Toda, barely alive after years of malnutrition and financially ruined by the war, had to do it. His mentor had died in prison, too old to survive the ordeal. Everyone else had abandoned the Soka Gakkai, like rats from the proverbial sinking ship. There was, literally, no one else.

I often think of the moment it struck him, that he alone must save humanity. In my darkest hours, I don’t think I come close to knowing how lonely he must have felt. But his resolve, his faith in the power of the Law, must have been just a little stronger.

That resolve propelled him to single-handedly rebuild the Soka Gakkai, one suffering, sick, destitute person at a time. One of these people was Daisaku Ikeda. The young Ikeda was profoundly moved by Toda’s unrelenting spirit, and took that spirit as his own. It has been his unwavering foundation in spreading the Daishonin’s Buddhism across the globe.

So while Josei Toda never left Japan and only lived to be 58, his single-minded determination created the SGI we have today, an organization that *is* leading humanity to happiness. Imagine the way we’ll view this one man’s efforts 100 or 1,000 years from now, when the Daishonin’s Buddhism has reached even further into every corner of the globe and gained acceptance as a world religion.

“I am now taking a stand and fighting,” Toda said, “looking ahead 100 or 200 years into the future. But people don’t understand this. Two centuries from now, my actions and my struggles will have been proven to be the only genuine struggle for truth and justice among all of humanity” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 63).

For me, though, in those dark moments when I feel I’m at the end of my rope, his true legacy is that he did exactly what he knew he must, despite every obstacle and self-doubt: He changed the world.