

DIOCESE OF SAITAMA

TOKIWA 6-4-12, Urawa-ku,
SAITAMA city
〒330-0061, JAPAN
TEL: 048-831-3150
FAX: 048-824-3532



カトリックさいたま教区

さいたま市浦和区
常盤 6-4-12
〒330-0061
TEL: 048-831-3150
FAX: 048-824-3532

To all my brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Saitama:

**I wish you a very happy Christmas 2019 and New Year 2020!
“...on earth peace among those whom he favors!” (Luke 2:14b)**

Today, on New Year's Day, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This day also has been established as World Day of Peace. At the beginning of the year, let us pray, especially through the intercession of Our Mother Mary, for the world leaders to respond to Pope Francis' call to peace, to join more seriously forces both mentally and physically to build a peaceful world.

Filled with the joy we received from Pope Francis' visit to Japan last November, we're getting the new year started. I'm sure that the Holy Father's posters and calendars are posted everywhere at our churches, convents, schools, institutions, facilities and homes, and that many of you treasure the commemorative goods as well as the photos you took. What should be treasured more, however, is that we keep in our hearts every message the Holy Father called us for and make each of his messages come true as we take steps throughout the new year.

Let us love God, love our neighbors, and care for nature.

If I were to choose just one among the calls given by the Holy Father as my New Year's resolution, that would be a call that “each of us be an instrument of peace.” If each of us is willing to go beyond all differences and creatively do what we can do together, no matter how small it may be, we'll be truly blessed.

Pope Francis says that one of the wonderful ways to “be an instrument of peace” is caring for and protecting “the earth, our common home of every creature”. Japan, blessed with beautiful nature, also has seen her environmental devastation in a critical state due to the ever-expanding economic activity. Just one look at the sea or a beach is enough to recognize that. The earth owes her life to oceans. Many of the things necessary to our daily lives are carried by ships across the oceans. Our life is supported by various kinds of lives born and grown in the ocean currents. The activity

to care for nature in Japan is far more advanced than in Argentine where I lived for 33 years. Still, our own awareness is far from adequate, and more unified cooperation and effort is needed.

Caring for nature is deeply related to our most important commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ...You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40). It is an urgent issue common to all people of different religions. My hope is that you be creative with all kinds of activities to “care for nature” and practice what you can do at your beloved parishes, homes, and local communities.

May God abundantly bless you all to make this new year truly fruitful! And let us pray that our trust in Our Mother Mary may be deepened.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us! Amen.”



Presenting Pope Francis with two kendamas at audience in Vatican

New Year's Day 2020

Mario YAMANOUCHI Michiaki
Bishop of the Diocese of Saitama