

Prayer for peace

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One, two, three, four, five. In these few seconds, in Japan, many new lives have been born, with hope. But 74 years ago, it was different. At that time, suddenly, despair came down from the sky, and tomorrow was taken away from many people. Have you thought about that?

74 years ago, many people ceased to be during World War II. The Japanese Air Force loaded bombs onto planes and flew them into enemy ships. How fearful it was! Not only for the Japanese pilots but also for the US military. They must have been afraid of death falling from the sky. But innocent civilians were also afraid of death falling from the sky. A few days before Japan finally surrendered, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and more than one hundred thousand people disappeared in an instant.

A couple of months before that, around one hundred and fifty thousand civilians died in the Battle of Okinawa. Our islands saw an intense battle between Japan and the US. My grandfather was six years old at the time. Along with four members of his family he headed north, dodging bullets, walking at night, and hiding in the bushes during the day. While running away, his most unforgettable memory is of many corpses along the route. Not only those who died in the fighting, but also those who starved to death due to food shortages. And he remembers many children were crying. He spent time with many refugees in a small hut in the northern forest, and they managed to keep their hunger at bay by eating snakes, turtles and frogs from the mountains. From time to time, bombs fell near the hut, and he could only sleep for a moment at a time. At one point, three people, including his 13-year-old brother, went out of the hut to check to see if the US military were near by. His brother never returned, he was killed in an ambush. Only people who have experienced war, know how frightening it is – My grandfather said this so many times to me, over and over again. I will never forget what he has told me about the war.

As I have grown older, I have become more aware of the horror and misery of World War II. People lived desperately then, and now I realize how important peace is. In addition, the opportunity to think about peace in Christianity classes and lectures has increased my

understanding. And now that I'm graduating next year, I have come to think again about how grateful I am for the fact that my Grandfather wasn't killed, and the fact that I am here now. Grateful also for the environment where I live. I have a house to go home to, a family, friends, a school to study at, and I have a tomorrow. And I hope, you have too. But I think you and I should not take peace for granted. In order to pass on the baton of life and to live a long happy life, with many more small lives that will be born from now on, we need to protect peace.

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution states the country cannot use War to solve international disputes. It also says that Japan cannot have a military force. But Prime Minister Abe wants to modify the constitution to allow the Self-Defense Forces to fight in other countries. We have to think very carefully about if that proposal will lead to war or not.

Never forget, War takes away tomorrow from people. War takes the lives of your loved ones.

One, two, three, four, five. More small lives have been born in these few seconds. Please don't give them a tomorrow of despair, give them a tomorrow of hope and peace.

Thank you for listening.