
Japan, the bishops' document on the Coronavirus. Msgr. Takami: "To renew the fundamental trust in God"

Tokyo – Japan will have to wait until May 6, the end of the long-awaited holiday week called Golden Week, to find out whether or not the Abe Government will extend the state of emergency in effect throughout the country for the past three weeks, aimed at reducing contact between people by 80%. The Catholic community of Japan is likewise looking forward to the decision of State authorities. For their part, the bishops will evaluate the next steps concerning the resumption of Eucharistic liturgies after that date. The President of the Japanese Episcopal Conference Joseph Sanmei Takami, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Nagasaki, felt the need to address the faithful and clergy to express his feelings in the light of the present situation of uncertainty and precariousness. In the introduction to the document "In the midst of the new coronavirus pandemic" published in April on the CBCJ's official website ([Catholic bishops conference of Japan](#)), archbishop Takami writes: "As we witness the worldwide spread of the new coronavirus, I want to share some thoughts with Japan's Catholics", encapsulating his reflection in four points: *Prayer, Greatness, yet fragility of human life; Our spiritual life; Efforts we must make as citizens*. The document begins with a "Prayer for the World Suffering from the New Coronavirus Pandemic" prepared by the Japanese bishops to invoke God's help at this particular time confronted with the new coronavirus, defined by the archbishop "a global threat of infection and death that is incomparable to the 2002 SARS and the 2012 MERS epidemics." In the second chapter of the Letter, the President of the Japanese Bishops' Conference draws attention to the fact that "Humanity has used its God-given wisdom to advance science and technology, especially medicine. But now, people around the world are frightened by the threat of the virus and struggle to prevent infection and end the scourge as soon as possible." Before this situation

we are called to renew our fundamental trust in God.

"We humans are loved by God, created in the image of God, given a mission to govern all things on earth. But we are also like dust, wild grass, breath and shadow. That is why we keep in mind that apart from Christ we can do nothing, yet we will not fear anything and will trust in God and have hope for salvation." In the third point of his Letter the Archbishop of Nagasaki invites the faithful to reflect that *the current situation may prove to be an opportunity to take a new look to our spiritual life* and that, while we are making new discoveries "about our relationships with others and nature", we are called to rediscover also our spiritual life and our faith: "the cancellation of Sunday Masses has made some of us once again consider the meaning of Sunday Mass and how grateful we are for it", points out Msgr. Takami. Quoting from and referring to various passages from Holy Scripture to describe its profound reality, he *encourages us to accept God's will at this time when Sunday celebrations are cancelled or limited*. In the closing remarks of the third paragraph the document calls upon the faith community to show compassion and solidarity, cautioning against thinking only about the safety of our own life and pointing out that the very reflection on the Eucharistic celebration reminds us that "We are all united in him, and he is with us so that just like him we can approach others with love and mercy." The Letter concludes with a plea to show sensitivity towards the life of others especially in the light of the present situation, to behave accordingly, and to pray for everyone's recovery. In the last point, the document recalls a number of safety measures that all citizens are required to comply with for their own safety and that of others. A special word of advice, however, is the washing of hands, avoiding doing it hastily: *"Thoroughly wash hands with soap or use a disinfectant solution. Reciting the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Glory!"*

