

Message for Christmas and the New Year 2016

To all the faithful of the Diocese of Saitama,

I wish you Happy Christmas and New Year at the opening of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy!

Pope Francis says: "We are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us." (*Misericordiae Vultus [Jesus Christ, the Face of the Father's Mercy]*, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 9)

God has already poured out his grace of mercy upon us, and still, he pours out his Holy Spirit upon us every day to renew us day by day. He does send his own breath to renew all things as the Psalmist says: "When you send forth your spirit [or *your breath*], they are created; and you renew the face of the ground." (Psalm 104:30, NRSVCE)

Renewal is the work of creation, and creation is done by the Spirit of God. Throughout the history of salvation God has been renewing all things on earth every day and will accomplish "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1, NRSVCE) in the end.

I have once read the following passage from *the Great Learning*, one of China's classic works on Confucianism: "苟日新、日日新、又日新 (Truly new each day. New each and every day. Again, new each day.)" This is a good reminder that we need to receive the Holy Spirit each and every day to be created anew day by day.

Some people say that the Japanese term, "*kegare* (defilement)," derives from "ke (life-spirit)" and "gare (drying up)." Doesn't it illustrate what will become of us the Christians if we dry up the Spirit of God within us instead of receiving him every day?

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit for his guidance and help so that we may truly live God's mercy and make peace of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout this year.

8 December 2015

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Opening of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

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