

IN HONOR OF JOSEI TODA
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On Feb. 11, we commemorate the birth of the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda—a man whose life was one of epic struggle and profound achievement.

Born in 1900, Toda worked his way through school and became a teacher. At the age of 20, he moved to Tokyo where he met first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, soon coming to regard him as his mentor in life.

On July 6, 1943, Toda went with Makiguchi to prison—both incarcerated for upholding their religious beliefs and their resistance to the militarist government. While in prison, Makiguchi had passed away behind bars on Nov. 18, 1944. “Mr. Toda only learned of his death on Jan. 8, 1945. ‘Who murdered my mentor!’ he screamed in grief and fury” (March 17, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 8).

Upon his release from prison on July 3, 1945, the Soka Gakkai was on the brink of extinction. Many predicted the organization would not survive. Toda was impoverished and his health poor. The only possession he had was his determination to realize his mentor’s dream. In reply to his mentor, Toda determined to rebuild the Soka Gakkai.

On May 3, 1951, when Toda was inaugurated as Soka Gakkai’s second president, the Soka Gakkai’s membership was less than 3,000 households. Toda poured his entire life to help develop the organization with dreams of worldwide kosen-rufu. Within seven years, the organization’s propagation efforts resulted in an increase in the number of households, from 3,000 to more than 750,000.

Toda died on April 2, 1958.

As we look around today at the magnificence of the SGI, it’s clear that Toda’s dream is coming to fruition. *Seize the Day* would like to print the following excerpt from a poignant essay “No Greater Source of Pride” written by Toda’s disciple, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

John F. Kennedy said: “A man does what he must—in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures—and that is the basis of all human morality.”

Today, Feb. 11, marks the centennial of the birth of our mentor in life, Josei Toda.

There is no greater source of pride than a life dedicated to serving a respected mentor. This has certainly been true for me. No youth can be as overflowing with vigor and vitality as one spent following the Buddhist path of mentor and disciple.

It has been my unparalleled honor to have been able to look up to Mr. Toda like a father and walk the strict and demanding path of mentor and disciple. I have lived my life with Mr. Toda, and I have fought to proclaim his truth to the entire world.

This has been my life, my life’s purpose.

(SGI President Ikeda, March 17, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 8)