

日本カトリック司教協議会  
CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF JAPAN



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On the Occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Blessed Peter To Rot

To all of you in Papua New Guinea,

On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Blessed Peter To Rot, I would like to convey a message of apology to all of you in Papua New Guinea from Japan, which is responsible for his death.

First of all, I would like to reflect on Blessed Peter To Rot's life for a while.

Since Oceania covers a vast area, it is difficult for the Catholic Church to proclaim the Gospel there. When Peter To Rot was young, missionaries were rarely seen in Oceania, so he started to study to become a catechist. He was a model student respecting the Sacraments, praying regularly, and working hard as a faithful.

After graduation, he was qualified as a catechist by his bishop, and started to work earnestly at once. He married Paula Ia Varpit, a young Catholic from a neighboring village, and lived an ideal family life.

During World War II, Japanese troops invaded Papua New Guinea, and imprisoned priests and the religious, whose number was already limited, in a concentration camp. He assumed responsibility as a catechist since there was no priest around, and devoted himself to pastoral services such as administering infant baptism and funerals, and assisting at marriages. Japanese troops even interfered in the Church's activities and destroyed church buildings. They even forbade some systems based on the Catholic teaching, especially monogamy, and forced people to return to polygamy.

However, Peter To Rot strongly insisted about his own marriage that the original meaning of marriage is being united by God, and it must be fulfilled only when married couple are united as one. He decisively refused to change this view so that he was arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed.

Japan is not a Christian country now and then. Catholics and Protestants in total account for only 0.09% of its population. Therefore the views on humanity and human life are totally different from those of Christian nations. The Japanese military during World War II did not share the Christian view on marriage at all. Putting aside the difference in religions and ideologies, it is true that Japan inflicted enormous damage from a humanitarian perspective on many nations including Papua New Guinea. Japan deprived Peter To Rot of his precious life by wielding inhumane power at will. I convey my heartfelt apology for such conducts on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the life of Blessed Peter To Rot. As a Japanese bishop, I would like to offer a Mass and prayers on the anniversary day.

+Leo Jun Ikenaga S.J.

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President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan