

THE LEGACY AND SOLEMN DUTY AND MANIFEST DESTINY OF SOKA UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Hon. Hilario G. Davide

Dr. Daisaku Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda; Soka University President Yoshihisa Baba; SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda; Soka Women's College President Keiko Ishikawa; Vice Presidents, Trustees, Deans and other officials and members of the teaching staff of the various units of the Soka University; members of the 2015 graduating classes; parents and loved ones of the graduates; ladies and gentlemen:

Good afternoon to all of you. *Minna-sama, konnichiwa!* I bring you greetings of joy from the Philippines, that beautiful country in the Pacific composed of 7,107 islands with a population of more than 100 million people. It is very near to your beloved Japan.

Let me forthwith begin by expressing my profound gratitude to Soka University President Baba for inviting me through his letter of 19 December 2014 to be the commencement speaker for these graduation exercises of the Soka University and the Soka Women's College. I was touched and extremely delighted to be so invited. I accepted the invitation for two principal reasons. First, the occasion would bring me back to these consecrated grounds of the University. Exactly 13 years and 3 years ago, or on 15 March 2002. I was here to be conferred by the Soka University with the Degree of Doctor, Honoris Causa, upon the unanimous resolution of the Academic Council based on the "strong recommendation" of Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, the most honored and esteemed founder of the University and President of the Soka Gakkai International, an internationally recognized Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder, and educator who is the recipient of, among others, the United Nations Peace Award and of academic honors from more than 200 universities in five continents. He is a rare gift of God blessed with Buddhism enlightenment and wisdom, whose fruits he unselfishly shared with the rest of mankind and for the glory of humanity. I easily became his admiring pupil, and my personal dialogue with him in the presence of Mrs. Ikeda and my wife (who is here with me) was a spiritual blessing beyond forgetting. With that conferment I became a proud alumnus of this great

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educational institution, the Soka University. I am prouder yet today because the University has become a towering citadel of what it was envisioned to be upon its formal establishment nearly 44 years ago today, or on 2 April 1971. It was built on these three founding principles:

Be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education.

Be the cradle of a new culture.

Be a fortress for the peace of humankind.

Starting only with three faculties (Economics, Law, and Letters) and four departments at its establishment, Soka University soared up with dazzling and amazing phenomenal growth with the opening of scores of faculties, graduate schools, institutes, colleges and departments; it has become more international not only with the establishment of the Soka University of America, but also with its comprehensive system of international exchange which involves five continents, thereby producing global citizens whose lives are strengthened by the founding principles of the Soka University. Principles that, in the language of Dr. Ikeda, seek to create value. the value of a life lived to the fullest, the value of victory and happiness.¹

I salute you, dear Soka University. I am back to you as a very proud alumnus from the Philippines, although by honorary title.

On the occasion of its first graduation ceremonies 39 years, 11 months, and 26 days ago today. That is on 22 March 1975, the University certified and passed 613 students of great promise for its first graduation event. About them Dr. Ikeda meaningfully wrote this tribute: “As they make their way in a world of turmoil and confusion, their sights never stray from the correct course. In the midst of a society of alienation and spiritual squalor, they possess magnificent conviction, unhesitatingly rebuking hypocrisy and deceit. Their lives shine not with mere pleasure but with ennobling sense of gratitude.”² Since then, thousands upon thousands of Soka University graduates here in Japan and in many parts of the world are serving humanity in various fields and endeavors, touching the lives of people without regard to race, color, nationality, culture, creed, gender, or age. Each of them carries and lives the heart and soul of that humanistic education Soka University alone, and not any other in the world offers forever guided by the light of the University’s founding principles. These graduates serve as beacon lights for others to emulate for humanity’s sake and for the triumph of humankind. That triumph can only be founded on **Love**, whose quality can

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *To the Youthful Pioneers of Soka . Lectures, Essays and Poems on Valuecreating Education* 76.

² *Id.*, 78.

never be measured. Thus, I ended my response to the conferment on me of its **Degree of Doctor, Honoris Causa**, by the Soka University in this language: “Truly then, **Love** is the heart of the three founding principles of Soka University.” I now say that humanistic education cannot be achieved and would never grow unless love is its moving power. A new culture can only be built on the basis of love. And peace can never flourish unless love reigns in the heart of everyone. O Soka University, incomparable is your greatness because you are dedicated to the virtue and value of love in its glorious quintessential state. I also believe that **Love** is the heart of Nichiren Buddhism for it “holds that everyone has a Buddha nature of limitless power, wisdom, and compassion.” Compassion is genuine and perfect love. And Christianity, too, is founded on **Love**. Its founder, Jesus Christ, was crucified because of **Love** and He was born because of Love.

For all this amazing growth of Soka University and for its unmatched record of accomplishments, I commend and congratulate you, President Baba, and all of you for your exemplary and sterling leadership in upholding without cease and with all vim, vigor, and vitality the University’s founding principles, and its vision and mission.

The second reason why I accepted President Baba’s invitation is that the 2015 graduation event would provide me a singular opportunity to be with about 3,000 students who will graduate into the real world as new global citizens with a vision and a mission Soka University has inspired them to have. You, my dear graduates of Soka University and the Soka Women’s College of the year 2015, have inherited a sacred legacy, the Soka University humanistic education, the value-creating education. These stirring words of Dr. Ikeda delivered at the third entrance ceremony of the University on 9 April 1973, must always remind you of such legacy:

This University belongs to all of you. It is yours to shape and create. It must not be an ivory tower isolated from society. Instead, it must be a towering beacon of hope, filled with boundless possibilities for the unfolding of a new era, a new culture for humankind. I hope that this University will be a place where the ethos of continually searching and striving to find ways to contribute to humanity and society, of working for the happiness of every individual will never be lost even in the distant future.³

Honor and safeguard that sacred legacy. That is your solemn supreme and paramount duty. Do not stain or diminish it. Defend it at all cost even with your life. For you are now what you are

³ Daisaku Ikeda, *op cit.*, 19.

because of that legacy.

I wish, however, to stress that you of graduating class 2015 have much more to do. Yours is a world almost entirely different from the world of the first graduates in 1975 or even of those of the succeeding years. Yours is a world of fear; of trials and tragedies; of many daunting challenges.

You graduate in a year when the horrible and horrifying effects of climate change are alarming. The climate crisis brought in supertyphoons, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, which have caused to several millions deaths and injuries; destruction of homes; hunger; diseases; and many more. Recovery would take many painful years of tremendous sufferings. The Philippines and Japan were not spared of natural and man-made calamities.

You graduate in a year when peoples in many places of the world are victims of wars, rebellions, religious intolerance, oppression, persecution and injustice. The threats of nuclear war remain a grave problem. North Korea and Iran are heedless to the demands for a nuclear-free world. We should not forget that Japan is at the forefront of the campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons and for forty years, Dr. Ikeda has campaigned for such abolition.

You graduate in a year when human trafficking, the modernday slavery, drug trafficking, child labor, and child abuse are increasing and getting out of control.

You graduate in a year when terrorist groups and religious extremists have increased their presence and their wanton and shameless disregard for the value of life and for sowing fear and misery gravely disturb the peace and security of peoples and of the world itself. Consider the continuing criminal acts of the group of Osama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda, and now the extremely dangerous Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), attacking cities and towns; killing innocent people. Millions have been forced to run for their lives or abandon their homes.

You graduate in a year when corruption in the government service in many parts of the world rules the day. Corruption is a social cancer that affects the poor.

The year of your graduation may yet experience the worst of man's inhumanity to man.

Nonetheless, the year of your graduation may yet be the year when the cry for world

peace, respect for the fundamental human rights and for a just and humane society will be most pronounced, even if painfully expressed.

As the latest graduates of the Soka University, born into a sacred legacy and bound by a solemn duty to protect and safeguard it, yours, dear graduates, is the manifest destiny to confront the challenges which this world in chaos and crisis and this humanity in grave peril face. This task is daunting and formidable. The weak and the cowards would not even start arming themselves to fight the confronting evils. They would simply retreat or surrender and yield to shameless defeat. Only the brave and the strong, the stout-hearted, the visionary, the humanist, brought and reared in a culture of enlightenment, and lovers and advocates of peace, truth, and justice can wage a sustained struggle and fight a war to destroy and eliminate the forces of the confronting evils and save humanity and the world. Only they can be triumphant and victorious against these evils. Your Soka University education, with the inspiring virtue of love for humanity and for others which it ingrained in you through its curriculum and various programs, has fully prepared you to be the army to fight this war and to end the reign of these evil forces with all your hearts and minds and with all your strength, and save humanity and the world. With the spirit of the great minds behind the establishment of Soka University guiding you. The minds of Josei Toda, Shin'ichi Yamamoto, and Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, as your guiding lights, you will not fail. Let Dr. Ikeda be "a lamp to our feet, a light to our path." Follow him in his latest vision for world peace written only last 26 January 2015 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Soka Gakkai International. — **A Shared Pledge for a More Humane Future: To Eliminate Misery from the Earth.** That vision calls for, among other things, our return to the pledge in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"; to "reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person"; and to "promote the economic and social advancement of peoples." The vision calls for the rehumanization of politics and economics for a chain reaction of empowerment by which people develop capacity to transcend and transform suffering; and the expansion of friendship as the basis for evading war.

All these demand that you, dear graduates, must stand, march forward, and be counted in the fight against the climate crisis and be advocates of climate justice for the future generations. You must be among the protectors of the people's right to a balanced and healthful ecology. I am happy to note that Soka University is maintaining a Department of Environmental Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering.

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You must stand, march forward, and be counted in denouncing and demanding the end of wars, rebellion, terrorism, religious intolerance, persecution, injustice, oppression, and corruption in any part of the world.

You must stand, march forward, and be counted in the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons.

Soar high, then, dear 2015 graduates of Soka University. Be not afraid. Soka University will hold you up in the planet and you will transform the world and make it a better place to live in. Be not afraid because your parents and loved ones will always support you and pray for you all the way. Above all, they will always love you. Through their love, prayers and sacrifices, you reached this momentous event your graduation. You owe them a lot. You cannot have been what you are now without them. It is for this reason that I extend my warmest congratulations to you, dear parents and loved ones of our dear graduates. This day, too, is your day, a day of triumph and victory. Congratulations.

Let me end with this quote from Dr. Ikeda in his book **The Human Revolution**: “A great inner revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.” This is a message for all of us here present.

Doumo arigatou gozaimashita. Mata kondo yoroshiku onegaishimasu!