

On the Occasion of the 2009 Annual Ten Days for Peace
(Message from the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan)

To All Who Seek Peace,

“Blessed are the peacemakers”(Mat 5,9)

“Ten Day for Peace” is approaching again this year. Responding to the Peace Appeal in Hiroshima of the late Pope John Paul II, the Catholic Church of Japan observes August 6th until August 15th as a period of Ten Days for Peace, and appeals to learn, pray and act for peace.

Since the last year, the world has been facing an unprecedented economic crisis. In Japan this led to the serious circumstances in which many people lost both jobs and housing. Above all, migrant workers who have been supporting Japanese industries from the basis are placed in a miserable situation. Although these people have contributed the least to the economic crisis, they are suffering the greatest damage on their livelihood and lives.

Pope Benedict XVI stated about struggles against poverty and establishment of peace in his message for the World Day of Peace of this year, which has a title “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace”. He said that every extreme poverty brought about by mankind is an insult to the innate dignity of people, a threat to the global peace and a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore. He also appealed that the Church, accompanying the poor on journeys, should not be satisfied with “giving from one’s surplus”, but should support the poor above all by “a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies”. In the Peace Message After 60 Years From the End of World War II, we as bishops appealed to build peace not by the use of force but through nonviolence and dialogue. The eradication of poverty is essential for establishment of peace along with dialogue.

On April 5 2009, President Obama of the United States called for the elimination of nuclear weapons in his speech in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. This speech is epoch-making, because no one else but the leader of the military superpower appealed to seek for the peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. We would like to pay close attention to the efforts by President Obama and the US government to eliminate their own nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the Mayors

for Peace conference will be held in Nagasaki from August 7 to 10 in order to find ways to eliminate nuclear weapons across national boundaries. This Mayor for Peace has 2963 member cities from 134 countries and regions. These movements will surely cast a light of hope to the depressing society of today. As residents of the only country in the world to have suffered nuclear attacks, we must not spare any effort for nuclear abolition.

True peace will surely be realized, if we beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks (cf. Isaiah 2,4), and apply the enormous amount of funds for nuclear weapons and other armaments to poverty eradication, welfare, education and improvement of living standards by promoting these efforts for nonviolence and nuclear abolition.

The peace of the Lord be with you always!

August 6, 2009

President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

Peter Takeo Okada, Archbishop of Tokyo