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Bishop's New Years Message for 2010

**WE IMPLORE YOU ON BEHALF OF CHRIST.  
BE RECONCILED TO GOD. (1)**

**To all my Brothers and Sisters of Saitama Diocese,**

Merry Christmas! And a Happy New Year!

I think that in the midst of the economic recession, many people have not only been placed in difficult working or living situations but have also been subjected to much psychological stress. However, in many of the parishes and area blocks, you have come together as brothers and sisters, to pray, share and help one another to get through these difficult times. When I see all these efforts, I realize that it is precisely in times of adversity that God's grace is abundantly poured out.

This year is the tenth year of my ordination as a bishop. At the beginning of this New Year, I want to reflect and share together with you about reconciliation with God.

**Reconciliation with God**

Through Christ, God saved us when we were mired in sin and reconciled us to God. Reconciliation is the restoration of the original relationship between God and humanity. However, looking over society, reconciliation between God and humanity has still not yet been fully realized. In fact, in this world, sin, evil and fighting still exist; peace and equality have not yet been achieved. Since we have already been reconciled to God, we must undertake the ministry of telling one and all about reconciliation with God. St. Paul has said the following:

*“God, has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2)*

Since you are praying for peace, and proclaiming the words of the Scriptures etc. in various places, you are in many ways already fulfilling your “duty to minister for reconciliation”. Here I would like to share with you about three themes that are familiar to all of us concerning reconciliation with God.

**Reconciliation with Ourselves**

There is a so-called twelve step program for recovery from addictions. The following is a passage from a prayer for the twelve step program.

*“No matter how powerless I was, no matter how much my life was out of hand, denial was able to obstruct my awareness.”*

It is denial from within ourselves that prevents us from being aware of weaknesses, limits, and the stifling aspects of our lives. Could it be that we are too concerned with wanting to appear stronger than we are or too worried about what our neighbors may think of us? Are our ears always attuned for warnings from friends? If we can remember that God has already accepted us just as we are, then this can become an opportunity for us, to accept ourselves just as we are.

Maybe we have become too wrapped up in the values of a society that puts precedence only on economics and efficiency. It depends on the person but in some cases, we have placed unbearable burdens and expectations upon people who cannot bear them. Should we respond to these expectations or reject them? Either way, we have to ask ourselves first, whether we have even forgotten to be aware of what we would like to do, or what we want.

In order to be reconciled with ourselves, I think that it is important that we take time to pray and share with others concerning the state of our mind and body, our life-style and our relationship with our neighbors, etc.

### **Reconciliation with our Neighbors**

I am very happy that you, as brothers and sisters, have made a reality of being able to gather together around the one Table of the Lord. However, we all know that there can be divisions and squabbles in communities, as well as people who leave the Church. It can easily be said that the building of a community is a human endeavor and therefore these kinds of things are to be expected. However, since it says in the Scriptures, *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;”* (3) I urge you to have sincere discussions and to seek unity in the community. *“If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.”* (4)

What is absolutely indispensable for reconciliation with our neighbors is guidance from the Holy Spirit. We should all seek to discern whether or not our words or actions are in accord with the Holy Spirit through discussions together. As a reference, please use the following words of St. Paul for discussion.

*“The evidence of the Spirit's presence is given to each person for the common good of everyone. God has put each and every part of the body together as he wanted it. An eye can't say to a hand, ‘I don't need you!’ Or again, the head can't say to the feet, ‘I don't need you!’”* (5)

### **Reconciliation with Nature**

When I say reconciliation with nature, you may feel that this is slightly off the topic of our discussion of the reconciliation of God and humanity. However, reconciliation with nature, which is God's creation, is affected by our spiritual poverty, the way that we human beings live in this world. In other words, to reconcile with nature, we must restore the original relationship between God and humanity that was revealed to us through Christ.

When I discussed, “What is spiritual poverty?” earlier this year with you, we learned that there are three main points to consider. The first is liberation from attachment to money and things, in order to achieve freedom. The second is to correctly assess the value of the benefits and products of nature by considering how we use such things as the air and water that are part of God's creation. The third is the encounter of humanity with nature. I cannot give you a detailed discussion of spiritual poverty here, but I hope in the near future to discuss this more with you.

Last year you held serious discussions together about the inquiry that I sent to the Pastoral

Evangelization Committee, “What can the Church do in regard to the issues of poverty and the environment?” The final report with all the responses to the inquiry will be presented in January. After we have all received this report, I think that together as a diocese, we will be able to start dealing with the issue of reconciliation with nature.

Here I have tried to share with you my thoughts on reconciliation. During the coming year, I pray that together we can try to fulfill our “duty to minister for reconciliation” in some small way.

I offer my blessings for all of you, that the New Year may be filled with many graces.

May the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all.

January 1, 2010

Catholic Saitama Diocese

Bishop Marcellino Tani Daiji

(1) II Corinthians 5:20, (2) II Corinthians 5:18, (3) Romans 12:10, (4) I Corinthians 12:26, (5) I Corinthians 12:7-22