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Letter of Japanese
School of Guam
September Issue
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Principal 8/25/2023

War and Peace (Guam Liberation Day)

One month ago, on July 21, the anniversary of Guam's liberation from the Japanese occupation, the 2023 Liberation Ceremony was held in front of the Guam Museum after a service at the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Haganilla. I heard that every year, each village holds a memorial service with a parade, but this year, due to a typhoon, the preparations were not made in time, so the ceremony was held in one place.

In the cathedral, the bishop gave a talk, in which I heard the word "**Japan**" many times. Although it was in Chamorro, I felt that he was probably talking about the liberation from the Japanese occupation, which made me feel tense.



Next, a memorial ceremony was held in front of the museum with the participation of representatives from each Guam village, Guam war veterans, the Governor of Guam, the Japanese Consul General, and the U.S. military. The vivid stories of the Guam war survivors conveyed the cruelty of the war, even to me, who could not fully understand English. The stories were sometimes interspersed with jokes, so even though the events took place during wartime, every single word was deeply moving to me in response to the actions of the Japanese military. Also, when I heard the moderator reporting the number of people killed by the Japanese army in each village, the air around me was filled with a tense atmosphere that seemed to freeze and I was filled with feelings of apology.

However, I was also struck by the depth of meaning of the phrase "**Never forget, but forgive!**" They can never forget the bitterness they feel for those who killed their family members, relatives, and friends. But it also sounds like a heartbreaking cry to themselves that they still need to forgive in order for them, their family, and Guam to continue to move forward. We must take heart.



At this time of year in Japan, various TV programs are put on to mark the end of the war. In one of these programs, a roundtable discussion was held and the question was asked, "Why do wars happen? The answer was not clear. One of the experts said, "Actually, no researcher knows the answer to that question. I was impressed by this comment.



I have heard the following story. "Wars have been started by the rulers of the time out of **fear, spirit, and appetite.**" I feel that these words are very apt when I think of the war that Russia is now waging against Ukraine. Although Russia has a vast land area, its geographical feature of having no high mountains on its borders has historically led it to be invaded by other countries. Therefore, it has

always had a fear of invasion by other countries. Russia's defense against this has forced it to adopt an aggressive posture of invading other countries first. Furthermore, I am sure you are all aware of the spirit and appetite associated with religion .

Returning to the aforementioned TV roundtable discussion, I sensed a difference in the way Japanese and foreigners think about "peace". While the Japanese attendees focused on maintaining a friendly attitude with others, the foreign attendees insisted on taking action themselves, including protesting, to obtain and maintain peace. Peace will not be something that can be obtained by keeping silent. I still feel that it is something that should be obtained. However, it is a difficult thing to do because it carries the danger of war if we go too far and become selfish.

For those of us involved in education (including parents and guardians), it is important to eliminate factors in our daily interactions with children that may lead to conflict, while at the same time teaching them that how people tend to think and act in a group, and it is important that we let them continue to think how to build an amicable society. On the occasion of Guam Liberation Day, I renewed my belief that this will lead to avoiding war and maintaining peace for a long time.

