

Honorable guests from the alumni association and the Metropolitan Board of Education, Former Principal, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and boys and girls, I would first like to say a few words to our new graduates at this, the 69th commencement of Aoyama High School.

Three years have passed since you began your studies at this highly selective and historically important Metropolitan high school. There must be countless things that have concerned and interested you during these years.

Three years ago, all of you were very good junior high school students. Most of you were second to none in your junior high schools. It might even have been shocking to most of you to discover that some of your friends at Aoyama High School were better

than you in certain fields. Looking back on my childhood, I was bad at many things. I was a slow runner. I was awful at drawing. I was poor at arithmetic. I was clumsy at baseball. I was short-tempered and always had trouble communicating with my classmates, my teachers, and even my parents. It took a long time to be able to accept those unhappy days.

It may have taken you a long time to accept living in friendly rivalry with others at Aoyama High School. That, however, has helped you mature and has made you stronger and wiser. Your friends may have motivated you to learn more, so as to become more like them. They may have helped you overcome hardships. Be proud of your friends, and don't envy them for being better than you in any field. And when friends are in low spirits, talk to them. Listen to them. Try to understand. It's not important for you to give them any specific advice. Just be there, close to them, offering your friendship.

The bonds of friendship will last long after you graduate, often as long as you live.

There were many things which seemed especially noteworthy during these past three years.

In April, 2014, when you started Aoyama High School, the consumption tax was raised to 8% in order to help meet social security budget needs in an aging society, such as those for pensions and medical care.

In September, Mt. Ontake erupted suddenly, covering the area with thick volcanic ash and taking 58 precious lives. It was the worst volcanic disaster in Japan's postwar period.

In 2015, simultaneous terrorist attacks occurred in Paris and its suburbs in November. These attacks left 130 people dead and more than 300 injured. They were preceded in

January by an attack on a newspaper office in Paris and the murder of two Japanese hostages in the Middle East.

In July, the United States and Cuba started restoring diplomatic relations. It had been more than fifty years since the Cuban missile crisis occurred in 1962, during the presidency of John F. Kennedy.

And last year, in 2016, huge earthquakes hit Kumamoto, resulting 50 deaths, injuries to more than 2,000 people, and damage to a large number of buildings, including such important cultural properties as Kumamoto Castle.

In May, Barack Obama visited Hiroshima for the first time as President of the United States. 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.” 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.

In October, Yoshinori Ohsumi was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discoveries of the mechanisms for autophagy. On the basis of his 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.

Many other things occurred last year, too. Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, many people were killed in a terrorist attack on the Nice waterfront, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito indicated his wish to abdicate, and Japan won 41 medals in all at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. ※割愛しました

The many natural disasters and terrorist attacks that have occurred during these past three years have made us terribly sad.

Fortunately, we have witnessed new discoveries and reconciliations, too, which have made us happy and which have given us a new hope for the future.

In this age of uncertainty, we have to keep on learning. Learning is the best thing we can do during such times. Japan has little in the way of natural resources. Our nation's greatest treasure is its citizenry. You, boys and girls, are part of that great treasure. Each of you is irreplaceable.

Some of you will begin studies at a university and others will prepare for another try for admission next year. To both of you, I would like to say, "Don't be afraid to set high goals for yourselves." Believe in yourselves. 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. So don't hesitate to accept as many new challenges as you can.

It has been a wonderful pleasure to see your efforts on Sports Day, 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.

Now, to your guardians, I would like to express my appreciation for the many ways that you have helped us.

To our guests, I thank you very much for attending this commencement. I hope you will continue to offer us your very important help and advice.

Finally, I would like to wish you all great happiness.

Thank you very much.

Good luck, boys and girls.

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