

SOKA SPIRIT
THE ESSENCE OF NOVEMBER 18
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Nov. 18 is truly significant because it commemorates what it takes to make dreams come true. It was when the Soka Gakkai was founded in 1930—the birth of a dream held by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of this movement and first Soka Gakkai president. It is also the day that Makiguchi passed away in prison in 1944, standing by his convictions and never compromising his belief in the dignity of human life. We see that this day illuminates the very essence of the Soka Spirit.

During the Central Zone celebration in Chicago on Nov. 4, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima said, “Have a dream.” He echoed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who in 1963 declared, “I have a dream today!” To have some kind of mission is in itself an act of courage. We all have talents and insight into our lives. Having a dream will allow us to share those gifts with others. It presents opportunities for us to temper our weaknesses and to appreciate the obstacles we face. The bigger the dream, the more we can learn. When we can live without acting like we know it all, we can live with exemplary humility and respect for others.

Why are dreams hard to actualize? Dreams ask a lot from us, often requiring things that we may find painful or hard to do. Dreams ask for our commitment. Dreams ask for us to love. Dreams want us to be bigger and better than what we merely think we are capable of. Dreams become real when we actualize that which is the very best in all of us.

Dreams are inherently aligned with truth. They are derived from the fact that we are perfectly endowed beings with infinite potential. Our task is for us to align ourselves with truth. It is only when we are dishonest with ourselves that we let dreams slip out of our grasp. Thus, let’s understand that chasing a dream comes hand in hand with refuting doubt and dishonesty. We have a responsibility to cultivate a clear understanding of truth and recognize its diverse expressions. That’s why we study.

Once we have a dream, we need tremendous effort and commitment to see it through to the very last moment of our lives. We will face strong enemies and devilish functions, which will try to persuade us not to continue. In our hearts, we will understand the pain of injustice and suddenly feel a kinship to those who want something better and more meaningful than the delusions and animality they see from day to day. Here is our chance to develop the sort of courage that all dreams hinge upon. Here’s our opportunity to challenge evil, to stand up for truth, to believe in ourselves. This is the Soka Spirit. This is the purpose of faith.

Let’s not compromise our principles, our belief in what’s right and true. Let’s not put away our dreams simply because we don’t think we can do it. Let’s not settle for less because we don’t believe in our goodness and our beauty. Those doubts are loud only when our convictions are silent.

We have two chances every day to crank up the volume on our convictions, to let our greater selves, our Buddha nature, speak loud and clear—twice a day to say that we are going to make our wildest dreams come true, twice a day to say we are going to stick to doing what’s right, even if it scares us, even if danger is looming right next to us. We have those times to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, to develop the courage

it takes to be the human beings that we've always dreamed of becoming. The rest of the day is our chance to remind others. And we will, because our strength in those crucial moments will encourage them, because our unwavering dedication to truth will inspire them, because our respect for ourselves and others will deeply move their hearts. This is why we practice.

For me, Nov. 18 is a very special day. It's the day I renew my determination to fight for kosen-rufu as President Ikeda does; the day I accept the challenge of construction, of building a life and a dream with my own sweat and tears as second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda did; the day I renew my commitment to challenge injustice even at the cost of my own life just as President Makiguchi did; and the day I celebrate Soka Spirit.