

## SGI President Discusses Courage of Plymouth's Pilgrims

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“If the core people of a group are brave, responsible and considerate of others, then the entire group will without fail be victorious,” SGI President Ikeda said today at the first session of an all-Japan representatives conference. To emphasize this point, the SGI leader spoke of the 102 Pilgrims who, in 1620, braved a perilous 66-day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from England to America aboard the Mayflower, a small three-masted cargo ship.

They then established the first permanent colony at what is today Plymouth, Mass. One-third of the travelers were Puritans seeking religious freedom in the New World.

Mr. Ikeda explained that most of the settlers came from small villages and were not among the socially elite. They were instead ordinary people with little or no status.

Their leader was 30-year-old William Bradford, who eventually became the colony's governor, serving a total of 31 terms. Like the other Pilgrims, he was neither a cleric nor college-educated. He was, however, a man of unshakable character — a trait, the SGI leader said, Bradford developed by challenging a host of obstacles from early childhood.

Mr. Ikeda asserted that the SGI is also supported by ordinary people. On a daily basis, with their feet firmly on the ground, they face numerous difficulties and triumph over them.

The Pilgrims suffered untold privations, not the least of which was exposure to an inhospitable environment, cold and disease. As a result, only half of them survived the first six months. While constantly encouraging one another, they fought so desperately to survive that they didn't even have the luxury to complain.

Noting that opinion remains divided on the historical significance of that first colony, Mr. Ikeda shared the thoughts of British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) on this subject. Toynbee once said that it was the harsh circumstances encountered by that first colony that in fact were the impetus for the development of America into the great country that it has become.

Speaking then on the waves of immigrants who have followed in the Pilgrims' footsteps, Mr. Ikeda made the observation that Harvard University, where he has lectured on two occasions, was established just 16 years after the Mayflower's arrival in 1636. There is no doubt, the SGI leader said, that the pioneering spirit of those men and women to open a path for future generations continues to live on in “the flourishing country of the United States.”

President Ikeda closed his speech by quoting Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that “life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after all, is the Buddha land” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 132). He then encouraged all those attending the meeting to strive to cultivate a wonderful realm of peace and happiness, an eternal utopia for the people. He stated that those who lead noble lives for the sake of their fellow human beings are the true treasures of the world.

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