

Catholic Saitama Diocesan Pastoral Evangelization Committee, Brothers and Sisters

Question: “What can the Church do about the issues of Poverty and the Environment?”

On January 1, 2009, the “World Day of Peace,” Pope Benedict XVI issued a message entitled, “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace”. On December 10, 2008, the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Japanese Bishops’ Conference published a message entitled, “Respect the Human Rights of All.”

Since what was written about in these messages concerns global issues, they may appear to be issues that quite apart from us. However, if we look around at our surroundings, we can see that our life-style affects the environment and the deterioration of the environment in turn affects our lives.

Because of the economic crisis that began in America last year, many migrants who are members of our Church have been faced with the situation of being fired from their jobs. There are also among the brothers and sisters of Asia, whom we encountered through our program, “Donations from the Table of Jesus,” many who are struggling with poverty.

These two issues of, “Poverty” and the “Environment” are problems that our brothers and sisters confront in their daily lives and in the life our Church. Our lives are not unrelated to these global issues. For our small Church, these big issues are not the kind that we are able to handle by ourselves. However, even if we are only a small Church, we cannot run away from these issues either. The reason we cannot run away, is because the problems of poverty and the environment are problems of life, and they are a matter of human rights. We, as the Church, must do what we can. Pope Benedict XVI closed his “Peace Message” with the following words:

“I extend to every disciple of Christ and to every person of good will a warm invitation to expand their hearts to meet the needs of the poor and to take whatever practical steps are possible in order to help them. The truth of the axiom cannot be refuted: ‘to fight poverty is to build peace.’”

Therefore, I pose the following question to the Catholic Saitama Pastoral Evangelization Committee:

Theme: “What can the Church do about the issues of Poverty and the Environment?”

1. Learn about the problems of poverty and the environment.
2. As a Church and as Christians, let us clarify what concrete things we can do about the problems of poverty and the environment.
3. Make proposals from the clarified concrete ideas of No. 2 that give us ways in which we can handle these issues as a parish, as a block and as a diocese.

January 18, 2009

Catholic Saitama Diocese

Bishop Tani Daiji