

SGI President's Visit to the Philippines The New Frontier Is Life Itself

On Feb. 11, the University of the City of Manila awarded an honorary doctorate in humanities to SGI President Ikeda, the first Japanese citizen to be so honored by the school, in recognition of his contributions to the education, culture and peace of Asia and the world.

Respected president of the University of the City of Manila, Dr. Virsely dela Cruz; distinguished members of the faculty; ladies and gentlemen:

It is my extraordinary privilege to have received the degree of Doctor of Humanities from the University of the City of Manila, a great citadel of humanistic education, its doors open to all citizens and the entire world. Thank you very much.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes out to His Honor Mayor Alfredo S. Lim for finding time, amidst the demands of his busy schedule, to send a congratulatory message for this occasion.

Dr. José Rizal, the hero of Philippine independence, wrote to a comrade of his dream to build a school. The most talented youth will come to us, he said. He expressed his desire to devote his energy to the education of the people. I feel that Dr. Rizal's sublime spirit and determination live today in this city and this university.

I was impressed to learn that the University of the City of Manila was the first in Asia to offer tuition-free admission for talented young people in less privileged circumstances. What a hope-filled vision of society, in which all young people equally enjoy the right to study and learn!

Today, Feb. 11, is the most joyful day of the year for me — it is the anniversary of the birth of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, my mentor in life. He was born in 1900, just two years after the Philippines proclaimed its independence.

Living in an era of great turbulence and strife, Mr. Toda had the consistent, unchanging desire to bring the brilliant light of peace to the people of Asia. He was also an educator with an infinite love for young people.

When I met him, I had been struggling to study while working. For some 10 years, he tutored me every morning. It was at this "Toda University" that I received one-on-one instruction in the humanities and a wide range of disciplines.

This spring marks the 40th anniversary of my mentor's passing.

I offer the great honor I have received today to the memory of my mentor in gratitude for all that I received from him.

Mr. Toda's humanist philosophy was deeply rooted in an unyielding reverence for life. He remained unbowed by a two-year imprisonment at the hands of Japan's militarist government, and his conviction that the value of life itself is supreme and absolute became the basis for the populist peace movement he later initiated.

Indeed, life contains the capacity, like flames that reach toward heaven, to transform suffering and pain into the energy needed for value-creation, into the light that illuminates darkness. Like the wind traversing vast spaces unhindered, life has the power to uproot and overturn all obstacles and difficulties. Like clear flowing water, it can wash away all stains and impurities.

And, finally, life, like the great earth that sustains plants and vegetation, impartially protects all people with its compassionate, nurturing force.

Mr. Toda therefore proclaimed that all meaningful action must start from the inner life,

its exploration and development, and the resultant transformation of individuals.

It cannot be denied that the search for knowledge in our world has increased the comfort and convenience of human society. At the same time, however, increased knowledge has given rise to weapons of mass slaughter and brought about nature's destruction.

It would be regrettable if education were to be accompanied by a loss of empathy and the desire to contribute to the welfare of others. The future of a society whose educational system produces such cold-hearted egotists could not be bright.

Rather, we must find ways of ensuring that knowledge and information are directed toward furthering the cause of human happiness and peace. It is essential that we bring forth the capacities of wisdom and compassion that exist within people's lives.

I am convinced that pioneering the greatest frontier of the 21st century — life itself — is the proud mission of humanistic education.

The educational philosophy of the University of the City of Manila is rooted in a profound faith in the precious treasures of life, those hidden within the young — in all young people — and a commitment to seek out, uncover and polish those treasures.

Indeed, your esteemed university, which is advancing proudly at the forefront of educational revolution, is of immeasurable importance to both Asia and the entire world, as your beautiful school song exalts.

I today pledge with you to uphold your school mottoes of "Wisdom," "Progress" and "Nobility," and to work alongside the distinguished faculty, staff and students of your university toward a new century of peace and prosperity for the human family.

In closing, I offer my heartfelt prayers for the continued health and well-being of President dela Cruz, and all those who have so kindly attended today.

Malamin salamat po! (Thank you very much!)

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