

Global

## Special Symposium "Christianity and UN Peace Building" at Sophia University

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### Special Symposium "Christianity and UN Peace Building" at Sophia University



A special symposium **"Christianity and UN Peace Building"** was held in International Conference Hall at Sophia University on Oct 5, 2019, organized by Sophia Institute of Human Security, and supported by Japan Jesuit Province, Embassy of Argentina in Japan, and Sophia University Alumni Association. This symposium was one of the three special events, prior to the visit of Pope Francis to Japan in November 2019 to understand the Pope's commitment on peacebuilding and the impact of his action. (This symposium was also a part of "Sophia UN weeks" in 2019.)

In the symposium, the lectures were given by Fr. Juan Haidar, S.J., Professor in Faculty of Theology who received direct teaching from the Pope during his years in seminary in Buenos Aires; Fr. Sali Augustine, S.J., Professor in Faculty of Global Studies who is specializing on issues on religions and conflicts; and Dr. Daisaku Higashi, Professor at Center for Global Education and Discovery, who has been conducting field researches on peacebuilding on numerous conflicted areas, including South Sudan, Syria and Iraq.



Fr. Tsutomu Sakuma, S.J., Chancellor of Sophia School Corporation

### Opening Address by Fr. Tsutomu Sakuma, S.J., Chancellor of Sophia School Corporation

In the opening address, Chancellor Tsutomu Sakuma described, in English the Pope is interpreted "roman pontiff" and "pontifex maximus" in Latin. "Maximus" being "the top" and "Ponti-fex" meaning someone who builds the bridge, this title shows that one of important responsibilities of the Pope is to navigate peacebuilding between conflicting parties to regain the justice and the order. He hoped this symposium promotes the understanding of important missions of the Pope on peacebuilding worldwide.



Fr. Sanji Yamaoka S.J., Executive assistant to the Jesuit Provincial of Japan

### Greeting by Fr. Sanji Yamaoka, S. J.

Following address was made by Fr. Sanji Yamaoka S.J., Executive assistant to the Jesuit Provincial of Japan. Fr. Yamaoka mentioned that the Pope frequently encourages people to visit Africa as the Pope himself had visited there four times. In his own experience visiting Africa, Fr. Yamaoka shared his impression of African youth being fluent in foreign languages and their communication skills can contribute to a great deal not only for our country but for the rest of the world. He also hopes that youth of Africa will be able to overcome current issues by taking parts in building nations with the peace and also for them to advocate peacebuilding worldwide.



Fr. Juan Haidar, S.J., Professor in Faculty of Theology

### The Lecture by Professor Juan Haidar

The first lecture was given by Professor Juan Haidar who received teachings from Pope Francis during his time at the seminary in Buenos Aires. He shared his experience with the Pope introducing the root of the Pope's belief on peacebuilding. The civil war taken place in Argentina for seven years from 1976 greatly impacted the Pope as young Provincial serving at Society of Jesus Province there facing a disastrous circumstance. Beliefs of the Pope had never changed ever since based on his four principles being: "the reality rules over mere ideas", "the unity rules over the conflict", "inclusivity rules over small groups" and "time means more than place".

Especially with his principle "the reality rules over mere ideas", Professor Haidar told how the Pope refrains himself from being involved in promotion of ideology or political instigation instead always thinks of the ways of bringing true help for those in need. As to "the unity rules over the conflict", the Pope points out people's "fear" for others had become bases of conflicts, claiming "too many are misled by what is called fears". And as to "time means more than place", the Pope believes in orders to reach the peace, existing values must be changed since God also need time and he also take risks for helping others. If the Pope was ever to be criticized, those with criticisms may be blind of the necessary "risk" mentioned here.



Fr. Sali Augustine, S.J., Professor in Faculty of Global Studies

### The Lecture by Professor Sali Augustine

In the lecture given by Professor Sali Augustine, based on his studies on religions and conflicts, he discussed of the Pope's tireless effort on Peacebuilding including his work in South Sudan. Professor Augustine emphasized that while such efforts by the Pope earning both praises and criticisms, Pope Francis is only standing by the principles of Second Vatican Council. Professor Augustine explained that the Pope's political activities (as the 'Political Pope') are based upon two principles. 1) Calling for "inclusivity" in our modern society penetrated by "political chauvinism" or "exclusivity"; 2) Calling to protect peoples' rights based on "positive freedom" like in cases of protecting rights of gender minority as positive freedom, as well as calling to stop infringements of people's rights basing on "negative freedom", like in cases triggered by conflicts, persecutions, sexual violence.

In conclusion, he emphasized that the Pope's contributions made on peacebuilding seen in worldwide regions solely reflects

principles of "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" of Second Vatican Council. Then Professor Augustine spoke on behalf of Sophia University that as a catholic institution we promise to fully support the effort of the Pope who does not only stay within the church but opens its door to the world to seek for the reconciliation and the peace and continuously send the message of the Gospel for all.



Dr. Daisaku Higashi, Professor at Center for Global Education and Discovery

### The Lecture by Professor Daisaku Higashi

Then Professor Daisaku Higashi gave a lecture on peacebuilding of South Sudan and about the contribution made by the Pope, based on his field researches on peacebuilding worldwide. He first shared his activities in South Sudan when he visited there in March 2019; he was assigned by Japanese Foreign Minister to make intellectual contribution to South Sudan, including his lecture at University of Juba in South Sudan, as well as interviewing a vice president, many cabinet members, and oppositions in South Sudan. Then he introduced the video of the Pope Francis inviting President Kiir and Vice President Machar to Vatican as Pope Francis hosted the dialogue for reconciliation between them, kissing their feet in the end of the session. Professor Higashi expressed his hope that such a moving action by the Pope will become a turning point to bring the peace to their country where majority of citizens in South Sudan are Christians.

In order to end the military conflict of South Sudan, Professor Higashi emphasized that inclusion is the top priority; there are three major challenges in creating sustainable peace in South Sudan: 1) Regaining the trust between President Kiir and Vice President Machar for advancing reconciliation, 2) Unification of forces, 3) Transparency of their revenue for oil production.

In the end of his lecture with his great respect for the Pope's actions, he also believes that peacebuilding requires the support by many actors, including neighboring countries, donors, and international organizations. While the U.S and many European states have lost interest giving support for South Sudan, Japan can play a role in facilitating the dialogue between President Kiir and Vice President Machar, with its history and continuous commitment of supporting nation building of South Sudan, Professor Higashi concluded.



Minister Matias Babino of Embassy of Argentina in Japan and panelist members



## Discussion by Professor Hadier, Professor Augustine and Professor Higashi

After the lectures Q&A session was held and many questions were gathered as more than 130 people attended. During the session, Professor Higashi asked Professor Haidar, "In South Sudan the conflict is prolonging due President Kiir and Vice President Marchar being captured by the 'fear,' promoted by the distrust for each other. How can they overcome the fear in your thought?"

Professor Haidar responded, "If one side takes the risk of trusting others, the counterparty shall do the same. I believe the Pope is trying to be a model for this virtuous spiral. I think someone of only the good intention with the hope for the peace is truly powerful. The power of the good and the evil are not equal. In the end, the good wins."

And Professor Augustine reflected on his favorite word by Tun Channareth from Cambodia who visited Sophia University in 2002, "There are many mines planted in the heart of people such as envy, jealousy, hatred and gossips but at the same time many seeds for the flowers as well to bloom. The job of the education is to remove those mines and to water those seeds for blooming flowers."



His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Chennoth

## Closing Remarks by His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Chennoth

In his closing remarks, Archbishop Joseph Chennoth expressed that this symposium offered a great opportunity for meaningful discussions, and Sophia University was a perfect place to be with its commitment to promote the educational spirit "for others and with others". Then the word by the Pope for young people was introduced: "You should become the craft-men of building peace." Archbishop Chennoth emphasized that education is the key to bringing the peace for inner-selves, family, our neighbors, our community, and our society. Before ending the remarks, he shared the verse from the bible "God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love." (Romans 5:5) to conclude the entire symposium.



← Three special events that Sophia University hosted, prior to the visit of Pope Francis to Japan in 2019

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