

**May 3 Message
We've Only Just Begun
From SGI President Ikeda**

Congratulations on your commemorative gatherings today to celebrate May 3, Soka Gakkai Day.

Walt Whitman's well-known poem "Song of the Open Road" begins with the words "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,..." and follows with the declaration "Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune...."

This poem is one of many in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, an anthology of poetry that I read over and over again when I was a struggling youth, working with all my might to help my mentor, Josei Toda, surmount the business troubles he was facing. I had already decided to advance upon life's open road with Mr. Toda as my mentor.

May 3 is a historic day in the Soka Gakkai. On this day in 1951, Josei Toda was inaugurated as the Soka Gakkai's second president. Inheriting the spiritual legacy of first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who died in prison for his beliefs during World War II, President Toda embarked in earnest on the task of rebuilding the organization.

As fate or the wondrous bonds of mentor and disciple would have it, again on May 3, 1960, I was inaugurated as the third Soka Gakkai president. At the age of 32, I bravely rose to this momentous challenge, determined to fulfill the dream and vision of my mentor.

On Oct. 2 that same year, I set off on my first overseas guidance trip with the goal of worldwide kosen-rufu.

My foremost pledge at my inauguration was the same as Nichiren Daishonin's immortal vow: "This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 174). My spirit was, if I may rephrase the words of Whitman, that "henceforth I seek not happiness; my struggle to advance our movement itself is happiness."

Thirty-eight years have passed. Without a day's rest, I have devoted myself to working all out for kosen-rufu. This has been my greatest source of joy.

On its exciting journey throughout the world, the Buddhism of the Daishonin has today spread to 128 countries. The presence of SGI members around the globe, living with vibrant hope, signals an unparalleled development in the 3,000-year history of Buddhism. We are a presence that heralds the dawn of a new era in the 21st century.

Buddhism focuses on the entire world and has a perspective of space and time as vast as the universe itself. Nevertheless, I am certain that without the appearance of the SGI, which faithfully follows the Buddha's will and decree, and without all your noble efforts as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the Daishonin's prophecy of worldwide kosen-rufu would have remained nothing more than empty words. In addition, the SGI members' presence verifies the Daishonin's prediction that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three existences would gather on the earth.

The indestructible citadel of value-creation, soka, is shining its magnificent light on the world. As long as we have courageous faith, undaunted by obstacles, the SGI will live on and prosper eternally.

All of you have traveled the path of pioneers alongside me, knowing full well that many arduous struggles lay ahead. We are all linked by bonds from the distant past. Your names will shine forever in the annals of human history. You, as well as your children and descendants, will be bathed in the undying sun of Buddhism while journeying the path of good fortune and benefit for all time. Of this you may be certain.

In the Goshō, the Daishonin writes, "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and

encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” (MW-4, 272). We have only just begun our journey through the 10,000 years of the Latter Day of the Law. The real work lies yet ahead.

The SGI has built a network of peace, culture and education in people’s hearts. I am determined to redouble my efforts to travel throughout the world and continue opening this path, taking this as my greatest honor as a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

Whitman writes in the same poem:

*Allons (let us go)! whoever you are come travel with me!
Traveling with me you find what never tires.
Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
We will sail pathless and wild seas*

I hope each of you will dedicate yourself to your noble mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth, contributing to the development of your country and local community as an exemplary citizen. With the spirit that kosen-rufu and your life are in no way separate, may you live all your days without regret.

Let’s show one another what one individual can achieve in this lifetime!

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