

Message for Christmas 2016 and the New Year 2017

To all the faithful of the Diocese of Saitama,

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year.

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy closed at the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe on November 20, 2016. However, God's Mercy never ends. "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)

This is the fourth time for me to celebrate Christmas and greet the New Year as apostolic administrator of Saitama Diocese. Along with the memories of nine years (1991-2000) as bishop of this diocese then called Urawa, I've been having a fruitful time. Once again, thank you for your prayers, understanding and support.

For the next year, I would like to call upon you especially for evangelization by all the faithful in Saitama Diocese.

Every one of us Christians must confess and declare our faith at every opportunity and we can do so.

Every one of us Christians must explain what we believe in words of their own.

Every one of us Christians must practice works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual acts of mercy and love, in our daily lives.

Every one of us Christians must commit ourselves to bringing this world more peace and respect for human rights.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit for His guidance and help so that the year 2017 may see us truly live God's mercy and make peace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Advent 2016

Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Saitama

Archbishop Peter Takeo OKADA