

## Lenten Love Collection

Since becoming pope in 2013, Pope Francis has stressed the importance of making a world in which no one is excluded a reality.

At Mass with 50,000 people at the Tokyo Dome, he expressed our most important fundamental values, saying, “we are invited as a Christian community to protect all life and testify with wisdom and courage to a way of living marked by gratitude and compassion, generosity and simple listening, one capable of embracing and accepting life as it is.”

When meeting with survivors of the triple disaster in Tohoku, Pope Francis said, “Without basic resources such as food, clothing and shelter, it is not possible to live a worthy life and have the bare minimum needed to succeed in rebuilding.” But he added that, “No one ‘rebuilds’ by himself or herself; nobody can start over alone. We have to find a friendly and fraternal hand capable of helping to raise not just a city, but also our horizon and our hope.”

Pope Francis has emphasized that the Church is the place where God's love can be lived concretely. We have a mission to proclaim God's love. That love is directed toward those who are oppressed, faced with difficulties, or are in sorrow. But it is also directed at those who live with values opposed to those of God. That is because God does not exclude, but mercifully embraces all. The Church must always embrace everything in kindness that embodies the mercy of God rather than excluding anyone. To do that, we must be a Church community that supports one another and creates hope that enables us to live.

Lent is a time to show the Father's mercy to all people. It is a time to live in a way that concretely supports each other. It is a time to bring forth hope for life. The tradition of the Church calls on us during Lent to reexamine our faith from three points: prayer, abstinence, and works of love.

Our Lenten contribution is nothing less than a work of love from hearts offered as a sacrifice. I ask as part of your Lenten sacrifice this year that you cooperate in this year's Lenten collection, and take your part in the Church's work of love.

Your Lenten contribution is essential not only for emergency disaster relief, but also to assist those whose lives are in crisis here and abroad. You support long-term programs such as education for ethnic-minority children in developing countries and programs for women's independence. Caritas Japan's activities are supported by your donations throughout the year, and one-third of that annual support comes through this Lenten collection.

Please cooperate once again this year with the Lenten Collection and make this season a time to show in a practical way the love of God that embraces us all.

Ash Wednesday, February 26, 2020  
Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi  
President, Caritas Japan