

**“APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO THAILAND AND JAPAN”**

**19 - 26 November 2019**

**Organized by  
Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand  
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**Edited by FABC Central Secretariat**

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**I. VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN THAILAND**

*Wednesday, 20 November 2019*

*Dear Young Friends,*

I know that this evening you are keeping a vigil of prayer, you are praying. And I know that others are still on their way, journeying here. How beautiful these two things are: to pray and to journey!

There are two things that we have to do in life. We have to keep our hearts open to God, since we receive our strength from him, and we have to keep journeying, because in life one can never stand still. A young person cannot retire at the age of twenty! He or she must keep walking. He or she must always keep moving forward, always going uphill.

One of you can say to me: “Yes, Father, but sometimes I am weak and I fall”. That doesn’t make any difference! There is an old Alpine song that says: “In the art of climbing, the important thing is not to keep from falling, but never to remain down on the ground”.

I offer you these two pieces of advice. Never stay down, immediately get up; let someone help you to get up. That’s the first thing. The second thing is: Don’t spend your life sitting on a couch! Live your life, build your life, do it, keep moving forward! Keep advancing on the journey, get involved and you find extraordinary happiness. I can assure of you of that.

May God bless you. I am praying for you; please pray for me.

**II. MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, "INNER SANTI MAITRI" HALL OF THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE, BANGKOK**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Thursday, 21 November 2019*

*Mr. Prime Minister,  
Members of the Government and the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Political, Civil and Religious Leaders,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am grateful for this opportunity to be with you and to be able to visit this land so rich in natural beauty, and the splendid guardian of age-old spiritual and cultural traditions, like that of the hospitality I have personally experienced, and which I would like in turn to spread, thus increasing bonds of greater friendship between peoples.

I thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your welcome and for your kind words of introduction, and for your attentive and humble gesture. I am grateful that this afternoon I will have the opportunity to pay a courtesy visit to His Majesty King Rama X and the royal family. I once more thank His Majesty for his gracious invitation to visit Thailand and I renew my best wishes for his reign, while paying sincere homage to the memory of his late father.

I am happy to be able to greet and address you, governmental, religious and civil leaders, and through you to greet the entire Thai people. I likewise address a respectful greeting to the diplomatic corps. On this occasion, I readily offer my good wishes in the wake of the recent elections, which signified a return to the normal democratic process.

I thank, too, all those who worked to make this visit possible.

We know that the challenges facing our world today are indeed global problems, embracing the entire human family and calling for a firm commitment to international justice and solidarity between peoples. I consider it significant to note that, in these days, Thailand will conclude its chairmanship of ASEAN, an expression of its historic engagement with the broader issues and challenges facing the peoples of the entire South East Asia region and also its

continuing interest in fostering political, economic and cultural cooperation in the region.

As a multi-ethnic and diverse nation, Thailand has long known the importance of building harmony and peaceful coexistence between its numerous ethnic groups, while showing respect and appreciation for different cultures, religious groups, thoughts and ideas. Our age is marked by a globalization that is all too often viewed in narrowly economic terms, tending to erase the distinguishing features that shape the beauty and soul of our peoples. Yet the experience of a unity that respects and makes room for diversity serves as an inspiration and incentive for all those concerned about the kind of world we wish to leave to our children.

I am pleased to know of your initiative to create a social ethics commission and to invite the traditional religions of the country to take part, so as to receive their contributions and to keep alive the spiritual memory of your people. In this regard, I will have the opportunity to meet with the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch as a sign of the importance and urgency of promoting friendship and interreligious dialogue, also in the service of social harmony and the building of just, responsive and inclusive societies. I would like personally to assure you of the full commitment of Thailand's small but vibrant Catholic community to maintain and promote the distinctive characteristics of the Thai people, as evoked in your national anthem: peaceful and loving, but not cowardly. They are likewise firmly resolved to confront all that would lead us to be insensitive to the cry of our many brothers and sisters who yearn to be freed from the yoke of poverty, violence and injustice. This land bears the name "freedom". We know that freedom is possible only if we are capable of feeling co-responsible for one another and of eliminating every form of inequality. Hence the need to ensure that individuals and communities can have access to education, dignified labour and health care, and in this way attain the indispensable minimal levels of sustainability that can enable an integral human development.

Here I would like to dwell briefly on the movements of migration that are one of the defining signs of our time. Not so much for the movements in themselves, as for the conditions in which they take

place, a phenomenon that represents one of the principal moral issues facing our generation. The global crisis of migration cannot be ignored. Thailand itself, known for the welcome it has given to migrants and refugees, has experienced this crisis as a result of the tragic flight of refugees from nearby countries. Once more, I express my hope that the international community will act with responsibility and foresight, will work to resolve the issues that have led to this tragic exodus, and will promote safe, orderly and regulated migration. May every nation devise effective means for protecting the dignity and rights of migrants and refugees, who face dangers, uncertainty and exploitation in their quest for freedom and a decent life for their families. It is not just about migrants; it is also about the face we want to give to our societies.

Here I think, too, of all those women and children of our time, especially those who are wounded, violated and exposed to every form of exploitation, enslavement, violence and abuse. I express my appreciation for the Thai government's efforts to extirpate this scourge, and for all those private individuals and organizations working to uproot this evil and to provide ways to restore their dignity. In this year that marks the thirtieth anniversary of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent*, we are all invited to reflect on the need to protect the welfare of our children, their social and intellectual development, their access to schooling, and their physical, psychological and spiritual growth (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 7 January 2019). The future of our peoples is linked in large measure to the way we will ensure a dignified future to our children.

Dear friends, today, more than ever, our societies need "artisans of hospitality", men and women committed to the integral development of all peoples within a human family committed to dwelling in justice, solidarity and fraternal harmony. Each of you, in various ways, has devoted your life to enabling the service of the common good to reach every corner of this nation; this is one of the noblest tasks any person can undertake. With these sentiments, and with prayerful good wishes that you may persevere in the mission entrusted to you, I invoke every divine blessing on this beloved nation, on its leaders and its people. And I ask the Lord to guide

each of you, and your families, in the ways of wisdom, justice and peace. Thank you!

### **III. VISIT TO THE SUPREME BUDDHIST PATRIARCH, WAT RATCHABOPHIT SATHIT MAHA SIMARAM TEMPLE BANGKOK**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Thursday, 21 November 2019*

*Your Holiness,*

I thank you for your gracious words of welcome. At the beginning of my visit to this nation, I am pleased to come to this Royal Temple, a symbol of the values and teachings that characterize this beloved people. The majority of Thais have drunk deeply from the sources of Buddhism, which have imbued their way of venerating life and their ancestors, and leading a sober lifestyle based on contemplation, detachment, hard work and discipline (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 6). These traits nurture your distinctive characteristic as a “smiling people”.

Our meeting takes place as part of the journey of esteem and mutual recognition initiated by our predecessors. I would like this visit to follow in their footsteps, in order to increase respect but also friendship between our communities. Almost fifty years have passed since the seventeenth Supreme Patriarch, Somdej Phra Wanarat (Pun Punnasiri), together with a group of distinguished Buddhist monks, visited Pope Paul VI in the Vatican. This represented a very significant turning point in the development of the dialogue between our religious traditions, which subsequently enabled Pope John Paul II to visit this Temple and the Supreme Patriarch, His Holiness Somdej Phra Ariyavongsagatanana (Vasana Vasano).

I myself recently had the honour of welcoming a delegation of monks from the Wat Pho temple, who presented me with a translation of an ancient Buddhist manuscript in the Pali language kept in the Vatican Library. These are small steps which help testify that *the culture of encounter* is possible, not only within our communities but also in our world, so prone to creating and spreading conflict and exclusion. When we have the opportunity to appreciate and esteem one another in spite of our differences

(cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 250), we offer a word of hope to the world, which can encourage and support those who increasingly suffer the harmful effects of conflict. Occasions like this remind us how important it is for religions to become more and more beacons of hope, as promoters and guarantors of fraternity.

In this regard, I am grateful to the people of this land, because, since the arrival of Christianity in Thailand some four and a half centuries ago, Catholics have enjoyed freedom in religious practice, despite their being in a minority, and for many years have lived in harmony with their Buddhist brothers and sisters.

On this path of mutual trust and fraternity, I wish to reiterate my personal commitment, and that of the whole Church, to furthering an open and respectful dialogue in the service of the peace and well-being of this people. Thanks to scholarly exchanges, which lead to greater mutual understanding, as well as the exercise of contemplation, mercy and discernment – common to both our traditions – we can grow and live together as good “neighbors”. We will likewise be able to promote among the followers of our religions the development of new charitable projects, capable of generating and multiplying practical initiatives on the path of fraternity, especially with regard to the poor and our much-abused common home. In this way, we will contribute to the formation of a culture of compassion, fraternity and encounter, both here and in other parts of the world (cf. *ibid.*). I am sure, Your Holiness, that this journey will continue to bear fruit in abundance.

Once again, I thank Your Holiness for this meeting. I pray that you may be granted every divine blessing for your own health and well-being, and for your high responsibility of guiding the followers of Buddhism in the ways of peace and concord.

Thank you!



**IV. HOLY MASS, NATIONAL STADIUM, BANGKOK**  
**- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis**

**Thursday, 21 November 2019**

***“Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” (Mt 12:48).***

With this question, Jesus challenged the crowd of his hearers to reflect on something apparently obvious and self-evident: Who are the members of our family, our relatives and loved ones? After allowing time for the question to sink in, Jesus then replies, “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother” (v. 50). In this way, he subverts not only the religious and legal certitudes of the time, but also every undue claim on the part of those who thought themselves above him. The Gospel is an invitation and a freely bestowed right for all those who want to hear it.

It is surprising to see how full the Gospel is of questions that attempt to unsettle and stir the heart of the disciples, inviting them to *set out* to discover the *truth* that is capable of giving and generating *life*. Questions that challenge us to open our hearts and minds to encounter a newness much more beautiful than we could possibly imagine. The questions of the Master are always meant to renew our lives and those of our communities with incomparable joy (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 11).

Such was the case with the missionaries who first set foot in these lands. By hearing the Lord’s word and responding to its demands, they came to realize that they were part of a family much larger than any based on blood lines, cultures, regions or ethnic groups. Impelled by the power of the Spirit, their bags filled with the hope brought by the good news of the Gospel, they set out in search of family members they did not yet know. They set out to seek their faces. Their hearts had to be opened to a new way of thinking capable of overcoming the “adjectives” that create division; this enabled them to discover the many Thai “mothers and brethren” who were still absent from their Sunday table. Not only to share with them everything that they themselves could offer, but also to receive what they needed to grow in their own faith and understanding of the Scriptures (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 8).

Without that encounter, Christianity would have lacked your face. It would have lacked the songs and dances that portray the Thai smile, so typical in your lands. The missionaries came to understand more fully the Father's loving plan, which is not limited to a select few or a specific culture, but is greater than all our human calculations and predictions. A missionary disciple is not a mercenary of the faith or a producer of proselytes, but rather a humble mendicant who feels the absence of brothers, sisters and mothers with whom to share the irrevocable gift of reconciliation that Jesus grants to all. "Behold I have made ready my dinner; go therefore to the streets and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find" (cf. *Mt 22:4.9*). For us, this invitation is a source of joy, gratitude and immense happiness, for it enables us to "let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 8).

This year marks the 350th anniversary of the creation of the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam (1669-2019), a sign of the fraternal embrace brought forth in these lands. Two missionaries alone were able to sow the seed that, from that distant time, has grown and flourished in a variety of apostolic initiatives that have contributed to the life of the nation. This anniversary is not a celebration of nostalgia for the past, but a fire of hope to enable us, here and now, to respond with similar determination, strength and confidence. A festive and grateful commemoration that helps us to go forth joyfully to share the new life born of the Gospel with all the members of our family whom we do not yet know.

All of us become missionary disciples when we choose to be a living part of the Lord's family. We do this by sharing with others as he did. He ate with sinners, assuring them that they too had a place at the Father's table and the table of this world; he touched those considered to be unclean and, by letting himself be touched by them, he helped them to realize the closeness of God and to understand that they were blessed (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 11).

Here I think of children and women who are victims of prostitution and human trafficking, humiliated in their essential human dignity. I think of young people enslaved by drug addiction and a lack of

meaning that makes them depressed and destroys their dreams. I think of migrants, deprived of their homes and families, and so many others, who like them can feel orphaned, abandoned, “without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). I think also of exploited fishermen and bypassed beggars.

All of them are part of our family. They are our mothers, our brothers and sisters. Let us not deprive our communities of seeing their faces, their wounds, their smiles and their lives. Let us not prevent them from experiencing the merciful balm of God’s love that heals their wounds and pains. A missionary disciple knows that evangelization is not about gaining more members or about appearing powerful. Rather, it is about opening doors in order to experience and share the merciful and healing embrace of God the Father, which makes of us one family.

Dear communities of Thailand, let us continue to go forward in the footsteps of the first missionaries, in order to encounter, discover and recognize with joy the faces of all those mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, whom the Lord wants to give us and who are absent from our Sunday table.

**V. MEETING WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS, SEMINARIANS AND CATECHISTS, ST PETER’S PARISH, BANGKOK**  
*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Friday , 22 November 2019*

I thank Bishop Joseph [Pradhan Sridarunsil] for his words of welcome in your name. I am happy to see all of you, to listen to you, to share in your joy and to sense how the Spirit is at work in our midst. I thank all of you: catechists, priests, consecrated men and women and seminarians, for the gift of this time together.

Thanks too to Benedetta for sharing her life and her testimony. As I listened to her, I felt gratitude for the lives of all those missionaries, men and women, whose lives of service left their mark. Benedetta, you told us about the Daughters of Charity. And I would like first to express gratitude for all those consecrated persons who, by the silent

martyrdom of fidelity and daily commitment, have borne great fruit. I do not know if they were able to appreciate or taste the fruits of their commitment, but without a doubt their lives were capable of bringing about much good. They were a promise of hope. For this reason, at the beginning of our meeting, I would ask you especially to keep in mind all those catechists and elderly consecrated men and women who drew us into the love and friendship of Jesus Christ. Let us give thanks for them and for the elderly members of our communities who could not be present today. Tell the elderly ones who could not be here today that the Pope sends them a grateful blessing, and in turn asks for their blessing.

I believe that the history of each of our vocations is marked by those people who helped us discover and discern the fire of the Spirit. It is so good and at the same time important to be thankful. "Gratitude is always a powerful weapon. Only if we are able to contemplate and feel genuine gratitude for all those ways we have experienced God's love, generosity, solidarity and trust, as well as his forgiveness, patience, forbearance and compassion, will we allow the Spirit to grant us the freshness that can renew (and not simply patch up) our life and mission" (*Letter to Priests, 4 August 2019*). So let us think of them with gratitude, and, standing on their shoulders, may we too feel called to be men and women who help bring about the new life the Lord bestows on us. As those called to apostolic fruitfulness, called to struggle valiantly for the things that the Lord loves and for which he gave his life, let us ask for the grace for our hearts to beat in unison with his own. I would even ask you to be wounded by that same love; to have that same passion for Jesus and for his kingdom.

Here we can all ask ourselves: how can we cultivate apostolic fruitfulness? This is a good question, that each of us can ask ourselves, and can answer from our hearts.

Sister is translating what is not in the text because it is not easy for me to communicate with you through this device; it's not easy. But you have good will. Thank you.

Benedetta, you spoke of how the Lord first attracted you to himself by beauty. It was the beauty of an image of Our Lady, whose special gaze pierced your heart and made you want to know her better.

Who is that woman? It had nothing to do with words, or abstract ideas or cold syllogisms. It all started with a look, a beautiful look that captivated you. What great wisdom was hidden in your words. Let us be alert to beauty, alert to a sense of wonder capable of opening up new horizons and raising new questions. A consecrated life incapable of openness to surprises is only half a life. I want to say this again. A consecrated life incapable of openness to surprises each day – open to joy and to sadness, but open to surprises – is only half a life. The Lord did not call us and send us forth into the world to impose obligations on people, or to lay heavier burdens than those they already have, which are many, but rather to share joy, a beautiful, new, surprising horizon. I really like the words of Benedict XVI, which I consider not only true but also prophetic for our times: the Church does not grow by proselytizing but by attraction (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 14). “Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful – lovely – capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties” (*ibid.*, 167).

And this means we are not afraid to look for new symbols and images, for that particular music which can help awaken in the Thai people the amazement that the Lord wants to give us. *Let us not be afraid to continue inculturating the Gospel.* We need to seek new ways of transmitting the word, ways that are capable of mobilizing and awakening a desire to know the Lord. Who is that man? Who are these people who follow a man who was crucified?

As I prepared for this meeting, I read, with some pain, that for many people Christianity is a foreign faith, a religion for foreigners. This should spur us to find ways to profess the faith “in dialect”, like a mother who sings lullabies to her child. With that same intimacy, let us give faith a Thai face and flesh, which involves much more than making translations. It is about letting the Gospel be stripped of fine but foreign garb; to let it “sing” with the native music of this land and inspire the hearts of our brothers and sisters with the same beauty that set our own hearts on fire. I encourage you to pray to Our Lady, to the one who by the beauty of her gaze first captivated Benedetta, and to say with childlike confidence: “Obtain for us now

a new ardor born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 288).

Mary's gaze impels us to look where she looks, to turn our eyes to that other gaze and to do whatever he tells us (cf. *Jn* 2:1-12). His is a gaze that captivates because it is able to penetrate appearances to find and celebrate the authentic beauty present in every person. It is a gaze that, as the Gospel teaches us, shatters all determinisms, fatalisms and standards. Where many saw only a sinner, a blasphemer, a tax collector, an evildoer or even a traitor, Jesus was able to see apostles. Such is the beauty that his gaze invites us to proclaim, a gaze that enters in, transforms and brings out the best in others.

As for the first stirrings of your vocation, many of you in your early years took part in the activities of young people who wanted to put the Gospel into practice and to go out into the cities to visit the needy, the neglected and even the despised, orphans and the elderly. Surely many of you were in turn visited by the Lord, who made you see that he was calling you to give everything away, to leave yourselves behind and, in that very movement, to find yourselves. In the faces of those we encounter on the street, we can discover the beauty of being able to treat one another as brothers and sisters. We see them no longer as orphans, derelicts, outcasts or the despised. Now each of them has the face of "a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian! Can holiness somehow be understood apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being?" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 98). I would like to encourage all those among you who, on a daily basis, spend your lives serving Jesus in your brothers and sisters, as Bishop Joseph proudly pointed out when introducing you. So many of you manage to see beauty where others see only contempt, or abandonment or an object of sexual gratification. In this way, you are a concrete sign of the Lord's mercy, alive and at work: a sign of the anointing of the Holy One in these lands.

Such anointing calls for prayer. Apostolic fruitfulness requires and is sustained by fidelity to deep prayer. Deep prayer like that of those

elderly people who constantly pray the rosary. How many of us have received the faith from our grandparents, from seeing them doing their household chores, rosary in hand, sanctifying their entire day. This is contemplation in action, making God part of the little things of each day. It is vital that the Church today be able to proclaim the Gospel to all, in all places, on all occasions, without hesitation and without fear (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 23); as a people who every morning, in their face to face conversation with the Lord, are sent forth anew. Without prayer, our life and mission loses all its meaning, loses strength and fervor. If you are missing out on prayer, any work you do will not make sense, will have no strength, no value. Prayer is the center of everything.

Saint Paul VI said that one of the worst obstacles to evangelization is the lack of fervor (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80). Do read that number 80 of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. For religious, for priests and for catechists, that fervor is nurtured by a double encounter, with the face of the Lord and with the faces of their brothers and sisters. We too need to find the space to be able to return to the source and drink of its life-giving waters. Immersed in myriad responsibilities, may we always seek that quiet place where we can remember, in prayer, that the Lord has already saved the world and that we are asked, in union with him, to make this salvation felt by all.

Once again, I thank you for your lives, I thank you for your witness and your generous commitment. I ask you, please, not to yield to the temptation of thinking that you are few in number. Instead, think of yourselves as little, little tools in the Lord's creative hands. And he will be writing with your lives the finest pages of the history of salvation in these lands.

Please remember to pray for me, and to ask others to do the same.

Thank you.

**VI. MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF THAILAND AND FABC, BLESSED NICHOLAS BUNKERD KITBAMRUNG SHRINE (BANGKOK)**

*- Welcome address by His Eminence Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand*

*Friday, 22 November 2019*

*Most Holy Father,*

In the name of the Bishops of Thailand and those of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, I welcome you to Thailand. We are honored by your presence among us here in the shrine of Blessed Nicolas Bunker Kitbamrung, priest and martyr.

We have gathered with you, Holy Father, to listen as you speak to us of our role as shepherds of the "little flock" in Asia, the motherland of major traditional religions of the world, and of our role in and for the Church.

Next year, in 2020, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary with a General Conference here in Bangkok. The theme will be: "FABC 2020: Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia". Our aim is to foster solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of the Church and society in Asia among the members of the FABC. We hope that this celebration will contribute to the New Evangelization by enabling our lives, actions and words to bear witness to Jesus and to the Gospel. As Bishops of Thailand in particular, we wish to dedicate ourselves in a spirit of fraternal dialogue to the service of our Asian brothers and sisters, especially the poor and those who desire to know Christ and seek his truth. We desire also to be artisans of peace and reconciliation in this region which has known many conflicts, displacement of people, and the scourge of human trafficking. The Church in Thailand wants to show to the world how society can be when the Gospel and a spirituality of communion are put into practice. In this way, it will be possible for the disciples of Christ in Thailand to overcome social divisions.



Holy Father, on behalf of my brother Bishops, I thank you again for being with us today and for your encouraging words to guide us in our journeying together, that we may be living icons of the love of God for his people in Asia. We ask your blessing upon us and upon all of our communities.

- *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

I thank His Eminence Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij for his kind words of introduction and welcome. I am happy to be with you and to share, even briefly, your joys and hopes, your projects and dreams, but also the challenges that you face as pastors of God's holy and faithful people. Thank you for your fraternal welcome.

Our meeting today takes place at the Shrine of Blessed Nicholas Bunkerd Kitbamrung, who devoted his life to evangelization and catechesis, forming disciples of the Lord, primarily here in Thailand but also in part of Vietnam and along the border with Laos, and who crowned his witness to Christ with martyrdom. Let us place our meeting under his watchful gaze, so that his example may inspire us with a great zeal for evangelization in all the local Churches of Asia, so that we may increasingly become missionary disciples of the Lord, enabling his Good News to spread like a fragrant balm throughout this great and beautiful continent.

I realize that you are making plans for the 2020 General Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, which will mark the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. This is a fitting occasion to revisit those "shrines" where the missionary roots that left their mark on these lands are preserved, to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the footsteps of our first love, and to welcome with courage, with *parrhesia*, a future that you yourselves must help develop and create. In this way, both the Church and society in Asia will benefit from a renewed and shared evangelical outreach. In love with Christ and capable of bringing others to share in that same love.

You are living in the midst of a multicultural and multi-religious continent, with great beauty and prosperity, but troubled at the same time by poverty and exploitation at various levels. Rapid

technological advancements can open up immense possibilities that make life easier, but can result in the growth of consumerism and materialism, especially among young people. You have taken upon yourselves the concerns of your people: the scourge of drugs and human trafficking, the care of great numbers of migrants and refugees, poor working conditions and the exploitation experienced by many labourers, as well as economic and social inequality between rich and poor.

In the midst of these tensions stands the pastor who struggles and intercedes with his people and for his people. The memory of the first missionaries who preceded us with courage, joy and extraordinary stamina can help us take stock of our present situation and mission from a much broader, much more transformative perspective. In the first place, that memory frees us from the belief that times past were always more favorable or better for the proclamation of the Gospel. It also helps us to avoid taking refuge in fruitless discussions and ways of thinking that end up making us turn in on ourselves, paralyzing any kind of action. “Let us learn from the saints who have gone before us, who confronted the difficulties of their own day” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 263). Let us cast aside everything that has “stuck” to us along the way and that makes it harder for us to press forward. We know that some ecclesial structures and mentalities can hamper efforts at evangelization. Yet even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them. Ultimately, without new life and an evangelical spirit, without “the Church’s fidelity to her own calling”, any new structure will soon prove ineffective (cf. *ibid.*, 26) and detract from our important ministry of fervent prayer and intercession. Sometimes this can help to give us perspective when dealing with enthusiastic though unwise methodologies that appear to be successful, but offer little by way of life.

As we contemplate missionary progress in these lands, one of the first lessons we learn is to be confident in the knowledge that it is the Holy Spirit himself who goes before us and gathers us together. The Holy Spirit is the first to invite the Church to go forth to all those places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities and

cultures (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 74). Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit arrives in advance of missionaries and remains with them. The power of the Holy Spirit sustained and motivated the Apostles and countless missionaries not to discount any land, people, culture or situation. They did not look for places of “guaranteed success”; on the contrary, their “guarantee” lay in the certainty that no person or culture was *a priori* incapable of receiving the seed of life, happiness, and above all friendship, that the Lord wants to sow in them. They did not expect a foreign culture to receive the Gospel easily; rather, they plunged into these new realities, convinced of the beauty of which they were bearers. All life has value in the eyes of the Master. They were bold and courageous because they knew that in the first place the Gospel is a gift to be shared with and for everyone: shared among all people, the doctors of the law, sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes. With and for all sinners, then as now. I like to observe that the mission, even prior to things to be done or projects to be implemented, demands the cultivation of a gaze and a sense of smell. The mission calls for a paternal and maternal concern, because the sheep is only lost when the shepherd gives it up for lost, and not before. Three months ago, I received a visit from a French missionary who has been working for forty years in the north of Thailand, among the tribes. He came with a group of twenty or twenty-five people, all mothers and fathers, young people, not more than twenty-five years old. He himself had baptized them, the first generation, and now he was baptizing their children. One could think: you have given your life for fifty or a hundred people. But that was the seed, and God is giving him the consolation of baptizing the children of those he first baptized. Simply put, he experienced those indigenous people from the north of Thailand as a source of wealth for evangelizing. He did not give up on that sheep; he took it in charge.

One of the most splendid aspects of evangelization is our realization that the mission entrusted to the Church does not lie only in the proclamation of the Gospel but also in learning to believe the Gospel. How many there are who proclaim – at times we proclaim, in moments of temptation – the Gospel, but we do not believe the Gospel, do not let ourselves be laid hold of and transformed by it. This means living and walking in the light of the word of God that

we are charged to proclaim. We do well to remember the words of Saint Paul VI: “The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15). In this way, the Church enters into the dynamic of conversion-proclamation demanded of each disciple. Purified by the Lord, she becomes a witness by vocation. A Church that goes forth, unafraid to take to the streets and come face to face with the lives of the people entrusted to her care, is a Church able to be open in humility to the Lord. With the Lord, she can experience the wonder, the amazement, of the missionary adventure without the need, conscious or unconscious, to be in first place, to seek or occupy any possible place of preeminence. How much we can learn from you, who are a minority in many of your countries or regions, and sometimes are overlooked or impeded or persecuted minorities, yet have not let yourselves be carried away or corrupted by an inferiority complex or the complaint that you are not given due recognition! Go forwards: proclaim, sow, pray and wait. And you will not lose your joy!

Dear brothers, “in union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what he loves” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 267). Let us not be afraid to make his priorities our own. You are well aware that yours is a Church small in numbers and resources, but full of zeal and eager to be a living instrument of the Lord’s loving concern for all the people of your towns and cities (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 1). Your commitment to advance that evangelical fruitfulness by proclaiming the kerygma with deeds and words in the various areas where Christians are present is a striking form of witness.

A missionary Church knows that its best message is its readiness to be transformed by the word of life, making service its hallmark. We are not the ones in charge of the mission, and even less our plans and strategies. The Holy Spirit is the true protagonist who propels us, as sinners who have been forgiven; he constantly sends us forth to share this treasure in earthen vessels (cf. *2 Cor* 4:7). We have been transformed by the Spirit in order to transform wherever we are

placed. The martyrdom of a daily and often silent commitment will bear the fruits your people need.

This motivates us to develop a specific spirituality. The pastor is a person who, in the first place, *loves his people deeply* and knows their idiosyncrasies, weaknesses and strengths. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus Christ and a passion for his people. When we stand before the crucified Jesus, we see the depth of his love that exalts and sustains us, but at the same time, unless we are blind, we begin to realize that Jesus' gaze, burning with love, expands to embrace all his people (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 268).

Let us remember that we too are part of this people; we are not masters, we are part of the people; we were chosen to be servants, not masters or managers. This means we are to accompany those whom we serve with patience and kindness, listening to them, respecting their dignity, always promoting and valuing their apostolic initiatives. Let us not lose sight of the fact that many of your lands were evangelized by the lay faithful. Let us not clericalize our mission, please, and no less should we clericalize the laity. These laypeople were able to speak the dialect of their people, a simple and direct exercise of inculturation, neither theoretical nor ideological, but the fruit of their zeal to share Christ. The holy and faithful People of God possesses the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which we are called to recognize, esteem and expand. Let us never lose the grace of seeing God working in the midst of his people, as he did in the past, as he is doing now and as he will continue to do. An image comes to mind which was not in our programme, but...: the young Samuel who woke up at night. God respected the elderly priest, whose character was weak, he let him carry on, but he did not speak to him. He spoke to a boy, one of the people.

In a particular way, I encourage you always to keep your door open for your priests. The door and the heart. May we always remember that the closest neighbor of the bishop is the priest. Be close to your priests, listen to them and seek to accompany them in every situation, especially when you see that they are discouraged or apathetic, which is the worst of the devil's temptations. Apathy, despondency. Do so not as judges but as fathers, not as managers who deploy them, but as true elder brothers. Create a climate of

trust for honest dialogue, an open dialogue; seek and implore the grace to show the same patience with them that the Lord, whose patience is so very great, has shown to each of us, and it is a great deal, a great deal.

Dear brothers, I know that there are many issues you must confront within your communities, both daily and as you look to the future. May we never lose sight of the fact that in that often uncertain future, it is the Lord himself who comes with the power of the resurrection to transform every wound into a fountain of life. Let us look to the future in the certainty that we are not alone, we do not journey alone; the Lord is there, waiting for us, and inviting us to recognize him above all in the breaking of the bread.

Let us beg the intercession of Blessed Nicholas and that of all the many missionary saints, so that our people may be renewed with that same anointing.

Given the presence here of many Bishops from Asia, I take this opportunity to extend my blessing and affection to all your communities and, in a special way, to the sick and to all who are experiencing moments of difficulty. May the Lord bless, care for, and accompany you always. And you, may he take you by the hand; and may you let yourselves be taken by the Lord's hand, and do not seek out other hands.

And please, do not forget to pray for me and to ask your communities to do the same, because everything I have said to you I need to say to myself as well.

Thank you very much.

**VII. MEETING MEETING WITH THE LEADERS OF THE  
CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND OTHER  
RELIGIONS, CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY,  
BANGKOK**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Friday, 22 November 2019*

*Your Eminence,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Representatives of the different Religious  
Confessions,  
Representatives of the University Community,  
Dear Friends,*

Thank you for your warm welcome. I am grateful to Bishop Sirisut and to Dr. Bundit Eua-arporn for their kind words of introduction. I am grateful as well for the invitation to visit this renowned university and the students, instructors and staff who enliven this place of study. I am also grateful to them for granting me this opportunity to meet representatives of the various Christian communities and the leaders of other religions, who honor us by their presence. I thank you for coming and I express my deep esteem for the precious cultural heritage and the spiritual traditions to which you are heirs and witnesses.

One hundred and twenty-two years ago, in 1897, King Chulalongkorn, for whom this university is named, visited Rome and met Pope Leo XIII in audience, the first time that a non-Christian Head of State was received in the Vatican. May the memory of that significant encounter, as well as that of his reign, whose virtues included the abolition of slavery, challenge us, in our own time, to pursue the path of dialogue and mutual understanding. And to do so in a spirit of fraternal solidarity that can help end the many present-day forms of slavery, especially the scourge of human trafficking.

The need for mutual respect, esteem and cooperation between religions is all the more pressing for humanity today. Our world faces complex challenges such as economic and financial globalization and its grave consequences for the development of

local communities; rapid advances in technology – which seemingly promote a better world – and the tragic persistence of civil conflicts, whether these involve movements of migration, refugees, famine or outright war. Then, too, there is the degradation and destruction of our common home. These challenges remind us that no region or sector of the human family can look to itself or its future in isolation from or immune to others. All these situations require us to be bold in devising new ways of shaping the history of our time without denigrating or insulting anyone. Long gone are the days when an insular mode of thought could determine an approach to time and space and appear to offer a valid way of resolving conflicts. Now is the time to be bold and envision the logic of encounter and mutual dialogue as the path, common cooperation as the code of conduct, and reciprocal knowledge as a method and standard. In this way, we can provide a new paradigm for resolving conflicts and help foster greater understanding and the protection of creation. In this regard, religions, like universities, have much to offer, without having to renounce their specific character and special gifts. Everything we do in this regard will be a significant step towards guaranteeing younger generations their right to the future, while serving the cause of justice and peace. Only in this way will we provide the young with the tools they need to be in the forefront of efforts to create sustainable and inclusive lifestyles.

The times in which we live summon us to build solid foundations, anchored on respect for, and recognition of, the dignity of persons, the promotion of an integral humanism alert to and concerned for the protection of our common home, and a responsible stewardship that preserves the beauty and richness of nature as a right fundamental for existence. The great religious traditions of our world bear witness to a transcendent and widely shared spiritual patrimony that can make a solid contribution in this area, if only we are able to encounter one another without fear.

All of us are called not only to heed the voice of the poor in our midst: the disenfranchised, the downtrodden, the indigenous peoples and religious minorities, but also to be unafraid to create opportunities, as is already quietly occurring, to work hand in hand. For our part, we are asked to embrace the moral imperative of



upholding human dignity and respecting the rights of conscience and religious freedom. We need to create spaces where we can let in a breath of fresh air, in the certainty that all is not lost. For “human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning” (*Laudato Si'*, 205).

Here in Thailand, a country of great natural beauty, I would like to highlight one distinctive feature that I consider crucial and in some way a part of the wealth that you can “export” and share with other parts of our human family. You show esteem and concern for your elders, respecting them and giving them an honored place; this is a great value. This ensures that you preserve the roots necessary so that your people do not lose their bearings by following certain slogans that end up emptying and mortgaging the soul of new generations. In addition to a growing tendency to discredit local values and cultures by imposing a unitary model, “we see a tendency to ‘homogenize’ young people, blurring what is distinctive about their origins and backgrounds, and turning them into a new line of malleable goods. This produces a cultural devastation that is just as serious as the disappearance of species of animals and plants” (*Christus Vivit*, 186). I express my hope that you will continue to assist young people to know the cultural heritage of the society in which they live. Helping the young to know the living richness of the past, to treasure its memory and to interact with their elders, is a genuine act of love towards them, for the sake of their growth and the decisions they are called to make (cf. *ibid.*, 187).

This entire approach necessarily demands the involvement of educational institutions like this university. Research and knowledge can help to open new paths for reducing human inequality, strengthening social justice, upholding human dignity, seeking means for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and preserving the life-giving resources of our earth. I express my appreciation to the educators and scholars of this country who work to provide present and future generations with the skills and especially the wisdom, rooted in that of their ancestors, that will enable them to play their part in promoting the common good of society.

Dear friends, all of us are members of the human family. Each person, in his or her own way, is called to be actively and directly engaged in building a culture founded on the shared values that lead to unity, mutual respect and a harmonious coexistence.

Once again, I thank you for your invitation and your attention. I offer my prayerful good wishes for your efforts to serve the growth of Thailand in prosperity and peace. Upon all present, upon your families and those whom you serve, I invoke every divine blessing. And I ask you please to pray for me.

Thank you.

**VIII. HOLY MASS WITH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, CATHEDRAL OF THE ASSUMPTION, BANGKOK**

*- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Friday, 22 November 2019*

*Let us go out to meet Christ the Lord, for he is coming!*

The Gospel we have just heard invites us to set out, to look to the future in order to encounter the most beautiful thing that it can bring us: the definitive coming of Christ into our lives and into our world. Let us welcome him into our midst with immense joy and love, as only you young people can do! Even before we set out to seek him, we know that the Lord is seeking us; he comes out to meet us and calls us to make, create and shape a future. We set out joyfully, for we know he is waiting for us there.

The Lord knows that through you, young people, the future is coming into this land and the world, and he is counting on you to carry out your mission today (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 174). Just as God had a plan for the Chosen People, so he has a plan for each of you. He first dreamed of inviting all of us to a banquet that we have to prepare together, with him, as a community: the banquet of his kingdom, from which no one could remain excluded.

Today's Gospel speaks of ten young women called to look ahead and share in the Lord's banquet. The problem was that some of them were not prepared, not because they had fallen asleep, but because they lacked the oil they needed for their lamps, the inner fuel to keep

the fire of love burning. They had great excitement and motivation; they wanted to take part in the feast to which the Master had invited them. But as time passed, they grew weary, lost their energy and enthusiasm, and they arrived too late. This parable is about what can happen to any Christian. Full of excitement and interest, we hear the Lord's call to be a part of his kingdom and share his joy with others. But often, as each of you is well aware, in the face of problems and obstacles like the suffering of our loved ones, or our own helplessness before apparently hopeless situations, unbelief and bitterness can take over and silently seep into our dreams, making our hearts grow cold, causing us to lose our joy and to arrive late.

So I would like to ask you three questions. Do you want to keep alive the fire that keeps you burning brightly amid darkness and difficulties? Do you want to be prepared to answer the Lord's call? Do you want to be ready to do his will?

How can you obtain the oil that will keep you moving forward, that impels you to seek the Lord in every situation?

You are heirs to a precious history of evangelization that has been handed down to you as a sacred treasure. This beautiful cathedral is a witness to your ancestors' faith in Jesus Christ. Their deeply rooted faithfulness led them to do good works, to build that other, even more beautiful temple, made up of living stones, in order to bring God's merciful love to all the people of their time. They were able to do this because they were convinced of what the prophet Hosea proclaimed in today's first reading: God had spoken to them tenderly; he had embraced them with steadfast love forever (cf. *Hos* 2:14.19).

Dear friends, in order that the fire of the Spirit will keep burning, so that you can keep your eyes bright and your hearts aflame, you need to be deeply rooted in the faith of your ancestors: your parents, grandparents and teachers. Not to be stuck in the past, but to learn to find the courage that can help us respond to ever new situations. They had to endure many trials and much suffering in their lives. Yet along the way, they discovered that the secret to a happy heart is the security we find when we are anchored, rooted in Jesus: in the life of Jesus, in his words, in his death and resurrection.

“I have sometimes seen young and beautiful trees, their branches reaching to the sky, pushing ever higher, and they seemed a song of hope. Later, following a storm, I would find them fallen and lifeless. They lacked deep roots. They spread their branches without being firmly planted, and so they fell as soon as nature unleashed her power. That is why it pains me to see young people sometimes being encouraged to build a future without roots, as if the world were just starting now. For “it is impossible to grow unless we have strong roots to support us and to keep us firmly grounded. Dear young friends, it is easy to drift off, when there is nothing to clutch onto, to hold onto” (*Christus Vivit*, 179).

Without this firm sense of *rootedness*, we can be swayed by the “voices” of this world that compete for our attention. Many of those voices are attractive and nicely packaged; at first they seem appealing and exciting, but in the long run they will leave you only empty, weary, alone and disenchanted (cf. *ibid.*, 277), and slowly extinguish that spark of life that the Lord once ignited in the heart of each of us.

Dear young people, you are a *new* generation, with new hopes, new dreams and new questions, and surely some doubts as well, yet firmly rooted in Christ. I urge you to maintain your joy and to look to the future with confidence. Rooted in Christ, view all things with the joy and confidence born of knowing that the Lord has sought us out, found us and loved us infinitely. Friendship cultivated with Jesus is the oil needed to light up your path in life and the path of all those around you: your friends and neighbors, your companions at school and work, including those who think completely unlike yourselves.

*Let us go out to meet Christ the Lord, for he is coming!* Do not be afraid of the future or allow yourselves to be intimidated. Rather, know that the Lord is waiting for you there, in that future, in order to prepare and celebrate the banquet of his kingdom.

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*Remarks of His Holiness Pope Francis  
Conclusion of Holy Mass with Young People*

At the conclusion of this celebration, I wish to thank all those who have made my visit to Thailand possible, and those who worked together to bring it to fruition.

I renew my gratitude to His Majesty King Rama X, the government and to the other authorities of the country, for their warm reception. I offer heartfelt thanks to my brother bishops and, in a particular way, to Cardinal Francis Xavier, as well as the priests, men and women religious, and lay faithful, and especially you young people.

My deep thanks go to the volunteers who worked together with such generosity, and to all who accompanied me with their prayers and sacrifices, especially the sick and those who are incarcerated.

May the Lord reward you with his consolation and the peace that he alone can give. I am leaving you with a task: do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

**IX. MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS, APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE, TOKYO**

*- Welcome to Pope Francis by Archbishop Joseph Mitsuaki Takami, PSS, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan*

*Saturday, 23 November 2019*

Holy Father, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan and the entire Church here, I want to respectfully welcome you to Japan. We are grateful and honored by your visit.

This year marks the 470th anniversary of Saint Francis Xavier's arrival in Japan. After he and his companions arrived, Christianity developed here, but in 1614 a persecution began which lasted for 260 years, and many martyrs were born. During these years, mainly in the Nagasaki region, believers kept their faith in their own way and passed it on through baptism, prayer, and teaching. In recognition of this important historical fact, last year churches and villages in the Nagasaki area were registered as a World Heritage Site.

The Japanese people love and respect nature, and society is peaceful. However, there are various problems relating to life that hinder the development of the whole person. We hope you will give us a message about the dignity of life, its meaning and how to live it.

Japan strives to build peace with its neighbors. Japan, the only country where atomic bombs have been dropped in war, cries out that such a disaster should not be repeated. We hope that you will appeal to the world that humanity does not need nuclear weapons.

This year marks 100 years since the first papal envoy was sent to Japan. We pray that as the Japanese people learn more about Christianity and the universal Church learns more about Japan, the relationship between them will become increasingly rich and contribute to the peace and development of the international community.

Holy Father, we pray to the Lord through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Saint Francis Xavier that your visit to Japan that begins today will be significant and fruitful.

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Saturday, 23 November 2019*

*Dear Brothers,*

First of all, I need to offer my excuses and apologize for entering without greeting anyone. How rude we Argentinians are! I am sorry for that. It is a pleasure to be here with you. The Japanese are famous for being methodical and hardworking, and here is the proof: the Pope gets off the plane and they put to him work straightaway! Thank you very much.

I am very grateful for the gift of visiting Japan and for the welcome you have given me. I especially thank Archbishop Takami for his words on behalf of the entire Catholic community in this country. Here in your presence, in this first official meeting, I want to greet each one of the members of your communities: lay people, catechists, priests, religious, consecrated persons, seminarians. I also want to extend my embrace and prayers to all the Japanese people at

this time marked by the enthronement of the new Emperor and the beginning of the Reiwa era.

I don't know if you are aware of this, but ever since I was young I have felt a fondness and affection for these lands. Many years have passed since that missionary impulse, whose realization has been long in coming. Today the Lord gives me the opportunity to come among you as a missionary pilgrim in the footsteps of great witnesses to the faith. Four hundred and seventy years have passed since the arrival of Saint Francis Xavier in Japan, which marked the beginning of the spread of Christianity in this land. In his memory, I want to join you in thanking the Lord for all those who, over the centuries, have dedicated themselves to implanting the Gospel and serving the Japanese people with great tenderness and love. This dedication has given the Japanese Church a unique face. I think of the martyrs Saint Paul Miki and his companions, and of Blessed Justo Takayama Ukon, who in the midst of many trials bore witness up to his death. Such self-sacrifice for the sake of keeping the faith alive amid persecution helped the small Christian community to develop, grow strong and bear fruit. We can also think of those "hidden Christians" of the Nagasaki region, who kept the faith for generations, thanks to baptism, prayer and catechesis. Authentic domestic Churches that shone forth in this land, perhaps without even realizing it, as reflections of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The path taken by the Lord shows us how his presence "plays out" in the daily life of his faithful people, who seek ways to keep his memory alive. His is a silent presence, a living memory that makes us realize that wherever two or more are gathered in his name, he is there, with the strength and tenderness of his Spirit (cf. *Mt 18:20*). The DNA of your communities is marked by this witness, an antidote against despair, that points out the path they must follow. You are a living Church that has been preserved by invoking the Lord's name and contemplating how he guided you through the midst of persecution.

Faithful sowing, the witness of martyrs and patient expectation of the fruits that the Lord gives in his time, have characterized your apostolic approach to Japanese culture. As a result, over the years you have developed a form of ecclesial presence that is for the most

part much appreciated by Japanese society, thanks to your many contributions to the common good. This important chapter in the history of your country and of the universal Church has now been recognized with the designation of the churches and villages of Nagasaki and Amakusa as World Cultural Heritage sites. But above all, as living memorials of the soul of your communities, a fruitful hope for every form of evangelization.

The motto of my Apostolic Journey is “Protect All Life”. This could well symbolize our own ministry as bishops. A bishop is called by the Lord from among his people, and then given back to them as a pastor called to protect all life. This determines in great measure what our aims and goals should be.

The mission in these lands was marked by a powerful search for inculturation and dialogue, which allowed the formation of new models, independent of those developed in Europe. We know that, from the beginning, literature, theatre, music and various types of instruments were employed, for the most part in the Japanese language. This is a sign of the love that those first missionaries felt for these lands. Protecting all life means, first of all, having a contemplative gaze capable of loving the life of the entire people entrusted to you, and recognizing it, above all, as the Lord’s gift. “Only that which is loved can be saved. Only that which is embraced can be transformed” (*Address at the Vigil with Young People, Panama*, 26 January 2019). An incarnational principle that can help us view each life as a gratuitous gift, apart from other valid yet secondary considerations. Protecting all life and proclaiming the Gospel are not separate or opposed; rather each appeals to, and requires, the other. Both entail being careful and vigilant about anything that could hinder, in these lands, the integral development of the people entrusted to the light of the Gospel of Jesus.

We know that the Church in Japan is small and Catholics are in a minority, but this must not diminish your commitment to evangelization. In your particular situation, the strongest and clearest word you can speak is that of a humble, daily witness and openness to dialogue with other religious traditions. The hospitality and care you show to the many foreign workers who represent more than half of Japan’s Catholics, not only serve as a witness to the



Gospel within Japanese society, but also attest to the universality of the Church. This demonstrates that our union with Christ is stronger than any other bond or badge of identity, and can enter into and become part of every situation.

A Church of witness can speak with greater freedom, especially when addressing pressing issues of peace and justice in our world. Tomorrow I will visit Nagasaki and Hiroshima, where I will offer prayers for the victims of the catastrophic bombing of these two cities, and echo your own prophetic calls for nuclear disarmament. I wish to meet those who still bear the wounds of this tragic episode in human history, as well as the victims of the triple disaster. Their continued sufferings are an eloquent reminder of our human and Christian duty to assist those who are troubled in body and spirit, and to offer to all the Gospel message of hope, healing and reconciliation. Let us remember that evil has no preferences; it does not care about people's background or identity. It simply bursts in with its destructive force, as was the case recently with the devastating typhoon that caused so many casualties and material damage. Let us entrust to the Lord's mercy those who have died, their families and all who have lost their homes and material possessions. May we never be afraid to pursue, here and throughout the world, a mission capable of speaking out and defending all life as a precious gift from the Lord.

For this reason, I encourage your efforts to ensure that the Catholic community in Japan offers a clear witness to the Gospel in the midst of the larger society. The Church's highly respected educational apostolate represents a great resource for evangelization and engagement with larger intellectual and cultural currents; the quality of its contribution will naturally depend on the fostering of its distinctively Catholic identity and mission.

All of us are aware of the grave problems affecting people in your communities whose lives are marked, for various reasons, by loneliness, despair and isolation. The increase in the rates of suicide in your cities, as well as bullying (*ijime*) and various kinds of neediness, are creating new forms of alienation and spiritual disorientation. Since these affect the young in particular, I ask you to pay special attention to them and their needs. Try to create spaces in

which the culture of efficiency, performance and success can become open to a culture of generous and selfless love, capable of offering to everyone, and not only to those who have “made it”, the possibility of a happy and successful life. With their zeal, ideas and energy, young people – when well-formed and accompanied – can be a deep source of hope to their contemporaries and bear vital witness to Christian charity. A creative, inculturated and imaginative quest to live the Gospel message can have a powerful effect on so many lives thirsting for compassion.

I recognize that the harvest is great and the labourers are few. I encourage you to seek out and develop a mission capable of involving families and of promoting a formation that can reach people where they are, always taking into account the specifics of each situation. The starting point for every apostolate is the concrete place in which people find themselves, with their daily routines and occupations, not in artificial places. It is there that we must reach the souls of our cities, workplaces and universities, in order to accompany the faithful entrusted to us with the Gospel of compassion and mercy.

I thank you once more for the opportunity you have offered me to visit your local Churches and to celebrate together with them. Peter wants to confirm you in faith, but Peter also comes to walk in, and be renewed by, the footsteps of so many martyrs and witnesses to the faith. Please pray that the Lord may grant me this grace.

And I ask the Lord to bless you and, with you, to bless your communities. Thank you very much.

**X. MESSAGE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS, ATOMIC BOMB  
HYPOCENTER PARK, NAGASAKI**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Sunday, 24 November 2019*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

This place makes us deeply aware of the pain and horror that we human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another. The damaged cross and statue of Our Lady recently discovered in the

Cathedral of Nagasaki remind us once more of the unspeakable horror suffered in the flesh by the victims of the bombing and their families.

One of the deepest longings of the human heart is for security, peace and stability. The possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed they seem always to thwart it. Our world is marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.

Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation. They can be achieved only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family of today and tomorrow.

Here in this city which witnessed the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of a nuclear attack, our attempts to speak out against the arms race will never be enough. The arms race wastes precious resources that could be better used to benefit the integral development of peoples and to protect the natural environment. In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven.

A world of peace, free from nuclear weapons, is the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere. To make this ideal a reality calls for involvement on the part of all: individuals, religious communities and civil society, countries that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not, the military and private sectors, and international organizations. Our response to the threat of nuclear weapons must be joint and concerted, inspired by the arduous yet constant effort to build mutual trust and thus surmount the current climate of distrust. In 1963, Saint John XXIII, writing in his Encyclical

Letter *Pacem in Terris*, in addition to urging the prohibition of atomic weapons (cf. No. 112), stated that authentic and lasting international peace cannot rest on a balance of military power, but only upon mutual trust (cf. No. 113).

There is a need to break down the climate of distrust that risks leading to a dismantling of the international arms control framework. We are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism which is all the more serious in light of the growth of new forms of military technology. Such an approach seems highly incongruous in today's context of interconnectedness; it represents a situation that urgently calls for the attention and commitment of all leaders.

For her part, the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to promoting peace between peoples and nations. This is a duty to which the Church feels bound before God and every man and woman in our world. We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Last July, the bishops of Japan launched an appeal for the abolition of nuclear arms, and each August the Church in Japan holds a ten-day prayer meeting for peace. May prayer, tireless work in support of agreements and insistence on dialogue be the most powerful "weapons" in which we put our trust and the inspiration of our efforts to build a world of justice and solidarity that can offer an authentic assurance of peace.

Convinced as I am that a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary, I ask political leaders not to forget that these weapons cannot protect us from current threats to national and international security. We need to ponder the catastrophic impact of their deployment, especially from a humanitarian and environmental standpoint, and reject heightening a climate of fear, mistrust and hostility fomented by nuclear doctrines. The current state of our planet requires a serious reflection on how its resources can be employed in light of the complex and difficult implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to achieve the goal of an integrated human development. Saint Paul VII suggested as much in 1964, when he proposed the establishment of a Global Fund to assist those most impoverished

peoples, drawn partially from military expenditures (cf. *Declaration to Journalists*, 4 December 1964; *Populorum Progressio*, 51).

All of this necessarily calls for the creation of tools for ensuring trust and reciprocal development, and counts on leaders capable of rising to these occasions. It is a task that concerns and challenges every one of us. No one can be indifferent to the pain of millions of men and women whose sufferings trouble our consciences today. No one can turn a deaf ear to the plea of our brothers and sisters in need. No one can turn a blind eye to the ruin caused by a culture incapable of dialogue.

I ask you to join in praying each day for the conversion of hearts and for the triumph of a culture of life, reconciliation and fraternity. A fraternity that can recognize and respect diversity in the quest for a common destiny.

I know that some here are not Catholics, but I am certain that we can all make our own the prayer for peace attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

In this striking place of remembrance that stirs us from our indifference, it is all the more meaningful that we turn to God with trust, asking him to teach us to be effective instruments of peace and to make every effort not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

May you and your families, and this entire nation, know the blessings of prosperity and social harmony!

**XI. TRIBUTE TO THE MARTYR SAINTS, MARTYRS'  
MONUMENT - NISHIZAKA HILL, NAGASAKI**

*- Greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Sunday, 24 November 2019*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

Good morning!

I have very much looked forward to this moment. I have come here as a pilgrim to pray, to confirm you in the faith, and to be confirmed by the faith of these brothers and sisters who by their witness and devotion light up our path. I thank all of you for your warm welcome.

This shrine bears the images and names of Christians who were martyred long ago, starting with Paul Miki and his companions on 5 February 1597, and a host of other martyrs who consecrated this ground by their suffering and their death.

However, this shrine does more than speak of death; it also speaks of the triumph of life over death. Saint John Paul II saw this place not simply as the mount of the martyrs but a true *Mount of the Beatitudes*, where our hearts can be stirred by the witness of men and women filled with the Holy Spirit and set free from selfishness, complacency and pride (cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 65). For here the light of the Gospel shone forth in the love that triumphed over persecution and the sword.

This shrine is above all a monument to Easter, for it proclaims that the last word – despite all evidence to the contrary – belongs not to death but to life. We are not destined for death but for the fullness of life. This was the message the martyrs proclaimed. Yes, here we see the darkness of death and martyrdom, but also the light of the resurrection, as the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the new life that Jesus wishes to bestow on us. Their witness confirms us in faith and helps us to renew our dedication and commitment to that missionary discipleship which strives to create a culture capable of protecting and defending all life through the daily “martyrdom” of silent service towards all, especially those in greatest need.

I have come to this monument of the martyrs to pay homage to these holy men and women. But I also come in humility, as one who himself, as a young Jesuit from “the ends of the earth”, found powerful inspiration in the story of the early missionaries and the Japanese martyrs. May we never forget their heroic sacrifice! May it not remain as a glorious relic of the past, to be kept and honored in a museum, but rather as a living memory, an inspiration for the works of the apostolate and a spur to renewed evangelization in this land. May the Church in the Japan of our own day, amid all its difficulties and signs of hope, feel called to hear anew each day the message proclaimed by Saint Paul Miki from the cross, and share with all men and women the joy and the beauty of the Gospel which is the way of truth and life (cf. *Jn* 14:6). May we free ourselves daily from whatever weighs us down and prevents us from walking in humility, freedom, *parrhesia* and charity.

Brothers and sisters, in this place we are united with those Christians throughout the world who, in our own day, suffer martyrdom for the faith. They are the martyrs of the twenty-first century and their witness summons us to set out with courage on the path of the Beatitudes. Let us pray with them and for them. Let us speak out and insist that religious freedom be guaranteed for everyone in every part of our world. Let us also condemn the manipulation of religions through “policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women” (*Document on Human Fraternity, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019*).

Let us ask Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, Saint Paul Miki and all his companions, who throughout history have proclaimed by their lives the wonders of the Lord, to pray for your country and for the whole Church. May their witness awaken and sustain in all of us the joy of the mission.

XII. HOLY MASS, BASEBALL STADIUM, NAGASAKI,  
SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF  
THE UNIVERSE

*- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Sunday, 24 November 2019*

*“Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power”  
(Lk 23:42).*

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we join our voices to that of the criminal crucified beside Jesus, who acknowledged and acclaimed him a king. Amid cries of ridicule and humiliation, at the least triumphal and glorious moment possible, that thief was able to speak up and make his profession of faith. His were the last words Jesus heard, and Jesus’ own words in reply were the last he spoke before abandoning himself to the Father: “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43).

The chequered history of the thief seems, in an instant, to take on new meaning: he was meant to be there to accompany the Lord’s suffering. And that moment does nothing more than confirm the entire meaning of Jesus’ life: always and everywhere to offer salvation. The attitude of the good thief makes the horror and injustice of Calvary – where helplessness and incomprehension are met with jeers and mockery from those indifferent to the death of an innocent man – become a message of hope for all humanity. “Save yourself!” The shouts of scornful derision addressed to the innocent victim of suffering will not be the last word; rather, they will awaken a response from those who let their hearts be touched, who choose compassion as the authentic way to shape history.

Today, in this place, we want to renew our faith and our commitment. We know too well the history of our failures, sins and limitations, even as the good thief did, but we do not want them to be what determines or defines our present and future. We know how readily all of us can take the easy route of shouting out: “Save yourself!” and choose not to think about our responsibility to alleviate the suffering of innocent people all around us. This land has experienced, as few countries have, the destructive power of which we humans are capable. Like the good thief, we want to speak



up and profess our faith, to defend and assist the Lord, the innocent man of sorrows. We want to accompany him in his ordeal, to stand by him in his isolation and abandonment, and to hear once more that salvation is the word the Father desires to speak to all: "Today you will be with me in Paradise".

Saint Paul Miki and his companions gave their lives in courageous witness to that salvation and certainty, along with the hundreds of martyrs whose witness is a distinguished element of your spiritual heritage. We want to follow in their path, to walk in their footsteps and to profess courageously that the love poured out in sacrifice for us by Christ crucified is capable of overcoming all manner of hatred, selfishness, mockery and evasion. It is capable of defeating all those forms of facile pessimism or comfortable indolence that paralyze good actions and decisions. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, they are sadly mistaken who believe that, because we have here no lasting city and keep our gaze fixed on the future, we can ignore our responsibility for the world in which we live. They fail to see that the very faith we profess obliges us to live and work in a way that points to the noble vocation to which we have been called (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 43).

Our faith is in the God of the living. Christ is alive and at work in our midst, leading all of us to the fullness of life. He is alive and wants us to be alive; he is our hope (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 1). Each day we pray: Lord, may your kingdom come. With these words, we want our own lives and actions to become a hymn of praise. If, as missionary disciples, our mission is to be witnesses and heralds of things to come, we cannot become resigned in the face of evil in any of its forms. Rather, we are called to be a leaven of Christ's Kingdom wherever we find ourselves: in the family, at work or in society at large. We are to be a little opening through which the Spirit continues to breathe hope among peoples. The kingdom of heaven is our common goal, a goal that cannot be only about tomorrow. We have to implore it and begin to experience it today, amid the indifference that so often surrounds and silences the sick and disabled, the elderly and the abandoned, refugees and immigrant workers. All of them are a living sacrament of Christ our King (cf. *Mt25:31-46*). For "if we have truly started out anew from the

contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified" (John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49).

On that day at Calvary, many voices remained silent; others jeered. Only the thief's voice rose to the defence of the innocent victim of suffering. His was a brave profession of faith. Each of us has the same possibility: we can choose to remain silent, to jeer or to prophesy.

Dear brothers and sisters, Nagasaki bears in its soul a wound difficult to heal, a scar born of the incomprehensible suffering endured by so many innocent victims of wars past and those of the present, when a third World War is being waged piecemeal. Let us lift our voices here and pray together for all those who even now are suffering in their flesh from this sin that cries out to heaven. May more and more persons be like the good thief and choose not to remain silent and jeer, but bear prophetic witness instead to a kingdom of truth and justice, of holiness and grace, of love and peace (cf. *Roman Missal*, Preface of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe).

### **XIII. MEETING FOR PEACE, PEACE MEMORIAL, HIROSHIMA** *- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Sunday, 24 November 2019*

*"For love of my brethren and friends, I say: Peace upon you!" (Ps 122:8).*

God of mercy and Lord of history, to you we lift up our eyes from this place, where death and life have met, loss and rebirth, suffering and compassion.

Here, in an incandescent burst of lightning and fire, so many men and women, so many dreams and hopes, disappeared, leaving behind only shadows and silence. In barely an instant, everything was devoured by a black hole of destruction and death. From that abyss of silence, we continue even today to hear the cries of those who are no longer. They came from different places, had different names, and some spoke different languages. Yet all were united in

the same fate, in a terrifying hour that left its mark forever not only on the history of this country, but on the face of humanity.

Here I pay homage to all the victims, and I bow before the strength and dignity of those who, having survived those first moments, for years afterward bore in the flesh immense suffering, and in their spirit seeds of death that drained their vital energy.

I felt a duty to come here as a pilgrim of peace, to stand in silent prayer, to recall the innocent victims of such violence, and to bear in my heart the prayers and yearnings of the men and women of our time, especially the young, who long for peace, who work for peace and who sacrifice themselves for peace. I have come to this place of memory and of hope for the future, bringing with me the cry of the poor who are always the most helpless victims of hatred and conflict.

It is my humble desire to be the voice of the voiceless, who witness with concern and anguish the growing tensions of our own time: the unacceptable inequalities and injustices that threaten human coexistence, the grave inability to care for our common home, and the constant outbreak of armed conflict, as if these could guarantee a future of peace.

With deep conviction I wish once more to declare that the use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home. The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral, as I already said two years ago. We will be judged on this. Future generations will rise to condemn our failure if we spoke of peace but did not act to bring it about among the peoples of the earth. How can we speak of peace even as we build terrifying new weapons of war? How can we speak about peace even as we justify illegitimate actions by speeches filled with discrimination and hate?

I am convinced that peace is no more than an empty word unless it is founded on truth, built up in justice, animated and perfected by charity, and attained in freedom (cf. Saint John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 37).

Building peace in truth and justice entails acknowledging that “people frequently differ widely in knowledge, virtue, intelligence and wealth” (*ibid.*, 87), and that this can never justify the attempt to impose our own particular interests upon others. Indeed, those differences call for even greater responsibility and respect. Political communities may legitimately differ from one another in terms of culture or economic development, but all are called to commit themselves to work “for the common cause”, for the good of all (*ibid.*, 88).

Indeed, if we really want to build a more just and secure society, we must let the weapons fall from our hands. “No one can love with offensive weapons in their hands” (Saint Paul VI, *United Nations Address*, 4 October 1965, 10). When we yield to the logic of arms and distance ourselves from the practice of dialogue, we forget to our detriment that, even before causing victims and ruination, weapons can create nightmares; “they call for enormous expenses, interrupt projects of solidarity and of useful labour, and warp the outlook of nations” (*ibid.*). How can we propose peace if we constantly invoke the threat of nuclear war as a legitimate recourse for the resolution of conflicts? May the abyss of pain endured here remind us of boundaries that must never be crossed. A true peace can only be an unarmed peace. For “peace is not merely the absence of war... but must be built up ceaselessly” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78). It is the fruit of justice, development, solidarity, care for our common home and the promotion of the common good, as we have learned from the lessons of history.

To remember, to journey together, to protect. These are three moral imperatives that here in Hiroshima assume even more powerful and universal significance, and can open a path to peace. For this reason, we cannot allow present and future generations to lose the memory of what happened here. It is a memory that ensures and encourages the building of a more fair and fraternal future; an expansive memory, capable of awakening the consciences of all men and women, especially those who today play a crucial role in the destiny of the nations; a living memory that helps us say in every generation: never again!

That is why we are called to journey together with a gaze of understanding and forgiveness, to open the horizon to hope and to bring a ray of light amid the many clouds that today darken the sky. Let us open our hearts to hope, and become instruments of reconciliation and peace. This will always be possible if we are able to protect one another and realize that we are joined by a common destiny. Our world, interconnected not only by globalization but by the very earth we have always shared, demands, today more than ever, that interests exclusive to certain groups or sectors be left to one side, in order to achieve the greatness of those who struggle co-responsibly to ensure a common future.

In a single plea to God and to all men and women of good will, on behalf of all the victims of atomic bombings and experiments, and of all conflicts, let us together cry out from our hearts: Never again war, never again the clash of arms, never again so much suffering! May peace come in our time and to our world. O God, you have promised us that "mercy and faithfulness have met, justice and peace have embraced; faithfulness shall spring from the earth, and justice look down from heaven" (Ps 84:11-12).

Come, Lord, for it is late, and where destruction has abounded, may hope also abound today that we can write and achieve a different future. Come, Lord, Prince of Peace! Make us instruments and reflections of your peace!

*"For love of my brethren and friends, I say: Peace upon you!" (Ps 122:8).*

**XIV. MEETING WITH THE VICTIMS OF TRIPLE DISASTER,  
"BELLESALLE HANZOMON", TOKYO**  
*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Monday, 25 November 2019*

*Dear Friends,*

This meeting with you today is an important part of my visit to Japan. I thank all of you for welcoming me with music from Argentina. In a special way, I thank Toshiko, Tokuun and Matsuki, who shared their stories with us. They, and all of you, represent everyone who suffered so greatly as a result of the triple disaster -

the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear accident – that affected not only the prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima but the whole of Japan and its inhabitants. Thank you for expressing in your words and by your presence the sorrow and pain, but also the hope of a better future, experienced by so many. At the end of his testimony, Matsuki invited me to join you in prayer. Let us spend a moment in silence, so that our first word will be one of prayer for the more than eighteen thousand people who lost their lives, for their families and for those who are still missing. Let us pray that we be united and given the courage to look forward with hope.

Let us also give thanks for the efforts of the local governments, organizations and individuals working for the reconstruction of the areas where the disasters struck, and for the relief of the over fifty thousand persons who have been evacuated and are living in temporary housing, still unable to return to their homes.

I especially appreciate, as Toshiko pointed out, the speed with which many people, not only from Japan, but from all over the world, mobilized immediately after the disasters to support the victims with an outpouring of prayers and material and financial aid. We should not let this action be lost with the passage of time or disappear after the initial shock; rather, we should continue and sustain it. As Matsuki told us, some of those who lived in the affected areas now feel forgotten by others, and many must face ongoing problems: contaminated land and forests and the long-term effects of radiation.

May this meeting help us to appeal together to all persons of good will, so that the victims of these tragedies will continue to receive much needed assistance.

Without basic resources such as food, clothing and shelter, it is not possible to live a worthy life and have the bare minimum needed to succeed in rebuilding. This, in turn, calls for experiencing the solidarity and support of a community. No one “rebuilds” by himself or herself; nobody can start over alone. We have to find a friendly and fraternal hand, capable of helping to raise not just a city, but also our horizon and our hope. Toshiko told us that although she lost her home in the tsunami, she is still thankful for

being able to appreciate the gift of life, and for the experience of hope that came from seeing people come together to help one another. Eight years after the triple disaster, Japan has shown how a people can unite in solidarity, patience, perseverance and resilience. The path to a full recovery may still be long, but it can always be undertaken if it counts on the spirit of people capable of mobilizing in order to help one another. As Toshiko said, if we do nothing, the result will be zero. But whenever you take one step, you move one step forward. I invite you, then, to move forward each day, little by little, to build a future based on solidarity and commitment to one another, for yourselves, your children and grandchildren, and for the generations to come.

Tokuun asked how we can respond to other major issues we face: wars, refugees, food, economic disparities and environmental challenges. These, as you well know, cannot be understood or treated separately. It is a serious mistake to think that nowadays these issues can be dealt with in isolation, without viewing them as part of a much larger network. He rightly pointed out that we are part of this earth, part of the environment, inasmuch as everything is, in the end, interconnected. Important decisions will have to be made about the use of natural resources, and future energy sources in particular. But the most important thing, I believe, is to progress in building a culture capable of combating indifference. One of our greatest ills has to do with a culture of indifference. We need to work together to foster awareness that if one member of our family suffers, we all suffer. Real interconnectedness will not come about unless we cultivate the wisdom of togetherness, the only wisdom capable of facing problems (and solutions) in a global way. We are part of one another.

Here, I would like to mention, in a particular way, the accident at the Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in Fukushima and its aftermath. In addition to scientific or medical concerns, there is also the immense challenge of restoring the fabric of society. Until social bonds in local communities are re-established, and people can once more enjoy safe and stable lives, the Fukushima accident will not be fully resolved. In turn, this involves, as my brother bishops in Japan have emphasized, concern about the continuing use of nuclear power; for

this reason, they have called for the abolition of nuclear power plants.

Our age is tempted to make technological progress the measure of human progress. This “technocratic paradigm” of progress and development shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society, and often leads to a reductionism that affects every aspect of human and social life (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 101-114). So it is important at times like this, to pause and reflect upon who we are and, perhaps more critically, who we want to be. What kind of world, what kind of legacy, will we leave to those who will come after us? The wisdom and experience of elders, united to the zeal and enthusiasm of young people, can help to forge a different vision, one that fosters reverence for the gift of life and solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the one multiethnic and multicultural human family.

As we think about the future of our common home, we need to realize that we cannot make purely selfish decisions, and that we have a great responsibility to future generations. Consequently, we must choose a humble and sober way of life that recognizes the urgent realities we are called to face. Toshiko, Tokuun and Matsuki have each reminded us of the need to find a new path for the future, a path rooted in respect for each person and in respect for the natural world. Along this path, “all of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents” (*ibid.*, 14).

Dear friends, in the ongoing work of recovery and rebuilding after the triple disaster, many hands must join together and many hearts unite as one. In this way, those who are suffering will be supported and know that they have not been forgotten. They will realize that many people actively and effectively share their sorrow and continue to extend a fraternal helping hand. Once again, I thank all those who, in ways large and small, have tried to ease the burdens of the victims. May that compassion be the path that enables all to find hope, stability and security for the future.

Thank you again for being here. Please pray for me. And may God grant to all of you, and to your loved ones, his blessings of wisdom, strength and peace. Thank you.



**XV. MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, CATHEDRAL OF HOLY MARY, TOKYO**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Monday, 25 November 2019*

*Dear Young Friends,*

Thank you for coming, thank you for being here. Seeing and hearing your energy and enthusiasm gives me joy and hope. For this, I am thankful. I am also grateful to Leonardo, Miki and Masako for their words of testimony. It takes great courage to open your hearts and share as you did. I am sure that your voices echoed those of many of your classmates present here. Thank you! I know that there are young people from other nationalities among you, some of whom are seeking refuge. Let us learn to build together the society we want for tomorrow.

As I look out at you, I can see the cultural and religious diversity of the young people living in Japan today, and also something of the beauty that your generation holds for the future. Your friendship with one another and your presence here remind everyone that the future is not monochrome; if we are courageous, we can contemplate it in all the variety and diversity of what each individual person has to offer. How much our human family needs to learn to live together in harmony and peace, without all of us having to be the same! We were not mass-produced on an assembly line. Each one comes from the love of their parents and their family, and so each of us is different, each one has a story to share. (When I say something that is not translated, he will translate, okay?). We need to grow in fraternity, in concern for others and respect for different experiences and points of view! Our meeting today is so joyful precisely because we are saying that the culture of encounter is possible, that it is not a utopia, and that you young people have the special sensitivity needed to carry it forward.

I was impressed by the questions you asked, because they reflect your concrete experiences, but also your hopes and dreams for the future.

Thank you, Leonardo, for sharing the experience of bullying and discrimination. More and more young people are finding the courage to speak up about experiences like yours. In my time, when I was young, we never spoke about things like the ones Leonardo spoke about. The cruellest thing about bullying is that it attacks our self-confidence at the very time when we most need the ability to accept ourselves and to confront new challenges in life. Sometimes, victims of bullying even blame themselves for being “easy” targets. They can feel like failures, weak and worthless, and end up in very tragic situations: “If only I were different...” Yet paradoxically, it is the bullies – those who carry out bullying – who are the truly weak ones, for they think that they can affirm their own identity by hurting others. Sometimes they strike out at anyone they think is different, who represents something they find threatening. Deep down, bullies are afraid, and they cover their fear by a show of strength. And in so doing, take note, when you sense, when you see that someone “needs” to hurt another person, to bully another, to harrass them: *he* is the weak one. The victim is not the weak one; it is the one who bullies someone weaker because he needs to feel like a big boy, the powerful one, in order to feel that is a human being. I said this to Leonardo a little while ago: “When they say you are fat, tell them: “It’s worse to be skinny like you!”. We must all unite against this culture of bullying, all of us together against this culture of bullying, and learn to say “Enough!” It is an epidemic, and together you can find the best medicine to treat it. It is not sufficient that educational institutions or adults use all the resources at their disposal to prevent this tragedy; it is necessary that among yourselves, among friends and among colleagues, you join in saying: “No! No to bullying, no to attacking another. That’s wrong”. There is no greater weapon against these actions than standing up in the midst of our classmates and friends and saying: “What you are doing – bullying – is wrong”.

A bully is fearful, and fear is always the enemy of goodness, and so it is the enemy of love and peace. The great religions, all the religions that we practice, teach tolerance, teach harmony, teach mercy; religions do not teach fear, division and conflict. For us Christians, we hear Jesus constantly telling his followers not to be afraid. Why? Because if stand with God and we love God and our

brothers and sisters, this *love casts out fear* (cf. 1Jn 4:18). For many of us, as Leonardo reminded us, looking to the life of Jesus gives us consolation, for Jesus himself knew what it was to be despised and rejected – even to the point of being crucified. He knew too what it was to be a stranger, a migrant, someone who was “different”. In a sense – and here I am speaking to Christians and non-Christians who can see him as a religious model – Jesus was the ultimate “outsider”, an outsider who was full of life to give. Leonardo, we can always look at all the things we don’t have, but we can also come to see all the life that we can give and share with others. The world needs you. Never forget that! The Lord needs you, he needs you so that you can encourage all those people around us who are looking for a helping hand to lift them up. I would like to tell you something which will stand you in good stead for your lives: to look at someone with contempt, with scorn, is to look them up and down, that is to say: “I am superior and you are inferior”; but there is only fair and right way to look a person up and down: to help them to get up. If one of us, and that includes me, looks a person up and down, with contempt, it doesn’t amount to much. But if one of us looks a person up and down to give them a hand, to help them get up, that man or that woman is truly great. So, when you look someone up and down, ask yourselves: “Where is my hand? It is hidden or is it helping this person to get up?” and you will be happy. Okay?

Now this involves developing a very important but underestimated quality: the ability to learn to make time for others, to listen to them, to share with them, to understand them. Only then can we open our experiences and our problems to a love that can change us and start to change the world around us. Unless we are generous in spending time with others, in “wasting” time with them, we will waste time on many things that, at the end of the day, leave us empty and confused; “stuffed”, as they would say in my home country. So please make time for your family, dedicate time to your friends, and also make time for God through meditation and prayer, each one of us according to his or her own belief. And if you find it hard to pray, don’t give up. A wise spiritual guide once said: prayer is mostly just a matter of being there. Be still; make space for God to come in; let him look at you and he will fill you with his peace.

That is exactly what Miki talked about. Miki asked how young people can make space for God in a society that is frenetic and focused on being competitive and productive. More and more we see that a person, a community or even a whole society can be highly developed on the outside, but have an interior life that is impoverished and underdeveloped, lacking real life and vitality; they seem like ready-made dolls that have nothing inside. Everything bores them; there are young people who do not dream; a young person who does not dream is a terrible thing, one who does not make space for dreaming, for God to enter in, for dreams to enter in so that the person can live a fruitful life. There are men and women who have forgotten how to laugh, who do not play, who have no sense of wonder or surprise. They are like zombies; their hearts have stopped beating. Why? Because of their inability to celebrate life with others. Listen: you will be happy, you will be fruitful, if you maintain your ability to celebrate life with others. How many people throughout our world are materially rich, but live as slaves to unparalleled loneliness! I think of the loneliness experienced by so many people, young and old, in our prosperous but often anonymous societies. Mother Teresa, who worked among the poorest of the poor, once said something prophetic, something deep: "Loneliness and the feeling of being unloved is the most terrible form of poverty". It might be good to ask ourselves: "For me, what is the worst form of poverty, what would be for me the greatest kind of poverty? And if we are honest, we will realise that the worst kind of poverty we could face is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved. Do you understand? Is this really boring, or may I keep going? Is it boring? [Young people reply: No]. We don't have long to go.

Combating this spiritual poverty is a task to which we are all called, and in which you, the youth, have a special role to play, because it demands a major change in priorities, in our options. It means recognizing that the most important thing is not what I have or can acquire, but with whom I can share it. It is not so important to focus on *what* I live for, but *whom* I live for. Learn to ask yourselves this question: not *what* do I live for, rather, for *whom* do I live? With whom do I share my life? Things are important, but people are essential. Without them we grow dehumanized, we lose our faces,

we lose our names, and we become just another object, perhaps better than everyone, but nothing more than an object, and we are not objects; we are people. The book of Sirach says: "Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure" (6:14). That is why it is always essential to ask: "*For whom* do I live? Certainly, for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you" (*Christus Vivit*, 286), to share with others, not only to live your life but to share your life. Sharing life.

This is something beautiful that you can offer to our world. Young people need to give something to the world. Bear witness that a "social friendship", friendship among yourselves, is possible! Put your hope in a future based on the culture of encounter, acceptance, fraternity and respect for the dignity of each person, especially those most in need of love and understanding. Without sensing the need to attack or despise others, but learning instead to recognize their gifts.

One thought that can help us is that in order to stay alive physically, we have to keep breathing; it is something we do without realizing it; we all breathe automatically. To stay alive in the fullest sense of the word, we also need to learn how to breathe spiritually, through prayer and meditation, in an inward movement by which we can hear God speak to us in the depths of our heart. Yet we also need an outward movement, by which we reach out to others in acts of love and acts of service. This double motion is what enables us to grow, and to discover not only that we are loved by God, but that he has called each of us to a unique mission and vocation. We will discover this to the extent that we give ourselves to others, to specific persons.

Masako spoke about all this from her own experience as a student and a teacher. She asked how young people can be helped to discover their innate goodness and worth. Here again I would say to you that in order to grow, to discover our own identity, our own goodness and our own inner beauty, we cannot look at ourselves in a mirror. We have invented all sorts of gadgets, but we still can't take selfies of the soul. Thank God! Because to be happy, we need to ask others to help us, to have the photo taken by someone else. We

need to go out of ourselves towards others, especially those most in need (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 171). I want to say something to you: don't look at yourselves too much; don't look too much at yourselves in the mirror, because you run the risk that by looking at yourselves the mirror will break!

And now I'm finishing: it was about time! In a special way, I ask you to extend the hand of friendship to those who come here, often after great sufferings, seeking refuge in your country. Indeed, a small group of refugees is present with us here, and your kindness to them will show that they are not strangers. Not in the least, for you regard them as brothers and sisters.

A wise teacher once said that the key to growing in wisdom is not so much finding the right answers but discovering the right questions to ask. Each of you should think: "Do I know how to respond to things? Do I know how to respond well to things, to give the right answers?" If someone says "yes", well done! But ask the next question: "Do I know how to ask the right questions? Do I have a restless heart that prompts me continually to ask myself about life, about myself, about others, about God? With the right answers, you pass an exam, but without the right questions you do not pass the exam of life! Not all of you will become teachers like Masako, but I hope that you will keep asking, and help others to ask, the right questions about the meaning of our life and about how we can shape a better future for those who are coming after us.

Dear young people, I thank you for your friendly attention, and thank you for your patience, for all of this time you have given me and for sharing something of your lives. Don't cover up your dreams! Don't set them aside. Give your dreams plenty of room, dare to glimpse vast horizons and see what awaits you if you aspire to achieve them together. Japan needs you, and the world needs you to be alert, not sleeping; it needs you to be generous, cheerful and enthusiastic, capable of making a home for everyone. I promise to pray for you, that you will grow in spiritual wisdom, that you will be able to ask the right questions, that you will forget the mirror and be able to look into the eyes of others.

To all of you, and to your families and friends, I extend my best wishes, my blessing, and I ask you to remember also to send me good wishes and your blessings.

Thank you very much.

## **XVI. HOLY MASS, TOKYO DOME**

*- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Monday, 25 November 2019*

The Gospel we have heard is part of Jesus' first great sermon. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount, and it describes for us the beauty of the path we are called to take. In the Bible, the mountain is the place where God reveals himself and makes himself known. "Come up to me", God says to Moses (cf. *Ex 24:1*). A mountain whose summit is not reached by willpower or social climbing, but only by attentive, patient and sensitive listening to the Master at every crossroads of life's journey. The summit presents us with an ever new perspective on all around us, centered on the compassion of the Father. In Jesus, we encounter the summit of what it means to be human; he shows us the way that leads to a fulfillment exceeding all our hopes and expectations. In him, we encounter a new life, where we come to know the freedom of knowing that we are God's beloved children.

Yet all of us know that along the way, the freedom of being God's children can be repressed and weakened if we are enclosed in a vicious circle of anxiety and competition. Or if we focus all our attention and energy on the frenetic pursuit of productivity and consumerism as the sole criterion for measuring and validating our choices, or defining who we are or what we are worth. This way of measuring things slowly makes us grow impervious or insensible to the really important things, making us instead pant after things that are superfluous or ephemeral. How greatly does the eagerness to believe that everything can be produced, acquired or controlled oppress and shackle the soul!

Here in Japan, in a society with a highly developed economy, the young people I met this morning spoke to me about the many people who are socially isolated. They remain on the margins,

unable to grasp the meaning of life and their own existence. Increasingly, the home, school and community, which are meant to be places where we support and help one another, are being eroded by excessive competition in the pursuit of profit and efficiency. Many people feel confused and anxious; they are overwhelmed by so many demands and worries that take away their peace and stability.

The Lord's words act as a refreshing balm, when he tells us not to be troubled but to trust. Three times he insists: "Do not be anxious about your life... about tomorrow" (cf. *Mt* 6:25.31.34). This is not an encouragement to ignore what happens around us or to be irresponsible about our daily duties and responsibilities. Instead, it is an invitation to set our priorities against a broader horizon of meaning and thus find the freedom to see things his way: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (*Mt* 6:33).

The Lord is not telling us that basic necessities like food and clothing are unimportant. Rather, he invites us to re-evaluate our daily decisions and not to become trapped or isolated in the pursuit of success at any cost, including the cost of our very lives. Worldly attitudes that look only to one's own profit or gain in this world, and a selfishness that pursues only individual happiness, in reality leave us profoundly unhappy and enslaved, and hinder the authentic development of a truly harmonious and humane society.

The opposite of an isolated, enclosed and even asphyxiated "I" can only be a "we" that is shared, celebrated and communicated (cf. *General Audience*, 13 February 2019). The Lord's call reminds us that "we need to acknowledge jubilantly that our life is essentially a gift, and recognize that our freedom is a grace. This is not easy today, in a world that thinks it can keep something for itself, the fruits of its own creativity or freedom" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 55). In today's first reading, the Bible tells us how our world, teeming with life and beauty, is above all a precious gift of the Creator: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (*Gen* 1:31). God offers us this beauty and goodness so that we can share it and offer it to others, not as masters or owners, but as sharers in God's same creative dream. "Genuine care for our own



lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (*Laudato Si'*, 70).

Given this reality, we are invited as a Christian community to protect all life and testify with wisdom and courage to a way of living marked by gratitude and compassion, generosity and simple listening. One capable of embracing and accepting life as it is, “with all its fragility, its simplicity, and often enough too, with its conflicts and annoyances” (*Address at the Vigil of World Youth Day, Panama, 26 January 2019*). We are called to be a community that can learn and teach the importance of accepting “things that are not perfect, pure or ‘distilled’, yet no less worthy of love. Is a disabled or frail person not worthy of love? Someone who happens to be a foreigner, someone who made a mistake, someone ill or in prison: is that person not worthy of love? We know what Jesus did: he embraced the leper, the blind man, the paralytic, the Pharisee and the sinner. He embraced the thief on the cross and even embraced and forgave those who crucified him” (*ibid.*).

The proclamation of the Gospel of Life urgently requires that we as a community become a field hospital, ready to heal wounds and to offer always a path of reconciliation and forgiveness. For the Christian, the only possible measure by which we can judge each person and situation is that of the Father’s compassion for all his children.

United to the Lord, in constant cooperation and dialogue with men and women of good will, including those of other religious convictions, we can become the prophetic leaven of a society that increasingly protects and cares for all life.

**XVII. MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE  
DIPLOMATIC CORPS AT KANTEI, TOKYO**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Monday, 25 November 2019*

*Mr. Prime Minister,  
Honorable Members of the Government,  
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I thank the Prime Minister for his kind words of introduction and I offer respectful greetings to you, distinguished authorities and members of the diplomatic corps. Each of you, in his or her own way, is devoted to working for peace and prosperity for the people of this noble nation and the nations that you represent. I am grateful in a special way to Emperor Naruhito for having received me this morning. I offer him my good wishes and I invoke God's blessings on the Imperial Family and all the Japanese people at the beginning of the new era inaugurated by his reign.

The friendly relations existing between the Holy See and Japan are long-standing and rooted in the appreciation and admiration felt by the first missionaries for these lands. We have only to recall the words of the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, who in 1579 wrote: "Whoever wishes to see what our Lord has bestowed upon man need only come to Japan to see it". Historically, many contacts and cultural and diplomatic missions have fostered this relationship and helped to surmount moments of tension and trouble. These contacts have gradually taken on institutional form, for the benefit of both parties.

I have come to confirm Japanese Catholics in their faith, their charitable outreach to those in need and their service to the country of which they are proud citizens. As a nation, Japan is particularly sensitive to the suffering of those less fortunate, the handicapped and the disabled. The theme of my visit is "Protect All Life", in the recognition of its inviolable dignity and the importance of showing solidarity and support to our brothers and sisters in any kind of need. I have had a powerful experience of this in listening to the

stories of those affected by the triple disaster, and was touched by the hardships that they have endured.

In the footsteps of my predecessors, I have also come to implore God and to invite all persons of good will to encourage and promote every necessary means of dissuasion so that the destruction generated by atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki will never take place again in human history. History teaches us that conflicts and misunderstandings between peoples and nations can find valid solutions only through dialogue, the only weapon worthy of man and capable of ensuring lasting peace. I am convinced of the need to deal with the nuclear question on the multilateral plane, promoting a political and institutional process capable of creating a broader international consensus and action.

A culture of encounter and dialogue, marked by wisdom, insight and breadth of vision, is essential for building a more just and fraternal world. Japan has recognized the importance of promoting personal contacts in the fields of education, culture, sport and tourism, knowing that these can contribute in no small measure to the harmony, justice, solidarity and reconciliation that are the mortar of the edifice of peace. We see an outstanding example of this in the Olympic spirit, which unites athletes from throughout the world in a competition based not necessarily on rivalry but rather on the pursuit of excellence. I am confident that the Olympic and Paralympic Games, to be held in Japan this coming year, can serve as an impetus for a spirit of solidarity that transcends national and regional borders and seeks the good of our entire human family.

In these days, I have experienced and have come to esteem once more the precious cultural heritage that Japan throughout many centuries of its history has been able to develop and preserve, and the profound religious and moral values that characterize this ancient culture. Good relations between the different religions are not only essential for a future of peace, but for training present and future generations to cherish the ethical principles that serve as the foundation for a truly just and humane society. In the words of the *Document on Human Fraternity* that I signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar last February, our shared concern for the future of the human family impels us to the "adoption of a culture of

dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard”.

No visitor to Japan can fail to be moved by the sheer natural beauty of this country, long celebrated by its poets and artists, and symbolized above all by the image of the cherry blossom. Yet the very delicacy of the cherry blossom reminds us of the fragility of our common home, subjected not only to natural disasters but also to greed, exploitation and devastation at the hands of human beings. As the international community struggles to honor its commitments to protecting creation, it is the young who are increasingly speaking up and demanding courageous decisions. They challenge us to see that the world is not a possession to be squandered, but a precious legacy to be handed down. For our part, “we owe them real answers, not empty words; actions not illusions” (*Message for the 2019 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*).

In this regard, an integral approach to the protection of our common home must also consider its human ecology. A commitment to protection means confronting the growing gap between rich and poor in a global economic system that enables a select few to dwell in opulence while the majority of the world’s population lives in poverty. I am aware of the concern of the Japanese government for the promotion of different programs in this regard, and I encourage it to persevere in shaping a growing awareness of co-responsibility among the world’s nations.

Human dignity needs to be at the center of all social, economic and political activity; intergenerational solidarity must be fostered, and at every level of community life concern must be shown for those who are forgotten and excluded. I think particularly of the young, who so often feel overwhelmed in facing the challenges of growing up, the elderly and the lonely who suffer from isolation. We know that, in the end, the civility of every nation or people is measured not by its economic strength, but by the attention it devotes to those in need and its capacity to be fruitful and promote life.

Now, as my visit to Japan draws to a close, I once again express my gratitude for the invitation I received, the gracious hospitality with which I have been met, and the generosity of all those who

contributed to its happy outcome. In presenting these thoughts for your consideration, I wish to encourage you in your efforts to shape a social order ever more protective of life, ever more respectful of the dignity and rights of each member of our human family. Upon you and your families, and all those whom you serve, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings. Thank you very much.

## **XVIII. VISIT TO SOPHIA UNIVERSITY, TOKYO**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Tuesday, 26 November 2019*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

It is a great joy for me to be able to spend a few minutes with you at the conclusion of my apostolic visit, shortly before leaving Japan and returning to Rome. It is time to say goodbye.

My stay in this country has been short and very intense, but I would like to thank God and all of you for the opportunity to visit this country which Saint Francis Xavier so greatly desired to know, and where so many martyrs bore witness to their Christian faith. Despite the fact that Christians are a minority, their presence is felt. I myself have witnessed the general esteem in which the Catholic Church is held, and I hope that this mutual respect may increase in the future. I would also observe that, for all the efficiency and order that mark Japanese society, I have sensed a yearning, too, for something greater: a profound desire to create an ever more humane, more compassionate, more merciful society.

Study and meditation are part of every culture, and your Japanese culture is rightly proud of its ancient and rich heritage in this regard. Japan has been able to integrate the thinking and the religions of Asia as a whole, and to create a culture with a well-defined identity. The Ashikaga School, which so impressed Saint Francis Xavier, is an example of the capacity of Japanese culture to absorb and to pass on knowledge. Centers of study, meditation and research continue to play an important role in present-day culture. For this reason, it is important that they preserve their autonomy and freedom, for the sake of a better future. Since universities continue to be the primary place where future leaders are trained, it is necessary that a breadth

of knowledge and culture inspire every aspect of the life of educational institutions, making them ever more inclusive and capable of generating opportunities and social advancement.

*Sophia*. In order to manage our resources in constructive and efficient ways, we have always been in need of true *sophia*, true Wisdom. In a society as competitive and technologically oriented as present-day Japan, this university should be a center not only of intellectual formation, but also a place where a better society and a more hope-filled future can take shape. In the spirit of my encyclical *Laudato Si'*, I would add that love for nature, so typical of Asian cultures, should here find expression in a sapient and foresighted concern for the protection of the earth, our common home. A concern that can join in the promotion of a new "episteme" that can provide a broader vision as opposed to the reductionism born of the technocratic paradigm (cf. Nos. 106-114). Let us not forget that "an authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?" (*ibid.*, 112).

Sophia University has always been marked by a humanistic, Christian and international identity. From its foundation, the university has been enriched by the presence of professors from various countries, even at times from countries in conflict with one another. Yet all were united by the desire to give the best of themselves to the young people of Japan. That same spirit continues in the many ways that you provide help to those in greatest need, here and abroad. I am confident that this aspect of your university's identity will grow ever stronger, so that today's great technological advances can be put at the service of a more humane, more just and ecologically responsible education. The Ignatian tradition, on which Sophia is based, ought to inspire professors and students alike to create an atmosphere that fosters reflection and discernment. No student of your university should graduate without having learned how to choose, responsibly and freely, what he or she knows in conscience is best. In every situation, even the most complex, may they be concerned that their conduct is just and humane,

conscientious and responsible, and show themselves resolute defenders of the vulnerable. May they be known for the integrity so greatly needed in these times when words and actions are often either misleading or deceitful.

The Universal Apostolic Preferences that the Society of Jesus proposed and that I approved this year make it clear that the accompaniment of young people is an important priority worldwide, and that all Ignatian institutions must foster that accompaniment. As evidenced by the Synod on Youth and its documents, the universal Church likewise looks with hope and interest to young people worldwide. Your university as a whole ought to focus on the young, who should not only receive excellent education, but also be part of that education, offering their insights and sharing their vision and hopes for the future. May your university be known for such a model of sharing and for the enrichment and vitality that it generates.

The Christian and humanistic tradition of Sophia University is fully consonant with yet another of the Preferences that I mentioned, namely that of walking with the poor and the outcasts of our world. The university, focused on its mission, should always be open to creating an “archipelago” capable of connecting realities that might be considered culturally and socially separate. The marginalized would be creatively incorporated into the life and curriculum of the university, in an effort to bring about an educational approach aimed at reducing distances and disconnects. Quality university education should not be the privilege of a few, but constantly informed by the effort to serve justice and the common good. A service to be carried out by each one in the sector in which he or she is called to work. This is a concern that regards everyone. Peter’s advice to Paul remains true today: that we not forget the poor (cf. *Gal* 2:10).

Dear young people, dear professors and all who work at Sophia University: may these reflections and our meeting today bear fruit for your lives and for the life of this academic community. The Lord and his Church are counting on you to share in the mission of seeking, finding and spreading divine Wisdom, and thus offering

joy and hope to present-day society. Please, remember too, to pray for me and for all those most in need of our help.

And now, as I prepare to leave Japan, I thank you, and through you, the entire Japanese people for the kind reception and welcome accorded me during my Apostolic Visit. I assure you that I will keep all of you in my heart and my prayers. Thank you.



## APPENDIX

### Thailand, Japan: Catholics by the Numbers

Statistics of the Catholic Church in Thailand and Japan as of 31 December 2017 (from the Central Office for Church Statistics)

Table 1 – Population and ecclesiastical structure

Table 2 – People engaged in activities of the apostolate

Table 3 – Indicators of pastoral workload

Table 4 – Priestly vocations

Table 5 – Educational centres owned / managed by ecclesiastics or religious

Table 6 – Charitable and social centres owned / managed by ecclesiastics or religious

The following are some statistical data relating to the situation of the Catholic Church in Thailand and Japan as of 31 December 2017:

#### **Table 1 – Population and ecclesiastical structure**

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Japan</b>
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	513,115	377,829
Population (in thousands)	65,522	126,786
Density (inhabitants/km <sup>2</sup> )	128	336
Catholics (in thousands)	389	536
Catholics per 100 inhabitants	0.59	0.42
Ecclesiastical circumscriptions	11	16
Parishes	502	859
Other pastoral centres	566	102
Catholics per pastoral centre	365	558

**Table 2 - People engaged in activities of the apostolate**

	Thailand	Japan
Bishops <sup>1</sup>	16	29
Diocesan priests	523	511
Religious priests	312	896
Total priests	835	1,407
Permanent deacons	-	29
Men religious (other than priests)	123	173
Professed women religious	1,461	4,976
Members of secular Institutes	57	174
Lay missionaries	221	5
Catechists	1,901	1,307

[1] Situation on 30.09.2019

**Table 3 - Indicators of pastoral workload**

	Thailand	Japan
Catholics per priest	446	381
Catholics per pastoral worker	84	66
Priests per pastoral centre	0.78	1.46
Priests per 100 people engaged in activities of the apostolate	18.4	17.7

**Table 4 - Priestly vocations**

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Japan</b>
Minor seminarians	771	33
Major seminarians	306	80
Major seminarians per 100,000 inhabitants	0.47	0.06
Major seminarians per 100,000 Catholics	78.6	14.9
Major seminarians per 100 priests	36.65	5.69

**Table 5 - Educational centres owned / managed by ecclesiastics or religious**

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Japan</b>
<b>Schools:</b>		
Pre-school and primary	253	575
Lower middle and secondary	163	183
Higher and university	10	57
<b>Students in:</b>		
Pre-school and primary schools	319,515	83,517
Lower middle and secondary schools	147,034	67,508
Higher and university institutes	22,149	53,310

**Table 6 - Charitable and social centres owned / managed by ecclesiastics or religious**

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Japan</b>
Hospitals	4	29
Clinics	8	10
Leper colonies	-	-
Homes for the elderly and disabled	26	274
Orphanages and nurseries	115	236
Family consultation centres	7	3
Special centres of social education or rehabilitation	11	21
Other institutions	19	33

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129. IX FABC Plenary Assembly: Living the Eucharist in Asia, February 2010
130. Dialogue: Interpretive Key for the Life of the Church in Asia, by James H. Kroeger, M.M., May 2010
131. A Glimpse at Dialogue in Asia 30th Anniversary First Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA), by FABC Office of Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs (OEIA), August 2010
- 132a Word of God in the Life & Mission of the Church, 5th FABC - OE & CBF Asia-Oceania Biblical Congress and Bishops' Institute for the Biblical Apostolate (BIBA) III, by FABC Office of Evangelization in collaboration with The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), December 2010
- 132b Word of God in the Life & Mission of the Church, 5th FABC - OE & CBF Asia-Oceania Biblical Congress and Bishops' Institute for the Biblical Apostolate (BIBA) III, by FABC Office of Evangelization in collaboration with The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), November 2011
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138. "FABC at Forty Years: Responding to the Challenges of Asia", X FABC Plenary Assembly, Xuân Lộc and Hồ Chí Minh City, Việt Nam, December 2013

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140. Climate Change, Asian Impacts and Response, II FABC Climate Change Seminar, by FABC Central Secretariat, June 2014
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142. Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Republic of Korea on the Occasion of the 6th Asian Youth Day, 13-18 August 2014, Organized by Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, FABC Office of Laity & Family – Youth Desk & Daejeon Youth Team, November 2014
143. Families in Asia, Serving and Being Served, Final Statements and Survey on Family Ministry, Prepared by Wendy Louis, Executive Secretary, FABC Office of Laity & Family, February 2015
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