

New Year's greetings from Bishop to all the people in the Diocese of Saitama

'To be the messengers to proclaim the Peace' (Pope Leo XIV)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I pray for each of you for the New Year, 2026, to be a blessed and wonderful year.

After celebrating the Holy Christmas, we now welcome the New Year with the celebration of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, praying for the Peace of the world. Here in Japan as located in the Far East, we have privilege to welcome the New Year's Sun before the peoples in all the other countries, lands and islands will do. As Christians, facing the New Year Sun, we thank Pope Leo XIV for his New Year Message, united in our hearts with Jesus who gives his life to all the humans of 8.3 billion and who is the light to show the way for all of us to go.

In the beginning of the New Year Pope Leo XIV calls us to be 'the messengers of the Gospel of Peace. Peace be with you all; 'Towards an unarmed and disarming Peace'.

Since the very evening on 5 May, 2025, of his election as Pope, his first appearing at the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica, until now, via the day of 26 August when the theme of the World Day of Peace 2026 was officially announced by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the Peace has always been the main theme for Pope in his words and his deeds.

"To accept the Peace in its truest sense"

In his message of World Peace, Pope says "We humans are asked to refuse the theories of violences and wars, and accept the Peace in its truest sense, based on love and justice". The Peace, he says, does not mean only the state without conflicts but the clear intentions of disarmament, that is, 'the Peace without fears'.

When the arms are silenced, the world changes to 'disarmament', which 'solves conflicts and opens our hearts to fidelity, sympathy and hope'. However, it is not enough for us to call it in mind. "It should be realized by living in the way to refuse the violences in all the means, visible or social structural".

'Peace be with you'. From the risen Christ to the successors of St Peter, this calling for Peace is universal without exception for 'all the Christians, non-Christians, political leaders and all the citizens alike' with the eager longing 'to build the Kingdom of God where all of us may share humane and peaceful future together'.

According to Pope Leo XIV, the calling for Peace cannot separate from the present state of reality of the world, wounded and not yet healed. 'Our world has been deeply wounded with conflicts,

unfairness, environmental destructions and with the sense of spiritual loneliness which has become more serious', thus, told by Pope to the congregation at the assembly to commemorate the centenary of the 'Ecumenical Meetings' in Stockholm in 1925.

As Pope also told in his talk to the people in their movements or communities to create "Meeting place for Peace" in Verona, the reconciliation should have its "reality", that is, which may be originated among the rural societies and communities and will be grown up by their rural organizations. The reconciliation, thus, does not renounce 'differences' or 'different opinions' but accept them, understand and overcome them.

"To prepare the agencies for Peace, if you desire the Peace"

However, where the pains seem to overwhelm, you will have greater responsibilities, thus, for building up the future for reconciliation. This may be a paradox in the modern world where the impacts are needed to overcome the inertia which tends to keep the status quo. Against the Latins' saying, 'Si vis pacem, para bellum (To prepare for the wars, if you desire peace)' Pope Leo XIV insists on saying, 'To prepare the agencies for Peace, if you desire the Peace'. This should be done in a way 'to discuss with everybody humbly' not coercively. The only universal condition for building Peace is still as follows: 'Without forgiveness, no Peace', as told by Pope at his general audience to the people with their old roots in Portugal on 20 August, 2025.

"We wish Peace of the world"

Supported by these strong intentions, the Peace becomes 'the light of the world'. No doubt 'everybody' wishes Peace, but particularly the youth living toward their future realize its necessity. On the Eve of their Jubilee for the youth in Tor Vergata, Rome, Pope delivered his speech to them, 'how the world eagerly wants the messengers of the Gospel as the witnesses for justice and Peace!'

Pope then indicated to them the simple way, which might be easily forgotten, by saying 'Fellowship can truly change the world. Fellowship is the way to Peace'. He also entrusted his wish from the bottom of his heart, which is to reach the heavens and is surely engraved in their hearts, to the youth who gathered in St Peter's Square in Vatican to celebrate the Holy Year Mass. His wish is, 'We are looking for Peace of the world'.

May Our Lord Jesus with the Blessed Virgin Mary always be with us closely throughout this New Year, so that each of us may become the better architects to build the society filled with brotherly love, as well as becoming the witnesses as the disciples of Jesus for the love of God to each other.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, 1 January, 2026

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