

A Message for Peace to Commemorate 80 Years Since the End of World War II

This year marks the 80th year since the end of World War II. First and foremost, I offer my heartfelt condolences to all those around the world who lost their lives in that devastating war. I also express my deepest sympathy to those who suffered unimaginable hardship—losing family, homes, and enduring countless forms of sorrow—due to the war.

War is a collective act carried out between nations that takes lives and tramples upon the dignity of life. It is a tragic expression of human ignorance and foolishness in its most horrific form. During World War II, in Asia, the Pacific, and across the globe, both allies and enemies alike—combatants and civilians—suffered tremendous losses. On Japanese soil, Okinawa experienced a devastating ground battle. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki annihilated both people and entire cities. Tokyo, Osaka, and many other cities were reduced to ashes through air raids. And yet, it is part of our history as a Buddhist organization that we once cooperated with and even glorified that war.

Shinran Shonin stated, “If the karmic cause so prompts us, we will commit any kind of act.” When illuminated by the Buddha’s teaching, we come to see our true selves—beings so easily swayed by circumstances that we are capable of the most tragic and shameful acts. Precisely because of this, we must never again allow such conditions to arise.

Since the end of the war, our organization has engaged in various efforts to realize peace, including an annual memorial service for all who died in the war. However, as those with no direct experience of war now make up the majority of the population, the painful memories of war are gradually fading. We must not forget our past—a past in which we failed to question the national and social context of that time, and mistook what was wrong for what was right. We must hold a deep sense of remorse and strive never to let our past fade away, guided by Shinran Shonin’s words, “The nembutsu alone is true and real.”

We are awakened to the reality that all life—past, present, and future—is embraced by the compassionate vow of the Buddha. We must honor those who came before us, cherish those living now, and convey our aspirations to those yet to be born.

Our organization should carry forward the painful stories of war passed down to us by our predecessors so that their experiences will not be in vain. People around the world continue to suffer from wars and conflicts even at this very moment. It is our important role as a Buddhist organization to sympathize with their pain and sorrow, deeply reflect on ourselves, and pass on the Nembutsu to the next generation.

Continuously reflecting on the past, questioning ourselves, and considering what we can do now and what we can leave behind for future generations—these are the matters of true importance. On the 80th-year commemoration of the end of the war, I offer this message for peace.

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