



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 27 November 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

Yesterday I returned from an [Apostolic Journey to Thailand and Japan](#), a gift for which I am very grateful to the Lord. I wish to renew my gratitude to the Authorities and to the Bishops of these two countries who invited me and welcomed me with great attention, and above all, to thank the people of Thailand and of Japan: May God bless them with an abundance of prosperity and peace.

Thailand is an ancient kingdom that has achieved a high level of modernization. Meeting *the King, the Prime Minister and the other Authorities*, I paid tribute to the rich spiritual and cultural tradition of the Thai people, the people with the “beautiful smile”. The people down there smile. I encouraged a commitment to harmony among the various members of the nation, as well as to an economic development that is beneficial to everyone and to the healing of the wounds of exploitation, especially those of women and minors. The Buddhist religion is an integral part of the history and life of this people; thus I visited the [Supreme Buddhist Patriarch](#), continuing on the path of reciprocal admiration begun by my Predecessors, so that compassion and fraternity may grow throughout the world. In this sense, the [ecumenical and interreligious encounter](#) which took place at the country’s top university was very significant.

The witness of the Church in Thailand also takes place through charitable works for the sick and the least. Among them [Saint Louis Hospital](#) excels. I visited it, encouraging the healthcare staff and meeting some patients. I then dedicated specific moments [to priests and consecrated people](#), to [bishops](#) and also to my *Jesuit* confreres. In Bangkok, I celebrated Mass with all the *People of God* at the [National Stadium](#) and then with *young people in the Cathedral*. There we experienced that there are also the faces and voices of Thai people in the new family formed by Jesus Christ.

I then travelled to Japan. On my arrival at the Nunciature in Tokyo, I was received by the country’s [Bishops](#) with whom I immediately shared the challenge of being Shepherds of a very small Church that however bears the living water, the Gospel of Jesus.

“*Protect all life*” was the motto of my visit to Japan, a nation which bears the mark of the wounds of the atomic bombing and is an example of the fundamental right to life and to peace for the entire world. In *Nagasaki and Hiroshima* I paused in prayer; I met some survivors and relatives of victims, and I renewed my firm condemnation of nuclear weapons and the hypocrisy of talking about peace while building and selling weaponry. After that tragedy, Japan showed an extraordinary ability to fight for life: and it did so again recently, following the 2011 *triple disaster*: earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant accident.

In order to protect life, one must love it, and today’s serious threat in more developed countries is the loss of the meaning of life.

The first victims of the emptiness of the meaning of life are *young people*. Hence an encounter in Tokyo was dedicated to them. I listened to their questions and their dreams. I encouraged them to join to oppose any form of bullying and to overcome fear and closure by opening up to God’s love in prayer and in service to others. I met more young people at Sophia University, along with the academic community. This university — like all Catholic schools — is much appreciated in Japan.

In Tokyo I had the opportunity to visit Emperor Naruhito to whom I once more express my gratitude. I also met the country’s Authorities with the Diplomatic Corps. I expressed my wishes for a culture of encounter and dialogue, marked by wisdom and broad outlook. Remaining faithful to its religious and moral values and open to the Gospel message, Japan can be a leading nation for a more just and peaceful world and for harmony between mankind and the environment.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us entrust the people of Thailand and Japan to God’s kindness and providence. Thank you.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from England, Australia, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

I would like to extend my greeting and closeness to the dear people of Albania who have suffered greatly these days. Albania was the first European country that I chose to visit. I am close to the victims. I pray for the deceased, the injured and their families. May the Lord bless this people whom I greatly love.

Last Saturday Father Donizetti Tavares de Lima, a pastor who was entirely dedicated to his people, a witness to Gospel charity and a courageous protector of the poor, was proclaimed Blessed in Tambaú, Brazil. May priests, consecrated people but also lay people make Blessed

Donizetti's testimony of faith their own, with consistent life choices inspired by the Gospel. A round of applause for the newly Blessed!

Lastly, I greet *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. This Sunday marks the beginning of the liturgical time of Advent. I will go to Greccio to pray in the place where Saint Francis of Assisi made his first nativity scene, and to send all believers a letter so they may understand the meaning of the nativity scene. I wish for you all that Advent, the [time of] waiting for the Lord, may fill your hearts with hope and find you joyful in service to the neediest. Thank you.