

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 8 SPEECH SUFFERING LEADS TO VICTORY

'Greatness comes from weathering suffering,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Those who have undergone intense trials cannot be defeated. In the end, they prosper. Youth, and life as a whole, follow this formula.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech on receiving the title of Knight of the Grand Cross of the Equestrian Order of Saint Agatha from the Republic of San Marino, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, Sept. 8. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the future division and doctors division general meetings. Also attending the event were 450 members from 50 countries and territories participating in an SGI youth training course.

Congratulations on the first future division general meeting of the 21st century! [The future division in Japan includes the Boys and Girls Group and the junior and senior high school divisions.] I am very happy to see that you are all in high spirits.

I fondly recall that when I was the same age as the current members of the Boys and Girls Group, I read a poem filled with romance and adventure. It opened with the words "On the summit of a glass mountain, there was a golden castle."

I remember the story went something like this: There was an intense struggle over the control of a golden castle. At first, the honest, hardworking people living under its protection were harassed and tormented by villains who wanted to usurp the castle. But the people refused to be defeated and bravely fought on. In the end, they triumphed and held a grand celebration within the castle walls.

An invincible land like the one in this tale does exist on this green planet of ours. It is a land of proud people who have built a beautiful castle on a high mountain peak and from there have resolutely defended peace, freedom, justice and humanity. That land is the venerable Republic of San Marino, the world's oldest republic. [San Marino, an enclave in central Italy, was founded in 301 C.E.]

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, strongly espoused and upheld his nation's ideal of a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Incidentally, both Soka University of America and Soka University in Japan possess among their treasures correspondence written by President Lincoln.

Of which country did President Lincoln say the following? "Although your dominion is small, your state is nevertheless one of the most honored, in all history. It has by its experience demonstrated the truth, so full of encouragement to the friends of humanity, that government founded on republican principles is capable of being so administered as to be secure and enduring."

It was the Republic of San Marino. This nation stands as a peerless model and a golden ideal for humanity, the world and the future.

On Sept. 3, San Marino celebrated the auspicious occasion of the 1,700th anniversary of its founding. Allow me to extend my warmest congratulations.

President Makiguchi always asserted that to be despised by fools is the greatest honor.

Most esteemed Captain Regent Luigi Lonfernini and Captain Regent Fabio Berardi of San Marino, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: I humbly accept this most significant of honors from the Republic of San Marino. Thank you very much.

From the time I was a young man, I have felt a profound respect and affection for San Marino. Almost a century ago, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi made mention of the republic in his book *The Geography of Human Life*. He noted that though San Marino was surrounded by great powers, it stood on towering mountain peaks and resolutely preserved its independence as a republic for more than a thousand years.

President Makiguchi also wrote that people who live in mountain regions such as San Marino have many admirable characteristics. He described them as high-minded, heroic people possessing an independent will and steadfast integrity. He discerned a strong republican spirit in their amicable, cooperative way of living, equitable sharing of land and wealth, and general spirit of equality.

At a time when Japan was rallying the country for a war against Russia, President Makiguchi studied the circumstances of other nations. He was a person with a broad, international perspective, who always looked at the world as a whole. Envisaging a distant age of peace and humanity, he created value by striving for a world of human harmony, a “republic of humanity.”

Because of the towering scope of President Maki-guchi’s vision, people in Japan, with their narrow island-country mentality, envied and resented him, showering him with groundless slander and abuse. Later, as a consequence of his speaking out for truth during World War II, he was persecuted by the insane forces of nationalism, and ultimately died in prison for his beliefs.

President Makiguchi always asserted that to be despised by fools is the greatest honor, and he persevered in his struggle to the very end like a lion king. I have every confidence that this selfless champion’s commitment to human harmony lives on in the youthful members of the SGI, who are now active in 177 countries and territories around the world.

Outstanding youth leaders from five continents and a total of 50 countries and territories, including San Marino, are with us here today. How happy this makes me! Thank you so much!

In addition, some 500,000 representatives of the future division, at close to 1,000 Soka Gakkai culture centers across Japan, are scheduled to watch today’s ceremony by satellite transmission. Thanks to all the future division members for their efforts. Let me also express my sincerest appreciation to the members of the 21st Century Mission Group, the leaders of the future division, who are always working so hard to foster and support our younger members.

For the young people who will shoulder the new century, there is much to be learned from the history of San Marino. When a certain citizen of San Marino was asked 700 years ago, “What is freedom?” he replied, “Freedom is not fearing anyone.”

These words that express the very pith and marrow of freedom have been handed down to the present. The united, valorous citizens of San Marino have staunchly fought for the freedom of the human spirit, repulsing such threats as religious persecution and political oppression, and have won.

Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have admired San Marino and offered to expand the boundaries of the mountain republic. The citizens of San Marino, however, rejected this

offer. They chose to act in a resolute, dignified manner, based on a firm refusal to build their own happiness and prosperity on the suffering of others.

Furthermore, San Marino, a community of generous, strong people, has throughout history always opened its doors to refugees of natural disasters and political persecution, never turning anyone away, always warmly welcoming and protecting all.

It is a well-known historical fact that during World War II, San Marino, with a tiny population of 15,000, accepted more than 100,000 refugees and sheltered and fed them from its own scarce food supplies. This has moved even scholars studying San Marino's history to tears.

During the war, San Marino's physicians also distinguished themselves by their contributions. Today, members of the Soka Gakkai doctors division are with us. My thanks for their steadfast efforts.

We need the courage and compassion to reach out to those who are suffering or in trouble.

Recently in Japan, there has been an upsurge in incidents of cowardly bullying and atrocious violence. The country is deteriorating.

But you, the future division members, must never allow yourselves to be contaminated by these negative influences. You must not be defeated. No matter what might happen in your relations with others or in society, please continue to live your lives with strength, wisdom and optimism, and stand by those who are suffering. This is the way of a magnificent individual who has the heart of a lion.

Learning from the example of San Marino, it is important that we have the courage and compassion to reach out to those who are suffering or in trouble. This is the noblest thing that a human being can do. It is also the spirit of your mothers and fathers, who have pioneered this gathering of courageous individuals that is the Soka Gakkai.

Why has San Marino prospered for 1,700 years, always free and independent? Historians who have studied and analyzed this important question conclude that one of the reasons is that the San Marino citizens have together shared and endured various trials and hardships.

In other words, greatness comes from weathering suffering. Those who have undergone intense trials cannot be defeated. In the end, they prosper. Youth, and life as a whole, follow this formula.

When the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum presented an exhibit on Napoleon in 1993, San Marino lent a precious golden cavalry helmet and armor, which gleamed with an astonishing brilliance that I vividly remember even now. Buddhism teaches us to "don the armor of endurance" (WND, 392).

I hope that all of you, as youth who possess a lofty mission, will walk the royal road of truth, sincerity and integrity with unflagging perseverance and patience. I also hope you will study assiduously and work painstakingly to forge yourselves into invincible citadels of truth, magnificent citadels of philosophy and towering citadels of victory.

This is my most ardent wish for you. Let's make a vow today to achieve this! Those who agree, please stand up! [The members of the future division answered enthusiastically and rose from their seats. President Ikeda went on to ask them in a humorous manner such questions as "Did you help your mother this morning?" "During exam time, did you study without watching TV?"]

To the future division members, I wish to declare that the future top leaders of the Soka

Gakkai will emerge without fail from your ranks, and that your division will produce an uninterrupted stream of outstanding leaders in every field of society.

Sept. 8 is a very important day in SGI history.

It was on today's date, Sept. 8, 44 years ago, in 1957, that second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, holding aloft the ideal of global citizenship, made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons at the Mitsuzawa Track and Field Stadium in Yokohama.

It was also on this date, 33 years ago, in 1968, that I, as his disciple, amid countless obstacles and criticism, called for the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, based on my desire for world peace and global security.

Once again on this date, six years later, in 1974, a few months after visiting China, I made my first visit to Moscow in the former Soviet Union. Although faced with strong opposition, I declared that I would go, because fellow human beings were there.

Sept. 8 is a very important day in SGI history.

Today, by welcoming our honored guests from the Republic of San Marino, we are adding yet further significance to this meaningful date.

I assert that the seeds of humanistic exchange that I have carefully planted one after another over the years in this way are now bearing abundant fruit in the spheres of peace, culture and education. It is important to plant seeds. It is important to take action.

Yesterday, Sept. 7, Captain Regents Luigi Lonfernini and Fabio Berardi honored Soka University with a visit. Captain Regent Lonfernini gave a wonderful speech in which he called for the solidarity and harmonious coexistence of the global village. I am in profound agreement with him and deeply appreciate his message.

I suggest that we all pledge here and now to work together cheerfully and courageously with these great leaders of the world's model republic, San Marino, to build a new global society of human harmony.

I also hope that when you, the future division members, grow up, you will take your parents—or, if you are without parents, someone who has taken care of you like a parent—to visit San Marino, foremost nation of peace. Let's make these promises together!

Finally, allow me to share the words of the Italian poet and Nobel laureate Giosuè Carducci, who said of San Marino: "Glory unto thee! O ancient republic—Virtuous, generous, and loyal!" Like the poet, I dearly pray for the eternal and indestructible glory of San Marino.

I close my speech with the sincere, fervent prayer that the sun of victory of San Marino, as well as of the youth of the world, will brilliantly illuminate the way toward eternal freedom and peace for humanity in the 21st century.

Grazie, Grazie! ("Thank you" in Italian.)