

Message from The Forty-fifth Headmaster

Sen'ei Ikenobo

On the occasion of the Ikenobo Ikebana 550th Year Celebration

The Ikenobo Ikebana 550th Year Celebration began in November, 2011. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all Ikenobo members and those who are involved in organizing the celebration events.

The year 2012 marks 550 years since the name Ikenobo first appeared in historic records. I happen to be Headmaster on this occasion and I strongly feel the importance of Ikenobo Ikebana continuing to be passed down for 600 or 700 years. To that end, we need to follow the fundamental spirit of the "Senno Kuden," continuously creating new things and being aware of the thoughts and needs of people who live in our own time.

Although I introduced *Shoka shimputai* and *Rikka shimputai*, I don't expect that these styles will be arranged forever. I believe what is most important is for the Headmaster of each era to create styles suited to that time. It is fine to arrange classical styles if you like them, but if you are in a position to teach ikebana, you need to bring up the next generation, becoming aware of what will be most sought after in the days ahead.

Recently, an interview with the head of another school appeared in the newspaper. In the interview it was said, "It is not difficult to arrange if you follow certain rules. Just have a ruler in one hand. You cut a branch of vaccinium to be X centimeters long and then bend it at a point X centimeters from the bottom..." My feeling, however, is that what can be measured with a ruler will merely be a standardized work. Nothing will be conveyed by an arrangement in which floral materials are measured. One might as well use artificial flowers. No two flowers are identical, and even if branches are similar some will have darker bark, others can be brownish, and their thicknesses differ. Each plant has its own unique life, changing from

moment to moment. Its life is always precarious, and its being alive is beautiful. Such beauty cannot be measured with a ruler.

I think ikebana is not art, but rather a part of human culture. Unlike animals, humans "create" things, and in so doing culture has developed. What we call culture exists only in human society. In human culture we speak both of intellectual culture, and of culture of the heart or spirit. In intellectual culture, for example, the automobile and train were created to solve inconveniences of transport. Similarly, eyeglasses were designed to help with problems of vision. The culture of the heart, however, includes "truth," "goodness" and "beauty." People seek to know "truth," they wish to do "good" and they long for and admire "beauty." One must not focus only on intellectual culture while neglecting culture of the heart or spirit. The coming together of both results in the full richness of a human being.

Ikebana is a "path of the heart or spirit," passed down from teacher to student, and by students who have become teachers passing ikebana in turn to their students. The path each teacher has taken and each teacher's heart and spirit are thus passed on. Through ikebana arranging we find the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the importance of continuing this "path of the heart or spirit." We find thoughtfulness and sympathy and a sense of warmth in human relationships, enriching the culture of the heart.

A jet leaves a trail in the sky and a boat leaves a wake. These marks eventually disappear. But the path of ikebana that we have taken will not vanish even if it is not visible to the eye. This path has been followed for 550 years because of the bond between people's hearts, and I am certain that we will continue to follow this path in the future.