

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 2 SPEECH THE YEAR 2000—AN EXHILARATING STRUGGLE

**'Right from New Year's Day, I have begun an exhilarating struggle!' says SGI President Ikeda. 'It is my dearest wish that all of you join me in leading an exhilarating life and waging an exhilarating struggle!'**

*On Jan. 2, SGI President Ikeda attended a New Year's gongyo meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji. Celebrating his 72nd birthday, he joined representatives from around Japan and overseas in chanting daimoku for the SGI's successful endeavors in the year ahead. Warmly wishing the members a Happy New Year's, he called, "Let's strive hard together again this year!" To the youth, he said, "I'm praying and waiting for your growth." He also delivered the following speech:*

As one who is your senior in faith, I am earnestly praying each day for your good health and longevity, and that you will lead lives imbued with great good fortune.

Right from New Year's Day, I have begun an exhilarating struggle! It is my dearest wish that all of you join me in leading an exhilarating life and waging an exhilarating struggle!

This year, too, lively SGI New Year's gongyo meetings are being held throughout Japan and the world—in a total of 148 countries and territories. Of all the religious groups in Japan, the Soka Gakkai's New Year's gatherings rank No. 1 both in festive spirit and attendance. I have received a stream of reports from SGI organizations outside Japan as well, telling of the high-spirited start to the new year being made by our fellow members in each country.

### **The most important thing is the people's spirit.**

Representatives of the Soka Gakkai's student division have sent me a collection of famous sayings. I want to share a few of them with you today.

First, a quote from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*: "The first step towards victory undoubtedly is to gain courage." The key to victory is indeed courage. A person without courage cannot accomplish anything.

By courage, however, I do not mean the reckless, barbaric courage that resorts to violence. That is not true courage. Faith is the supreme form of courage—it is courage that accords with reason.

*Parallel Lives*, which has become a model of behavior for the lives of so many, also contains these words: "The city is well fortified which hath a wall of men instead of brick." The famous Japanese warlord Takeda Shingen similarly declared, "People are the walls; people are the fortress." Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda also called on the Gakkai to "build a stronghold of capable people." He was a person of exceptional insight.

What leads to lasting victory is not money, authority or worldly fame. Groups or areas that are successful have built solid ranks of capable people. The most important thing is people—the people's spirit, their commitment. We must be determined to hold fast to our convictions. A spiritual fortress is unconquerable.

## **Those who keep striving for good despite criticism are true disciples.**

The Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius in *The Meditations* cites the words “It is royal to do good and to be abused.” To do something supremely worthy and be vilified for it—I constantly find myself in this situation. Above all, these words conjure images of the regal figure of Nichiren Daishonin. Accordingly, those who keep striving for good despite being criticized and maligned are true disciples of the Daishonin.

Marcus Aurelius also declared: “Do not act as if you were going to live for ten thousand years. Death hangs over you. While you live, while it is in your power, be good.” Death is inescapable; that is why it is important to do good while we are alive, he says.

## **True heroes are those who spread the Mystic Law.**

Who are the true heroes? Says Chinese author Lao She, “True heroes are those who remain free of the slightest regret or despair, no matter how prolonged or how great the hardships they suffer.” This quote was sent to me by members of the Soka Gakkai’s Young Women’s Division International Group.

The real heroes are not those who fight with military might or Japanese warlords such as Oda Nobunaga or Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The true heroes are those who strive for kosen-rufu, those who spread the Mystic Law, the indestructible foundation for bringing lasting peace to the world. You, the SGI members, are the true heroes. This is what the Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, tells us. The Daishonin is Japan’s greatest hero. We must create an era in which this is widely recognized.

People the world over honor us with their support and friendship. They have great expectations for the development of our movement. This is a wonderful thing. The many prestigious honors I have received from around the globe are all honors that I have humbly accepted as your representative. I hope you will have firm conviction that they are a symbol of the incredible good fortune you are accumulating in your lives.

I hope you will do your best in all your endeavors again this year!