

# SHINMEIZAN

## *Centre of Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue*

### **CHRISTMAS 2025**

#### **Dear friends and supporters of Shinmeizan!**

As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of the Nativity of Christ, Christmas, we wish to share with you the joy and gratitude for the journey we have made together during this year, celebrated by the Catholic Church as a Holy Year or 'Jubilee Year'.

In the silence that surrounds us on this mountain, we have experienced the quiet coming of the Lord through the encounter with the many people who have come to visit us. With this letter we wish to share with you some of the events that have marked our activity this year both as a House of Prayer and as a Center for interreligious Dialogue.



#### **Welcoming people**

Also this year, 2025, Shinmeizan, as a 'House of Prayer' has welcomed numerous guests coming for an experience of silence, prayer, encounter and sharing. Starting with the first rising of the sun on New Year's day, followed by the monthly retreat on Jan. 9 (which this whole year has been on the topic of "pilgrimage", in accordance with the theme of the "Holy Year" of the Catholic Church: "Pilgrims of hope"), and by the retreat of the group from the parish of Tetori (Kumamoto), on January 13, concluding their "One hundred weeks-long study of the Bible".



The monthly retreats have reached the total number of 300, since they began in 1996, and were marked, this year, by the celebration of Baptism of Mr. Kanda Takashi (June 12) and of Mr. Nijima Kokichi (July 10).

Among the many guests who visited us this year, we wish to mention the 'Paradise' Group from Tokyo and Yokohama, which came twice to Shinmeizan for a three days retreat; the group of seven Priests from Italy, led by the Xaverian Father



Luciano Mazzocchi, all of them involved in interreligious dialogue in their respective dioceses (August 13-15); the groups coming from nearby Catholic Parishes: Arao, Tetori, Amakusa; and the guests who came from other Prefectures: like Fukuoka, Osaka, Oita and Okinawa, as well as the guests from other Countries: Korea, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy; among them especially the international and interreligious group that accompanied Archbishop Felix Machado (from India) composed of three Buddhist Monks, friends of the Archbishop and also of Shinmeizan: from



Germany, Tibet and... Japan! Among the guests from abroad, some stayed with us for several days, like Prof. Dohna Schlobitten, from the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome (March 18-24), Mr. Enrico Campo, from Italy (July 3-22); Prof. Olimpia Niglio, University of Pavia, Italy, (August 17-22).

Special guests have been also Ven. Shaku Choei and Ven Hara Onin (Nichiren Buddhism) on June 16-17; the Bishop of Hiroshima, His Exc. Mitsuru Shirahama (July 15) and the Superior General of the Xaverians, Fr. Fernando Garcia Rodriguez, accompanied by the General Consultor Franciscus

Sudarmanto and the Regional Superior Fr. Giovanni Paolo Succu (October 21-25), as well as the Xaverians Fr. Pio Pasini, Fr. Irvin Gutierrez, Fr. Renato Filippini; the group of young Xaverians recently arrived to Japan from Africa and from Mexico; and Sister Elena Conforto, General Councilor for the Xaverian Missionary Sisters of Mary (Xaverian Sisters) accompanied by the Delegate General for Japan Sr. Milka Nonini (April 22-24).



## Interreligious dialogue

Interreligious dialogue continues to be the main activity of Shinmeizan, through meeting and cooperation with people of other religious traditions, both at the local level and at the national as well as the international level.

**At a local level,** also this year Shinmeizan has led the Kumamoto Group for interreligious dialogue in visits and meetings to temples and institutions representing other religious traditions: the Choenji Temple of Kumamoto (Nichiren

institutions representing other religious traditions:



Buddhism) of Ven. Hara Onin; the Islamic Center of Kumamoto guided by Ven. Imam Mohammed Ouatik, and the Jokokuji Temple (Soto Zen Buddhism) of Ven. Nakayama Gisho, also in Kumamoto.

Like every year, Shinmeizan has attended the festive commemoration of the anniversary of the death of Shinran at the Sainenji Temple (Pure Land Buddhism) of Ven. Ide Satoshi in Imari (Pref. of Saga), on May 24, and the ceremony held at the Seimeizan Schweitzer temple of



Ven. Ryuji Furukawa in Tamana (Kumamoto Pref.) on the 50th anniversary of the unjust execution of Nishi Takeo (June 29). On June 9th, all the four members of the Community of Shinmeizan attended the solemn inauguration of the Choenji Temple of Ven. Hara Onin (Nichiren Buddhism) rebuilt after the great earthquake of Kumamoto of 2016, celebrated at the presence of more than one hundred Monks of the Nichiren School.



**At the national level,** Sr. Maria was invited to take part in a conference in Tokyo on April 3 called by an organization of Nichiren Buddhism, to present the famous "Deposition of Christ from the Cross" by Caravaggio being shown at the International EXPO of Osaka; on September 3, has taken part in a symposium organized at the same International EXPO of Osaka, with the participation, among other guests, of all the Catholic Bishops of Japan, speaking on "Religions on a common pilgrimage: in a dialogue of salvation" (ES 72); and, on August 4, also represented Shinmeizan at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual "Summit of Religions" held on Mount Hiei (Kyoto). Sr. Maria has also been requested, from September this year, to be a member of the newly constituted National Committee for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Bishops Conference of Japan.



On February 15<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Franco, Ven. Nishimura Eshin (Zen Buddhism) and Ven. Mitsuhashi Takeshi (an expert on Shintoism) have taken part (Fr. Franco *on line*) in a symposium organized in Osaka by Fr. Rocco Viviano, sx, responsible for interreligious dialogue of the Archdiocese of Osaka, exchanging each one's experiences of a lifelong practice of interreligious dialogue.

**At the international level,** Sr. Maria, as a Consultor to the Vatican Dicastery for interreligious dialogue, participated in the 8th Buddhist-Christian colloquium organized by the same Dicastery and held at Phnom Penh (Cambodia) on May 28-30, and in the meeting organized by the same Vatican Dicastery for interreligious dialogue on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican



Council, held in Rome on October 28-29, highlighted by the papal audience which gave Sr. Maria the chance of a personal encounter with Pope Leo 14<sup>th</sup>. Sr. Maria also represented Shinmeizan at the international interreligious meeting called by the Community of Saint Egidio, held this year in Rome on October 26-28.

As we offer our good wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all of you, dear friends and supporters of Shinmeizan, we would like to take this occasion to express to you our deep gratitude for having been with us also this year, as "pilgrims" on the path of dialogue, reconciliation and peace! In a time saddened by ongoing wars, tensions, and uncertainties, may the light and grace of Christmas shine on our path towards the new year and the future of the world. To all of you, your families and communities, our best wishes, with our prayer, for a new year brightened by the light of hope, mutual trust, and marked by a common effort toward peace and a more human world.



Fr. Claudio Codenotti sx, Director  
Fr. Pietro Sonoda Yoshiaki OFMConv,

Sr. Maria De Giorgi mmx, Assistant Director  
Fr. Franco Sottocornola sx.