

To My Dear Friends of the Youth Division—Part 3 Successors—Live Out Your Lives Upholding and Fulfilling Your Vow

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Hi everyone! In the month of October, we all must be busy preparing for the study exam at the end of this month! You may not be holding regular study meeting so thank you for listening to this month's instalment.

In the lecture series “To My Dear Friends of the Youth Division” there are 5 instalments that focus on courage, invincible spirit, successors, humanism, and kosen-rufu. This is the third instalment focusing on successors.

President Ikeda begins this lecture with a quote from the 22nd chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

We will respectfully carry out all these things [to accept, uphold, read, recite, and broadly propagate this Law] just as the world-honoured one [Shakyamuni Buddha] has commanded. Therefore we beg the world-honoured one to have no concern on this account! (LSOC22, 320).

As disciples of Sensei, this is our vow—to reassure that the propagation of the Mystic Law is rock solid. If we do not stand up to carry on this task, who will? This is the significance of the March 16th ceremony. This life-to-life transmission, the passing of the baton from the mentor to the disciple is profoundly significant.

President Ikeda states:

On March 16 in 1958, the last year of his life, my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, conducted a ceremony in which he entrusted kosen-rufu to us, the members of the youth division, who were his successors. It has always been my firm belief that this ceremony had profound significance, comparable to the entrustment that takes place in the Lotus Sutra.

Sixty-one years have passed since then and successors all over the world are standing up to take full responsibility to spread the teachings of the Mystic Law. In this

installment, two Gosho passages are used to study this theme of successors.

Strengthen your faith now more than ever. Anyone who teaches the principles of Buddhism to others is bound to incur hatred from men and women, priests and nuns. Let them say what they will. Entrust yourself to the golden teachings of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, Dengyo, and Chang-an. This is what is signified by the expression, "practicing according to the Buddha's teachings" [cf. LSOC21, 316]. (WND-1, 626)

This first Gosho passage is from "The Embankments of Faith" written to the lay nun Sennichi, the wife of Abutsu-bo.

Sensei states that the first requirement of a successor in the Daishonin's Buddhism of the people is to inherit the spirit of propagation. This entails vowing to fight against fundamental darkness or ignorance, the root cause of unhappiness and suffering in people's lives. Sennichi is praised as she is not discouraged in her efforts to share Buddhism despite meeting with hostility from those around her. Nichiren Daishonin encourages his disciples time and time again by stating that those who persevere in spreading the Mystic Law are going to face opposition and criticism and that this is truly "practicing according to the Buddha's teachings". It requires us to challenge our human revolution and help others do the same. It is a continuous battle to connect with others through dialogue and never be defeated by criticism and opposition.

President Ikeda states:

The essence of the spirit to teach others about Buddhism is the compassionate wish to help people become happy. All of our efforts toward that end arise from the courage to free the person right in front of us from the chains of negative karma.

The important thing, first and foremost, is to chant earnestly to be able to share Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with those who are struggling or suffering, and to then go out and speak about the Daishonin's Buddhism sincerely and confidently with people in your environment.

We all know that this is not easy. We all have had experiences of the people we have introduced not start practicing immediately. However, there is great benefit in these efforts as the foundation for each and every one of these connections is true friendship. Even if that person does not take up faith immediately, a connection has been made and this world needs more of that.

The second Gosho quote for this instalment is from “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of faith, and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate Law of life and death, and manifest it in your life. Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana. Even embracing the Lotus Sutra would be useless without the heritage of faith. (WND-1, 218)

The second requirement for a successor of kosen-rufu is being a person of courage who can resolutely protect the Soka Gakkai, the organization that is heir to the heritage of faith of Nichiren Buddhism. This second Gosho passage ultimately means that we can transform anything through the great power of the Mystic Law with the heritage of faith.

To further explain, Sensei states:

The principles of “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” are other ways of expressing the “attainment of Buddhahood in one’s present form” and the “attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime.” They therefore represent hope-filled principles teaching us that we can shine just as we are; that we can change and others can, too; and that all of us have the capacity to attain the lofty life state of Buddhahood.

The way we do this is through the Buddhist principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life”. What this principle teaches is that a change in our fundamental mind-set or attitude through faith in the Mystic Law enables us to transform our lives and even our environment. Our lives encompass everything in the universe which gives us the power to transform any struggle or difficulty we encounter. In this way, when we practice just as the Daishonin instructs, we have embraced the “heritage of faith”.

As successors, we take our mentor’s personal example which demonstrates this fundamental spirit of faith and apply it to our own daily lives.

Sensei states:

The heritage of faith cannot exist without prayers and efforts to spread our

movement for kosen-rufu. The mentors and disciples of Soka have inherited and carried on this heritage of faith with unsparing dedication. As long as we continue to follow the path of faith of Soka, uniting in the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple and “many in body, one in mind,” capable individuals awakened to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth will continue to emerge in growing numbers.

It is my wish that you will steadfastly protect the Soka Gakkai, the noble, pure-spirited realm of Soka. I hope you will always treasure your fellow members. The true path of successors of kosen-rufu is found in such dedicated and persevering Buddhist actions. The trailblazing efforts of youth will open inspiring new horizons of worldwide kosen-rufu.

As youthful successors, no matter what our age, we must remain true to our vow no matter what. We are so fortunate to be alive during this time, together with President Ikeda in order to ensure that the Soka Gakkai will flourish. Let’s continue to advance with hope and joy, no matter what the circumstances and enable those around us to become truly and absolutely happy.

Sensei finishes the lecture with the following:

You, my young friends, possess the noble mission of creating an age of respect for the dignity of life. You are all courageous young Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have appeared at this wondrous time in accord with your vow for kosen-rufu. To you, I entrust the future of Soka!

Thank you so much for listening! Let’s welcome this significant month of October with many victories and truly enjoy encouraging ourselves and others to write the Level 1 Basics Exam!