

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
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Bishop's Message for the New Year 2012

**NOW FAITH IS THE ASSURANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR,
THE CONVICTION OF THINGS NOT SEEN. (Heb. 11:1)**

To my Brothers and Sisters of Saitama Diocese,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!

In the year 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake devastated the Tohoku area and wide areas of Saitama Diocese. We have received great support from you and from people around the country and abroad. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all of you. You have worked hard together for the restoration of the damaged facilities in our Diocese. Moreover, even though you yourselves were victims of the disaster, you have been offering aid and support for the Tohoku area. I am very proud of you and I would like to express my profound respect for all of you.

In considering various aspects of the relief activities undertaken in the Tohoku area, what was really wonderful was that the work was done, as a multicultural Church. One example of this was the emergency food service (*takidashi*), where the menu, the songs, and the dances people performed, had a very rich international character. This multicultural dimension was welcomed with great joy by the people of the disaster area. Also, because of the success of a long standing diocesan program for the formation of active-listening volunteers (*keicho*), the Diocese was able to smoothly initiate the activities of active-listening volunteers in the disaster area.

Community-building as a multicultural Church, and formation of active-listening volunteers, are two important "Saitama Diocese Priority Issues" that we have been dealing with over the past ten years. Indeed, over the last decade, we have been working together on various other issues as well. It can probably be said that your hard work and commitment to dealing with our Diocesan Priorities can readily be seen in the success of our disaster relief activities for the Great East Japan Earthquake!

Since 2010, over the course of a full year, we evaluated the Saitama Diocesan Priorities; then in September of last year, we drew up the "Saitama Diocese Basic Principles and Priority Issues for Pastoral Evangelization (2011-2020)". It was because of your dedication to discussing and deepening your understanding of the past Diocesan Priorities that we were able to come with this new proclamation. As we commit ourselves to these new Diocesan Priority Issues, let us aim for a community that; while actively encountering Christ in the midst of our contemporary society; also learns the teachings of Christ together in community: praying together, living the Gospel with many other people, and having enough vitality to share the Gospel with others. (1)

In the Great Earthquake, about twenty thousand people lost their lives in an instant. This had a huge impact on us all. In coming face to face with “death”, we were made to reflect on the meaning of our lives, and on the meaning of death and resurrection. We were also made keenly aware of the vital importance of our family bonds, and of our bonds to the local community. To live our daily lives while fixing our eyes upon death and resurrection, helps us to be aware of the meaningfulness of “being alive” each and every day of our life. I believe that this way of living leads us to even more treasured encounters with each person that we meet, and it is intrinsically linked to the strengthening of the bonds between us. Within our Church community as well, I hope that we can learn to reflect on the importance of the encounters and the bonds we have made with people of the same faith. Let us, the laity and pastoral ministers gather around the same table, so that after discussing and sharing the graces of the Lord with one another, we may grow even more as brothers and sisters by collaborating together. (2)

To “Work for Reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake” has been chosen as one of our new Diocesan Priority Issues. We need to continue our reconstruction assistance on a long-term basis. The aid for people living in temporary housing is a vital pillar of reconstruction. Let us continue to cherish encounters with people in the disaster area. Moreover, there are many others who are troubled and who suffer, not only in the disaster area of the Great East Japan Earthquake, but also in our society and in our Church. To ensure that every person is able to live a dignified human life, let us pray together, be in solidarity with one another, and act together. (3)

In the letter to the Hebrews, Paul declares: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” At the beginning of this New Year, let us contemplate these words of Paul and start another year with hope. I give thanks to God who guides us in hope, and I send you my blessing for the New Year.

† May the Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you all.

January 1, 2012
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Bishop Marcellino TANI Daiji
Catholic Diocese of Saitama

(1) Basic Principles 1, “BASIC PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITY ISSUES FOR PASTORAL EVANGELIZATION, CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAITAMA” (2011-2020).

(2) Basic Principles 2

(3) Basic Principles 3