

To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice—Our Hope for the Future—Part 2 [of 3]

“The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”—Humanity Is Awaiting Your Growth

Lecture presented by Glenn Turner
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Hi there. This month we’re continuing with the series of lectures by President Ikeda entitled “To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice—Our hope for the Future”.

In this series, President Ikeda speaks directly to our younger members, encouraging them to continue their daily Buddhist practice, face challenges with hope and confidence, and become great leaders of kosen-rufu and in society. If you have Future Division members in your district, this might be an opportunity to ask them to talk about short parts of the lecture during the study meeting.

President Ikeda’s consistent encouragement of young people is a model for us too, when we talk with Future Division members. And, of course, his guidance is equally applicable to all of us—we are all young, one way or another, and we are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth with great missions to accomplish.

Part two of the series is entitled “‘The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life’—Humanity is awaiting your growth”. You’ll find it in the January 2022 edition of *New Century*, and we hope that you’ll have time to read it before your district study meeting. Don’t forget that the digital version of *New Century* is available online to subscribers through the SGI Canada online portal.

This month’s lecture looks at the importance of:

- our mission
- the mentor-disciple relationship
- and the Soka Gakkai

all seen through the lens of one of Nichiren Daishonin’s most important writings, “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”.

President Ikeda begins by listing the reasons for his confidence in Future Division members. He says that because they are practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, because they are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth and because they are supported by the people around them, they will definitely be able to "open the way to a brighter future". He calls them "torchbearers of justice" and says that the future of kosen-rufu depends upon them.

In one memorable paragraph, he gives very clear and concrete guidance to young people:

Youth is the greatest of all treasures. It is also a time of many problems and hardships. But no matter what your situation or if things don't go the way you'd hoped, because you are practicing Nichiren Buddhism now, the path before you is bright and full of possibilities. It is certain that in the future you will be able to spread your wings and soar freely. Otherwise, the teachings of Buddhism would be a lie. Therefore, with an invincible spirit, try to make the most of the present and take a bold step forward. Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in earnest, study hard, and develop yourselves. Faith in the Mystic Law gives you the power to win in life.

To explain the essential role that young people have to play in the kosen-rufu movement, President Ikeda turns to Nichiren Daishonin's letter entitled "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life". The first passage from this Gosho is particularly well-known:

All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren's propagation. When you are so united, even the great desire for widespread propagation [or the great vow for kosen-rufu] can be fulfilled. (WND-1, 217)

President Ikeda reminds us that Nichiren's purpose in revealing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was to allow all people in the Latter Day of the Law to raise their life condition and become absolutely happy. In our time, only the Soka Gakkai has dedicated itself to spreading this teaching and working for kosen-rufu as Nichiren intended. By continuing

to chant and talk to our friends about Buddhism, we are all fulfilling our mission to help others become happy, and we are passing on the “heritage of the ultimate Law of life and death”.

For us to do this properly, says President Ikeda, we also need to share the same commitment and desire for kosen-rufu as our mentor. The Daishonin’s expressions “transcending all differences among themselves”, “as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim” and “with the spirit of many in body, one in mind” all indicate that we can successfully unite, respecting one another as unique individuals, and work together towards our common goal of kosen-rufu.

This is how the Soka Gakkai functions. It has always brought people together for the sake of the happiness of each individual. President Ikeda says:

The Soka Gakkai is carrying out a movement to realize world peace and the happiness of all, spreading the philosophy of respect for life’s dignity across the globe. It accords entirely with the Buddha’s intent, faithfully achieving Nichiren Daishonin’s wish for worldwide kosen-rufu. In that sense, it originated with the Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day.

President Toda used to say that the Soka Gakkai, the organization for kosen-rufu, was more important to him than his life. We have a mission to serve as a model of solidarity for global society.

And we have seen the value of this model very clearly over the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the restrictions on our activities, we have been able to continue to practise and study together, encourage one another, and introduce people to the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin with its message of respect for everyone.

The second Gosho passage is also taken from “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life”:

Gold can be neither burned by fire nor corroded or swept away by water, but iron is vulnerable to both. A worthy [wise] person is like gold, a fool like iron. You are like pure gold because you embrace the “gold” of the Lotus Sutra. . . . It must be ties of karma from the

distant past that have destined you to become my disciple at a time like this. Shakyamuni and Many Treasures certainly realized this truth. The sutra’s statement, “Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers” [LSOC7, 178], cannot be false in any way. (WND-1, 217)

Sairen-bo, the recipient of this letter, remained true to the Daishonin despite the persecutions that both he and Nichiren faced. This is why the Daishonin says that Sairen-bo is like “pure gold” and that they are both connected from the distant past.

This is also the case for us. Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda comments:

The Daishonin says that mentor and disciples are always born together without fail. In light of these words, I feel tremendous gratitude to all of you. We were born together in this world because of a promise we made in the past.

And President Ikeda adds:

[Mentor and disciple] ceaselessly take action to guide people to happiness. Together, they strive to transform wherever they are into a Buddha land and help all people change their karma. This is their promise and their vow from the infinite past.

We can be confident that by practicing Nichiren Buddhism at this time, we have a connection to our own mentor, Daisaku Ikeda, that goes far beyond this life.

In the last sections of the study lecture, President Ikeda again addresses young people directly:

All of you, the Future Division members who have emerged at this time, are young people of profound mission joined by a deep connection and to whom I entrust everything.

President Ikeda explains that young practitioners are actually Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have chosen to be born at this time. He points out the strong sense of mission and great victories of the older and more experienced members around them, and encourages

younger members to also take action for other people's happiness and become a part of our worldwide "network of hope".

Finally, President Ikeda restates his conviction that young people are essential to the future of kosen-rufu:

The hopeful movement of Soka will continue to enrich the 21st century so that it truly becomes a century of life. You, my young friends, will play admirable vital roles in creating an age of the people when a song of the triumph of humanism resounds.

As you can see, it's a great article this month with lots of powerful encouragement for younger members, and great guidance for all of us.

You can find the entire article in the January 2022 edition of *New Century*. If you're not receiving *New Century* right now, you can subscribe by talking to your district leaders, or by visiting the publications page on this website.

Next month we'll look at the third and final part of this series "To our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice—Our Hope for the Future."

See you next month. Bye for now.