

Creating a Foundation for the Future
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From a speech given at the Sept. 13 region leaders teleconference.

Last month I participated in a training course in Japan along with 11 other representatives of SGI-USA. Everyone was celebrating the 51st Anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's beginning to practice Buddhism. He was very healthy and full of vitality.

For the past 51 years, President Ikeda has dedicated his life to the members' happiness and kosen-rufu. The atmosphere in Makiguchi Hall, during the headquarters leaders meeting on Aug. 27, was filled with great appreciation and joy.

President Ikeda said: "What was the human quality most valued by U.S. President John F. Kennedy? The answer is courage...President Kennedy said, 'Courage, not complacency, is our need today.'"

When we try to advance, we need courage to break through and win. If we remain satisfied with things just as they are, then we can not expect to grow. President Ikeda asserted that everything changes except Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. This means that we must determine to break out of our old shells. We shouldn't stay in our comfort zones but rather make efforts to challenge ourselves to show growth and value in our lives. There will surely be progress in our lives when we work for kosen-rufu.

We also had the opportunity to meet with SGI Deputy President Akiya. He said that in order to advance our kosen-rufu movement, we must create the foundation for the new generation. To do this, leaders must become like stepping stones.

In other words, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves to be like stepping stones across a river for our members and youth division so they can safely cross to emerge and blossom for the 21st century. This determination will bring victory to the future of America kosen-rufu.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes, "If *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind) prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas in *dotai ishin* (one in body, different in mind), they can achieve nothing remarkable" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 153).

One person asked President Ikeda: "What does it mean to fight directly connected with our mentor?" He replied, "It is to fight on the front lines of our movement and protect those who are exerting themselves for kosen-rufu. This is what connecting with the mentor means.... It is not enough to just simply pray. We should move and take action."

President Ikeda also talked about the importance of fighting evil. He quoted the Rissho Ankoku Ron, stating "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better to simply outlaw this one evil doctrine that is the source of all the trouble."

He went on to say that authority, power and arrogance are evil. Those who try to deceive the Soka Gakkai are evil. We must fight against such evil. Kosen-rufu will be propelled when we fight against evil. We must create true causes starting fresh from today. We must not relax.

President Ikeda talked about sincere spirit in our prayer by again quoting the Daishonin, "What we call faith is nothing extraordinary." It means to accomplish our mission in this life, to continue our faith and dedicate ourselves to kosen-rufu lifetime after lifetime. Then we can experience great health and vitality. According to our determination, we can develop boundless wisdom.

Faith is manifested in one's character. Your character is ultimately manifested through

your practice of Buddhism. Leaders should not harbor jealousy towards others or look down on them. Rather, leaders should be humble, embracing everyone with their hearts.

We should all make sure to check our own faith and practice. Sometimes we tend to be strict with others but not ourselves. However, it should be the opposite. We must embrace others and be strict with ourselves and be leaders who are trusted. Then kosen-rufu will definitely advance.

President Ikeda quoted the famous words of John F. Kennedy. “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” If we apply these words to ourselves, rather than asking what can the organization do for us, we should ask ourselves what can we contribute to our organization and determine to do anything for kosen-rufu.

I am determined to challenge myself to the utmost to lay a solid foundation for the younger generation. Let’s strengthen our commitment to always dedicate ourselves for the sake of the members, SGI-USA and kosen-rufu.

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