

BECOME A MODEL FOR THE WORLD SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECHES IN THE UNITED STATES IN FEBRUARY, 1990

To celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the historic visit of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda to the United States in February 1990, *Living Buddhism* presents excerpts from the speeches and guidance he shared at that time. The SGI-USA organization was called NSA in 1990. The following material has been edited to reflect the current name as well as current translations of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and *The Lotus Sutra*. All dates are from 1990.

Become a Model for the Rest of the World

First SGI-USA Training Meeting at Malibu Training Center, February 12.

The worldwide kosen-rufu movement was launched here in the United States thirty years ago. These thirty years have been the first phase. Now, I would like to designate this last decade, up to October 2, 2001, as the second stage in the worldwide kosen-rufu movement. The purpose of my current visit to your country is to see that this new phase gets off to a smooth start.

All of you are together as like-minded seekers of the way from the infinite past. I hope you will advance further in harmony as wonderful companions who have a deep connection with each other, based on the Mystic Law.

All members are equal in front of the Gohonzon. You are beautiful friends sharing the same faith. I would like all of you to move forward cheerfully, amicably, and with hearts and minds in unison.

True leaders are those who protect their members, praising them and being tolerant toward them. In contrast, leaders who exploit their positions in the organization, rebuking people and acting in a high-handed manner, not only cause the Buddha's children to suffer but make causes for their own suffering in the future as well.

If you allow that kind of leader to have control, then both parties—the leader and the members—will end up in misery. This must be avoided at all costs. The world of faith exists for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood and true happiness in this life.

It is important to have a sufficiently elevated life-condition so that you can calmly accept whatever happens in life, always striving to put problems into proper perspective and solving them with a positive attitude. Happiness blossoms forth from such a strong and all-encompassing life-condition.

You can forge the path to a fulfilling and enjoyable life if you have the depth of faith to regard everything as a source for creating happiness and value. Conversely, if you see everything in a negative or pessimistic light, your life will gradually but inevitably be plunged into darkness. Buddhism teaches the subtle principle of *ichinen* (basic attitude of life) and, moreover, the power of faith.

Build a Solid Foundation

SGI-USA Representatives Conference in Malibu, February 13.

Today I would like to talk briefly on five points that I hope you will always bear in mind.

In the first place, please advance steadily with the awareness that you are now building a foundation for the next thousand years of the kosen-rufu movement in the United States. There is no need to be impatient. Anything that is accomplished quickly and easily will not

long endure. Now is the time to concentrate on the construction of a solid foundation. I hope you will complete this work slowly but surely, filled with hope and joy.

Laying the groundwork may sound unexciting and lack the brilliance that attracts people's attention. However, such painstaking work is indispensable and extremely important. Once the foundation is solidified, on it you can construct anything. Please remember that the task of building the foundation of the castle of the Law, which will endure for a thousand years, is in the hands of the current generation of SGI-USA members. For my part, I will spare no effort in supporting you in any way I can.

The second point that I want to make is that capable people are the greatest treasure. Without capable people neither the eternal establishment of the Law nor kosen-rufu can be achieved.

First of all, you must "find" capable people. Just as a miner searches for gold ore in ordinary rocks, you have to look for members who possess great potential, and then work to develop their ability with your heart and soul.

Prayer is most fundamental in raising capable people. You should pray earnestly to the Gohonzon that the person you have found will become an able person important to SGI-USA. And then, with this prayer, you take the utmost care to help that person develop.



You should sincerely respect capable people and raise them with the determination to make them even more outstanding and abler than you are yourself. Looking down on one's juniors or exploiting them for personal gain is an offense comparable to that of slandering the Law. Please remember that one who raises capable people is great. Such a person is truly capable and important.

The third point concerns holding joyful meetings and conducting dialogue that is imbued with joy and wisdom. By making these your mottoes and living up to them, SGI-USA can become an exemplary organization for kosen-rufu.

The *raison d'être* of the world of faith is to help people become happy. In essence, it is a gathering of supreme freedom and joy. No one has the right to reprimand and cause suffering for others. Nor is anyone obliged to let himself be reprovved and made to feel badly.

For example, whether or not someone succeeds in helping others take faith in the teachings of Buddhism, the simple fact that he or she practices is in itself most praiseworthy. If one can feel heartfelt joy in being able to expound the Law and share it with others, one's blessings will increase still further. Joyfully engaging in propagation and other activities—this is the spirit of Buddhism.

Again, no matter what difficulties you may have, when you go to a meeting and see friends, you feel relief and a sense of joy, and your heart is filled with hope. It is my sincere hope that you hold wonderful meetings of this kind—happy gatherings where friends warmly pat each other on the back, encourage one another and share their joys and sorrows.

My wish is that SGI-USA will become an organization overflowing with smiles, friendship and humanity. I hope that all of you, without a single exception, will lead lives of the greatest fulfillment and joy

Intellect will play a very important role in the coming age. By intellect I mean refined wisdom, clear reasoning, profound philosophy and broad-ranging knowledge. We are entering an age when the people will develop their intelligence and wisdom, infusing society with their new outlook.



Fourth, you must respect those who are fighting for kosen-rufu, irrespective of their race or nationality.

There are many differences, for instance, between the cultures, climates and social systems of Japan and the United States. Therefore, it is only natural that there might be differences in how kosen-rufu is advanced in the two countries.

Fundamentally speaking, however, infinite variety derives from the one Law, and the true entity of life—as described by the one hundred worlds and one thousand factors as well as three thousand realms in a single moment of life—is the same in all societies. Viewed from this dimension, it is important that we respect anyone who is struggling on the forefront of our movement for kosen-rufu. This attitude will become a great driving force behind the spread of the Mystic Law.

President Toda once said, “If you fail to respect those who are fighting for kosen-rufu, you will be unable to develop correct faith and there will be no development in the organization that you are leading.” In this sense, I ask that you receive guidance on what is important for advancing kosen-rufu.

Fifth, I would like you to forge ahead, always taking good care of your health. All of you are extremely precious children of the Buddha who are dedicated to the cause of kosen-rufu. Nothing would be more regrettable than for you to impair your health.

Therefore, I ask that you maintain a rhythm in your daily life and get ample rest. Things that you volunteer to undertake on your own initiative aside, there is no need to overstrain yourself at the expense of your health on account of organizational pressures.

I sincerely hope that you will devote yourself to kosen-rufu and Buddhism while living with a correct rhythm and carrying out meaningful and enjoyable activities. Please establish a splendid life. I would like to conclude my speech with my prayers that you will be able to open up a path for the prosperity of your families.

Cultivate a New Common Sense

SGI-USA Youth Division Training Session at Minuteman Hall, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 14.

Today I would like to share with you some of my ideas on history and life. What I desire above all is to raise leaders who are well equipped with the power of intellect. Therefore I hope that each of you will study broadly and develop your understanding of life, society and the universe, based on your faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. This type of learning enables you to cultivate a rich state of life, or inner world, drawing forth profound wisdom and limitless leadership ability from the depths of your life.

When the long-entrenched barriers of established “common sense” in people’s hearts are broken down, a new common sense, borne on the wings of lively dialogue, begins to take shape. This signifies the beginning of a new era and of fundamental change in society.

Before Copernicus, the heliocentric theory was beyond or outside of common sense, as was the theory of evolution before Charles Darwin. Today, however, those ideas are widely accepted. Likewise, there are currently many misconceptions and prejudices regarding Buddhism. Nevertheless, I am confident that in the future the Buddhist teachings will become a matter of common sense among all people. That will be the time of kosen-rufu.

Buddhism is so tremendously farsighted and profound a religion that, externally, it is difficult to grasp its true message. People with little understanding of Buddhism can no

more discern its value than a child can understand the real value of a diamond. However, please be confident that the development of human wisdom will produce an increasing body of evidence pointing to the greatness of Buddhism.

In the course of the struggle for American independence, there was a small fifty-page pamphlet that triggered a momentous change in people's outlooks. This pamphlet served to alter the destiny of America and the world.

The pamphlet to which I refer was "Common Sense" (1776) by Thomas Paine. This publication shook dispirited and cowardly people from the shackles of their accustomed common sense as colonial subjects.

The author appealed to his fellow citizens to take a brave step toward freedom and independence, never succumbing to the authority and power represented by tyrannical rule and hereditary distinctions of class. He asserted that by taking one courageous step forward they could arrive at common sense that was new and correct.

This pamphlet sold 100,000 copies in only three months. Considering the difference in population size, this would correspond to roughly ten million copies today. It was truly a bestseller.

The power of the written word sometimes defies the imagination. The cry for freedom in this booklet galvanized the hearts of the people.

We are now advancing toward a new century, a century of life, in which all people will enjoy the benefits of equality, happiness and freedom to the fullest. The fundamental "common sense" of Buddhism and of life itself forms the basis for our activities toward this goal.

The road we walk is not level. We must climb a great mountain, a task that invariably requires painful effort. However, in the world of Buddhism, no effort is wasted or in vain. All causes that you make will be engraved in the depths of your life; they are passages in the golden diary of your eternal existence.

Thomas Paine volunteered to serve in the American War of Independence. He was then 39, roughly the same age as many senior leaders of our youth division.

I always place high value on personal initiative. Spontaneity underlies the spirit of autonomy and independence; conversely, taking action because one is told to amounts to slavery of the spirit. *Kosen-rufu* will be advanced by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*. Because they struggle on their own volition, they have no complaints or grievances. The greater the obstacles they face, the greater the courage, wisdom and power they muster from within.

When Paine joined the War of Independence, the American forces, led by General George Washington, were at a grave impasse. They were no match for the enemy forces, and in battle after battle they were defeated and forced to retreat. Soldiers deserted in droves.

Paine dared to join the army at a time when its defeat seemed certain. In what Paine later called "a passion of patriotism," he poured his heart into writing a document based on his own experience in the continental army. It was the tract "The American Crisis" that begins with the famous sentence, "These are the times that try men's souls." In this piece he posed the question: Will we shrink from this moment of crisis on which the war's outcome hangs, or shall we stand firm and turn the situation to our favor?

He also wrote, "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have the consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the glorious the triumph." Victory is not easily won. If

it is, it will not be a source of pride. What gratification, for instance, could a sumo wrestler derive from defeating a child? Only when one fights and wins over dire circumstances will one's victory shine brilliantly in history.

On a cold, blizzard day toward the end of the year, General Washington gathered soldiers who, after successive defeats, had lost their spirit and become thoroughly exhausted. The brave general had Paine's essay read to these soldiers, as though calling out to them on the front lines of the battlefield. Passion raced through their hearts, and their spirit to carry on the war for justice was revived. Paine's cry, arising from his soul as he contemplated the desperate situation, filled each soldier with the power of infinite courage and hope.

In this way, the American army righted itself and launched a great offensive. Crossing a frozen river swiftly, they crushed the enemy soldiers who had been caught off guard capriciously celebrating Christmas. This battle changed the course of the war and eventually led to the victory of independence.

In any struggle, the critical point is how a leader inspires others. As you are leaders of kosen-rufu, I ask that you encourage friends of the Mystic Law in such a manner that the powers of faith and life force surge forth in their lives. I hope that your efforts in the struggle of faith will serve to increase the majesty and strength of the Buddhist gods.

Profound Happiness Exists in Efforts for Construction

Second SGI Pan-American Joint Conference held in Minuteman Hall, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 15.

All of you are noble forerunners in your respective countries and communities, and the benefits to which you are entitled are immeasurable. This calls to mind a passage from "Letter to Myomitsu Shonin."

Although this letter was addressed to a male believer, Nichiren Daishonin's guidance is directed to his wife as well. When the Daishonin wrote to a follower, male or female, he never failed to show great consideration for the person's spouse. The Daishonin respected both men and women equally. Where such an attitude is present—in the household as well as in the organization—there is solid growth.

The Daishonin writes: "As first one person, then two persons, then a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, and then all the people throughout the country come to chant the daimoku, before you know it, their blessings will accrue to you. Those blessings will be like the drops of dew that gather to form the great ocean, or the specks of dust that pile up to become Mount Sumeru" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 672).

As this passage indicates, although at the outset the membership in your country may be small, the Mystic Law will spread without fail when the right time arrives. Thus, there is no need for you to be impatient. If you can achieve something very easily right from the start, you will find no sense of fulfillment or joy. It is in making tenacious, all-out efforts for construction that profound happiness lies.



In a letter to the Ikegami brothers and their wives, who had begun practicing during the initial stage of the Daishonin's propagation activities, Nichiren Daishonin states, "Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart" (WND, 502). These words of the original Buddha suggest the immeasurable value of pioneers.

For pioneers, hardships and sufferings are inevitable. However, the fact that they have blazed a trail and the growth that they achieve as a result are undeniable achievements. This is indicated by the sutra passage “If you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present” (WND, 279).

There is no doubt that with the passage of time and in lifetime after lifetime, you will enjoy immense good fortune welling forth from the depths of your life. You will enjoy both material and spiritual happiness and develop a profound state of life. Some of you may become great leaders in society, others distinguished scholars or master artists—all working to further advance kosen-rufu. In every lifetime throughout the 10,000 years of the Latter Day of the Law, you will be able to live such full and fulfilling lives. Please be convinced of the great blessings that you will enjoy in your present and future existences. Firm confidence in this will enable you to elevate yourself to an even higher plane.



Second President Toda detested formality. And for this reason, as his disciple, I have tried to place foremost emphasis on substance. Formalities are important in certain cases, but mere formality that lacks substance is an evil. Formalities in and of themselves have no life, whereas substance is alive. Formality is provisional and substance essential. Formality is conventional and therefore conservative, but substance provides the impetus for progress and development.

Suppose a meeting is held. If one is caught up with formality, concerned only about how many people attend or whether the meeting goes off without a hitch, one loses sight of substance. This is a sign of failure as a leader.

Even if the participants are few, if they are convinced of the greatness of faith and feel joy, thereby deepening their confidence in the Gohonzon, the meeting is a success. In this case, you are focusing on substance. Let’s say, for example, there are only three people at a meeting, but when they pray to the Gohonzon, read the Goshō and inspire one another, their lives are illuminated by the flame of faith. From the standpoint of Buddhism, such a meeting is a great success.

On the other hand, even though thousands may attend a meeting, and it may proceed smoothly and with an air of grandeur, if it does not inspire the joy of faith in the hearts of members, in the final analysis it is a vain and pointless charade.

Our meetings are held neither for the sake of leaders nor for the sake of the organization. They are intended to awaken and support the development of individual members. Both an organization and its leadership exist for the sake of individuals. This accords with the teachings of Buddhism. If, instead, individuals are manipulated to serve the needs of an organization and its leadership, the spirit of Buddhism is contradicted. In Buddhism, such a perverse relationship between the organization or leadership and the individual will block the power of the Law, stop the flow of benefits and stifle the development of kosen-rufu. Giving warm encouragement and care to each person is the basis for victory.

The organization is a gathering of human beings, a network of individuals. If a leader feels that his organization is dull and lifeless, unable to produce remarkable results, in reality this is an indication of the leader’s and the individual members’ states of life.

If, blinded by the mirage, of an organization, a leader tries to operate by giving orders and applying pressure, nothing will change, because no spontaneous or genuine power will be generated among the people who make up that body. We must understand the subtle character of people’s hearts.

Advance With Awareness That You Are ‘SGI-USA of the World’

Eleventh SGI General Meeting, World Peace Ikeda Auditorium in Santa Monica, February 17.

At this significant general meeting, I would like to speak about the Declaration of Independence of the United States.

Today, the deep shadows of autocracy and tyranny are rapidly receding. Historically, America’s Declaration of Independence represents the first ray of democracy and the dawn of liberty. It was on July 4, 1776, that the Continental Congress of the thirteen federated states unanimously adopted the Declaration of Independence.

The declaration sets forth the principle that all human beings are equal and asserts this to be self-evident. It also proclaims outright that “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are natural inalienable rights of all people that no one may infringe upon. This historic declaration has much in common with the Buddhist ideal of the inherent dignity of human life.

This document preceded the French Revolution by thirteen years. In this sense, the American War of Independence was a landmark divide in world history. Fifty-six delegates representing thirteen states signed the document. Along with the Declaration of Independence, their names will live forever.

Like history itself, the lives of those who create history are everlasting. All of you have dedicated yourselves over these past thirty years to opening the hitherto untrodden path of kosen-rufu in your respective countries. Each of your names, without exception, will be remembered forever, throughout the Latter Day of the Law. And the blessings you accumulate are everlasting, indestructible and inexhaustible. This is due to the workings of the Buddhist Law; it is the promise of the Buddha.



The Declaration of Independence was drafted by Thomas Jefferson, who subsequently was elected the third president of the United States. The important task of drafting the document fell on Jefferson who, at age thirty-three, was the youngest of the five committee members. Replying to the great trust they had placed in him, the young Jefferson is said to have prepared the document in just a few days.

To actively promote young people of outstanding ability to positions of responsibility and allow them to give free rein to their potential accords with the spirit of Buddhism. It is also the spirit of the SGI, and it ought to be the spirit of each member-organization. The reason for this is that the dynamic activities of young people are the fundamental driving force for fresh development.

Now, what was it that Jefferson labored over? To what did he pay the closest attention? It was neither novelty nor affected formality. His sole wish was to make the Declaration of Independence the crystallization of the American spirit. Jefferson was a person who, throughout his entire life, maintained the vibrantly pulsing spirit of America.

It is the cry of the spirit from the very depths of a person’s life that shakes and moves other people’s hearts. Similarly, Buddhism is above all concerned with the world of the heart. It expounds the principle that enables us to manifest the infinite power of the spirit. People of faith should strive to become outstanding citizens of their respective countries. There is no need for you to try to imitate others or force yourself into following any specific pattern of behavior.

In 1800, when Jefferson was fifty-seven years old, he wrote in a letter, “I have sworn...

eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” I am of the same belief. Freedom is something that you must fight for and gain by and for yourself. It is not something that is handed over on a silver platter.

One who has the courage to speak the truth lives a truly splendid and fulfilling life. In any sphere of society, if one loses this courage and becomes obsequious, one will be unable to resist exploitation by corrupt authorities.

The life of a person who shrinks before oppression and tries to get by with cunning strategies and falsehood is extremely pitiful. Such a life is self-defeating.

Rather, by fighting against and pushing through all the evil that oppresses one, both internally and externally, one establishes a magnanimous self and a profound and happy state of life. This is the purpose of faith.

Buddhism describes the fundamental anguish that restricts the freedom of life as the four sufferings or the eight sufferings. The four universal sufferings comprise birth, old age, sickness and death. In more detail, we can describe them as follows: the suffering of living bound by the shackles of karma; the loneliness of old age; the anguish of sickness and the fear of that most fundamental fact, death. The eight sufferings include four additional sufferings: the suffering of having to part with loved ones; the suffering of having to meet those whom one hates; the suffering of being unable to obtain what one desires, as in the case of one who wishes to become wealthy or successful but is unable to realize these desires; and the suffering arising from the five components, in other words, the suffering of being unable to realize harmony in the physical and spiritual aspects of one’s life and of feeling heavy and depressed.

It is the sharp sword of the Mystic Law and the great power of faith that enable us to completely sever the chains of these sufferings. Therefore, I wish to make it clear that in order to secure eternal freedom and happiness, you must absolutely not be cowardly, especially in faith.

By coincidence, Thomas Jefferson died at the age of eighty-three on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence. A similar example of historic coincidence is evident in the fact that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, died on the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

Ten days prior to his death, in a letter of thanks for an invitation to a ceremony commemorating fifty years of independence, Jefferson expressed the sentiment that the Declaration of Independence would become a signal to awaken people around the world, encouraging them to sever the chains of ignorance and superstition that had hitherto bound them in order to win liberty. I feel that now, some one-hundred-sixty years later, as we contemplate the current toward a century of peace that has emerged in all parts of the world, we can see Jefferson smiling brightly in victory.

Become People of True Wealth

SGI joint training session at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 18.

We are gathered at a university, a seat of wisdom. Therefore, let me first speak about the significance of the university.

When the British poet John Masefield (1878-1967) wrote “There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university,” he was not admiring the beauty of a university’s buildings or its appearance. Rather, its beauty lies in the fact that it is “a place where those

who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see.”

In other words, the university is a place for the liberation of humankind. It leads people from the darkness of ignorance to the light of intelligence, from spiritual blindness to awakening, from barbarous chaos to civilized order, and from slavery of the soul to its independence. To put it another way, the university is a fortress where, led by the light of reason, human beings achieve spiritual development; it is also a castle for defending civilization against barbarism, a castle founded on the love of truth. A university no doubt is in the vanguard of the effort to expel ignorance—the basic cause for all miseries—from the earth. It is therefore aptly said that nothing in this world is more beautiful than a university. President John F. Kennedy once cited these impressive words of Masfield in an address.

Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), a renowned twentieth-century philosopher who taught at Harvard University, remarked that “the task of a university is the creation of the future.” He meant that universities, in the name of reason and civilization, determine the future of humanity, that they in fact shape the future course of history.

In this sense, because we have founded a university we have participated in the creation of a future. A university in the present is the epitome of society in the future. Therefore, please be convinced that the victory of our university will contribute to the victory of humankind.

One of the mottoes of the Soka University Los Angeles campus is: “Be a dynamic force in developing a Pan-Pacific culture.” Soka University will host the Second Pacific Basin Symposium on the campus this coming summer, with the participation of representatives from the United Nations University. It is argued from various angles that the twenty-first century will be an age in which Pan-Pacific nations flourish.



Gongyo Is a Grand and Noble Rite

To SGI-USA youth at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 19

I would like to take the opportunity provided by today’s training session of the youth division to present a succinct and easily comprehensible discussion of the significance of gongyo. Because of the limitations of time I cannot pursue the subject in all its details, so I would like all of you to consider and explore this topic on your own afterwards as well.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches that our existence is identical to the universe as a whole, and the universe as a whole is identical to our existence. Each individual human life is a microcosm.

The practice of gongyo is a grand and noble rite to achieve the vital communication of the microcosm of each person’s existence with the universe, based on the Gohonzon.

The correspondence of each part of our bodies to parts of the universe is proof that our existence is a microcosm. Our heads are round like the heavens above us are round, and our eyes are like the sun and the moon. We close them and open them, like day and night. Our hair shines like the sparkling stars. Our eyebrows are like the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

Our breath is the wind, and the quiet breathing from our nostrils is like the still air of the valleys and dales.

There are some 360 joints in the human body, and they stand for the days of the year.

The twelve major joints signify the twelve months.

The warm, front side of our body—our abdomen and stomach—is spring and summer. The cold, hard back is fall and winter.

Our blood vessels and arteries are streams and rivers. When we suffer a cerebral hemorrhage, it is as if a dam or dike has burst. Our bones are stones, and our skin and muscle are like the earth. Our body hair is a forest.

Buddhist scriptures discuss in detail these correspondences, including each of the internal organs, teaching that our body is indeed a universe in miniature.

There are clouds in the heavens. The wind blows, the stars twinkle. There are oceans on earth. The rivers flow. Volcanoes erupt. And great quantities of metals and minerals—gold, silver, copper, potassium, calcium—lie in the earth's depths.

The activities and qualities of all of these materials are also contained in our bodies.

The infinite elementary particles of the cosmos—atoms, protons, photons, electrons, neutrons, and all the rest—microscopic animals such as bacteria, the activities of good and evil, and the laws of gravity, the conservation of mass and energy, and all other laws of the universe also apply in almost the same fashion to the microcosm of our bodies.

A look at the operation of our bodies suggests that they are great pharmaceutical plants. They have the capability to produce the drugs we need to preserve our health. They take in food and transform it into nourishment and energy.

The human brain has the capability of a giant computer—even though we may not always be able to use it!

The sixty trillion cells of our bodies work together in their established order in a perfect biorhythm. This is the original order of things.

Our existence is the universe, and its life processes are sublime. A slight change in the heat of the sun will enormously affect not only the Earth but all the other planets. If the Earth's rotation were to stop for the briefest instant, or if its axis were to tilt the slightest degree, all living things would be threatened with extinction.

That is how subtle the natural order is. And further, a firm and irrevocable law of the universe exists. This holds true for the microcosm as well.

It is science that pursues this invisible but truly existent law, and technology is the invention of machines and other devices based on the fruits of scientific research.

Nichiren Daishonin discovered and awoke to the great law of all existence that underlies all the partial laws governing all spiritual and physical phenomena, and it was he who revealed that law to humanity as Nam-myoho- rengo-kyo. This Mystic Law applies equally to the universe as a whole and to each and every individual human existence. The universe and the individual are one in this Mystic Law.

Under certain circumstances, an invisible law takes form as a visible existence. The individual human existence, for example, emerges out of its state of fusion with the rest of the universe by taking shape in the womb and being born in the world.

A ship can be regarded as a tangible representation of the law of buoyancy, just as an airplane is a representation of the laws of aerodynamics, a radio or television program a representation of the law of electromagnetic waves. All of these objects give shape to invisible laws.

The fundamental law of the universe and individual existence is also invisible. The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon as a visual representation of that Mystic Law for the people of the world. The Lotus Sutra and other Buddhist scriptures are the instruction manuals for the Gohonzon.

Josei Toda, my teacher and the second president of the Soka Gakkai, explained the Gohonzon in an easily comprehensible way as “a machine to produce happiness.”

When we practice gongyo and chant daimoku before the Gohonzon, our individual existence is perfectly harmonized with the universe.

Both the universe and our individual existence are the concrete manifestation of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, as is the Gohonzon. That is why, when we practice gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon, our existence and the universe mesh as perfectly as two gears, and with an initial creak begin to work together.

The single life-moment (*ichinen*) of the individual becomes one with the three thousand (*sanzen*) factors and realms of the universe and begins to produce great value. This is the concrete practice of *ichinen sanzen*.

Through that practice we can acquire wisdom and good fortune, and glow with the energy to overcome any obstacle throughout the four seasons, three hundred sixty-five days a year; we can enter the way to the eternal happiness and attain eternity, joy, true self and purity (*jo raku ga jo*).

Gongyo is a practice which calls forth and activates the infinite power that the microcosm inherently possesses. It transforms your fate, breaks through any apparent dead end and converts sufferings into happiness. It creates a transformation, a revolution of the microcosm. It is a diagram in miniature of kosen-rufu in our lives.

The kosen-rufu that is our aim is a movement to transform the universe, the Earth and human society into a world of peace, comfort and harmony in accord with the rhythm of the Mystic Law.

If you let an automobile or any other machine fall into disuse, it will rust and stop working correctly. You have to use it and maintain it regularly and properly. Why, the same thing is even true of the hair on our heads: If we don't wash it regularly, we'll be encrusted with dandruff!

If we don't practice gongyo, the rhythm of our lives will be thrown off kilter, just as a machine that isn't oiled will rust.

Gongyo and chanting daimoku are like starting the automobile's engine every day and driving in the direction of happiness and truth.

By doing so day after day, you will gradually attain perfect unity with the universe and the Law. That state is the state of the Buddha.

Once that has happened, you will be able to enjoy yourself with complete freedom for all eternity. Your existence will be a diamond that will never perish throughout the three existences.

To attain Buddhahood in this life, the Daishonin warns us with firm concern that we must never retreat in our practice.

Even though we may experience a period of sadness or depression, the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment teaches us that great sufferings are bound to be transformed into equally great joy, progress and value. There is nothing to fear, since the Gohonzon possesses the infinite power of the Law and the Buddha.

We often say that strong faith, valiant and untiring practice and courageous acts are important. This is an expression of the truth that without a strong will and courageous practice it is impossible to achieve great things.

You will not be able to communicate in a discussion with another unless you are clear and direct. If you lack the courage of your convictions and mumble vague things, you won't make any impression on your listener. Nor can you strike a chord in another's heart.

And of course you will not be able to move or convince that person. To do that you need to be very determined and sure.

Isn't the same thing true of love?

It's certainly true in a job interview. Unless you present your thoughts clearly and forcefully, you won't make any impression on the interviewer. In other words, mental determination and courageous actions can change any situation and they possess a critical capability to produce happiness.

To fly, a plane needs the extra push it gets by accelerating down a runway. To get good grades in school, you need the extra push of study before a test.

Whatever you do, to achieve something better, to reach a higher level, you need a push. Buddhism teaches practice for oneself and practice for others. If either one is lacking, you cannot practice properly.

The Gohonzon is the concrete manifestation of the very existence of Nichiren Daishonin, who taught kosen-rufu. Because of that, if you only practice gongyo and chant daimoku and don't take any other action for the sake of kosen-rufu or improving your own life, the Gohonzon will not have its true, full effect.

If, however, you take actions to achieve kosen-rufu, they will serve as that extra push for your own life and help you leap to higher and higher states of mind in your gongyo and chanting as well.

And it is only natural that the energy you acquire through the gongyo practice for yourself will be channeled back into your activities for others, for kosen-rufu.

The fact is that the practice of gongyo and your actions in service of kosen-rufu will become one, and together they will unlock the infinite power of the Mystic Law in your life.

In Buddhism, practice is faith. That means action is faith, and without action there can be no true faith. The action I speak of is the way of practice for oneself and for others that is taught in Nichiren Daishonin's writings.

Action is the source of blessings and merits. In propagating the teachings, for example, whether the person you are presenting the teachings to arouses faith or not is that person's concern. The effects of our action of propagating will vary, depending on the person's capacities and other conditions.

There is no need at all to rejoice or lament over each effect. You can be proud that you have practiced the truest, most wonderful law of life in the universe to the best of your ability and go forward with your head held high. One who has acted for the sake of kosen-rufu is already a great victor in life.

The words "the heads of those who cause affliction will be split in seven pieces" are written on the Gohonzon. This is a warning that it is wrong to seek to harm this law of your own being. Abandoning the teachings or slandering them are self-destructive actions that are bound to split you apart.

We also find the words "those who make offerings will acquire blessings surpassing the Buddha's ten names."

This forceful statement tells us that the merits of one who makes offerings to the Gohonzon and spreads the teaching will be far greater than the magnificent merits of the one who makes offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. This is a promise that our personal microcosm will absorb the nourishment of all the blessings in the macrocosm, the whole universe, and be elevated to a state of existence of the highest happiness itself.

Thus we know that the children of the Buddha who strive for kosen-rufu are each

guaranteed to attain the ultimate degree of happiness. There is no one who will be more blessed.

“For both the present and the future” is also written on the Gohonzon. For present and future. That is what faith is for, what the Buddhist Law is for.

When we worship the Gohonzon, the eternal life of time without beginning wells up within us. Our faith is that every day, every instant begins from time without beginning.

We are always setting out, full of hope, from today to the future, from this moment to eternal happiness. We are always young, always beginning.

My message to you is that you must be absolutely certain of this and live your wonderful lives without regret, with joy and brightness, always moving forward.

Worshipping the Gohonzon Opens Your Life to the Entire Universe

To SGI-USA youth at Malibu Training Center, February 20.

I want our young people to study doctrine, and I also want them to test themselves in action. With that hope in mind, as well as with the great appreciation I feel for your daily efforts, I would like to discuss today several points concerning the basis of faith.

We just finished evening gongyo together and expressed our deepest prayers to the Gohonzon. It is inappropriate to discuss the Gohonzon lightly, but the history of Buddhism in the United States is short and it is my duty as a leader to implant conviction and determined faith in your hearts to whatever extent I can.

For that reason, I would like to discuss several essential points concerning the Gohonzon, though I may not be able to explain it completely.

Gohonzon means fundamental object of devotion. It is the object which we pray to and have faith in as the basis of life. It is only natural, then, that our lives are fundamentally determined by the object we take as our object of devotion.

Traditionally, the objects of devotion in Buddhism were most frequently images of the Buddha. In some cases, paintings of the Buddha were used. In early Buddhism it is true, there were no Buddhist images, but in later ages images of the Buddha were created in northwest India, in the Gandhara region, under the influence of Grecian culture. Buddhist images were one of the products of the cultural intercourse of the Silk Road.

Ordinary people became familiar with the image of the Buddha through these statues and paintings, and they aroused faith in the Buddha and reverence for him through such works of art.

But Nichiren Daishonin’s basic object of devotion consists of writing, of words. Rather than worshipping a graphic image, the Daishonin made the written expression of the world of the intellect, the great and lofty wisdom of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, the object of highest reverence.

In this one respect alone, the object of devotion of the Daishonin is fundamentally different from that traditionally worshiped in Buddhism.

Words are mysterious. They have tremendous power. Take a person’s name, for example. One signs it. In it is included one’s personality, position in the world, strengths, mental and physical state, past and the causes and effects that made one what one is.

In the word Japan, written with two Chinese characters, the geographical features of the country, its people, its flora and fauna — all are encompassed.

In actuality, a person and a country are always changing, moment to moment, without a moment’s pause. The name of a person or country is the single word that expresses and

encompasses all of those activities and functions.

The daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, is just like that: it encompasses all phenomena in the universe. The true aspect of all phenomena in the ever-changing universe is perfectly expressed just as it is in the Gohonzon. The true aspect of the universe is precisely the same for each of us, who are each a microcosm of the universe. Nichiren Daishonin tells us this in his writings.

That is why the Daishonin's Gohonzon embodies the basic Law of the universe; it is the true fundamental object of devotion.



The Mystic Law Which Operates as Both Good and Evil

The universe includes both the powers of good and evil.

In the Gohonzon, all of the Ten Worlds are represented, from Shakyamuni and Taho, who represent the Buddha realm, to Devadatta, who represents the state of Hell.

And both the representatives of good powers and capacities and the representatives of evil powers and capacities are illuminated equally by the light of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Both then display the “exalted form that inherently exists in them,” which means the exalted forms and functions of existence just as it is. The exalted form of fundamental existence is manifested as the fundamental object of devotion.

When we practice gongyo and chant daimoku before the Gohonzon, the good and evil capacities of our life begin to function as the exalted form of fundamental existence.

Lives that are full of the pain of Hell, lives that are in the state of Hunger, lives warped by the state of Anger — such lives, too, begin to move in the direction of creating their own personal happiness and value. Lives being pulled toward misfortune and unhappiness are redirected and pulled in the opposite direction, toward good, when they make the Mystic Law their base.

It is as if sufferings are made the fuel for a fire of joy and wisdom and compassion. It is the Mystic Law and faith which ignite that flame.

If that is true, it goes without saying that the worlds of good—such states as Buddhahood, Bodhisattva and Heaven—only increase their brightness and their power and glory by the power of daimoku chanted.

The sun and moon of our individual microcosms, too, shine forth with brilliant light and illuminate the darkness of life.

Good and evil, all the three thousand realms and factors of existence merge and make a 180-degree revolution and lead us to happiness, to a life of eternity, joy, true self and purity.

It is only natural that sometimes we fall sick. But we must see that sickness as a sickness that exists originally in life, based on the principle of the Mystic Law. In other words, there is no reason to allow yourself to be controlled by illness, for it to fill your life with suffering and distress. From the standpoint of eternal life through the three existences, your fundamentally happy self is incontrovertibly established.

That realization will remove any obstacles or blocks you experience in life and will serve as a springboard for a leap to a more expansive state of being.

Life will be enjoyable. And death will be peaceful, a glorious journey to the next enjoyable life.

When winter arrives, the trees and other plants temporarily lose their leaves. But those plants possess the life to send forth new green shoots when spring comes. Human death is like that, but we possess a life force that leads us to a new life—to a new mission—

immediately, and without pain.

On the other hand, if the roots and even the seeds wither, no new life will spring forth. In one sense, such a life has perished. It will not send forth green leaves, beautiful flowers, or fragrant fruits. You must not allow yours to become that sort of life.

The Voice Chanting Daimoku Reaches the Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions

Next I would like to reply to the question whether there is any value in chanting daimoku and reciting sutra passages without understanding their meaning.

Of course it is better if you understand their meaning. That will strengthen your commitment to the Law. But if you understand and yet fail to practice, it's all of no use. Not only that, but you can't understand the real depth of the teachings through reason alone.

Birds, for example, have their own language, their own speech. People don't understand it, but other birds do. There are many examples among humans as well—codes, abbreviations, or foreign languages are well understood by experts or native speakers but unintelligible to others.

In the same way, the language of gongyo, of chanting daimoku, reaches the Gohonzon and the realms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three existences and the ten directions. We might call it the language of the realms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

That's why the voice of gongyo and daimoku directed to the Gohonzon, whether we understand it or not, reaches all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly deities. They hear it and say, "Excellent, excellent!" in response, rejoicing and praising us, and the entire universe envelops us in light.

Up the Mountain of Supreme Enlightenment, to the Sky of Tranquil Light

The Daishonin has taught us that through gongyo and chanting daimoku we can reach an elevated state in which, while engaged in our daily lives, we traverse the entire universe.

In his "Letter to Sairen-bo," Nichiren Daishonin writes, "And, without having to take a single step, those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. What a truly inexpressible joy it is!" (WND, 313).

When you worship the Gohonzon, the door to your microcosm is opened to the entire universe, the macrocosm, and you experience a great, boundless joy, as if you were looking out over the entire cosmos. You feel great satisfaction and rejoicing, a great wisdom, as if you held the entire universe in your palm. The microcosm enfolded by the macrocosm reaches out to enfold the macrocosm in its own embrace.

The Daishonin also writes, in his "Letter to Niike," "When nurtured by the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo,... (we are) free to soar into the sky of the true aspect of all phenomena and the reality of all things" (WND, 1030).

And, in "On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Though he himself is like the wisteria vine, because he clings to the pine that is the Lotus Sutra, he is able to ascend the mountain of perfect enlightenment. Because he has the wings of the single vehicle to rely upon, he can soar into the sky of Tranquil Light" (WND, 821).

Just as we might look down on the bright, clear scene of the world below from a lofty mountain's highest peak, we can climb the peak of the mountain of wisdom (supreme enlightenment).

And we can attain a state of eternal bliss, experiencing the infinite expanse and depth of

life moment after moment, as if we were flying through the universe and gazing at the brilliantly shining Milky Way, blazing comets, and all of the beautiful stars.

Nichiren Daishonin adds, after the passage from “On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors,” quoted above, the promise that we will be able to bring great fortune not only to ourselves but also to our ancestors for seven generations back and our descendants for seven generations into the future. How wonderful indeed are the enormous merits of the Mystic Law!

The Great Merits of Faith Are in Inconspicuous Benefits

Nichiren Daishonin writes in “The Fourteen Slanders,” “‘But how great is the difference between the blessings received when a sage chants the daimoku and the blessings received when we chant it?’ To reply, one is in no way superior to the other. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses; a fire made by a fool is the same as a fire made by a wise man” (WND, 756).

In other words, the benefits of the Gohonzon are completely unrelated to a person’s position or wealth. They are equal for all. The Daishonin tells us that any person who chants daimoku will attain happiness.

The merits of the Gohonzon can be divided into conspicuous and inconspicuous benefits.

Conspicuous benefits reveal themselves when you have some problem with your health or with work or in some other aspect of your daily life and you are protected and a solution suddenly presents itself.

At the same time, you accumulate blessings and gradually establish a rich and expansive state of life, just as the waters of the sea gradually rise with the swelling tide. Once you have established that state, you will never be defeated, no matter which of life’s troubles you might be confronted with. And you will be able to enjoy yourself in a state of happiness not only in this existence but for all eternity. This is the meaning of inconspicuous benefits.

They are like a spring: once you wind it up, it is always ready to be set in motion. But if the spring isn’t wound, it will not work when called on. To continue this metaphor, it is faith that winds the spring, and the state of the spring when it is fully wound and has the potential to act whenever necessary is a life filled with inconspicuous benefits.

The power of the Mystic Law allows us to naturally achieve a life in which all our wishes are fulfilled and we enjoy eternal happiness.

But how do those benefits depend upon faith? The Daishonin writes, in “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood,” “No matter how sincerely one believes in the Lotus Sutra, if one is guilty of failing to rebuke slander of the Law, one will surely fall into hell, just as a single crab leg will ruin a thousand pots of lacquer” (WND, 747).

The fourteen slanders are taught as the causes of evil. Among those slanders are contempt, hatred, jealousy and grudges. These mean being contemptuous of, hating, being jealous of, or holding grudges against those with faith.

There are cases when we wonder why merit doesn’t reveal itself in spite of our earnest and high degree of faith. At such times, rather than suspecting that you may entertain doubt about the Gohonzon, it is better to ask yourself whether you are not guilty of these four types of slander. Because a person who is contemptuous, hating, jealous, or holds grudges will realize no benefits.

Of course you are perfectly free to say what must be said even to your fellow members in faith, and it is necessary to do so. But there is a difference between words spoken with

real concern for your listener and those spoken with feelings of hatred or jealousy. It is extremely important to understand and observe this distinction.

All of us who gather here together before the Gohonzon in the cause of kosen-rufu are the Buddha's children, the family of the Mystic Law.

That is why we must respect and encourage each other throughout our lives. Let me end today's speech by urging you to be absolutely convinced that the merits of the Gohonzon and the protection of the deities are bound to increase for precisely such a person.

Take the Next Great Step Forward

First SGI-USA Executive Conference at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 21.

It is important for leaders to be fair and impartial and to hear out opinions that differ from their own. Having the broad-mindedness to consider others' views will win you the respect of your juniors. If you have the humility to treasure members who offer good suggestions, you will be able to raise many capable people. By giving sincere consideration to diverse opinions, you can develop a broad, flexible outlook and make stable progress.

Discussing all things openly as siblings or members of a family, please proceed hand in hand, step by step, toward construction and growth. In this sense, the world of Buddhism must be a model of democracy.



Equality and human rights are the ideals of America. At the same time, it is in fact Buddhism that places the greatest importance on these fundamental values and seeks their practical application.

All people are equal. There are absolutely no distinctions of superior and inferior among human beings. Differences of position in an organization are temporary and provisional. They are no more than an expedient means for enabling all members to practice joyfully and become truly happy.

Therefore, a leader in an organization is not someone who stands above others but one whose role is to serve and support everyone else. This is something that the second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda used to explain by saying, "Leaders are servants of the members." In a sense, a true leader of kosen-rufu is one who is determined to sacrifice himself for the sake of the members.

If leaders are under the illusion that they are somehow great or superior to others because of their position, their attitude goes against the Buddhist spirit of equality

In this connection, I would like to emphasize the importance of fostering an atmosphere where members feel free to speak their minds to leaders and say what they feel has to be said—for we are all equally good friends (*zenchishiki*) who are dedicated to the same cause.

Buddhism teaches in "The Opening of the Eyes II," "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent" (WND, 286). From the standpoint of faith, to keep silent when one sees something amiss is tantamount to lacking mercy. Although to criticize and censure someone out of petty emotionalism is of course incorrect, it is necessary that constructive and valuable opinions be aired. If a leader is broad-minded enough to listen with a sense of appreciation, both the leader and those sharing their views can expand their state of life.

A leader may sometimes have occasion to call something to a member's attention in the interest of his or her growth. That is an act of compassion. But to scold someone out of

emotionalism is a sign of arrogance. Leaders should never reprimand members without good cause. The human mind is infinitely delicate.

Men and women are equal. People who ignore this in their behavior cannot be called civilized. It sometimes happens that if women blindly follow male leaders, both will wind up suffering in the end. Rather, Buddhism teaches that women and men should complement one another like a bow and arrow. In order that the arrow may proceed along the correct path, a correct direction for the bow must be set, and from time to time corrective adjustments made.

In his guidance to the wives of the Ikegami brothers, Nichiren Daishonin states in “Letter to the Brothers,” “If both of you unite in encouraging your husbands’ faith, you will follow the path of the dragon king’s daughter and become the model for women attaining Buddhahood in the evil latter age” (WND, 502). This passage reflects the Daishonin’s strict and yet compassionate advice to his female followers. I hope that you will take it deeply to heart.

Buddhism places highest value on human rights and seeks to ensure that human rights are respected. In caring for a single person, one tries to thoroughly protect and do everything one can for that person. One who respects and embraces the children of the Buddha in this way is a true capable person and a true leader.



In making a phone call, if you misdial just one number, your call will not go through as desired. If even a single wire is misplaced in a sophisticated machine, it will fail to operate. How much more true is this in our practice of Buddhism, which reveals that each phenomenon, without exception, strictly possesses all of the 3,000 realms and factors of life. Unless a person embraces the correct Law, maintains correct faith, and carries out a correct practice, he will eventually lead many astray. This is an extremely serious offense, and those who follow such a leader are to be pitied.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that the “Law,” not the “person,” is to be regarded as the proper standard in all things. Putting the person first gives you an uncertain standard; it is to let that person’s mind become your master. At some point, relations based on such a standard will become like those existing between a paternal, godfather-like figure and those bound to him by personal loyalty.

In contrast, if you establish the Law as your standard, you will become the master of your mind. The great development that we have realized in Japan has been possible because we have exerted ourselves in the practice based on the Gohonzon and in accordance with the Goshō.

Nichiren Daishonin laments people’s approach to Buddhism, saying in “Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro”: “The people of our time—whether clergy or laity, nobles or commoners—all revere persons and do not value the Law. They make their own mind their teacher, and do not rely on the sutras” (WND, 156). If one makes his mind his sole standard, he will in due course become self-righteous. But if one carries out faith and practice based on the Law, he is a true leader of Buddhism.

Humanity Is the Essence of Buddhism

Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 22.

A Mother’s Prayer Reaches the World of Buddhahood

There are many passages in which the Daishonin refers to people's indebtedness to, and yearning for, their mothers. I would like to cite several examples here.

At one time, Nichiren Daishonin wrote to a believer who had lost her son:

There was a pheasant that braved the fire to save its chick, and the destitute woman who drowned in the Ganges River with her child held tightly in her arms. That pheasant is the present Bodhisattva Miroku, while the woman who drowned in the Ganges has been reborn as the heavenly King Bonten.

Moreover, you, Konichi Shonin, so deeply concerned for your deceased son, have become a votary of the Lotus Sutra. The two of you will certainly meet and reach the pure land of Eagle Peak together. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 934)

The Daishonin addresses the recipient of this letter using the title of "shonin," a title given only to a high-ranking priest, thus expressing his respect for this female lay believer. In the use of this single word, we can also see the Daishonin's exemplary sincerity and profound humanity

The Daishonin likens the selfless love of a mother for her offspring to the compassionate actions of a bodhisattva and the majestic power of the heavenly god Bonten. He further encourages her by saying that if the mother takes faith in the Mystic Law, her love for her children will surely be communicated to the Gohon-zon and enable both the mother and child to reach the world of Buddhahood.

Humanity is the essence of Buddhism. As stated in this Gosho passage, when sincere and beautiful affection, as symbolized in this Gosho by a mother's love, is nurtured by faith in the Mystic Law, one can elevate his or her state of life to that of a bodhisattva or a Buddha. At the same time, one's children and other relatives can share in the blessings one receives.

Mothers are truly a blessing. They are priceless treasures. I sincerely hope that all of you will become people who appreciate the obligations that you owe your mothers. In "The Gods Same Birth and Same Name," written to Nichigennyō, the wife of Shijo Kingo, Nichiren Daishonin states:

A baby may not recognize its mother, but the mother never forgets her baby. Shakyamuni Buddha is compared to the mother and women are compared to the baby. If two people long for each other, as a rule they will never be parted. If one person yearns for the other, but the other yearns not, sometimes they will meet, and sometimes they will not.. The Buddha is like the one who yearns, and women are like the one who does not. If we yearn for the Buddha, how could Shakyamuni Buddha possibly fail to appear? (WND, 315)

When she received this letter, Nichigennyō was then nursing her eleven-month-old daughter, Tsukimaro Gozen. The Daishonin uses the analogy of a "mother and her baby" to explain the compassion and great concern of the Buddha. Nothing could have been more appropriate to her situation or moved her heart more profoundly than this particular analogy. This is a perfect example that illustrates the Daishonin's characteristic attention, compassion and sensitivity to the other person's state of mind in expounding the teachings of Buddhism in a manner that is most appropriate to the situation of that particular person. In his letter, he explains that we are children of the Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha who is our parent constantly has our welfare at heart, and thoughts of us never

leave his mind. Nonetheless, like infants who do not recognize their mother's care and concern, common mortals are ignorant of the Buddha's compassion.

Please do not forget your mother's love or the hardships she has endured for you. I am convinced that while a person keeps the memory of his mother's loving face alive in his mind, he will never go far astray. Similarly, as long as we bear in mind the Daishonin's profound compassion and live in deep appreciation of it, our lives will be illuminated brightly by the light of Buddhahood. And, enveloped in the Gohonzon's great compassion, we will walk along a path that is fundamentally filled with tranquillity and immeasurable joy.

Therefore, I would ask that you take very good care of your parents—especially your mothers. A mother's love is unimaginably deep and her influence profound. If all people treasured their mothers, the world would undoubtedly be filled with peace and happiness.

Bring Forth the Great Flower of Absolute Happiness

First SGI All-America General Meeting held in the SGI-USA World Peace Ikeda Auditorium, February 24.

The lotus flower is invested with profound significance in Buddhism. It is thought to be the only plant that simultaneously produces both flower (cause) and seed-pod (effect). This unique trait is used to indicate the Buddhist principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

The Daishonin explains the significance of cause and effect: All sutras other than the Lotus Sutra expound that Buddhahood (effect) can be attained only after having made good causes, that is, practicing their teachings (causes) over a length of time. With the Lotus Sutra, however, the very act of embracing it (cause) enables one simultaneously to become a Buddha (effect).

Such is the splendid power of the Mystic Law. It does not require that you undergo lifetime upon lifetime of practice to become a Buddha. Moreover, the Mystic Law releases us from the shackles of our past negative karma. Based upon our firm faith in the Gohonzon each day, we can enable the most precious state of Buddhahood to pulsate vibrantly in our lives every moment.

This is the Daishonin's Buddhism. In general, it teaches that practitioners who possess strong faith and remain committed to kosen-rufu throughout their lives are already Buddhas. Therefore, leaders who deprecate and look down on such members, in essence, despise Buddhas. And those who disparage Buddhas are naturally creating bad causes. On the other hand, we cannot praise too much an individual who is dedicated to the Mystic Law.

The Pure Flower of Good Fortune Blooms in the Mire

Chapter Fifteen ("Emerging From the Earth") of the Lotus Sutra reads, "Unsoiled by worldly things/like the lotus flower in the water" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 222) That is, the lotus flower brings forth pure and beautiful blooms from muddy pond waters. Just like the lotus blossom, a person who embraces this great Law can never fail to establish a vigorous and beautiful life filled with the aspects of eternity, joy, true self and purity, even in the mire of this trouble-filled world.

The Buddhism of Nichiren Dai-shonin expounds that we should not seek a heavenly paradise somewhere outside ourselves. Nor should we seek an emotional escape from reality. The lotus flower of our own lives blooms in no other place than in actual society

and in our daily existence.

Society is a place of confusion, full of contradictions and collisions of egos. It is precisely in these murky waters of earthly desires that the state of Buddhahood—in other words, the great flower of absolute happiness—fragrantly blooms forth.

Become a Philosopher of Life

Youth Training Session held at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 25.

Establish a Warm Home of Kosen-rufu

You are the true successors of SGI-USA and future leaders of worldwide kosen-rufu. There-fore, on this occasion, I would like to confirm some basic tenets of our Buddhist practice.

The first point is that we are one big family whose members are joined by the lifeblood of faith in the Mystic Law. The organization for kosen-rufu should be a “home” of comfort and fulfillment in life.

I hope that all members, their lives illuminated by the Gohonzon, will gather together with a feeling of relief and relaxation and a sense of energy welling up from within.

On Meetings

Suppose you come back home exhausted after a hard day of work or study. And the moment you walk through the door, someone in your family barks at you: “You’re late. What on earth have you been doing?” If such things occur frequently, you will naturally feel negative and lose a sense of attachment to your home.

By the same token, sometimes members cannot be on time to certain meetings or cannot come at all. No one in the organization has the right to scold a person in this kind of situation. On the contrary, leaders should warmly welcome such members. A true family is pervaded by a spirit of praise and encouragement for individual members’ sincere efforts.

Propagation

The same can be said about the relationship of husband and wife, or parent and child. If a woman constantly badgers her husband that his salary is too low or harshly reprimands her child for low grades, to vent their frustration the husband may think of going out drinking and the child of going to an amusement center. My sympathy lies with them. Both the husband and the child, in this case, know their own problems; so another person pointing them out can only add to their misery.

We exert ourselves to spread true Buddhism and carry out other activities in connection with our practice so that we can accumulate good fortune and become happy. We do all this for our own sake and not for the sake of the organization, and most certainly not for the sake of our leaders.

Leaders should not needlessly give members a hard time. Scolding a member who is sincerely doing activities amounts to the offense of holding a fellow believer in contempt, one of the Fourteen Slanders.

Propagation is a practice that we carry out on the direction of Nichiren Daishonin. Whether people to whom you explain Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism decide to take faith depends mainly upon their life tendency and their capacity to understand and believe in Buddhism. In any case, whether a person determines to take faith in Buddhism after

listening to an explanation (Jpn *hosshin geshu*) or listens to the teaching and does not decide to take faith in it (Jpn *monpo geshu*), the benefit that the believer receives is the same.

Propagation is the action of the Buddha's envoys. We should treasure and most highly respect those who carry out this noble and benevolent practice.

"You've done well. You were able to plant the seed of Buddhahood in your friend's heart. That's a splendid thing." So saying, you should praise and encourage one another, sharing one another's joy like brothers and sisters. Touched by such a family-like atmosphere, more and more people will begin to take faith in true Buddhism. Love and peace are the lifeblood of a home.

Respecting Society, Your Job and Your Daily Life

Furthermore, faith manifests itself in daily life, and Buddhism in society. By refreshing your life force through faith, you can work and study much harder than others, and you can also build a model family. People will then place their trust in you and may remark at how, as a Buddhist or as a member of the SGI-USA family, you stand out among others. This is a kind of actual proof.

One who takes good care of his job, daily life and family is a person of deep and genuine faith. Activities are intended to be carried out in the spare time that you have from your work and family. In contrast, if on the premise that SGI-USA is your home, no one is allowed outside, or people are dissuaded from attending to their work or study, no family can be created. Noble families are so called because they have sent many capable people into society.

In the harsh reality of society, competition and tension cannot be avoided. You may also sometimes experience clashes of ego. But once you return to the home of SGI-USA, you can let go of your tension, relax and smile; this is where you can obtain "nutrition" for your life, thereby feeling refreshed and filled with energy to undertake the next day's challenge. As leaders, it is your duty to make SGI-USA such an organization.

There may be some members who work at night or have irregular working hours, and others who are extremely busy with work or study for examinations. Such people might find it difficult to attend meetings. But they are also challenging their individual problems and trying hard to show actual proof of faith. I want you to become considerate leaders who can understand others' situations.

I hope that you will make all meetings held throughout the country joyful, interesting and significant, and filled with smiles. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe will watch over such harmonious gatherings of the Buddha's children.

All Are Children of the Buddha

All members of a family are equal. In terms of the organization, the father corresponds to the men's division, the mother to the women's division, the brothers and sisters to the youth division, and there are others who belong to the guidance division or who are students.

Although each member of the SGI-USA family has a different situation, they are all the Buddha's children who enjoy equal rights. In fact, the higher one's position, the heavier the responsibility one assumes. Try to imagine, for example, a family where the father alone eats good food and the children cry in hunger. This is not a home. Parents want their children to eat, even if they themselves can have nothing.

Nichiren Daishonin warmly encouraged a female disciple in “The Supremacy of the Law” saying: “If anything at all happens, please come over here. I will welcome you. Let us die of starvation together among the mountains.” (WND, 616). What compassion the Daishonin shows!

The family is a unit where all joys and sorrows are shared among members. As a result, the sadness is more than halved and the happiness more than doubled.

Neither orders, authority nor threats can unite a family. It is love, harmony and consideration that bind its members to one another. In a family, there is no particular need for a hero. What is needed is a strong father who can protect everyone and a mother who is impartial, fair and kind.

In a family, if one person is unhappy, then so is the entire family. Therefore, in SGI-USA, I would like you to sincerely pray for and protect one another so that there are no people who are unfortunate and unhappy, or who will abandon their faith, and that every person will become happy. These are the kinds of humanistic bonds among fellow members that give birth to true unity. Coercion or force stemming from power and authority is ineffective at critical moments.

The point is that Buddhism exists for the sake of each person’s happiness. The same can be said of the organization for kosen-rufu. The organization exists for the sake of the people, not the other way around. To embrace and protect all individuals, leading them to happiness and attaining Buddha-hood — this is why the SGI-USA organization exists.

A Shelter for the Spiritually Homeless

In America, the problem of the homeless has become a serious social dilemma. Homeless people are said to number in the millions. But I fear that the number of spiritually homeless people is even greater. These people go about searching for a comfortable place, their house of the soul, or spiritual home. The power of Buddhism provides people with a place of essential tranquility, a sweet home of life.

Nichiren Daishonin states in “Reply to the Lay Priest of Ko”: “No place is secure. Be convinced that Buddhahood is the final abode” (WND, 491).

From the outset America has been a country to which people from around the world have flocked, leaving their homelands for one reason or another. They came to this country searching for a new home. It is the task of the kosen-rufu movement to breathe life into America’s purpose of building a new home for these people. Society will become a genuine home to all only when it provides each person with absolute peace and compassionate protection.

Nichiren Daishonin states, “I, Nichiren, humble person though I am, have received Lord Shakyamuni’s royal command and come to this country of Japan” (WND, 331). As a disciple of the Daishonin, each one of you is an irreplaceable person who was born in this country with a unique mission that you yourself originally chose. By opening your eyes of faith, you can without fail understand your precious role.

Companions of Kosen-rufu From Time Without Beginning

We are family not only in this lifetime. Rather, we have been brothers and sisters from time without beginning. To view our relationship only in terms of this single lifetime is extremely shallow; it is to assume the view of pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, both of which held that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India.

To see our relationship as that of companions spanning the three existences of past, present and future is to accept the point of view of time without beginning that is expounded in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, together, we are carrying out an ongoing struggle, from now into the future, to advance kosen-rufu, to promote peace and culture for the sake of humanity.

I would like you to build an enviable, endearing SGI-USA family, of which those around you will say: “Those people seem truly happy. How warm the light from the window of that SGI-USA house looks!” Steadily infusing society with smiling faces and hope, please construct, with the Mystic Law as your foundation, an eternal family of peace and a happy and beautiful America.

Live Each Day Filled With Value and Happiness

Youth Training Session held on February 26 at the Malibu Training Center.

I hope that each of you makes further effort to become a master of faith, practice and study who has absolute conviction and outstanding ability in practice and study.

Youth is the time of continual worries. Your heart is swayed in all matters— your future direction, personality, the opposite sex, society and life. You may often feel irresolute and restless. Some will be puzzled by the gap between ideals and reality, and others will succumb to self-hatred and behave in a neurotic fashion.

Youth is a season of unrest and agony. This is true of young people anywhere in the world. In a sense, it may be all for the best. You certainly are not suffering on your own; and since young people are all experiencing change and growth, such feelings cannot be helped.

Therefore, you should not be hasty. It is unreasonable to suppose that you can become both spiritually and socially stable at one fell swoop. An airplane will have an accident if it tries to take off without first building up speed. Even if a plane takes off successfully, without sufficient fuel and complete preparation, it will not keep flying or it may even crash.

Life is like a marathon, as is faith. Though you may lose the lead in the midst of the race, victory or defeat is decided at the finish line. Your training during your youth is for the purpose of enabling you to win ultimate and true victory. Therefore, now is the time when you must study as much as you can, and chant abundant daimoku so that you can greatly increase your life force.

Please steadily advance along the fundamental path which accords with the principle that “faith manifests itself in daily life,” living in the way that best suits you. Just as the sun rises every day, if you persistently advance based on the Mystic Law, the absolute Law of the universe, you will definitely be able to lead a life in which all desires are fulfilled. Please be convinced that you are now leading the most certain and valuable youth.

Buddhism Is the Mirror That Perfectly Reflects Our Lives

First SGI-USA women’s division training session, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 27.

What is the purpose of life? It is happiness. But there are two kinds of happiness: relative and absolute. Relative happiness comes in a wide variety of forms. The purpose of Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood. In modern terms, this could be explained as realizing

absolute happiness—a state of happiness that can never be destroyed or defeated.

Nichiren Daishonin states, “There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (WND, 681). So long as you maintain strong faith, resolutely chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon no matter what happens, then you will without fail lead a life of complete fulfillment. This is in accordance with the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment.

True happiness lies only in establishing such a supreme state of life. By so doing, you are able to change all sufferings into causes for joy and contentment and to live with composure and jubilation.

Our organization for kosen-rufu exists so that each member can attain absolute happiness. Let me make it perfectly clear that the objective of this organization is your happiness.

Society and daily life are the “great earth” for our faith and practice of the True Law. The steady development of kosen-rufu can be ensured only when, based on faith, we carefully attend to the affairs of society, our daily lives and our families. “Faith manifests itself in daily life”—this is our eternal guideline.



A Japanese proverb has it that the mirror is a woman’s soul. It is said that, just as warriors will never part with their swords, women will never part with their mirrors. There would seem to be some truth to this saying, in that mirrors are prized by women the world over.

In Buddhism, the mirror is used to explain various doctrines. In one place, Nichiren Daishonin states, “There are profound teachings transmitted secretly with regard to mirrors” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 724).

Buddhism Is the Mirror That Perfectly Reflects Our Lives

Another writing states: “A bronze mirror may reflect the body but not the mind. The mirror of the Lotus Sutra reflects not only our physical form but our inner being as well. Furthermore, the sutra mirrors, with complete clarity, one’s past karma and its future effect” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1521).

Mirrors reflect our outward form. The mirror of Buddhism, however, reveals the intangible aspect of our lives. Mirrors, which function by virtue of the laws of light and reflection, are a product of human wisdom. On the other hand, the Gohonzon, based on the Law of the universe and life itself, is the culmination of the Buddha’s wisdom and makes it possible for us to attain Buddhahood by providing us with a means of perceiving the true aspect of our life.

Just as a mirror is indispensable for putting your face and hair in order, you need a mirror that reveals the depths of your life if you are to lead a happier and more beautiful existence.

Incidentally, as indicated in the Daishonin’s reference to a bronze mirror in the above Gosho passage, mirrors in ancient times were made of polished metal alloys such as bronze, nickel and steel.



Polish the Mirror of Your Life

Bronze mirrors not only reflected poorly but also tarnished very quickly. Therefore, unless they were polished regularly, they became unusable. This kind of mirror was popular in the

Kamakura era during which the Daishonin lived.

In “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” Nichiren Daishonin writes: “This is similar to a tarnished mirror will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality” (WND, 4). In this well-known passage, the Daishonin draws parallels between the tradition of mirror-polishing and the process of attaining Buddhahood.

Originally, every person’s life is a brilliantly shining mirror. Differences arise depending on whether or not one polishes this mirror. A polished mirror is the Buddha’s life, whereas a tarnished mirror is that of a common mortal. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is what polishes our life. Not only do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that the mirror of their lives shines brightly, too. Thus, it can be said that we are masters of the art of polishing the mirror of life.

Even though people may make up their faces, they tend to neglect to polish their lives. While they quickly wash off a stain from their face, they remain unconcerned about stains in their lives.

Perceive the Buddha Nature Inherent in Your Life

Just as you look into a mirror when you make up your face, to beautify “the face of the soul,” you need a mirror that reflects the depths of your life. This mirror is none other than the Gohonzon of “observing one’s mind,” or more precisely, observing one’s life. Nichiren Daishonin explains what it means to observe one’s life in “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” “Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs” (WND, 356).

Similarly, observing one’s life means to perceive that one’s life contains the Ten Worlds, and in particular, the world of Buddhahood. It was to enable people to do this that Nichiren Daishonin bestowed the Gohonzon of “observing one’s mind” upon all mankind. In his exegesis on “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichikan Shonin, the twenty-sixth high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, states, “The object of devotion can be compared to a wonderful mirror.”

Nichiren Daishonin states in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” “The five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo mirror all things without a single exception.” The Gohonzon is the clearest of all mirrors which reflects the entire universe exactly as it is. When you chant to the Gohonzon, you perceive the true entity of your life and tap the inexhaustible life force of Buddhahood.



The Gohonzon is a clear mirror. It perfectly reveals our state of faith and projects this out into the universe. This demonstrates the principle of *ichinen sanzen*, that a single life-moment pervades the three thousand realms.

In a letter to his disciple Abutsubo on Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin wrote: “You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself” (WND, 299). Worshipping the Gohonzon graces and glorifies the treasure tower of your own life.

When people worship the Gohonzon, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the entire universe immediately respond to their prayers by lending their protection. If they slander the Gohonzon, the response will be exactly the opposite.

One’s Mind of Faith Is Most Important

For this reason, one's mind of faith is extremely important. The mind of faith has a subtle and far-reaching influence.

There may be times, for instance, when you feel reluctant to do gongyo or take part in activities for kosen-rufu. That state of mind is reflected exactly on the entire universe, as if on the surface of a clear mirror. The heavenly deities will then also feel reluctant to play their part, and they will naturally fail to exert their full power of protection.

On the other hand, when you joyfully do gongyo and carry out activities with the determination to accumulate more good fortune in your life, the heavenly deities will be delighted and will valiantly perform their duty. If you must take some action anyway, it is to your advantage that you do so spontaneously and with a feeling of joy.

If you practice reluctantly with a sense that it's a waste of time, disbelief and complaints will erode your good fortune. If you continue to practice in this way, you will not experience remarkable benefits, and this will only serve to further convince you that your practice is in vain. This is a vicious circle.

If you practice faith while doubting its effects, you will get results that are, at best, unsatisfactory. This is the reflection of your own weak faith on the mirror of the cosmos. On the other hand, when you stand up with strong confidence, you will accrue limitless blessings.

While controlling your mind, which is at once both extremely subtle and solemnly profound, you should strive to elevate your faith with freshness and vigor.

When you do so, both your life and your surroundings will open wide before you, and every action you take will become a source of benefit. Understanding the subtle workings of one's mind is the key to faith and to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

There is a Russian proverb which says, "It is no use to blame the looking glass if your face is awry." Likewise, your happiness or unhappiness is entirely the reflection of the balance of good and bad causes accumulated in your life. You cannot blame others for your misfortunes. In the world of faith, it is necessary to realize this all the more clearly.



The Spirit of Propagation

Human relations also function as a kind of mirror. Nichiren Dai-shonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings": "When Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed in reverence to the four categories of people, the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back" (GZ, 769).

Here, the Daishonin reveals the fundamental spirit that we should have in propagating the Mystic Law. Propagation is an act to be conducted with the utmost respect for other people and out of sincere reverence for the Buddha nature inherent in their lives. Therefore, we should strictly observe courtesy and good common sense.

With the thought that we are addressing that person's Buddha nature, we should politely and calmly carry out a dialogue—sometimes, depending on the situation, mercifully correcting that person with fatherly strictness. In the course of such human interaction, the Buddha nature in that person, reflecting our own sincerity, will bow to us in return.

When we cherish another with the same profound reverence as we would the Buddha, the Buddha nature in that person's life functions to protect us. On the other hand, if we belittle or regard someone with contempt, as though gazing into our own image reflected in a mirror, we will be disparaged in return.

In the inner realm of life, cause and effect occur simultaneously. With the passage of time, this causal relationship becomes manifest in the phenomenal world of daily life.

Mutual Respect

In general, the people around us reflect our state of life. Our personal preferences, for example, are mirrored in their attitudes. This is especially clear from the viewpoint of Buddhism, which elucidates the workings of cause and effect as if in a spotless mirror.

To the extent that you praise, respect, protect and care for SGI-USA members, who are all children of the Buddha, you will in turn be protected by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and all heavenly deities. If, on the other hand, you are arrogant or condescending toward members, you will be scolded by the Buddhas and others in like measure. Leaders, in particular, should be clear on this point and take it deeply to heart.

We are a gathering of the Buddha's children. Therefore, if we respect one another, our good fortune will multiply infinitely, like an image reflected back and forth among mirrors. A person who practices alone cannot experience this tremendous multiplication of benefit.

In short, the environment that you find yourself in, whether favorable or not, is the product of your own life. Most people, however, fail to understand this, and tend to blame others for their troubles.

The Daishonin states in "Reply to Ysaburo": "These people, failing to recognize their own rudeness, seem to think that I am rude. They are like a jealous woman with furious eyes who, unaware that when she glares at a courtesan her own expression is disagreeable, instead complains that the courtesan's gaze is frightening" (WND, 828).

Nichiren Daishonin explains human psychology in such a clear and easy-to-understand manner. There are people who, out of malice, have criticized and sought to oppress us who are the Daishonin's disciples. But, reflected in the mirror of the world of the True Law, such people see only their own faults, ambitions and greed, and therefore slander their own reflections.

To a person who is possessed by the lust for power, even the most selfless, benevolent actions of others will appear as cunning moves undertaken to gain power.

Similarly, to a person who has a strong desire for fame, actions based on conviction and consideration will be seen as publicity stunts. Those who have become slaves of money simply cannot believe that there are people in the world who are strangers to the desire for wealth.

Build a Strong and Cheerful SGI-USA Women's Division

In contrast, an unusually kind and good-natured person will tend to believe that all others are the same. To a greater or lesser extent, all people tend to see their own reflection in others.

In SGI-USA there are a great number of people who are full of good will and intentions. In a sense, some might be even too good-natured and trusting, to the extent that I fear they could be deceived by deceitful people.

In *Le Pere Goriot*, the French author Balzac writes, "Whatever evil you hear of society, believe it...." So full of evil was the world that he perceived. He adds: "And then you will find out what the world is, a gathering of dupes and rogues. Be of neither party."

We must gain decisive victory over the harsh realities of society and lead a correct and vibrant life. This is the purpose of our faith. We have to become wise and strong.

Be People of Magnanimity and Tenacity

Training session for divisional representatives at Malibu Training Center, February 28.

People tend to congregate where there is joy, while they quickly leave places that are imbued with an oppressive atmosphere. Again, joining a gathering of pure and sincere people enables one to summon forth a sincere seeking spirit. On the other hand, earnest people will not follow leaders who are not seriously challenging themselves.

In the course of developing, both a person and an organization will have to face various difficulties. This is reasonable and accords with the principles of Buddhism. Having now reached the thirtieth anniversary of its founding, I believe that the SGI-USA has completed one stage in its growth. By all means, please continue to advance filled with hope and confidence.

I once had a discussion with a friend about the probable causes for the rise of Christianity as a world religion. My companion, who is studying Christianity, said, "Apart from questions of doctrine and religious conviction, Christianity's rise can be attributed to the fact that those who propagated it were magnanimous and extremely tenacious. Also, they were always gentlemen, conducting themselves in a polite and courteous manner. This was the main reason for the worldwide spread of Christianity."

To be sure, what he said was historically accurate and no doubt played an important role in the religion's spread. Of course, we, as Buddhists, must be strict in distinguishing the higher religions from the lower and the profound from the shallow, but at the same time we must learn from human history, drawing important lessons to fuel our further progress and improvement.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that SGI-USA members will always conduct themselves as people of magnanimity, tenacity and gentleness in their respective communities and in society.

Above all, I hope that the SGI-USA will be pervaded by warm bonds of trust and friendship. An organization that is filled with trust and friendship is strong; it will develop, and its members are happy. Where individuals are on bad terms with one another, there is conflict and suffering. In all certainty, such an organization will at some point self-destruct.

A world that is filled with affection and warmth is beautiful. An elegant flower garden is produced when the flowers bloom in harmony with one another. If the flowers are broken, twisted, turned in disorder or bloom at all different times, the flower garden will not be so impressive.

Being on good terms with one another means to live in a world of harmony. By way of analogy, we maintain our health and are able to conduct vigorous activities when our internal organs and bodily systems are all working in harmony. If this internal physical harmony is lost, diseases result, possibly even leading to one's death.

Therefore, it is my heartfelt desire that you, the members of SGI-USA, basing yourselves on faith in the Gohonzon, always live as a harmonious family of the Mystic Law, embodying the spirit of itai doshin. No matter what happens, I hope that you will continue to advance, directing your hearts toward unity and friendship.

The Law is the foundation of Buddhism. The foundation for advancing kosen-rufu is always the Gohonzon. In one sense, the person is the one responsible for managing an organization, seeing to it that it correctly upholds and spread the True Law.

In essence, the most important point regarding central figures is that they base themselves on faith in the Gohonzon. If the central figure forgets this vital point and tries to skillfully control and direct the members by exerting authority, there results a very dangerous situation. Such a person could even destroy the beautiful world of the True Law. Therefore, we must always watch that central figures base themselves on and cherish the Law above all else. □