

## Message to the participants in the Hiroshima World Peace Prayer Ceremony

I am Zengi Tanaka, Chief Buddhist Priest of Gokurakuji, a Shingon sect temple in Nara prefecture. At first, please let me express my deep condolences to a lot of war victims.

I am very much moved and encouraged by you who are praying under the scorching sun of August for the victims of the past war as well as for future world peace by raising the national flag of each country of the world. I remember the day when I also participated in your ceremony. I would like to tell you how it happened.

Before the war, there stood a Buddhist temple called Sairenji just besides the Atomic Bomb Memorial Dome. It was of course totally destroyed by the atomic bomb.

After the war, the temple was rebuilt in the same place. A new Buddha statue was enshrined in the temple. It consoled the citizens of Hiroshima who survived the atomic bomb. They prayed to it for peace of their departed loved ones. A lot of citizens worshipped the Buddha and called it Hiroshima Buddha. For them, it was a symbol of peace. They also held a festival for the Buddha to reactivate the city life. They loaded the statue on an oxcart and marched in boisterous parade through the nearby shopping street.

But the city of Hiroshima decided to make the Peace Memorial Park around the Atomic Bomb Dome so that the temple had to relocate and the Buddha statue had to move to another temple during the construction of the new temple. For unknown reason, it had to move from this temple to another temple and from this again to another one. In the course of his pilgrimage, it was missing at last and disappeared mysteriously

After 50 years since his disappearance, it turned out miraculously that the Buddha statue which my temple had acquired from an antique dealer many years ago is the very Hiroshima Buddha. This identification not only pleased me, but also urged me to hold a peace prayer ceremony in front of the Hiroshima Buddha on August 6 every year. We too just held today the flag ceremony at our temple.

Nowadays, people who experienced the miseries of war are rapidly decreasing so that younger generations must renew the resolution for peace. I am sure the Hiroshima Buddha came out again to convey us this important message.

While I walked through the Peace Memorial Park on August 6 some years ago thinking in this way, a lady asked me to join your ceremony. It was being held just on the site where Sairenji temple stood! I felt it was the guidance of the Hiroshima Buddha. This encounter has made it possible for me to be connected with a lot of people all over the world who pray for peace today. I am very happy to be a part of big hope and would like to pass the baton of peace to future generation on my own way.

I could not express all my thoughts in this short message. But I swear you that I will do my best to listen to peace, to think of peace and to act for peace

May peace and happiness prevail to all the people of the world! Thank you very much.