

A LETTER FROM A FATHER TO A DECEASED SON

Dear George,

It has been almost five years since I lost you. It reminds me of the proverb that states, "Time flies like an arrow."

It is true that time heals some of the wounds of life. On the other hand, it is also true that there are some pains that cannot be fully cured. These pains only deepen and become more distinct as time passes, turning into sorrows with which we must struggle throughout our lives. My experience of your death is such a pain.

Whenever I recall your accident five years ago, I experience the deepest sense of regret. Yet, at the same time, I am also filled with wholehearted feelings of appreciation for the beautiful life we shared as father and son for 22 years. I have many unforgettable memories of you, and I have engraved these recollections in my heart as my precious gifts from you.

Even though you departed this life at a young age, your image is engraved in my heart, and that image will live as long as I do. I really want your beautiful smiling face to dwell deeply in my heart forever. For this reason, I have determined to lead a joyful life myself. Otherwise, how could I ask you to keep smiling?

I have shared my resolution to lead a happy life with your mother, Patricia, sister, Margaret, and brother, John. And they all agreed to accept the challenge of building a wonderful family to prove the great power of the Gohonzon, and for the sake of your happiness, wherever you are.

George, I really want you to know that the four of us are all doing extremely well. Every day our lives are full of a great sense of gratitude to the Gohonzon, SGI President Ikeda, and our friends in the SGI. In truth, I am not sure I would have been able to survive your tragic loss without these three great supports.

We are strongly convinced that the best way to express our debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon, President Ikeda and the SGI-USA is to dedicate our lives to the happiness of other people and the development of the SGI-USA in any way we can.

George, do you remember that you gave your mother and me a bottle of Irish Cream liqueur in a beautiful box as a wedding anniversary gift a few years before your passing? I was so happy — not simply because of the present itself — but rather because of the warm consideration you showed to buy a gift for your mother and me out of the small salary you were earning as a delivery man.

Some months later we finished the bottle, but, for some reason, we kept its beautiful container and have been using it as a vessel for small change. From time to time, I would use this change. But after your death, your mother and I decided to fill the container with our small change, then, when the box was filled, we contributed all the money in your name to the SGI-USA. About three years ago, the container was full and we were able to fulfill our plan.

Now, for a second time, the box is again filled with change, and the annual SGI-USA May commemorative contribution activity is quickly approaching. Your mother and I are again overjoyed to present yet another donation in your name.

To be honest, I was surprised how all these small amounts of pennies, nickels, dimes

and quarters added up to a rather large sum, but I have come to see that an accumulation of items of small value can add up to something of surprising value. Nichiren Daishonin states in one of his writings, “[The number] one is the mother of [the number] ten thousand” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 112). Beside the significance of this short passage that Dai-shonin expounded upon, I interpreted that each and every number, starting from one all the way to infinity, consists of nothing but a multiple of one. Likewise, an organization, a society and the world consists of nothing but assemblies of individuals. I firmly believe that we can accomplish any goal in our lives through an accumulation of tenacious and steadfast efforts. At the same time, I have learned not to underestimate the value of what even one small effort by one person can mean to others.

George, these donations are a collective effort involving you, your mother and me because our connection to you gave us the wisdom to make these offerings. These donations are also a vehicle for you to participate in kosen-rufu activities for the sake of the 21st century as an eternal young men’s division member. After we present this contribution to the organization, your mother and I will begin refilling the vessel with change in order to make yet another donation in your name on May 3, 2001.

And there is another offering you made — you donated your organs at the time of your death. I want to report to you that these donations meant a new left kidney for a 33-year-old woman from New York; a new right kidney for a 40-year-old male dialysis patient; a new liver for a 9-year-old girl; a new pancreas for a 33-year-old woman; and most remarkable of all, a new heart for a 60-year-old man. Moreover, the donation of your bones allowed several people to avoid amputation and regain the use of their limbs after serious injuries or bone cancer. In addition, the New York Firefighters Skin Bank informed us of at least two severe burn victims who received skin grafts because of you.

These medical reports have left me amazed by how much good one person’s generosity can do for other people. I am sincerely praying for the excellent health and longevity of each person who received your organs. George, I am so proud of you.

And yet another present you gave continues to have wonderful impact. George, your mother is still talking about the beautiful floral bouquet you gave her on her birthday just four months before your death. Whenever she mentions it, it is with great joy and appreciation, and she also is confident that you will present her with an even larger bouquet in the future.

Until we next meet you, we will, together with President Ikeda, dedicate our lives for kosen-rufu in the best way we can. Through these actions, we will become better parents by the time we meet you again.

Lastly, I would like to read my favorite passage from President Ikeda, a passage that I treasure with my whole life for your sake: “No matter how disheartening the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we must not allow our resolute faith and conviction to waver. We must not allow our courage to falter. We absolutely must not be swayed.

“‘I have faith!’ ‘I have pride!’ ‘I have a mission!’ ‘I have hope!’ ‘These are my treasures!’ Those who live with this wholehearted cry and conviction under any circumstance are people of genuine faith” (April 7, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

Please have a good rest until we see each other next lifetime.

Good night, George.

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