

Boys and girls, I would like to talk about two things at the end of the second trimester, 2019.

First, looking back on this year, we have suffered from many natural disasters, including Typhoon Roke, which caused a blackout for many days in a large part of Chiba Prefecture, and Typhoon Hagibis, which caused many floods and took the lives of more than 90 people from their beloved families. Residents there still are striving to restore the lives that they had been living before. We can only hope that they are able to recover as quickly as possible, **not only economically and socially but also physically and emotionally.**

On the 31st of October, Okinawa's symbol, Shuri Castle, burnt down. Some of its stone ramparts, *ishigaki*, are registered as a World Heritage Site. The castle buildings themselves were destroyed during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, and a large number of people spent more than thirty years rebuilding them. The main building, Seiden, was restored in 1992. Since the rebuilding, Shuri Castle has been a symbol of the unique culture and traditions of Okinawa. It will take a long time and huge amount of money to rebuild, but I hope we will be able to see that beautiful castle again.

And this month, Dr. Tetsu Nakamura was shot and killed in Afghanistan. That is very sad news. He dedicated his life to improving agriculture, water management there, and turned the deserts into green belts. We are proud of him.

This year, we have also witnessed a number of very good things, one of which was the visit by Pope Francis to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was the second time for a Pontiff to visit our country. **Pope John Paul the Second visited those two cities in 1981. That was thirty-eight years ago. I was a university student at the time. John Paul visited my university then. And Pope Francis did so too, on his recent trip.** In Nagasaki he said, "Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation." **He also said, "In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance, and sale of ever more destruction weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven."** Pope Francis has been concerned about *hibakusha*. Japan is the only nation ever to have been attacked with atomic bombs, and it has called for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, even though it is still under the nuclear umbrella of the U.S.

Another good thing was the enthronement ceremony of His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito. He ascent to the throne on the 22nd of October, and he rode in a parade on November 10th whose route was very close to our school. It was the biggest Imperial event since Heisei 2, 1998. There are expectations that Emperor Naruhito, the first emperor with a college degree who also studied abroad, will, together with Empress Masako, internationalize the imperial household.

And four days ago, many of you joined in the New National Stadium Opening Ceremony. There are only seven months to go until the Tokyo Olympic Games. I am honored to work for our school. You must be proud of being a student in this traditional high school. You are among the first high school students to have been allowed to visit the new national stadium. The event was broadcasted nationwide. I'm still basking in the afterglow of that event.

Second, to twelfth graders, there are just 24 days to go before the Center Examination, and you need to concentrate on your studies more than ever. Do what you can do today for the sake of your own futures. After the Center Examination, your focus will shift to the secondary examinations for individual universities. You will have plenty of time, almost forty days, before taking them. Don't be afraid to set high goals for yourselves. I am sure that you will be able to make it. Aim high, boys and girls. I do hope each of you will live up to your own personal potential. The possibilities for you are infinite.

Now, to everyone, you may at times feel in low spirits. There will surely be hardships and, perhaps, bitter experiences. When it is hard striving to solve your problems all by yourselves, please don't hesitate to talk to your teachers, or the School Counselor, or to me.

Today I have talked about two things; first, we have suffered from many natural disasters, but we also witnessed many good things. Second, I asked twelfth graders to aim high and every one of you not to hesitate to talk to your teachers. In closing my speech, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I do hope the year 2020 will be a more peaceful one for people all over the world.

Thank you very much.

834 words I skipped the sentences in red, i.e. 94 words.