



23 February 2022

AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN  
TO THE HOLY SEE

**His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday (February 23<sup>rd</sup>)  
Message from H.E. Mr. OKADA Seiji, Ambassador of Japan to the Holy See**

Today, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito on his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. It is truly unfortunate that this year, as last year and the year before, I have to postpone the Emperor's Birthday reception due to Covid-19 circumstances. For that reason, I would like to celebrate this occasion by sharing this message instead. His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, with Her Majesty the Empress Masako, despite the pandemic, continued to consistently express his affection to the Japanese citizens by participating online to many events. Furthermore, he made every efforts to strengthen and deepen the friendly relations between Japan and all the foreign countries.

2022 is a special year for Japan, because it marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relations with Holy See. However, we should not forget that there is a much longer history of relations that goes back to Francis Xavier, the first missionary to arrive in Japan in 1549 and to introduce the high values and the rich culture of the Catholic Church to the Japanese. Few decades later, the first mission from Japan, the Tenshō Mission, was received in audience by Pope Gregory XIII in 1585 and the Keichō Mission to Europe crossed the globe to visit Pope Paul V in 1615. Although a few centuries have passed by, those events set the stage for the more recent history of friendly relations between Japan and the Holy See and were even mentioned by Pope Pius XII when he received Mr. Harada, the first official envoy with the rank of Ambassador from Japan, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942, eighty years ago.

In 2019 His Holiness Pope Francis visited Japan and sent a strong message against nuclear war. His visit also prompted in the general public new interest in Pope's activities and reaffirmed the friendship between the Holy See and Japan. This friendship is a strong foundation for a sincere and constructive dialogue that I, as the Ambassador of Japan, feel obliged and have the honor to further promote. Despite the difficulties and limitations due to circumstances of Covid-19, the Embassy is working to organize conferences and events to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations, so please check the Embassy's website and Facebook page for updates.

Finally, I would like to offer again my wishes for His Majesty's continued good health, and the prosperity of the Imperial Family, as well as the good health of everyone else reading this message.

OKADA Seiji  
Ambassador of Japan to the Holy See