



ASIA/JAPAN - "The Beatification of the 188 martyrs is an event of grace, the hidden treasure, an occasion to rediscover and bear witness to the faith." Interview with Archbishop Joseph Takami of Nagasaki

Nagasaki (Agenzia Fides) – Archbishop Joseph Takami has served as the President of the Executive Committee for the Beatification of the 188 Japanese martyrs. The Beatification will take place today, November 24, in Nagasaki. As Archbishop of Nagasaki, his Archdiocese will have the honor of hosting the event that will give new life and hope to the Church in Japan. Archbishop Takami defines the Beatification ceremony as “an event of authentic and infinite grace.” Agenzia Fides was able to ask him a few questions on the matter.

How is the local Church preparing for the coming event of the Martyrs' Beatifications?

The preparation of the Beatification is composed mainly on the study about the lives of the Martyrs, the assimilation of their faith and the practice of their ways of lives and it has been done by many ways: a Conference on the lives of the Martyrs by historians, pilgrimages to the lands of martyrdoms (17 different places in Japan), articles in Catholic magazines and journals, group studies and expositions about the lives of the Martyrs in parishes, a contest of pictures or compositions on the Martyrs, and so on.

What is the deep meaning of the Beatification for the Church in Japan? What do you expect from it?

The Beatification makes the Church in Japan find the treasure buried in the history of the Christianity in Japan. That is to say, Peter Kibe and his 187 companions send us Christians, and also non-Christians, a message containing many things, such as following: persistence in the faith in God, who alone can save the humanity; keeping the liberty of religion which is one of fundamental human rights; non-violence in front of those who persecute and attack with violence is necessary for making peace.

We expect that the Beatification for the Christians of Japan will be an occasion for rediscovering the importance of the faith and of bearing testimony to the love of God manifested through Jesus Christ and the Martyrs.

Is there any attention in the public opinion, in the civil authorities, among the non-Christians?

At least in Nagasaki, almost all of the Journals and the TV companies have manifested their deep interests in the Beatifications: they have requested interviews many times from me and from others - for example, from historians. The Prefecture of Nagasaki is also holding an exhibition on the history of the Christianity in Japan in the Museum of History and Culture of Nagasaki, borrowing several pictures and many historical objects from the Vatican Museums.

Will the Beatification bear fruits for the evangelization of Japan?

The mass media, which have awoken interest in the martyrdom, the Beatification, the Blessed and so on, in a sense help us to do evangelize people in Japan. The Beatification has made us, as Christians, reflect on the meaning of the lives of the Martyrs and their testimonies in the context of the contemporary world and to stimulate us to do more efforts for the evangelization of ourselves and other people as well. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/11/2008)