

“UNUM CORPUS IN CHRISTO”

Dear my brothers and sisters in Christ in the Diocese of Saitama

A Happy New Year to you all.

We celebrate the very first day of the new year as the *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*. Since 1968 we have also made the same day as a *Day of Peace*, addressed by Pope Saint Paul VI for peace for the world, when the humans faced the extreme strains and tensions with the pressures by the superpower countries. Sadly, we have, up to now, never seen the end of the wars in the various part of the world. However, the making all the efforts to strive to preserve Peace in the world by the Catholic Church has ever been strengthened all over the world, including here in Japan. The present Pope Francis, as the Leader of the Church, has, almost every year, continued organizing the international meetings for praying for Peace in the world, by inviting not only the Catholics but all the leaders from the different religions.

By the way, the spreading of infections of the Covid 19 for over the last three years has hit our church communities on every aspect in the incredible way. As the results, in many parishes people have still kept some distance from the church. I wonder if there might be some who have not returned yet to the church even after the masses with the congregation have now been allowed to celebrate. I ask the parish priests and the members of the parochial committees to think about restarting the activities of the various parish groups. Although, our life with the covid 19 may, perhaps, be continued a while, let us make a new start the parish activities little by little but with eagerness.

I am now reminded of the papal address on the “*New Evangelization*” by Pope Saint John Paul II when he visited Mexico for the synod of the Latin American Bishops in 1979. In that papal address, the Pope emphasized on the “*newness*” in the “*New Evangelization*”, which “must respond to these new situations with a new evangelization, methods that would bring the Gospel of Christ to all people, no matter their condition in life”.

My dear friends, you will be, I am sure, greatly blessed by God, at post-Covid 19 if you may start a new life, first, by attending Sunday masses, then, by praying together with your friends in the parish based on the unity with the Lord, and, finally, by striving to give Love and Charity to others. Keeping in mind above, let us now start the new year.

At the beginning of this year which marks the 5th year for me since I was created Bishop of Saitama, I thank God for the special richnesses given by him to Saitama

Diocese, that is, in our Diocese many of the members with the foreign nationalities have become very important part of the parishes, not as just travelers, but as the residential members. I think we have come to the new era when their children, who were born and brought up in Japan, are to contribute themselves to our church as well as to our society. Our Diocese is the one big community. I ask all of you to make every effort to deepen our Christian fellowship with the people with foreign nationalities sent by God from all over the world, as well as walking together and going forward with them.

My motto of the Bishop “*UNUM CORPUS IN CHRISTO*” will, I pray, become the motto of the whole Diocese for this new year.

At the beginning of the new year I will send my blessings to all of you. May God let you and I walk together.

May the Lord bless you and protect you and give you whatever you need.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On January the 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

The Bishop of Saitama

Mario Michiaki Yamanouchi