

To: Priests and Faithful of the Kyoto Diocese Collaborative Missionary Pastoral Blocks

† Bishop Paul Otsuka Yoshinao, Bishop of Kyoto

2026 Bishop's New Year Pastoral Letter – Statement of Purpose

Pope Leo XIV: A Shepherd Who Builds Bridges of Hope and Unity

—*Echoes of the Pope's Vision in the Missionary Pastoral Life of the Kyoto Diocese*—

Guided by the spiritual gaze of Pope Leo XIV, we in the Kyoto Diocese hope to make 2026 a year of renewed steps forward in hope, while reflecting on our journey of mission and pastoral care thus far.

■ Gratitude for the Graces of the Jubilee Year: “Pilgrims of Hope”

Let us first offer heartfelt thanks for the many graces received during the Jubilee Year of 2025. Through prayer and reconciliation, solidarity and service, we have walked with the desire to “become pilgrims of hope with all people.” Whom were you able to share hope with this past year? Did you listen to the voices of your neighbors, accompany those in difficulty, and reflect God’s love in the small acts of daily life? Looking back, there may have been moments when we could not respond fully. Precisely because of this, let us begin anew—here and now. Together with all whom we encounter, let us share God’s gaze and walk the path of hope.

■ The Gaze of Pope Leo XIV

The year 2025 also marked a significant transition for the Church, as the baton was passed from Pope Francis to Pope Leo XIV. We offer deep gratitude to Pope Francis, who embodied the Gospel spirit of “a Church that goes forth” and “a Church that heals wounds.” This gaze has been lovingly and powerfully inherited by Pope Leo XIV, who continues to illuminate our path. The new pope speaks boldly of a vision centered on “hope,” “unity,” and “a Church that builds bridges.” Having served in mission in Peru, Pope Leo XIV has witnessed how people of diverse cultures and ethnicities are united through the Gospel. He firmly believes that the Church is “God’s family,” welcoming all people.

■ The Journey of the Kyoto Diocese

The Kyoto Diocese will celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2027, with preparations beginning in June 2026. Toward this milestone, our diocese has been gradually embodying the vision of “a Church that walks together,” in response to the call of the popes. Now, cherishing multicultural coexistence and “spiritual conversation,” each of us is invited to become a “pilgrim bearing hope.” Through prayer and service, sharing and listening, let us spread the light of the Gospel throughout our communities.

For details on the 2026 parish bishop visits, joint Confirmation Masses in each district/block, and other events, please refer to the Kyoto Diocese website under “Bishop’s Schedule.”