

With COVID-19, A Crisis is an Opportunity

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Greetings to everyone this Christmas and New Year!

The year 2020, started with the joyful outcome of Pope Francis' visit to Japan, but the spread of COVID-19 meant that we were not able to celebrate both Lent and Easter publicly. Also now, from Advent, to Christmas and even until New Year, public masses in 2021 will continue to be restricted to prevent infection of the Coronavirus. But the way things will look like depends on how we think. For example, let us think like this: "If the COVID-19 disaster happened a few months earlier, Pope Francis' visit to Japan might not have happened. In a way, we were lucky that the onset of the pandemic came a few months later. We will survive the Coronavirus pandemic with "Positive thinking: A crisis is an opportunity," both in our public and private lives.

The theme of the Pope's visit to Japan, "*Protect all Life*," took on increasing weight in the midst of the COVID-19 disaster. It led to a call for an end to "intimidation and discrimination with regard to the virus," and an encouragement to "live together." It also took a collection of Papal messages, "*Life after the Pandemic*," and a new encyclical, "*Fratelli Tutti*" to reflect on these intentions of the Pope. As such, hereby we announce the goals of the Archdiocese of Osaka for 2021 and ask for your cooperation.

I. Establishment of the "*Protect All Life*" Fund

Although this matter has already been approved by the Diocesan Presbyteral Council and by the Advisory Council, I would still like to present it to all parishioners as a New Year's greeting in this diocesan newspaper. This is, of course, in response to the Pope's messages during His Holiness' trip to Japan. It is also to be in tune with the message of the bishops of Japan in response to the Pope's call.

1. To support the "*World without Nuclear Weapons*" Fund

The "Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons" was established in response to Pope Francis' call for action towards nuclear abolition during His Holiness' visit to the bombed city of Hiroshima. Bishop Shirahama of the Diocese of Hiroshima said, "We want to stand in solidarity with the abolition of nuclear weapons to remember all the survivors of the atomic bomb and the victims of war." Mr. Kawasaki, a member of the *International*

Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), expressed his enthusiasm, saying: “We would like to work with citizens to raise funds for the dismantling of nuclear weapons in the future. The Nuclear Weapons Convention has been signed and ratified by 50 countries, and will enter into force on January 22, 2021, with a goal of increasing the number of signatories to 100. We will seek the signature and ratification of Japan, the only country that has suffered a nuclear attack, and at a minimum, we will seek the participation of observers at the Conference of States Parties to the Nuclear Weapons Convention. We want to continue to participate in the activities of the fund as a supporting organization, for a world free of nuclear weapons.”

2. To support "*Kounotori no Yurikago* (Cradle of Stork) in Kansai".

We want to participate and support various activities to raise awareness that babies in the womb are important members of society.

3. For "*Emergency Disaster Relief*".

To be able to respond immediately to sudden disaster relief.

4. To protect the environment.

It is about “taking care of our homes” and in particular, the “environmental protection” activities called for in “*Laudato Si*.”

For these items, we ask all parishioners to make a special offering during the month for “Protecting All Life” from September 1 to October 4 of each year. The Disaster Response Committee will review where use the donations collected and will inform the parishioners after implementing said donations.

II. Event promoting the “*Canonization of Blessed Justo Ukon Takayama*”

1. “*A winter rainbow, Look up and then go ahead, Ukon festival*”

It was a great joy to hold the beatification ceremony of Justo Ukon Takayama at Osaka Castle Hall on February 7, 2017, but it was by no means the last goal. It is essential that we continue on praying for the canonization so that we can be witnesses of the faith to the whole world. There was a new catalyst for the canonization: on October 11, 2019, the jurisdiction to petition for the canonization, which had been in Tokyo, was returned to the Archdiocese of Osaka. In addition, on October 2, 2020, the painter, Mrs. Kayoko Murata (who belongs to Yukinoshita Catholic Church) donated to us ten (10) paintings depicting “The Life of Ukon Takayama”. On February 6, 2021, the promotion event will take place

at St. Mary's Cathedral in Osaka. We will pray for the canonization of Blessed Justo Ukon Takayama as we officially inaugurating the paintings. Let us re-activate the cause for the canonization of Ukon through the efforts of the entire Archdiocese of Osaka.

2. Opening of the “Osaka Seminary”.

Ukon's efforts for the mission to Japan focused especially on establishing a seminary. He built the "Azuchi Seminary" by the Azuchi Castle under Nobunaga Oda and worked with missionaries to train future priests. St. Paul Miki, leader of the 26 martyrs of Japan, studied at this seminary. In the paintings of the "Life of Ukon Takayama" by Mrs. Murata, St. Paul Miki is also depicted. This year, we plan for future seminary students who will study at the “Osaka Seminary” which we started last year. Please help us to promote the priestly vocations.

III. With and After COVID-19.

The COVID-19 disaster has forced a new way of life into the Catholic Church, including the way we handle masses, sacraments and liturgies. We need to discover new ways on how to build a church where we can share the grace of the Mass and each sacrament while at the same time, take appropriate measures to prevent infection. Also, incorporating new means of mission and pastoral care through online media has also started. On the other hand, we have also heard discussions about religion being taught by demonstrating at home, religion (from the Latin word “*religio*” meaning “joining or binding again”, church (from the Greek word “*ecclesia*”) meaning “assembly”, etc. in order to incorporate with it the concept of “social distance.” Let us explore the new life of the Church in light of the teachings from the collection of Papal messages, “*Life After the Pandemic*” and the encyclical, “*Fratelli Tutti*.”