

Message for the New Year 2022

May this be a year when we deeply understand and live
synodality essential to us the Church of Christ
to journey in Him, through Him, and with Him

January 1, 2022

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

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Dear brothers and sisters,

Happy New Year 2022! May the new year be filled with God's blessings for you and your families.

I'm sure you all remember that on October 17, near the end of last year, parishes around the world prayed for the start of the Diocesan Synod as the first phase of the Synod of Bishops to be held in October 2023. As an important preparation for the Synod, I invited Father Nakamaro Abe, a Salesian priest, on December 7 to learn together with our priests and deacons in advance of the laity about "synodality, an expression of the Church's style to live together." Father Abe reminded us again of Pope Francis' earnest desire from the beginning of his inauguration: He wants everyone to realize and remember the preciousness of living together with one another.

I would like you to think about this: Japan is considered an economically advanced country, but in terms of the Christian evangelization, it is one of the major countries where the preaching of the gospel is long overdue. I think we can say that this is the country where the significance of this Synod is the greatest.

We are not lacking in enthusiasm to learn and talk about "synodality, an expression of the Church's style to live together," but we are not optimistic about the future of our discussions

as the coronavirus pandemic continues to wane and regain momentum. However, let us move forward with caution and without flinching to turn this particular "time of trial" into a "time of grace". The priests and deacons who have learned in advance of you the laity are looking forward to living synodality with you in the future. I sincerely hope that you will have a year of walking in hope with your priests and deacons.

My other wish is that you would take up again the two important encyclicals of our Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, and be guided by them to remember more deeply that this world is one big family, that this earth is "our home" not only for human beings but for all life. It is my hope that you will renew your commitment to walking with the most humble, poor, and suffering people in this pandemic, and carry it out.

I sincerely hope that one day soon I will be able to visit your communities in peace and safety and see you in good health.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you abundantly!