

2026 Ten Days of Prayer for Peace Building a Peaceful World in Solidarity

A Message from the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

To all who wish for peace.

This year as we remember the 81st anniversary of the end of the war, we begin our annual Ten Days of Prayer for Peace centered around the anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every year at this time, we are invited to re-engrave memories of the past in our hearts, look to the present world, and reflect on our responsibilities for the future. Once again, let us keep in mind the many who died or were wounded in the war as well as the destroyed natural environment, and let us pray for the realization of peace.

Reexamining everyday life

Last year, as we marked the 80th anniversary of the postwar era, we bishops released “A Journey of Peace: Bearing Hope,” expressing our determination to pass the desire for peace to the next generation. In it, we asked, “The horror and sinfulness of war are clear to many people, but we must learn from the experience of 80 years ago that instilling ideas and values in everyday life unwittingly changed public opinion and led to war. Is Japan really on the path to peace?” This question confronts us with ever greater significance at this very moment.

The World We Live In

In Hiroshima in 1981, Pope John Paul II declared that “war is the work of man.” We are now witnessing how these “human works” are raging across the world.

Wars and conflicts are spreading around the world, including Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and the Middle East, including Gaza. On these battlefields, each one who is wounded or violently loses life is a human being just like us, created in the image of God.

Even more serious is that such violence is justified as “unavoidable,” neglecting such universal principles as international humanitarian law and human dignity. The framework of multilateralism is being deeply shaken. Where has humanity’s vow “never again” born as a cry from the horrors of past wars gone?

Japan, too, is undergoing significant changes. Lately, the interpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution has changed, allowing the exercise of collective self-defense with restrictions. With the excuse of changes in the security environment, defense spending has been rapidly increased. The deployment of long-range missiles for their “counterattack capability” has begun, and the Self-Defense Force deployment in the Nansei Islands has been strengthened. The export of weapons with lethal capability is now allowed under certain conditions.

While the framework of ‘exclusively defense’ remains, its essence continues to change significantly. The pacifism of the Constitution that stipulates the renunciation of war and maintaining military forces is important wisdom learned from the devastation of war by those who went before us. We need to pause and consider whether gradually eroding that spirit and advancing military buildup without sufficient national debate will lead to the establishment of true peace.

Solidarity for peace

On April 16, during a visit to Cameroon, Africa, Pope Leo XIV addressed a peace gathering, saying, “We must make a decisive change of course — a true conversion — that will lead us in the opposite direction, onto a sustainable path rich in human fraternity.”

Furthermore, the Pope said, “The world is being ravaged by a handful of tyrants, yet it is held together by a multitude of supportive brothers and sisters!” He thus praised the many women and men who work at peacebuilding and called on them to build solidarity with the courage that comes from faith.

The Pope also said, “Jesus told us: Blessed are the peacemakers! But woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic or political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth.” He strongly warned against the violence of taking others’ lives under the pretext of interreligious conflict.

On the flight to Africa, the Pope was asked about the Church’s call for peace being perceived as a political statement. He answered, “We are not politicians. … We don’t deal with foreign policy with the same perspective [they] might understand it, but I do believe in the message of the Gospel, as a peacemaker,” making it clear that peacebuilding is a priority in the Church’s work of evangelization.

Furthermore, the Pope stated, “I continue to speak strongly against war, seeking to promote peace, dialogue, and multilateralism among states to find solutions to problems. Too many people are suffering today, too many innocent lives have been lost, and I believe someone must stand up and say there is a better way,” (Vatican News, April 13, 2026).

Walking the path to peace with the Pope

Pope Leo XIV’s stance on peace is precisely the stance of the entire Church. The Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World declares at the outset that “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” In this spirit, I would like to call on you to stand in loving solidarity with our many brothers and sisters, protecting life and creating hope. Let’s establish peace together!

All life is a precious gift from God. Regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion, everyone is given dignity by God. Protecting that dignity is the starting point of peace. Let us pray and act for

peace. Let us pass down the memory of the preciousness of life. In our daily lives, let us choose words of love rather than words of power, and nurture a civilization of love. Let us spread among those close to us the gospel of life of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “Peace be with you.”

May God, the Giver of life, bless and guide you.

Cardinal Isao Tarcisio Kikuchi, President
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan
July 10, 2026

Japanese Text

2026年平和旬間 日本カトリック司教協議会会長談話「連帯のうちに平和な世界を築く」

<https://www.cbcj.catholic.jp/2026/07/10/38959/>