

Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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Pope Francis Meets the Survivors of Triple Disaster of Japan



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The survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 shared their experiences during the visit of the Pope Francis in Tokyo on November 25, 2019.

Toshiko Kato, a kindergarten teacher, whose town was swept away by tsunami, said that despite the disaster, she has received more than what she has lost. She spoke of the importance of teaching children the value of life.

Tokuun Tanaka, a Buddhist priest, whose temple is not far from the Fukushima nuclear power plant, said that honest and humble reflection, deep understanding, and decisions about what to be done are necessary to respond to disaster. He emphasized the importance of listening to the voice of the earth.

Matsuki Kamoshita was eight years old when he and his family were evacuated to Tokyo after the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. He said adults must tell the truth about the effects of radioactive contamination. He asked Pope Francis to join in prayer so that all of us can appreciate each other's pain and love one another. He humbly asked prayer from Pope Francis that people from all over the world would work to eliminate the threat of radiation exposure.

In response, Pope Francis thanked them for expressing the pain and sorrow and hoped for a better future. He spent a few moments of silence to pray for those who died during the triple disaster, for their families and for those

who are still missing. "May this prayer unite us and give us courage to look forward with hope." He also thanked those who responded generously to support victims, both with prayer and with material and financial aid.

After praising Japan for showing "how a people can unite in solidarity, patience, perseverance, and resilience", he invited his listeners "to move forward each day, little by little, to build a future based on solidarity and commitment to one another".

Reflecting especially on the accident at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Pope Francis said that in addition to scientific and medical concerns, "there is also the immense challenge of restoring the fabric of society". This, he said, raises the issue of concerns about the continued use of nuclear power; and he noted the Japanese Bishops call for the abolition of nuclear power plants.

In an age that "is tempted to make technological progress the measure of human progress", he said it is important to pause and reflect on "who we are... and who we want to be".

Once again thanking all those who "have tried to ease the burdens of the victims", the Pope expressed his hope that "that compassion might be the path that enables all to find hope, stability, and security for the future". And he prayed, "May God grant to all of you, and to your loved ones, His blessings of wisdom, strength, and peace"

PASTORAL DISTRICT NEWS

District #3 Kitakami Parish by Sato Ikuko

The parish of Kitakami was happy to welcome a group of 41 pilgrims from East Sendai parish on June 30. On the way to Kitakami, the pilgrims attended Mass at Mizusawa. After Mass, Fr. Takahashi Gave a Lecture on Goto Juan (a martyr). The pilgrims had lunch at a restaurant overlooking the Kitakami River. After lunch, the pilgrims moved to Kitakami Church. Sr. Kikuchi of the Daughters of St. Paul, led us into prayer. Then, Mrs. Wano Yumi, the artist who made the stained glass, gave a lecture about her creation. A group picture was taken. Although it was a cloudy day, the sun appeared before the pilgrims departed so that we could enjoy the beauty and mystery of the stained glass.



District #4 Senmaya Parish by Suehiro Junji

We held a meeting of the representatives of each parish of our pastoral district at the Kesenuma Church on September 7. Recently, many natural disasters have happened all over Japan, and Kesenuma was also seriously affected by the tsunami in 2011. Thanks to the help of many people we have overcome many challenges. The members of our community are aging and it becomes more difficult for them to climb the stairs. But on that day, we could make the sign of the cross and pray in front of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was a grace-filled

experienced for all of us. We are grateful to the diocese for giving us the chance to experience such good times. Thanks to the pastoral district system.

District #5 East Sendai Parish by Iwasaki Chiaki

Joint Confirmation Ceremony

On July 7, we celebrated the confirmation ceremony of 5 people. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Hiraga, assisted by Fr. Morita. During the party, after the Mass, everyone introduced themselves and expressed their commitment to continue the journey as believers.

District #7 Nodamachi Parish by Watanabe Yuko

On September 16 at the Matsukicho Parish, the biannual meeting of the members of Pastoral District #7 gathered. In the morning Fr. Horie Setsuro, a Jesuit Priest, gave a lecture on the theme "The Joy of the Gospel", based on the encyclical of Pope Francis. Fr. Horie was a missionary for 47 years in Brazil and East Timor. After lunch, there was a period of sharing. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Koda, assisted by Fr. Horie, Fr. Aime, Fr. Nosar, Fr. Itagaki and Fr. Kariura. During the Mass, 10 people received the sacrament of confirmation (3 from Matsukicho, 2 from Nodamachi, 1 from Aizu Wakamatsu, 3 from Koriyama, and 1 from Iwaki).

District #8 Iwaki Fukushima by Shiga Hideki

In order to implement peace and to understand the encyclical "Laudate Si", we organized a meeting at Iwaki Parish with members of our community from 6 countries (Vietnam, Philippines, Sri Lanka, China, Korea, and Japan). After the mass, we had a sharing and then we had an open air concert and a barbeque party. One week later, we evaluated the encounter and people expressed the desire to repeat experience. Thanks to Fr. Kariura who took the initiative of organizing this wonderful event.



A meeting at Iwaki Parish with members of our community from 6 countries

News Update from the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster Area in 2011

Minami Soma Caritas Base

Typhoon 19

by Nambara Mari

Although the premises of Caritas Minami Soma were not affected by the flood caused by Typhoon 19, but some parts of Minami Soma City were completely covered by water. The flooding of houses and the lack of running water created a situation of urgency.

After the earthquake of 2011, many mountains have been destroyed increasing the risk of flooding. Volunteers of Caritas Minami Soma provided relief to the local victims as well as the victims of Marumori Machi. We provided blue sheets, gloves, masks, drinking water, articles necessary for hygiene and sanitation, clothes, food, etc. we realized that there is a shortage of volunteers in Fukushima Prefecture.



Iwaki

Together with the Olive Tree by Takano Sachiko

After the 2011 earthquake, I was forced to evacuate my residence and had to move from shelter to shelter. Many friends and relatives got sick or passed away.

Every year, I went back to my house for a few hours wearing a protective suit (hazmat suit) each time I planted an olive tree. Now, in the garden, there are 4 thriving olive trees. In the Bible, at the time of flood, an olive tree became a symbol of hope for Noah. It has also become a source of hope for me.

Activities of the Sendai Diocese

Japan Catholic Buraku Discrimination Human Rights Committee 2019 Symposium

A symposium to eliminate segregation towards Burakumin was held on September 28 at Mototerakoji Church under the patronage of the national committee to eliminate segregation and the human rights commission of the Sendai Diocese. Based on the provision of the Japanese Constitution, we were reminded that it is strictly forbidden to discriminate on the basis of race, physical condition, health situation, or place of origin.

不妊手術 被害者の声
胎児の優生保護法はわたしたちの幸せ

9月28日(日) カトリック聖小路教会 大聖堂



Consequently, any policy of eugenics discriminating people must be banished.

Mototerakoji Parish Mass for Peace By Kimoto Noriko



The committee of justice and peace of Sendai Diocese organized a symposium during the week to promote peace on August 12 at Mototerakoji Church. The guest speaker was Bishop Wayne Berndt of Okinawa

Diocese. Bishop Wayne is working in collaboration with Bishop Katsuya of Sapporo, the bishop presiding the Justice and peace committee of the Japanese Bishop's Conference. Bishop Wayne related the sufferings of the people of Okinawa. It was a very good occasion for us to be more aware of all the injustices that the Okinawan people are still suffering from all kinds of exploitation and oppression.

2019 Conference of the Pastoral Council

On September 23, the Diocesan Pastoral Council of Sendai met for its annual gathering. The following topics were discussed:

- 1.The survey result on the extended evangelization program
- 2.Vocation
- 3.Report from each pastoral district.

The Diocesan Pastoral Assembly was postponed in order to have more time for preparation.

Sendai Diocese Help Desk for Foreigners

In 2004, the committee of human rights of the Sendai Diocese created the Help Desk, under the Pastoral Commission, to support the Foreigners in the Diocese. The Help Desk tries to meet the various needs of foreigners in

Profile of Three Priests of Sendai Diocese

Fr. Jose Ausencio Lopez, MG



I would recall my vocation to be a missionary in Japan in three stages; when I was in the primary school, high school, and first year theology.

As a child, I was so inspired by the missionary life of Francis Xavier in Japan that I told my father I wanted to enter priesthood. But, he was angry. Through constant persuasion my father allowed me to enter in the High School Seminary.

As a high school student at the seminary, I read the book of Pedro Arrupe, SJ “I lived the atomic bomb”. The way he narrated the horrifying effect of the bombing in Hiroshima that killed thousands of people have left a big impact in me. It dawned on me that Japan may have lost the war but it never lost the fight. I thought, aside from the discipline and determination of the Japanese people, there must be something in the spirit of these people that made them stand up and rebuild the nation and it’s people.

Right after ordination, I was sent to Rome for further study and taught theology at the seminary in Mexico for 6 years. Without any dialogue, because they know I love Japan, my superior assigned me to Sendai, Japan in 1976. It was my second assignment outside Mexico and the seminary.

When I came to Japan forty-three years ago, the issues and concerns of the parishioners were more on material needs because they were still recovering from the war. To respond to these needs, many congregations established hospitals, hospice, and orphanages.

At present, the needs Japanese people are changing. It is more of psychological, spiritual and moral issue. This is where I want to reach out to people. I want to show them the meaning of the word of the Gospel in their daily lives.

My hope for the parishioners is to become missionaries themselves that would reach out and relate to everyone especially to non-believers. My role as a missionary priest is like a pipe that connects the love of God to the people. This role is not exclusively for the priest but the parishioners as well. We have to promote and develop leaders in the parish.

Many foreigners are coming in the church. These foreigners are not only here to work. They have desires to contribute to the society and the church. It would be very enriching for the church if the foreigners and the Japanese will be sharing each other’s faith.

Fr. Shuto Masayoshi



I was baptized when I was 9 years old, together with 175 people in Yonekawa (Miyagi), in the hall of a school. When I was in Tokyo Major Seminary, I had the opportunity to visit India. I was impressed then by the daily witnessing of a religious. When I became a priest, I tried to celebrate Mass with the same spirituality of that Indian religious.

Thirty years ago, I was sent to Brazil as a missionary. During my stay in Brazil, two people influenced me.

In a small village where Mass was celebrated only a few times a year, a senior citizen entered the chapel, knelt down and prayed. Even if the kids were playing and yelling around him, he always kept praying silently. Every time, I celebrate Mass, I remember him and I am more convinced that we can witness our faith regardless of where we are or what surrounds us.

Another person who impressed me was a leper that I visited in another village. Since he could not attend Mass because he could not walk, I went to his home to give the Holy Communion. I always remember he wore a white shirt that he had washed himself over and over again. He received the Body of Christ in his fingerless hands. After receiving, he always listened on the radio to the sermons of his bishop.

When I was walking to the port to board the boat, he accompanied me. Although he could not walk, he supported himself with his arms crawling up to the port. Thanks to him, I realized that faith is an enormous power that can be witnessed to others whatever the surroundings maybe or whatever a person’s suffering maybe.

Fr. Kawasaki Tadonori



Each time I had the opportunity to visit a priest, I was impressed by the fact that priests were happy and were living a fulfilling life. That led me to think of becoming a priest myself. I am happy to have selected this way of life and I feel bless.

