

Message from the Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move—World Migration Day 2003

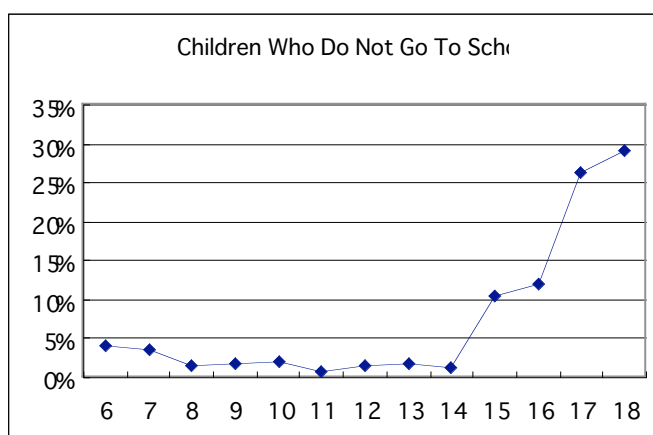
英語

委員長メッセージ

For The Protection Of Children's Rights

Last year The Commission For Migrants, Refugees and People On The Move of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, distributed a questionnaire to survey the number of multicultural children going to school. Thanks to your cooperation, we received about 1,300 responses from children. The graph below shows the results of the survey, by listing according to their age, the ratio of children of migrants from overseas that are not going to school.

Because this is a survey that was conducted only within the church, it is limited. It is estimated that within society as a whole, the ratio of children who are not attending school, would be much larger than what is listed in the graph. However, we have learned from the results of our limited survey, that the ratio of children who are not going to school in the 6-7 age group, is about 1 out of 25, in the 8-14 age group, it is about 1 out of 50, and in the 15-18 age group, it is about 1 out of 5. ①



It is written in Article 13 of the International Human Rights Agreement, that the signatory countries agree, that in regard to education, they “recognize the rights of all persons”. Also in Article 4 of the Japanese Basic Laws Of Education, it has been determined that “People have an obligation to insure that children in their care, receive the compulsory 9 years of standard education.” For example, even if there is no visa, or if the child is a citizen of another country living in Japan, we have the duty and obligation to insure that we protect the children’s “right to receive an education.” The above graph illustrates that in Japanese society today, the “right to receive an education,” is not being adequately guaranteed.

Even if someone is above 15 years of age, until they are 18 years old, they are still considered children, and therefore there is a necessity to guarantee that they also receive an education. Simply because children reach 15 years of age, they are also able to work. There is no compulsory educational requirement for them. Therefore it is a given that the ratio of children going to school at this age lowers significantly. Saying, “I came to Japan to work,” it seems that there are a large number of children in this age group who are working. However, I have heard reports that there are children who are not yet 15 years of age who

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are also working. It is thought that there is a serious question of this being a violation of Article 56 of the Standard Labor Laws and also an infringement of the rights of these children.

The reality has now been thrust before our eyes that we, the church, have not adequately protected the rights of children that have been entrusted to us from God. Can it not be said then, that in order to protect the rights of these children, and in order to guarantee that they receive a school education, and also that they come to learn to respect the culture of their parents' country, that we who are near to them, have a big role to exercise in finding concrete ways to support them? ②. In order to do this, first we have to turn our ears, to hear the voices and the cries of the children of our church. Through these concrete efforts to help our children, I am certain that we can also help to create a better Japanese society and a better church.

September 28, 2003 (Migrants, Refugees And People On The Move Day)
Catholic Commission For Migrants, Refugees And People On The Move
Chairperson – Tani Daiji

① For details please see, “The Cries Of Children Who Live Multi-Cultural Lives, “ (マルチカルチャーに生きる子どもたちの叫び) (published February 2003) Please contact the above commission and a copy of this booklet will be sent to you.

② For more information please see, The Treaty On Children's Rights, Article 29, Section 1, (c).