

Peace Declaration

Once again, we are gathered here to observe the Annual Memorial Service for All Who Perished in War. Each time we gather for this occasion, our hearts ache. Though 77 years have passed since the end of World War II, we as a religious organization continue to ask ourselves why we were not able to raise our voices at the time, and cannot help but feel remorse.

The news of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 shocked the world. Since then, daily TV news programs show videos of people suffering from the warfare, and we are faced with the grim reality of the ongoing war. While many civilians are being killed in Ukraine, Russia has also lost many lives of their soldiers. War produces only hatred and cruel results among both parties.

The impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has even triggered some politicians to claim an urgent need of military reinforcement here in Japan, and those who support this stance are not just a few. When international security is being threatened, as Buddhist followers, we are impelled to make difficult decisions.

A strong point is made among Sakyamuni Buddha's words that goes, "Fear does not create the need to have weapons. Rather, weapons create fear." The fear of guns in society begins with the fact that anyone can easily acquire a gun. The mindset that I should have a gun because others do only creates an endless cycle of anxiety and fear.

Monshu Sennyō (OHTANI Kojun), the present Head Priest of our denomination, in his message entitled 'A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower,' addresses armed conflicts and other global issues as being "the result of our ignorance or blind passions." Greed, anger, and ignorance, are known as the three poisons that typify our human desires. Majority of armed conflicts are said to be caused by greed for territorial expansion or securement of natural resources. Perhaps 'just wars' have been repeated as an outcome of claiming 'I am the one that is right.' It could be this self-righteous attitude of "I am right," that exemplifies ignorance.

As darkness cannot break through darkness, ignorance cannot be eliminated by ignorance. The darkness that originates from human ignorance can be illumined only through encountering the light of immeasurable wisdom. Based on this understanding, the preamble of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Constitution reads, "The Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha is an organization ... who... transmits the wisdom and compassion of Amida Tathagata to all people." In accordance, a statement made by Monshu entitled 'Gratitude for the Jodo Shinshu Teaching,' affirms that,

Living with the Dharma as my guide, ...
Frees me from becoming lost in greed and anger,
And allows me to share a warm smile and speak gentle words,
Sharing in the joy and sadness of others,
I shall strive to live each day to its fullest.

Peace cannot be easily realized simply through words and intentions. We must each reflect on our aspiration for peace in our acts under the guidance of the Buddha Dharma.

Let us live each day to the fullest, so that peace may come to the world as soon as possible.

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Governor General Iwagami Chiko
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha