

On the Occasion of Ten Days for Peace 2012
Comments of the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

The Path of Peace is the Path to Cherish and Respect Human Life

The annual "Ten Days for Peace" has come again. The late Pope John Paul II announced the "Appeal for Peace" in February 1981 at the Peace Memorial Park of Hiroshima. The Pope said at the beginning of the appeal, "War is the work of man. War is destruction of human life. War is death." This appeal called upon everyone in the world to abolish nuclear weapons, denounce nuclear wars, and commit ourselves to peace. Responding to this, the Catholic Church in Japan defined the days between August 6 and 15 as "Ten Days for Peace", a special period to think of our responsibilities to peace, to learn about peace and to work for peace.

In the "Appeal for Peace" the Pope said, "Those who cherish life on earth must encourage governments and decision-makers in the economic and social fields to act in harmony with the demands of peace rather than out of narrow self-interest. Peace must always be the aim.....The path of peace, the only path to a future in which equity, justice and solidarity are realities and not just distant dreams" (cf.5).

The path of peace is nothing less than the path to cherish and respect life.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, the entire world, not to mention the Catholic Church in Japan, has been concerned about the afflicted areas, and a surge of commitment to cherish life and walk the path of peace arose among a large number of people. Looking at the current situation, however, aid will be needed long into the future. It is my desperate hope that this surge will bring about the earliest possible reconstruction of the afflicted areas.

In November 2011, the bishops in Japan announced the message, "Abolish Nuclear Plants Immediately~ Facing the Tragedy of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant Disaster", and appealed, "However, most important of all, we as members of the human race, have responsibilities to protect all life and nature as God's creation, and to pass on a safer and more secure environment to future generations. In order to protect life, which is so precious, and beautiful nature, we must not focus on economic growth by placing priority on profitability and efficiency, but decide at once to abolish nuclear plants".

However, the causes of the accident in the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant are still unclear, and the prospect for the decommissioning of the plant is dim. Moreover, there are numerous problems such as nuclear waste and plutonium, which can be used for nuclear weapons, as well as the problem that future generations will be burdened with the storage and

disposal of these materials. Under such circumstances, it is truly regrettable that the government has decided to resume the operation of Oi Nuclear Power Plant.

The path of peace is precisely the path to cherish and respect life. Therefore, let us make every effort to appeal anew to abolish nuclear plants immediately and to create a society where people protect life and seek peace.

Leo Jun IKENAGA, S.J., Archbishop of Osaka
President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan