

Boys and girls,

I would like to say a few words at the end of the second semester, 2016.

Almost nine months have passed since April. Time flies.

Many things have concerned or interested me during this time. I will first mention four particular ones that I have chosen from among them:

- 1 On the night of April 14th, a huge earthquake hit Kumamoto. Two days later, in the middle of the night of the 16th, another huge quake struck. The series of earthquakes and aftershocks in Kumamoto killed 50, injured more than 2,000 people, and damaged many buildings, including such important cultural properties as Kumamoto Castle. People in Kumamoto still need help. I pray for their recovery from the disaster.
- 2 On May 27th, Barack Obama visited Hiroshima for the first time as President of the United States of America. In his remarks, he said, “Those who died — They do not

want more war. They would rather that the wonders of science be focused on improving life, and not eliminating it.” He also said, “When the choices made by nations, when the choices made by leaders reflect this simple wisdom, then the lesson of Hiroshima is done.” As President Obama suggested, we should choose a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening.

3 In July, 18- and 19-year-olds voted in the House of Councilors election and in the election for the Governor of Tokyo. Voting is a right guaranteed under the Constitution. It is also a civic duty. The Civil Code may be amended soon, and, in the future, people of the age of 18 may be legally considered adults. Actually, 92 of you had a chance to vote in the House of Councilors election, and 105 of you had a chance to vote in the election for the Governor of Tokyo. I think these were good opportunities for you to

start thinking about how you might be able to change our society for the better. Next summer, there will probably be a Metropolitan Assembly Election. I hope you will discuss political issues with your families and with others who have the right to vote.

4 On October 4th, the Nobel Assembly at the *Karolinska Institutet* announced that it had decided to award the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine to Yoshinori Ohsumi for his discoveries of the mechanisms for autophagy. On the basis of Dr. Ohsumi's research, other Japanese scientists have made further advances in understanding the cellular processes of autophagy and its effects on such degenerative diseases as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and they have found new medicines for treating them. I hope many lives will be saved as a result of these scientific discoveries.

There are many other things which have seemed especially noteworthy, too, during this

time. Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, Ichiro Suzuki reached 3,000 career hits in the MLB, many people were killed in a terrorist attack on the Nice waterfront, the number of refugees from Syria and Iraq has been increasing because of conflicts there, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito alluded in a video message to his wish to abdicate, and Japan won 41 medals in all at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

For me personally, having become Principal of Aoyama High School in April has been an especially meaningful change. After almost nine months as a novice principal, I'm even happier than at the beginning. It has been a wonderful pleasure to see your efforts on Sports Day, your enjoyment of other extracurricular activities, after school and in *gasshuku*, your eager studying in classes and in study rooms, your enthusiastic work on the stage or behind the scenes during the *Gaien-sai*. I am very proud of you. I am honored to be your principal.

And, to my fellow teachers, I would like to express my appreciation for the many ways that you have helped me. I would not have been able to perform my duties as principal without your very important help and advice.

Now, Twelfth graders,

The Center Examination is around the corner; actually there are just 22 days to go. Now is the time for you to concentrate on studying 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 second 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. Be ambitious, boys and girls. I do hope you will live up to your own personal potential. Believe in yourselves. You will be leaders in the future. The possibilities for you are infinite.

You may at times feel in low spirits. There will surely be hardships and, perhaps, bitter experiences. But such things are necessary for you to become mature. They will make you stronger, more patient, and wiser. So don't hesitate to accept as many new challenges as you can.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I do hope the year 2017 will be a more peaceful one for people all over the world.

Thank you very much.

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