

Abolish Nuclear Plants Immediately

~Facing The Tragedy of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant Disaster~

To all residents in Japan,

The accident in the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant triggered by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake contaminated the ocean and land by radiation, and tragically disrupted the daily life of an enormous number of people. Even now, almost one hundred thousand people are evacuated from the neighboring area of the nuclear plant, and numerous people are forced to live in fear and anxiety.

With regard to the pros and cons of nuclear plants, we, Japanese bishops, expressed in our message “Reverence for Life –A Message for the Twenty-First Century from the Catholic Bishops of Japan” as follows:

“It has provided a totally new source of energy for humanity, but as we can see in the destruction of human life in a moment in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the disaster at Chernobyl and the life-threatening criticality accident at Tokaimura, it also has the potential to pass huge problems on to future generations. To use it effectively, we need the wisdom to know our limits and exercise the greatest care. In order to avoid tragedy, we must develop safe alternative means of producing energy.”(1)

The “tragedy” in this message was brought about by nothing less than the accident in the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. This nuclear disaster wiped out the “safety myth”, which was created because people put too much trust in science and technology without having “the wisdom to know our limits”.

In the message “Reverence for Life”, we, Japanese bishops could not go so far as to urge the immediate abolishment of nuclear plants. However, after facing the tragic nuclear disaster in Fukushima, we regretted and reconsidered such attitude. And now, we would like to call for the immediate abolishment of all the power plants in Japan.

With regard to the immediate abolishment of nuclear plants, some people voice concerns about energy shortage. There are also various

challenges such as the reduction of carbon dioxide. 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.

Because of the prediction that a new disaster will occur due to another earthquake or tsunami, all the 54 nuclear plants in Japan are at risk of horrific accidents like the latest one. Therefore, in order to prevent human-generated calamities associated with natural disasters as much as possible, it is essential to eliminate nuclear plants.

Although nuclear plants have been supplying energy in the context of "peaceful use" to society until now, they have also released an enormous amount of radioactive waste such as plutonium. We are going to place the custodial responsibility of these dangerous wastes on future generations for centuries to come. We must consider this matter to be an ethical issue.

Nuclear power has been encouraged by national policies up to now. As a result, natural energy has fallen behind in development and popularity. We urge that the national policies be changed to place top priority on development and implementation of natural energy, which will also contribute to reducing carbon dioxide. On the other hand, it takes a long time and enormous labor to decommission a nuclear plant. Therefore, the decommissioning of reactors and the disposal of radioactive waste must be conducted with extreme caution.

Indeed, electricity is essential for our lives today. However, what is important is to amend our ways of general life by changing the lifestyles that excessively depend on electricity.

Japan has its culture, wisdom and tradition that have long co-existed with nature. Religions such as Shinto and Buddhism are also based on the same spirit. Christianity has the spirit of poverty as well. Therefore, Christians have an obligation to bear genuine witness to the Gospel especially through the ways of life expected by God; "simplicity of life,

the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice”. (2) We should choose anew a simple and plain lifestyle based on the spirit of the Gospel (3), in cases like saving electricity. We live in the hope that science and technology will develop and advance based on the same spirit. These attitudes will surely lead to a safer and more secure life without nuclear plants.

From Sendai
November 8, 2011
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

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- (1) *Reverence for Life –A Message for the Twenty-First Century from the Catholic Bishops of Japan* (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, 2001, p.104~p.105)
Another message on nuclear plants announced by the Catholic Church in Japan is “Petition on the Criticality Accident at the Uranium Conversion Facility, JCO Co. Ltd” (1999).
- (2) Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 76 (1975)
- (3) Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 486 d. New lifestyles (2004)