

**THE 2022 DAY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE
FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

February 17, 2022

Dear Sister and Brother Catholics in Japan,

We who believe in God who has gifted us with life have a duty to protect the dignity of life. It goes without saying that the Church's clergy are expected to be at the forefront in fulfilling that duty.

Unfortunately, there have been reports all over the world that clergy who should be examples have ignored and trampled the dignity of life by committing sexual abuse. It has become clear that among them there are some who have committed despicable acts of abuse against minors who should be protected. The Church in Japan is no exception.

In addition, for a long time there have been cases of bishops and other Church leaders around the world who had covered up these crimes.

Pope Francis has called on the whole Church to take this situation seriously, confess guilt, seek forgiveness, and do our best to restore the dignity of those affected by this issue caused by priests. In addition, he has instructed bishops around the world to set aside a special Day of Prayer and Penance for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Abuse. The Church of Japan has designated the second Friday of Lent as this day of prayer and penance. March 18 will be the 2022 Day of Prayer and Penance for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Abuse.

Since 2002, the bishops of Japan have responded by establishing guidelines and establishing a Desk for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Women. Last December, we created Guidelines for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, renewing our determination to fulfill our mission to protect minors entrusted to the Church in Japan. We will continue to review and develop the system to make it ever more effective.

The Church, which is now on the synodal path, aims to be a community of solidarity in which we listen to and support one another. We will work to make the Church in Japan a community that strives to protect the dignity of life.

There are many victims in the Church around the world. We confess the Church's sins, including indifference and coverup. We pray that the victims will be healed by God's loving embrace. At the same time, we clergy want to renew our faith commitment, pray in love, and act so that we do not repeat these sins.

Please pray with us bishops on or near the second Friday of Lent in accordance with the pope's wish.

+ Isao Kikuchi, President
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan