

**PERSPECTIVE: HAPPY BIRTHDAY, PRESIDENT IKEDA**  
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**LOS ANGELES**

On Jan. 2, SGI President Ikeda celebrates his 70th birthday. I see him going forward with such vigor, so energized, as if to create another 70 glorious years. As I look forward to another year with him, a question of faith arises within me.

Am I ready to carry on the same mission?

My own father died on May 5, 1997, at the age of 77. Exactly 52 years earlier, my father received a near-fatal wound in the Philippines — May 5, 1945. He survived to give me life 10 years later — a woman whose destiny it was to find the Gohonzon and a sense of mission with President Ikeda in this lifetime.

Thanks to President Ikeda's guidance, his example of humanity and my prayers to the Gohonzon, I discovered the love my father had in his heart for me before he died. In the moment when the light of life went out of him, I realized the thread that binds us through all our existences.

Since I have experienced the impermanence of life many times, I often feel like time is running out. I wish to live without regret. Someday the wind of impermanence will carry President Ikeda off into the future, so I feel that now, before he goes, I must learn as much as I can from his love for humankind.

I am an adult, 42, the next generation. President Ikeda has shown me how to live the best and richest of lives. Am I willing to advance with the courage to create a victorious life as he continues to do?

He has 50 years of vibrant faith and practice. I need to learn more from him. I must prepare myself for the future ahead, to live by his writings, to inherit and advance the vision that all our brave predecessors hold of planet Earth and the universe.

I am honored and grateful to have such a guide in my life. As I chant my way toward enlightenment with him, I wish to say:

Happy birthday, President Ikeda. I am with you in our discovery of the treasures of the heart.

**WT**