

# Pope visit special

## Anti-nuclear message at heart of Japan trip

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Pope Francis is visiting Japan from Saturday to Tuesday, exciting all Catholics in this country and raising expectations of all people, including non-Catholics, who hope the pope spreads his message of ending the threat of nuclear weapons from the only nation to have had atomic bombs dropped on it, killing 220,000 people.

As the first pontiff in nearly four decades to travel to Japan since Pope John Paul II came to Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1981, Francis is also visiting the three cities. He will be holding Mass in Nagasaki on Sunday and another in Tokyo on Monday.

On Nov. 18, the pope provided a video message for Japan on YouTube's Vatican News channel, explaining the theme of his visit "Protect All Life."

"This strong instinct that resonates in our heart, to defend the value and dignity of all human persons, it takes a special importance

in front of the threats to the peaceful coexistence that in the present moment the world has to face, especially the armed conflicts," he said in Spanish. "Your country knows very well the sufferings caused by wars. Together with you, I pray that the destructive power of nuclear weapons is never used again in human history. It is immoral to use nuclear weapons."

The visit of the 82-year-old pope was anticipated by Catholics in Japan, wrote Mitsunori Takami, archbishop of Nagasaki and president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan (CBCJ), on the Pope in Japan 2019 website organized by CBCJ.

"I hope you share my joy at the long-awaited news of Pope Francis' visit to Japan," Takami wrote, adding he and then-CBCJ President and former Archbishop of Tokyo Takeo Okada went to the Vatican in 2014 to ask for Francis' visit to Japan and they have petitioned for it by sending several letters to the Vatican. "In general audiences, the pope mentioned the Christian age of Japan and issued a photograph of a boy with the corpse of his baby brother following the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. I suppose these pope's words and actions implied his wish for this visit."

In 2017, the world's first pope from Latin America printed cards with the photo to hand out, along with the words "The fruit of

war." The 1945 photo, captured by American photographer Joe O'Donnell, showed the boy standing straight while waiting for his turn at a cremation site.

Takami also wrote he is grateful for the visit, despite Japan's small Christian population.

While the number of Catholics in Japan in 2018 was around 440,000, about 0.35 percent of the nation's population according to CBCJ, the Argentine pontiff has voiced a desire to visit Japan as he had hoped to come to Japan as a missionary after he was ordained in 1969.

The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have also reportedly asked the pope to visit to encourage the survivors of the atomic bombings and to appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On Sunday, Francis is scheduled to visit both cities, flying from Tokyo in the early morning, according to Christian Today.

In Nagasaki, the pope will go to Hypocenter Park, located almost directly below where the atomic bomb exploded in 1945, and give his message for abolishing nuclear weapons. He will then visit the 26 Martyrs Museum and Monument in Nagasaki at the site where 26 Christians were killed in 1597 and hold Mass at Nagasaki Baseball Stadium.

Leaving Nagasaki, the pontiff will fly to

Hiroshima and hold a Gathering for Peace at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park where Pope John Paul II announced his appeal for abolishing nuclear weapons 38 years ago. Pope Francis will also deliver his speech on the nuclear issue at the gathering in Hiroshima, joined by victims of the atomic bombing and Catholics, according to the Christian Today report.

After returning to Tokyo, the pope on Monday will meet victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that triggered the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. He will also meet Emperor Naruhito and hold Mass at Tokyo Dome, as well as meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The Vatican said the pope has invited an 83-year-old Japanese man whose death sentence has been suspended to the Mass, according to Kyodo News. The Roman Catholic Church announced in August 2018 a change in its catechism to state that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

In the video message, Francis expressed his desire shared by people to promote and strengthen the protection of all life.

"I trust that my visit encourages you along the path of mutual respect and the path of encounter that leads to a firm and lasting peace that never goes back."




Pope Francis waves before embarking on a one-week trip to Thailand and Japan at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport near Rome on Nov. 19. This is the 82-year-old's fourth pilgrimage to Asia.

VATICAN MEDIA / AFP



In an effort to convey the necessity of peace, Pope Francis has had cards printed and issued with a photo of a young boy in Nagasaki carrying the body of his brother taken shortly after the atomic bombing of the city in 1945. VATICAN CITY / VIA KYODO

Heartiest Welcome to  
Pope Francis on his Official Visit to Japan



Embassy of  
the Republic of Cameroon in Japan

H.E. Pierre Ndzengue  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

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Pope Francis on his Official Visit to Japan



Embassy of  
the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste



Embassy of  
the Republic of the Philippines

On behalf of all Filipinos,  
I send most joyous greetings to  
His Holiness Pope Francis, and  
fervently pray for his successful mission of  
peace in this historic visit to Japan.



H.E. Jose C. Laurel V  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary