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8 page    Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders” Revised Edition

A Pastoral Message for 2019  
from  
Bishop Paul Yoshinao Otsuka of Kyoto

## The Church’s Mission of Hospitality ~ Looking beyond Nationality to the Kingdom of God ~

### Introduction

In recent years, Japan has experienced a rapid increase in foreign visitors, and we now meet foreigners all over the country on a daily basis. In 2020, we will host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our modern era of globalization is an era of global migration, a phenomenon that can be called “a sign of the times.” In the last 50 years, the number of migrants in the world has increased about threefold, and more than 200 million people live outside their homeland. In order to deal with this migration situation, Caritas International has called for a “Share the Journey” campaign from September 27, 2017 to September 2019. In Japan, we are implementing this campaign under the title “Exclusion ZERO Campaign - For people to meet beyond nationality.”

In our Kyoto Diocese, technical intern trainees from Vietnam and the Philippines now participate in parish Masses. It is time for us to think more deeply about how to make our communities more multinational and multicultural, and we must take practical steps toward that. And so, I have decided to make refugees and migrants the theme of this pastoral message. First, we will look at the commandments in Scripture that deal with foreigners. Then I would like to present several fundamental aspects of creating the future Church community of the Kyoto Diocese.



In addition, please read the 2016 revised edition of "Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders" by the Episcopal Commission for Social Issues of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

## 1. The foreigner in the Old Testament

Palestine, center stage of the Old Testament, is located in a corridor area connecting Egypt to Babylon where various ethnic groups and tribes have always traveled, and so the phenomenon of migration set the stage for the history of salvation. In those days, each nation or ethnic group had its own gods, so living in a country other than your own meant living in an unbelieving land in an uncertain religious and social situation. In the Hebrew Bible, foreigners are spoken of in four ways: *zar* (a foreigner to fear), *nokri* (a foreigner to avoid), *toshabh* (a welcome guest) and *ger* (a respected foreigner). This shows that, depending on historical circumstances, the relationship of Israel to foreigners ranged from fear to respect and seeing them as enemies, guests or friends.

The experience of living separated from their native place, homeland and family is the experience of the people of the Bible, notably of the descendants of Abraham who lived as slaves in Egypt. This experience is linked with the commandment of God to not only recall their former circumstances, but also to remember God's work at that time. "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 22:21; see also Deuteronomy 10:19; Leviticus 19:33-34). Also, the God of Israel listens particularly to the cry of poor people who have no one else to hear them, such as orphans and widows, as well as foreigners (strangers), giving the people of Israel a command to defend such people. "Thus, says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place." (Jeremiah 22:3)

## 2. The law of hospitality in the New Testament

In the era of the New Testament, the scattered children of God are gathered together through their redemption by Christ on the cross (see John 11:52), and the walls separating Israel from others are destroyed (see Ephesians 2:14). Peter preaches this way: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and



does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34-35). Christians live as parts of the one body of Christ, being one with Christ and therefore brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. (See Romans 8:14-16, Galatians 3:26, 4:6)



So, in the New Testament, hospitality toward travelers is regarded as one of the norms of Christian life (Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9). Furthermore, hospitality is a qualification for leadership in the Church (1 Timothy 3:2, 5:10; Titus 1:8), and all Christians are strongly encouraged to exercise hospitality as a way to practice love of neighbor (Romans 12:13). Accepting foreigners who came to their country, and overcoming prejudice and fear was not only a natural obligation as a person to welcome people warmly, but also became faithfulness to the teachings of Christ. I call this the Church’s vocation to evangelical hospitality.

### 3. Evangelical hospitality

In the Bible, hospitality has a deeper meaning than simply entertaining friends at home. The Greek word *philoxenia* (hospitality) means “love of strangers.” The command to show hospitality is a call to go to people in trouble and build human relationships with them. When Jesus was asked “Who is my neighbor?” he reversed the question (see Luke 10:25-37). Rather than asking, “Who is my neighbor?” we should ask, “To whom should I be a neighbor?” Even strangers who need help are the neighbors to whom I should lend a hand. For the Samaritan, the dying Jew who was attacked by robbers was a foreigner, but nationality was not the standard he used to decide to become a neighbor.

Everyone who needs us, everyone we can help, is our neighbor (see Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical *God is Love*, 15). Even asking “Who is my neighbor?” is already trying to establish limits and conditions.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells us to go beyond the framework of whether it is legitimate or not, to move forward and to value the relationship with that person without setting limits.

We Christians do not practice this evangelical hospitality only toward foreigners; we have the mission of reaching out in hospitality to all the people we encounter in our lives. In other words, hospitality is the precious vocation of Christians who serve the life of the world.



#### 4. Meeting Christ

Evangelical hospitality means expressing love for others and showing love for Christ. “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking,” (Revelation 3:20). When the foreigner knocks on the door of my house, it is an important opportunity to meet Jesus Christ. For believers, accepting others is not



mere philanthropy, but is a way to meet Christ in everyone. Christ awaits us in our neighbors, especially those who are poor, in need of help, weak, unprotected, excluded from society and waiting for a helping hand. Thus, we must not forget that when our life ends, we shall be judged according to the love that we showed for the least of our brothers and sisters (see Matthew 25:31-45).

In the Old Testament period, the descendants of Abraham were as visitors and pilgrims in the promised land of Canaan. “The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Leviticus 25:23). In this New Testament era, no matter where we were born or live, we are citizens of our mother country heaven, members of a holy people, the family of God (Ephesians 2:19). We have no permanent abode here on earth but live as pilgrims (see 1 Peter 2:11), always moving toward our final home. The Second Vatican Council asserts: “One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (see Acts 17:26). One also is their final goal, God.” (Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*: Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, 1). Thus, evangelical hospitality as the mission of the people of God traveling through this world has renewed importance in this era of modern migration.

#### 5. The right to migrate

People have their own homeland, live freely in their own country, maintain and develop their linguistic, cultural and ethical heritage, publicly profess their religion, and have the right as human beings to be treated properly and with dignity in any situation. On the other hand, people also have the right to migrate. The Catholic Church acknowledges that every person has the right to leave their own country for various motives and enter other countries in search of better living conditions (see Pope John Paul II encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, On human work, 23). In this recent era of migration, the international community must legally recognize the right to emigrate to other countries and to immigrate from other countries. The Church teaches that as much as possible prosperous countries have a duty to receive foreign nationals who seek stability because they cannot live in their own countries (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2241)



## 6. Do not be indifferent to migrants

Let's imagine what kind of rejection the Holy Family of Nazareth experienced. Because Mary had no place to stay, "She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2.7). Jesus, Mary and Joseph were threatened by Herod's lust for power, and so escaped to Egypt, experiencing leaving their homeland as migrants (see Matthew 2:13-14). For contemporary Christians, the existence of immigrants presents evangelical challenges. Among those migrants are refugees trying to escape from poor living conditions and various other dangers. When he says, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me," Jesus says that those in need are himself (Matthew 25:35-36). In addition to constantly presenting this teaching of Christ, the Church must adapt its teaching to the "signs of the time."

Pope Francis, grieved by the inhumanities and death that so many refugees face daily all over the world, has challenged the international community with the question of Genesis, "Where is your brother? His blood cries out to me." (See Genesis 4:9-10). Coldness toward migrants is hypocrisy. The Lord "needs us to fulfil his promise. He needs our eyes to see the needs of our brothers and sisters. He needs our hands to offer them help. He needs our voice to protest the injustices committed thanks to the silence, often complicit, of so many." (July 6, 2018, Mass for Migrants).

We must not be indifferent to news reports of refugees around the world. We cannot abandon the weak and undefended people living in danger of life and in unstable situations, rejected and left out of society. It is the duty of Christians to be always concerned about the difficulties of migrants and the harsh circumstances of refugees.



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## 7. A universal Church without borders

Since the church is catholic (universal), it has a mission to foster solidarity, love and peace for the whole world, transcending differences of religion, eliminating all ethnic exclusion and racial discrimination, and building a society in which native peoples, immigrants and aliens coexist as equals (see Pope Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*).

When we speak of the "Japanese Church" it does not mean "The Church of the Japanese," but "The Church in Japan." As Japan becomes a multi-cultural society, we Christians must work hard to practice evangelical hospitality and take the initiative to create a "culture of encounter." This is an obligatory part of the original mission of the Church, not an optional additional activity.

Now is the time to show the true shape of a Church open to all people. The foreign Christians who come to our parishes are fellow believers for whom we should not merely care, but brothers and sisters with whom we should build a single community. It is also important for us as the Kyoto Diocese to deepen our interest in foreign nationals and to recognize the importance of moving ahead in dialogue with one another.

## 8. Parishes as homes without limitations

The Greek word *paroikia*, source of the English word "parish," is derived from the verb *paroikeo*, which means to live near one another. It is used most frequently in the New Testament to refer to strangers. The parish Church gladly welcomes all who come without discrimination against anyone, a place where no one is an outsider. The Church must be a family for all people, especially those who labor and are heavy burdened, a home where they find rest.

For Catholic migrants, their religion is not only indispensable to life, but is also the foundation of their identity and the spirit of the country of their origin. "The families of migrants, especially in the case of manual workers and farm workers, should be able to find a homeland everywhere in the Church. This is a task stemming from the nature of the Church, as being the sign of unity in diversity." Pope John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, On the family, 77). There must not be any habitual division within a single parish between local believers and groups of immigrants. That would close the possibility of deeper exchanges and keep relationships superficial. Rather, we should spare no efforts in developing opportunities to work together to explore ways to enrich one another's faith.



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As an example of this, thanks to migrants from Latin America, the Brazilian festival of Our Lady of Aparacida and Peru's Señor de los Milagros (Lord of miracles) that were unknown in the Kyoto Diocese 30 years ago now bring us together in celebration. Japanese Catholics touched by the traditions and faith of other country's Churches have learned a richer Catholic spirituality and have experienced the universality of the Church. The fellowship and unity aimed at in creating a multinational community does not mean assimilation that causes migrants to forget their cultural identities. Rather, local believers through exchanges and becoming acquainted with the roots of each other's faith as gifts of God will feel the energy of the wonderful faith that migrants possess. (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants, "The love of Christ toward migrants" 2, 42, 43, 62, 80, 89).

## **9. To everyone who is of foreign nationality**

If you are a foreign national in the Kyoto Diocese, you are a missionary in a special sense because you have brought your Catholic faith to Japan. Unlike your homeland, Japan's culture has no Christian roots, and so you may find difficulty in living your faith. In addition, modern society will try to eliminate the teachings of God and the Church more and more from your personal and community life. Do not be tempted to lose your sense of faith or your consciousness as a member of the Church in such an environment. In meeting you, we in the Kyoto Diocese are learning once again the importance of living in daily life the joy and underlying power that faith brings to our lives and the faith we have acquired. Your care for your families, your family devotions, your communicating the faith to your children, your prayers for God's protection in every aspect of your life, and your way of living that does not forget gratitude and hope are models for us all. I fully understand the desire for everyone to receive spiritual pastoral care and training more frequently in their mother tongue, but please value fellowship with the local Church and cooperate in creating a richer Church community.

Mary, who experienced even exile in her journey of faith, is at our side as a mother in every moment of our own journey. May the Lord Jesus Christ with his mother Mary wipe away their tears and give healing to all those who have left their homeland and had to part from their loved ones. Let us pray that God will give hope to the hearts of people journeying around the world. And let us pray for all those who walk with and serve migrants and refugees.



+ Paul Yoshinao Otsuka  
Bishop of Kyoto

# “Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders”

## Revised Edition

On the occasion of reprinting “Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders”

The Episcopal Commission for Social Issues of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan announced the message “Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders” on November 5, 1992, and on January 20, 1993, published it as a booklet addressed to the whole church in Japan.

In those days, immigrants had been increasing and many foreign Catholics had come to the church. Responding to these changes, Mass began to be celebrated in foreign languages. Japanese believers started feeling confused as they attempted to accept different cultures, while they were also delighted at an increasing number of people who shared the same faith. In small local churches where more foreign people participated in Mass than Japanese, some people felt confused about the churches consisting mostly of foreigners.

Under these circumstances, Japanese churches accepted migrants, refugees and people on the move as their friends, and responded to the call to accompany them and hear their voices.

In the twenty years since, the situation of foreigners has changed. After the financial crises precipitated by the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, a lot of foreign workers were forced to return home. However, more than in the past, many people were settled in Japan in international marriages and a new generation of migrants has arisen.

Even though services provided at the level of local government have improved, generally things have been not changed or have even gotten worse. Antiforeign hate speech, prejudice toward immigrants and measures against refugees by the government are all worsening.

The Episcopal Commission for Social Issues sees a need to reprint this booklet so that people who belong to the Japanese church will be able to think about how multicultural and multinational communities should be.

The Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move has verified the contents and revised some parts where circumstances have changed since the first printing.

We invite you to share and think about the progress that has or has not been already realized, and things that have become new challenges in recent years, comparing the present situation and the past.

We hope this booklet will be able to lead you to work for the community.

September 25, 2016  
Sueo Hamaguchi, Bishop of Oita, Chairman  
The Episcopal Commission for Social Issues of the  
Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan



## **“Toward the Kingdom of God beyond Borders” Revised Edition**

The Episcopal Commission for Social Issues of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

The church has a mission to embrace and accept people on the move and to serve them. We bishops have reaffirmed this responsibility and have decided to issue this message.

### **Immigration, the journey of encounter**

1 “Immigration” is part of the history of salvation, a social phenomenon deeply involved with the growth of the Kingdom of God. Father Abraham left his homeland and started out for the land of Canaan by God’s command. Thus, the People of Israel was prepared as a homeland for the Savior. And the journey of people of God has continued and will continue until the Kingdom of God comes to complete the salvation of the world.

When Japan was not economically affluent, approximately a million people moved to North and South America and Asian countries. Currently the estimated number of descendants of people of Japanese ancestry has reached 3.5 million (cf. the website of the Association of Nikkei & Japanese Abroad, as of 2014), and there are quite a number of Catholics among these people. In recent years, the number of people of different nationalities visiting Japan which has grown rich is rapidly increasing.

There are approximately 2.3 million foreign residents in Japan, including illegal immigrants (cf. the website of Ministry of Justice). Among these people, it is estimated that there are more than 410,000 Catholics who come to the church.

Today, Japanese churches continuously encounter foreign residents in Japan, people in need of help, protection, and support for various reasons. In particular:

- 1 Immigrants and their families
- 2 Spouses in international marriages
- 3 Children who have foreign roots
- 4 Technical intern trainees
- 5 International students
- 6 People from South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan and China who came to work in Japan or who were brought in Japan against their will in the colonial past before and during the war, and their descendants
- 7 Refugees
- 8 Seafarers from different countries
- 9 Victims of human trafficking
- 10 Foreigners who are jailed or in immigration detention centers

By encountering those people, praying with them and trying to share our lives in the church or society, we believe that evangelical change will be brought to Japanese churches and society.

## **Main problems in encounter**

2 In Japanese society, we see much discrimination and anti-foreign attitudes arising from a lack of understanding about the differences in race, gender, language, culture, lifestyle, religion etc. In the church, more understanding has developed along with the increasing number of foreign Catholics, but the attitudes described above remain.

As immigrants and their families have no social basis in Japan and their life is unstable, their place in society, workplace and community is tenuous. Immigrants are for the most part not protected by Japanese law, and so they are placed in a vulnerable position and they sometimes suffer inhumane treatment.

The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act provides 27 qualifications for foreign residents in Japan. The Act also strictly controls the activities permitted due to resident status.

Over the past 30 years, people who have settled in Japan in international marriages temporarily or permanently have increased, but their rights are not guaranteed equally with those of Japanese people.

Under these circumstances, many problems are occurring. For example, the exploitation of technical intern trainees to compensate for Japan's labor shortage, isolation of women in international marriages, damage from domestic and other violence, alienation of children who have foreign roots, inhumane treatment for illegal immigrants at detention centers, the lack of certification of refugee status and so on. The spread of antiforeignism as represented by hate speech is also a major social problem.

## **Beyond differences, the witness of universality of the church**

3 We Christian are invited to be truly one in Christ.

We must not forget that for the Japanese church, now is the perfect time for that. The church is a community in which people of all generations should embrace each other's differences by going beyond region, lifestyle or culture. Even the experience of friction and pain arising from each other's difference becomes an opportunity for conversion as a community. By engagement with conversion, the Christian community can become rich in diversity.

Making efforts to live with difference does not force others to adopt one's own lifestyle, but leads to a new shared society and culture.

For the church, all are brothers and sisters in Christ. The Japanese church is not only for Japanese people. We can bear witness to the universality of the church by not only welcoming migrants, refugees and people on the move but by making efforts to build one community that transcends our various differences.

We can bear witness to the Kingdom of God that builds up new levels of humanity as we encounter people from different countries.

Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians is precisely a message to us now:

“It is through faith that all of you are God’s children in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).

We hope that people visiting the church and all people involved with the church will be able to find and share joy and happiness in encountering Christ in others.

### **The Challenge for the Japanese church**

4 The fact that many people have left their families and homelands and moved to Japan and now live in a different culture is “a sign of the times” which continues to change even now. This “sign of the times” is a challenge for the Japanese church which is moving toward the Kingdom of God beyond borders, and presents possibilities for a new evangelization.

Actually, the good relations that lay people, Religious and clergy have with immigrants have drawn positive attention in various parts of Japan. However, a response to “the signs of the times” requires involvement not only by some believers, but challenges the whole Japanese church to such involvement every day. Major examples are as follows:

#### **a) Dealing with civic movements and government:**

1 Take initiatives and act for the protection of human rights against violations of human rights which occur at a high level. Work together on such problems as medical care, work injuries, unfair dismissal, unpaid wages, job and home searches, granting special permission for residence to overstayers, use of immigration detention centers, deportation for overstaying, domestic violence in international marriages, education for children who have foreign roots and others.

2 Examine necessary assistance to families in international marriages, hearing their opinions. Organize orientation meetings or seminars on the knowledge of the law, Japanese lifestyle, food and language.

3 Provide emergency shelter in cooperation with citizens’ groups.

4 Work with people whose human rights are ignored, resulting in their being deemed illegal, trying to secure a change in their status under the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.

5 Work on revising the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act to make it one based on fundamental human rights. At the same time, work on enacting fundamental laws such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and a Basic Law for Foreign Residents to respect foreigners’ human rights, and eliminate discrimination and anti-foreign prejudice.

6 Catholics should learn about the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1990, and participate in civic movements that work toward

ratification of it in Japan.

7 Have more understanding of the economical and political background of relationships among sending countries, receiving countries, and transit countries, as well as other issues in solidarity.

### **b) Churches' own challenges**

1 Make further efforts so that Japanese churches will be able to bear witness as multinational and multicultural communities.

2 Each diocese and parish should make efforts to realize the following measures in cooperation with the Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (J-CaRM):

- Develop communities in which foreign Catholics will be able to take part in the liturgy or Sacraments actively, respecting their ways of expressing Christian faith. Prepare liturgical texts in foreign languages, plan necessary workshops for faith formation.

- Encourage better communication among members of parishes regardless of nationality. As we all have the responsibility to build community together, people to be able to become full members of any parish.

- Consider providing more interpretation and translation for foreign Catholics so that they are not cut off from information.

- Mass needs to be celebrated in foreign languages, so that everyone can participate in their native language.

Mass in foreign languages should be organized by parishes voluntarily, but without being something separate from the parish community.

- Give consideration to everyone, and to foreign Catholics in particular, to be able to participate in the meetings or the activities in the church actively.

- It is desirable that each diocese to provide a consultation service offering practical support.

- As church, we will build a system and a network to deal with various problems that foreigners face.

Let us carry out the terms outlined above, doing what can be done positively in different places, including seminaries and centers for formation of laity, Religious and priests.

May God, the Father of all humanity bless you all, and may God pour his love on our efforts toward the Kingdom of God beyond borders.

September 25, 2016  
The Episcopal Commission for Social Issues  
of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan