

FUKUSHIMA DESK NEWS

Sendai Diocesan Support Center

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All Bags Were Checked Carefully Fukushima Rice Harvest

As you drive through the fields, a vast sight of golden sheets of beautifully ripening rice, awaiting the harvest, will be spread out on either side of you. One cannot help praising these faithful plants for their courage with which they overcame the most unfavorable weather of this past summer. Nihonmatsu City started harvesting their “earliest rice” on August 18 and submitted 10,000 sacks, each containing 30kg of fresh rice, to the local government for the test of radiation contamination. All of these sacks passed the test, i.e. they were all below the datum point given by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. We expect about 12,000,000 bags of rice will be submitted for the test at 170 inspection offices throughout the Prefecture.



CTVC Caritas Haramachi Base Faces the Future of Children



The City of Minami Soma is right next to the north side of Futaba-gun, adjacent to Fukushima #1 Atomic Power Plant. The number of the children who attend the public kindergarten, elementary school and high school in this city does not reach 60% of the quorum. This shows that the generation of the young parents is much fewer than that of the older generation. The fear of radiation is

the cause.

In this situation, there is still a good sign of hope called Catholic Sayuri Kindergarten, which, in its relationship with young parents, gives courage to the atmosphere of the city. Before the Earthquake, the number of children enrolled in the kindergarten used to be 85, and they disappeared after the tragedy. In response to the request of the local families, the kindergarten was opened again



on November 1, 2011, but there were only eleven children waiting for the class to start again. Now, in September 2015, the institution consists of 49 children and four staff members (including a clerical staff).

The means of transportation in Minami Soma is private cars. The place has been decontaminated, but the gutter along which the children walk to go to school is quite highly contaminated. Some primary schools ask the parents to drive their children to school. Since it is understood that kindergarten children need to be escorted, the CTVC Haramachi Base has been asked to cooperate. In addition to taking the children back and forth, we also watch them after school. Fortunately, our announcement of walking with the children resulted in an increase in registration of the Catholic kindergarten.

Now we feel it is our duty to appeal to the citizens that they need to buy a school bus and employ a driver.

Haramachi Catholic Church and Sayuri kindergarten attached to it, in the area we call Hamadori (meaning the Sea Shore Side) of Fukushima Prefecture, are the only notable buildings. One day, a young couple whose child was in our kindergarten had an inspiration that they were connected with God through the church and the kindergarten.

Strangely enough, it took almost two years for this thought to reach us, but one day we started answering the needs of the Tsunami victims. Now our activity is growing in its meaning and depth.

Let us imagine the future of those children, who will one day be adults. Will they not sing the hymns they used to sing with nuns, and feel encouraged

and healed, and realize the presence of a loving God? (CTVC Charitas Haramachi Base)

Increase of Senior Citizens' Suicides in Connection with Nuclear Power Plants

According to the report of the National Cabinet Office, the number of suicides in Fukushima in connection with the Great earthquake and the Nuclear Plant accident from January till July, 2015, was eleven. Out of these persons, one was above 70 years old, and three were in their 60s. One of the causes would be that these victims have been living already more than four years secluded in evacuation, which must be causing heavy stress on their psychological condition; the delayed reconstruction, too, must be increasing their worries. It is our hope that the time for their moving into the government-built apartment complex be advanced, and the system of helping the elderly victims be improved.

To compare the number of those who committed suicide as victims of the Earthquake during the past five years among the three Prefectures which were exposed to the same disaster: 33 in Iwate Prefecture, 40 in Miyagi Prefecture and 72 in Fukushima Prefecture. (Taken from *Fukushima Mimpo* September 8, 2015)

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