

**In this year of the Ordinary Jubilee,
may we forgive one another and continue to walk together
with the “hope that does not disappoint” from God in our hearts
precisely because we are in the midst of a world
where the threats to the present and future of all life have not ceased at
all**

Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Saitama,

Happy New Year! This year of 2025, the Catholic Church worldwide is celebrating the Ordinary Jubilee. The origin of the Jubilee dates back to the Year of Jubel, when people of Israel in Old Testament Times were liberated from the “yoke” of suffering every 50 years. Every 50 years they received the grace of “hope” to live from the Lord God. In order to welcome the Ordinary Jubilee that comes every 25 years, we, the people of the Saitama Diocese, also celebrated the opening Mass at our Cathedral, Urawa Church on December 29 and prayed together there. Throughout this Holy Year, we’re walking together with our brothers and sisters around the world. We are still a small flock of sheep in this beloved land, but we are entrusted by God with the precious mission of sharing and witnessing the Gospel, the words of hope that Jesus proclaimed, to people around us, and living with them to bring them hope in a world where hope seems to be fading these days.

When considering how to live this Holy Year, the Bull, *Hope Does Not Disappoint*, sent to us by Pope Francis, is a great help. “Hope does not disappoint” are the words of the Apostle Paul (Romans 5:5). I encourage you to read the entire text, and I would like to touch on a few points that I think we can cherish together to help you to do so. Pope Francis calls on us to first recognize the existence of those who need hope the most. Right beside us are people suffering from illness, those who are forced to live with great disabilities, young people who cannot dream of the future, those living in poverty where even a minimum standard of living is difficult, people left in lonely circumstances, those who have had to leave their homeland and live in unfamiliar foreign lands, and those desperately trying to rise again after encountering unexpected natural disasters. So many people desperately need “hope” to live with! Since we have once received gentle help from Jesus when we were in suffering and sorrow, if we slow our steps or stop and bend down, we can recognize Jesus who is with those people. Nothing would give me great joy if this Holy Year inspires you, priests and laity joined altogether in your parish, to be encouraged by this grace of recognition and begin engaging with those who need hope. Then we can discover together the hope, the gift of God's mercy through Jesus, and “walk together” with the “hope for peace” that is most needed

in the church today. This awareness is what the Pope urges as the beginning of everything. I do hope you will read the Papal Bull of Indiction with your brothers and sisters and receive the guidance and encouragement of the Holy Spirit. Making a pilgrimage to the Pilgrim Churches with your parishioners may be an excellent opportunity to do so. I also encourage you to receive the Indulgences, which are the grace of the Holy Year and the sign of God's infinite mercy.

I send you my blessings for the New Year so that we may walk together. May the Lord bless all of you, protect all of you, and abundantly grant all of you the graces you need. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

January 1, 2025

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

Mario YAMANOUCHI Michiaki

Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Saitama