

# Peace Declaration

We are gathered here today to observe the 41st Annual Memorial Service for All Who Perished in War. We become robbed of our dignity and lives through war and should never allow it to happen. Beyond the concepts of nation, ideology, and principle, this memorial is dedicated to all lives that were lost in war. As the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Buddhist organization, reflecting on our own past mistake of supporting the then-military regime, we observe this memorial as the center of our efforts in pursuing peace and renouncing war.

Eighty percent of the Japanese population today were born after World War II, and the average age of those who have experienced war firsthand are over eighty. As these generations age, the greater population of present Japan has no experience of any form of war. For the youth in particular, provided are very few opportunities to listen to firsthand war experiences directly from the older generations, such as grandparents and parents. Before their memories fade and become lost, we must find a way that enables us all, including the future generations to understand the devastation of war. As part of such efforts, a documentary film portraying the Battle of Okinawa was produced in 2019, with its screening promoted at affiliate temples and district offices as well as local movie theaters. A survey was also conducted on the damage that war has brought about.

Though 76 years have passed since the war, lives throughout the world continue to be put in danger. This situation is brought about by not only armed conflicts, but also economic disparity, poverty, and many other social issues. The pandemic we are facing right now has also been contributing to people's hardship because it naturally reveals our ugly self-centeredness that we all have deeply embedded within ourselves. While prejudice and discrimination have accelerated, racial and national division have also widened. In the midst of this global crisis, we must continue in our efforts in pursuit of renunciation of war and realization of world peace.

Monshu, or Head Priest, Sennyō explains in his message "A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower" as follows,

In today's world, there is an endless list of difficult global issues that are directly related to the existence of humanity such as terrorist attacks, armed conflicts, widening economic gap, global warming, mishandling of nuclear waste, and violation of human rights through discrimination. Such are the result of our ignorance and blind passions in which we fail to see the true nature of ourselves.

Thus he clarifies that even global or international issues can find their ultimate causes in our own ignorance or blind passions.

Therefore, for us who cannot completely get rid of our human desires, the only foundation that we can rely on is the guidance of Amida Tathagata, or the Buddha's enlightenment itself because it leads us to the right way even though we are still bound to the darkness of our own ignorance. Though we are not able to attain perfect peace like the Buddha, let us be guided by the true and real teaching and strive to our utmost. Let us live each day to its fullest and endeavor to ease the divide between self and other, refrain from being overly defensive, let go of our excessive attachments, control our urge to always be competitive, and instead, share in the sorrow and happiness of others.

Do not let conflict and exclusion get the better of us. But rather, let us appreciate one another, sharing in the other's pain, working together to realize a harmonious society. Only then, will we be able to overcome the treacherous walls and difficulties, and find the path to true peace.

With the wish for peace, temple bells shall be tolled across Japan. Our aspiration for peace for the world, which reverberates through the sound of the bells, shall reach our children and grandchildren. Now let us continue our efforts together.

September 18, 2021

Governor General Iwagami Chiko  
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha