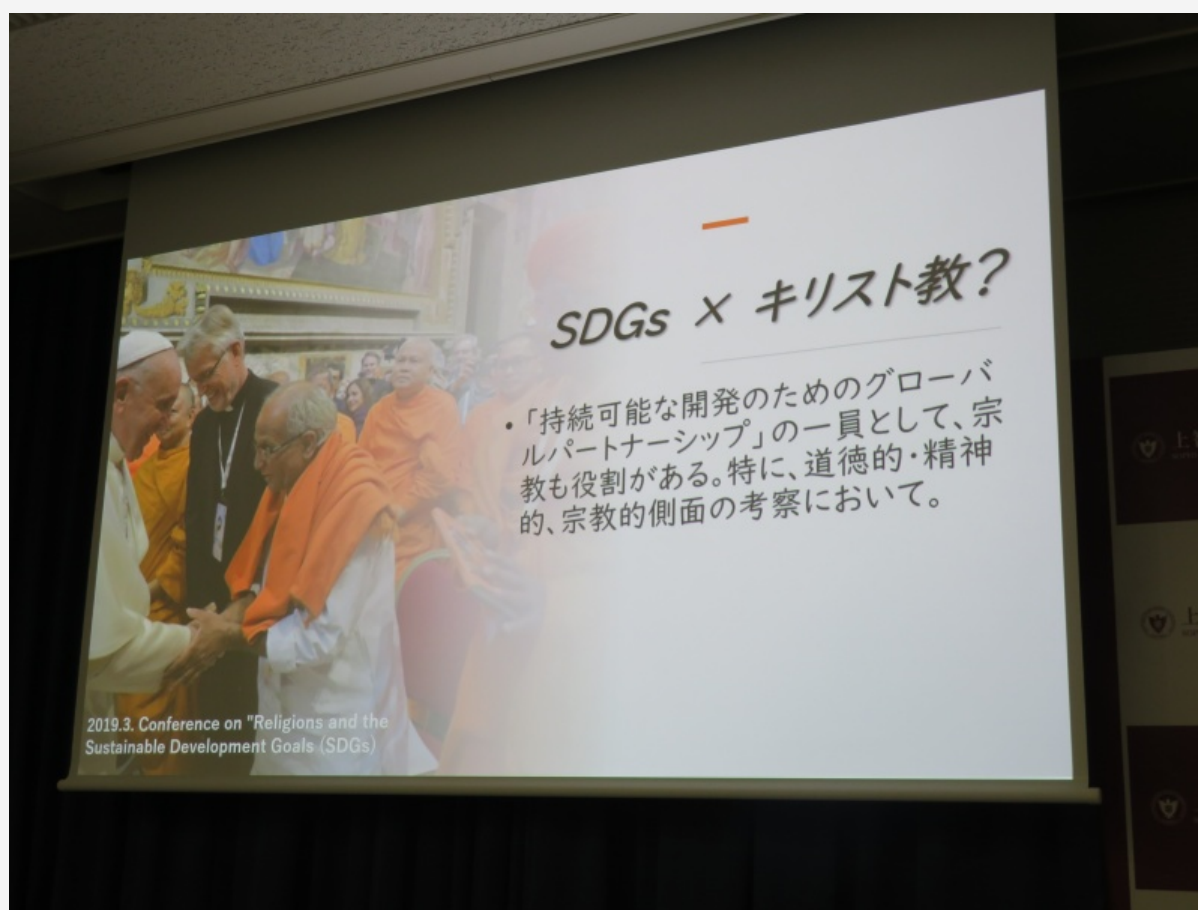


Global

## Special Symposium "Christianity and SDGs" at Sophia University

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### Special Symposium "Christianity and SDGs" at Sophia University



The symposium "**Christianity and SDGs**" was held on November 22, 2019 in the International Conference Hall at Sophia University in Tokyo.

To commemorate the visit of Pope Francis to Japan in November 2019, Sophia University hosted three special events to have a deep understanding about the meanings of the activities made by Pope Francis worldwide. This symposium, "**Christianity and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**" was organized as the last event in the series, one day before the arrival of Pope Francis to Japan.

Prior to this event, [the first lecture](#) was given on 19 September 2019 by Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., Editor in Chief of "La Civiltà Cattolica" who works closely with Pope Francis. On October 5, 2019, the symposium "[Christianity and Peace Building](#)" was held with Chancellor Tsutomu Sakuma, Professor Juan Hadiar of Faculty of Theology, Professor Sali Augustine of Faculty of Global Studies, Professor Daisaku Higashi of Center for Global Education and Discovery attending and also Archbishop Joseph Chennoth of Apostolic Nuncio to Japan was invited as a guest speaker.



Professor Daisaku Higashi of Center for Global Education and Discovery

### Opening Address by Professor Higashi

In the symposium on "Christianity and SDGs," with more than 150 audience, the opening address was given by Professor Higashi who planned and organized the entire series of those lecture and symposiums. Professor Higashi expressed that the works by Pope Francis, visiting conflicted regions worldwide to be with victims of the wars as well as to keep sending his messages to seek solutions for global challenges are truly meaningful. He also gave the purposes of three events explaining the first lecture was to understand the philosophy behind the Pope's those actions, the second symposium was extended to introducing his actual works on peacebuilding, and the final symposium was to mainly discuss his effort on working with poor as well as tackling the developmental issues.



Fr. John Joseph Puthenkalam, S.J, Professor at Faculty of Economics

### Lecture by Fr. John Joseph Puthenkalam, S.J, Professor at Faculty of Economics

Professor and a priest, Fr. Puthenkalam specializes on studies of SDGs, talked about the Pope's works from SDGs perspective. He addressed that SDGs clarifies what is crucial for us humans thus we can learn much as it indicates our future and the values for our humanity as a whole. On the developmental issues, he emphasized that our thoughts must be given to why the world is severely divided into those of developed and developing countries as the way currently is and also to well reflect our history to learn from our past successes and failures in order to create the better outcome. He described that the term such as "developing countries" was created between 50's and 60's after the World War II and also there are different ways to define those of developing countries as "newly industrialized countries" or "Heavily indebted poor countries" measured by decreasing order of economic growth or the size of the capital market by level of poverty and inequality or infant mortality rate.

He then introduced variety in the models for country's development and also the history of the development took place in our society as well as addressing the changes made as to the way of defining the development up to now. In explaining between 50's and 60's, development meant economic growth and material satisfaction however later the meaning of development diverse to offering of more choices for better lives of people, Professor Puthenkalam emphasized that the development which used be

mainly concerned with development of our economy shifted its purpose to development of human lives noting "we shall not exist for the economy but the economy shall exist for us".



More than 150 participants in the conference hall

Professor Puthenkalam also mentioned about how MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) created by UN in 2000 reached many of its goals in 15 years, initiated SDGs being adopted by the members of UN in 2015. He believes "universality", "integration" and "transformation" are the keys to achieving SDGs.

To conclude Professor Puthenkalam talked about SDGs in relation to Christianity. He introduced how Catholic social teaching reveals the Catholic doctrines on social matters and that as Catholic churches being included in SDGs partnership, he believes unifying those teachings and goals in SDGs are truly meaningful.



Sr. Yukiko Aoki

#### **Talk by Sr. Yukiko Aoki, Doctoral Program in Education Ph.D. Candidate**

Following Sr. Yukiko Aoki made a comment on Christianity and SDGs. By introducing the word by Gundhi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world.", she claimed that for the role religion can be played for SDGs is to promote people to make changes within inner-selves and to guide them to live differently instead of merely pointing out the problems on superficial level. Then she also mentioned the word of the Pope "to hear the cry of the poor and the planet" in Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' by Pope Francis in 2015 would be a good representation of a Christian version of SDGs.

In promotion of "Integral Human Development" initiated by the Holy See, she commented that it means to understanding the full aspect of SDGs including economy, environment, and social issues being part of human development as these plans are to evolve placing us humans in the center. It means that our living and effort must always be questioned of sincerity and consistency. She also made precaution that when we humans are said to be in the center, being self-centered has nothing to do with it but means to be inclusive and supportive of one and another.

Inspired by the message of the Holy Father, Sr. Aoki believes Christianity can play the significant role in SDGs for its ethical, spiritual and religious aspects and to promote dialogues for achieving the goals.



Q&A session

### Q&A session

At the end of the symposium many questions were gathered as to "What are the particular topics of Japan in relation for the human development?". In a response Professor Puthenkalam addressed "There are still people losing homes in Japan where it is known as a rich country and also the suicide being the serious issue. I believe human development can play important role to brining solutions to these issues."

The heated discussion continued until the closing while more than 150 attended in the heavy rain looking forward to the Pope's arrival to Japan next day.

The symposium was organized by Sophia Institute of Human Security and supported by Apostolic Nuncio to Japan, Sophia University Alumni Association and Embassy of Argentina in Japan.

[← Three special events that Sophia University hosted, prior to the visit of Pope Francis to Japan in 2019](#)

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