

December 29, 2024: At the beginning of the Jubilee Year

## Together on the path of hope

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### Introduction

On May 9th of this year, Pope Francis officially announced that, in accordance with the tradition of the Church, 2025 would be a Jubilee Year, and that it would begin on December 24th, 2024. A Jubilee Year is a “holy year” that is declared by the Pope every 25 years. There are two types of the Jubilee Year: the “Ordinary Jubilee Year”, which is held every 25 years, and the “Extraordinary Jubilee Year”, which is declared irregularly. The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy was held 10 years ago in 2015. Also, when the Nagoya Diocese celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2022, it declared a “Diocesan Holy Year” that was held only in the Nagoya Diocese, and I remember that we spent the year of renewal together with everyone.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve, Pope Francis declared that the Jubilee Year had begun at the Vatican for the whole world. In addition, in each diocese around the world, which are called “partial churches”, the Jubilee Year will begin simultaneously today, December 29th (the Sunday of the Holy Family), and we will also begin the Jubilee Year in unison with the dioceses around the world.

### A Sign of Hope

Pope Francis has announced the Jubilee Year with the publication of a major papal encyclical entitled “Hope does not disappoint”. In this letter, he expresses his hope that the Jubilee Year will be an opportunity for everyone to regain hope in the midst of the confused state of the world. We tend to fall into fear, distrust and discouragement because we cannot predict the future. There is no end to the list of things that make us anxious about the future: the fear of disasters following the Noto earthquake and the Nankai Trough earthquake, the divided and violent state of the world, and so on. Even in the face of this reality, the Pope is calling on us to return to the language of hope first. The starting point for this is the faith that “nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35). The logo for the Jubilee Year shows a picture of people on the sea, holding onto a cross that is acting as an anchor, and this is not only a sign of faith, but also a sign of hope.

### In order to realize hope in reality

we can walk the path of hope by standing on this faith in reality and returning to it when we waver. The Pope calls on us to take action, pointing to several specific events. In particular, he points out realities where it is easy to lose hope, but rather than just pointing out the problems, he calls on the Christian community to be a “sign of solid hope” in the midst of them. On December 26th, the first day of the Jubilee Year, the Pope went to a prison in Rome and announced that he would open the Holy Door as a “sign of hope” for all those imprisoned

around the world. (Catholic News, November 17th) In addition to this, he is calling on governments around the world to implement measures to help people who are on the path to redemption to regain their hope and reintegrate into society.

The Pope's specific call also condemns the “scandal of poverty” and the horrors of war, and extends to the sick, young people, migrants, the elderly, and the poor. All of these issues are also serious problems in Japan today. In particular, the Pope's call for peace is an important point for Japan, which continues to double its defense spending. The Pope suggests the following

“Let us establish an international fund with the money spent on weapons and other military expenses, to eradicate hunger and to develop the poorest countries, so that their inhabitants do not have to resort to violent or empty solutions, and do not have to leave their countries in search of a more dignified life.”

If we do not accept and put into practice this call from the Pope in our own lives here in Japan, as individuals and as a community, it will be meaningless.

As a member of the Holy Family, on the path of hope

Today, the opening day of the Holy Year, is the Feast of the Holy Family. The Holy Family is the bond between Jesus, who became a human being to save all people, and Mary and Joseph, who were called to walk with Jesus. At the same time, it also symbolizes the image of a community in which we live together, each with our own mission centered on Christ. A family in this world is an important place where each person can grow as a human being through relationships in which they are loved and accepted unconditionally. Of course, in reality, there are many children who are not blessed with such a family from a young age due to various circumstances. Nevertheless, children can grow up in a rich environment in a “place of unconditional acceptance” created by well-intentioned people and social support. And it is precisely because of the existence of such a place of acceptance that we are able to live in open relationships that embrace others. Furthermore, ultimately, we will all live in a community of connection with others that transcends blood relations. In this way, rather than remaining bound only by ties of blood and land, all people will come to value each other and live together as a community, transcending these ties. This is the “Promised Land” that God has been trying to lead us to since the Old Testament era, and it is the image of the completion of God's kingdom. For this reason, Christ became a human being and was born into the Holy Family, and he walked with Mary and Joseph so that one day all people would become God's family.

Even in a confused society, there are many people who are working and acting for this “Promised Land” everywhere, transcending religion. This is a sign of hope. Let us walk together through the Jubilee Year as “pilgrims of hope,” in solidarity with these good-hearted people.

May through the Holy Year that begins today, seeds of hope be sown in this world and that hope become reality.