

# Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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Catholic Sendai Diocese

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## From a Tiny Flicker of Peace to Eternal Glory



*Bishop Edgar Gacutan presided the Mass of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary held at Mototerakoji Cathedral, from 6:00 p.m. Fr. Ignacio Martinez, Fr. Kentaro Takagi, and Fr. Charles-Aimé Bolduc concelebrated. Japan commemorates on August 15 the anniversary of the end of World War II. It is also the last day of the annual Ten Days Prayer for Peace (observed by the Catholic Church in Japan since*

*1982). At the beginning of the Mass, Bishop Gacutan invited everyone to pray for peace, remember the many lives lost in the war, and commit themselves to work for peace. Some of the faithful who attended the Mass were non-parishioners visiting their hometowns. Below is the summary of the homily of Bishop Gacutan.*

After receiving the angel's announcement that she would become the mother of our Savior, Mary visited her relative Elizabeth. They rejoiced together, and Mary proclaimed the great things God had done for them.

Mary faced many uncertainties in her life. Upon learning she would conceive Jesus, she asked, "How could that be since I have never known a man?" Later, after searching for days and finding her 12-year-old son in the temple, she asked Jesus, "Why have you done this to me? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you." Jesus' reply, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?, only deepened her confusion. Mary kept her questions in her heart, trusting that God would provide answers at the proper time.

According to the teaching of our Catholic Church, Mary's journey concluded with her being assumed body and soul

into heaven, where she now reigns as Queen at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages. Mary endured physical and emotional hardships but remained faithful, surrendering to God's Word and progressing towards Heaven through her daily life.

We are called to follow Mary's example, accepting life's struggles and trusting in God's grace for healing. Our faith, hope, and love show in our daily actions—whether through encouraging words, a smile, or listening to others. We believe in the redemption of Jesus' cross and the intercession of our Blessed Mother. God's power is evident in simple acts of kindness and support. Though life is often a "valley of tears," God's consolation is ever-present. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (5:1-2) reminds us to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving, imitating God's love as demonstrated by Christ. Like Mary, let us proclaim God's mighty works through our care for others.

## Living the Synod: Becoming a Church that Walks Together

Representatives of the parishes of Sendai diocese gathered on June 14, the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time, at Mototerakoji Church for a talk about the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and a workshop on the method used during the Synod. Ms. Momoko Nishimura gave the talk and conducted the workshop. She is a member of the "Servi Evangelii" community, which

includes men, women, and consecrated persons in Asia. She is involved in youth pastoral activities in the Diocese of Yokohama and is a member of the Synod Team of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. She participated in the



First Session of the Synod, held last October, and served as one of its nine president-delegates chosen by Pope Francis. Bishops, priests, religious and laity, including 54 women, participate in the Synod, which will hold its Second Session in October. Ms. Nishimura shared her experience of the Synod and, in particular, its method called "conversation in the spirit". After listening to the sharing of Ms. Nishimura, participants met in small groups and, following

Ms. Nishimura's guidance, held a conversation in the spirit. The theme of the day's gathering was "Living the Synod: Becoming a Church that Walks Together". It is hoped that the participants would share their experience of conversation in the spirit with their fellow parishioners and hold their parish meetings according to the method they had experienced.

## Diocesan News Update

### Commemoration of the Anniversary of Mototerakoji Church



Mototerakoji Church in Sendai, founded in 1877, marks its 147th anniversary this year. Throughout its history, the church has grown into a vibrant and diverse community. The founding anniversary of the parish was commemorated on June 30 during the Mass of the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, presided by Bishop Edgar Gacutan. Fr. Ignacio Martinez and Fr. Kentaro Takagi concelebrated. At the beginning of his homily, Bishop Gacutan mentioned how happy and thankful he was for the safe arrival of Fr. Takagi from the Philippines where he studied English for one year. Bishop Gacutan appointed Fr. Takagi as assistant priest of Motorerakoji and Yagiyama parishes. In his homily Bishop Gacutan said that a community of believers may be likened to an artist who completes an unfinished work left by a master, as did the composer Franco Alfano who wrote the conclusion of the opera Turandot. The famous composer Giacomo Puccini left unfinished the opera when he died in 1924. Our mission as a church is to continue proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ before his Ascension. We continue the work of our Master. Bishop Gacutan invited the community to learn from the characters of the Gospel of the day (Mark 5:21-43), the woman with a hemorrhagic condition and Jairus, the father of the young girl healed by Jesus. Like them we should not be stopped dead in our tracks when all seems lost. Several readings and prayers of the Mass were said in different languages, reflecting the church's diverse community. A short and simple party was held after the Mass at the Cathedral Square.

### Three-Month Progress of the Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council

In April 2023, Bishop Gacutan appointed priests and lay missionaries to minister as teams in parishes. Two lay women, Claire Sanchez and Julie Fecteau, serve as pastoral ministers in the diocese of Sendai. Last May 27 both priests and lay missionaries held their first meeting together as "Pastoral Ministers" of the diocese. A meeting only for priests will continue to be held according to theme and issue. The Presbyteral Council, one of the advisory bodies of the bishop,

discussed during its monthly meetings since April the following themes: missionary-pastoral care, building faith foundation and transmitting faith, the essential role of parishes in creating faith communities, assets of the diocese like lands and buildings, statistical data of the diocese like the number of believers, Baptisms, First Communion recipients, and aging population. The Council also looked at the progress of its synodal journey while following the proceedings of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The Missionary Pastoral Council of the diocese will hold its 2024 annual meeting on September 23. One of the agenda to be discussed is how the diocese will observe the Holy Year 2025.

### Mass for Nuclear Abolition and Peace

The 31st "Mass for Nuclear Abolition and Peace" was held from 6:00 p.m. of July 16th, Tuesday, at Mototerakoji Church. Fr. Ignacio Martinez presided the Mass. Fr. Chonpil Yu and



Fr. Kentaro Takagi concelebrated. A meditation on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary preceded the Mass. In his homily, Fr. Martinez

emphasized the historical consequences of the first nuclear test done in 1945, that war is not according to God's will and that peace is a result of actively working for it. The Catholic Council for Justice and Peace in Sendai, supported by the Catholic Diocese of Sendai, organized the commemoration.

### "Indifference Takes Lives"

#### Ten Days Prayer for Peace Lecture in Sendai

The Catholic Council for Justice and Peace in Sendai held a Lecture on August 4, Sunday, given by Fr. Ignacio Martinez. The lecture emphasized the importance of not being indifferent and the significance of remembering past mistakes, addressing the issue of defenseless civilians, and embracing hope. Fr. Martinez concluded his lecture by mentioning the role of Christians in fostering unity and empathy. Around 100 people attended, a larger turnout than usual. The theme of the lecture was "We alone can stop violence against life — Indifference takes lives". Ten Days Prayer for Peace is observed by the Catholic Church in Japan from August 6 (anniversary of the Hiroshima Atomic Bombing) to August 15 (anniversary in Japan of the end of World War II). It was established by the Japanese Bishops in 1982, following Pope John Paul II's "Appeal for Peace at Hiroshima" (25 February 1981) during his Apostolic Journey to Japan. "Indifference takes lives" is the title of the message of Archbishop Isao Kikuchi, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, for the 2024 Ten Days Prayer for Peace.

## Ecumenical Worship Service for Peace

A lecture by Mr. Shigeo Aburaya representative of the "Tanabata Citizens Praying for Peace" preceded the Ecumenical Worship Service for Peace held on August 11, Sunday, from 2:00 p.m. at Mototerakoji Church. Mr. Aburaya shared why he founded the group in 1975 and the group's activities. Tanabata, also known as "Star Festival," is celebrated in Japan at various days between July and August. Every year Mr. Aburaya's group creates crane lanterns which are displayed during the Tanabata Festival in Sendai. The "connection between paper cranes and peace can be traced back to a young girl named Sadako Sasaki, who died of leukemia ten years after the atomic bombing. Sadako was two years old when she was exposed to the atomic bomb" (Wikipedia). A Protestant pastor led the ecumenical worship service, held after Mr. Aburaya's talk.

## The 3rd Sendai Diocese Vietnamese Youth Conference in Japan 2024

### "Let's move forward with hope"

Over 120 Vietnamese youth in the Diocese of Sendai attended a two-day gathering at Sayuri Kindergarten, featuring Taizé prayers, catechesis, dancing, games, and recreational activities. Bishop Edgar Gacutan presided the mass on the first day of the gathering. Fr. Dominique Nguyen Cau Tri and Fr. Nguyen Thanh Hi concelebrated. Fr. Ignacio Martinez and Fr. Kentaro Takagi, pastors of Mototerakoji parish, also participated in one of the gathering's activities.



## District News Update

### District #1

Sanpachi Bloc/Hachinohe Shiocho Church  
Sanpachi Bloc International Day



On June 2, 2024, the parishes of Sanpachi Bloc held an "International Day Mass and Exchange Meeting" at Hachinohe Shiocho Church, attracting around 250 participants, including Japanese, Vietnamese, French, Americans, and Indonesians. The event was celebrated in Japanese, Vietnamese, and English. Following the Mass, a social gathering was held, featuring tea, introductions, and home-cooked food from each country.

### District #3

Miyagi Northern Bloc/ Furukawa Church  
Celebration of the Solemnity of the Birth of John the Baptist  
On June 23, Sunday, Furukawa Church celebrated the feast of its patron saint, St. John the Baptist, and the 61st anniversary of its founding as a parish. The celebration started with the Eucharist presided by Fr. Miguel Varela, which was followed by a joyful party. Everyone enjoyed the food and drinks shared by the parishioners.



### District #4

Cathedral Bloc/Mototerakoji Church  
Let's Gather Around Jesus

Nine elementary to high school students attended an Altar Servers Gathering at Mototera Koji Church, learning about their role and the items used at Mass and Liturgies. They also tried ringing bells, wearing vestments and touching the pipe organ of the Cathedral. After lunch, they participated as Altar Servers in the Mass presided by Fr. Ignacio Martinez. The gathering was concluded with a watermelon-splitting event.



### "Let's Walk with Jesus" Sunday School Summer Day Camp

25 elementary, junior and high school students participated in a one-day camp held on August 3. The day's activities started at the Higashi Sendai Church. From there they visited the Bishop's House, the Osaka Saint Joseph Sisters Convent, and Ottawa Sisters Convent. During each visit they recited a prayer and then had their Prayer Leaflet stamped with a seal. For most of the participants, it was their first-time visiting a church or a religious house. They quickly became friendly and lively. The Catholics among them participated as Altar Servers during the mass held at the chapel of the Ottawa Sisters Convent and presided by Bishop Edgar Gacutan. Watermelon-splitting was the concluding event of the day. Everyone was thrilled taking part in breaking the watermelon with their eyes blindfolded.



## District #5

### Nakadori Kita Bloc/Matsukicho and Nodamachi Churches Annual "Summer Gathering" of Matsukicho and Nodamachi Churches

The annual "Summer Gathering" was held at Matsukicho after the Mass of the first Sunday of summer vacation (July 28). The festival was started with a prayer led by Sr. Egawa of the Congregation of Notre Dame. The participants enjoyed various games, including tug of war, Jenga, musical chairs, and bingo. They also wrote their wishes on Tanabata paper strips and hung them on a stand made of bamboo branch.



The gathering was concluded with a curry rice lunch, which was enjoyed together. The children, in particular, were filled with smiles during the event.

## OBITUARY

### Fr. Masayoshi Shuto (Diocese of Sendai)

Date of Birthday: August 25, 1946, Yonekawa, Towacho,  
Miyagi Prefecture  
Priest Ordination: September 15, 1977  
Died: July 14, 2024 (77 years old)

#### Ministries:

- 1977~ Parish Priest: Mototerakoji Church, Shiroishi Church, and Higashisendai Church
- 1988~ Missionary in Brazil. (Amazon 28 churches for 5 years)
- 1993~ Parish Priest: Aizu Wakamatsu Church, Mototerakoji Church, Ishinomaki Church, Hachinohe Shiocho Church, Samemachi Church, Namiuchi Church, Honcho Church, Noheji Church
- April 2014~ Vicar Forane of District 1 (Hirosaki Church, Kuroishi Church, Goshogawara Church, Honcho Church, Namiuchi Church)
- April 2017 Retired (Priest's Home)



Fr. Paulo Shuto served as a missionary for five years in the Amazon, primarily focusing on the Santarém parish. His mission involved visiting 28 church communities within the vast Amazon ecosystem, centered around the Tapajós River, a major tributary of the Amazon. During his time there, he learned the importance of prayer and faith in the lives of the residents. Upon returning to Japan, the Amazon and its people remained deeply embedded in his heart. Although expressing the full depth of his experiences proved challenging, Pope Francis' exhortation "Beloved Amazon" resonated with him, inspiring a lifelong commitment to advocating for the rights and dignity of the poorest, indigenous, and marginalized people. Fr. Shuto's mission evolved into a journey of promoting simplicity, learning, happiness, and the protection of the Amazon ecosystem.  
(Fr. Horie Setsuro, SJ)

## Thanksgiving Tribute



### Fr. Charles-Aimé Bolduc (Quebec Mission Society)

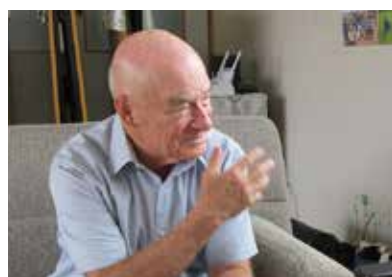
Date of birth: 1942  
Country of birth: Canada  
Ordained as a priest: May 24, 1970

#### Pastoral Ministries:

August 15, 1970, Arrived for the first time in Japan; 1972~ English teacher at Hachinohe College of Technology, Aomori Prefecture; 1974~ Worked at a facility of Social Welfare Corporation Oshimizu Gakuen; 1980~ Headmaster of the same facility; 1990~ Returned to Canada and visited communities of the Quebec Foreign Missions Society in several countries as the society's Vicar General; 1998~ Returned to Japan, missionary and pastoral work in several parishes Sendai Diocese, including Mototerakoji Church; Retired in April 2024

When the news broke that Father Charles-Aimé Bolduc was retiring and returning to his native Canada, he received invitations from the various churches where he had served as pastor to hold masses and share his memories. Therefore, as the editorial staff, we would like to convey to the current Japanese churches, especially those in the Sendai Diocese, the one thing he would like to express and leave behind

from his 54 years of missionary work in Japan. Interviewer: Sister Masako Hasegawa, Public Relations Committee Member, Sendai Diocese.



Fr. Aimé arrived in Japan on August 15, 1970, during a period marked by significant events. In the Diocese of Sendai, there were many priests but no available pastoral positions. Since then, many priests have passed away, highlighting the need for cooperation among churches rather than closures. Fr. Aimé emphasizes the importance of dialogue to build a united church community, avoiding divisive ideological debates. In Fukushima, two churches could collaborate by holding Masses at different times. The "Conversation in the Spirit" method, focusing on prayer and discernment, was successfully practiced at Matsukicho Church, particularly during the chairperson election. Fr. Aimé, who has served under five bishops, believes that each was sent by God at the right time, encouraging a perspective that goes beyond viewing church matters through the lens of social organization. He believes the Church's future is promising with open-minded cooperation and new ideas.