

Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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Catholic Sendai Diocese

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The Lord Will Surely Come

Bishop Edgar Gacutan



A part of the Nativity Scene displayed every year at the entrance of the Mototerakoji Cathedral during the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas

"Ready?" "Not yet!" "Ready or not?" "Ready!" These are the words exchanged between the one playing 'it' and other players when they start the game "hide-and-seek." After the players had quieted down, having hid themselves, the "it" calls out, "I'm coming, whether you are ready or not."

This year we entered the liturgical season of Advent on November 30. Advent is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and to the celebration of Our Lord's birth on Christmas.

The Lord Jesus had come to our world over 2000 years ago. In those days, our Lord called out: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4:17), as he urged his hearers to turn their hearts towards God and the kingdom's values. The call of the Lord resonates with us every now and then and brings about new awareness and resolve in our lives and relationships.

We often hear stories, which could be made into movies, of a dramatic change in someone's life. Most transformations, however, occur quietly or unnoticed. Sometimes they also happen before our eyes. Calling them "fruit of the Spirit," Saint Paul lists the following as signs of conversion: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Recall those experiences of how someone's patience or faithfulness have boosted our morale.

"I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20). Those were the last words of our Lord before he was taken up into heaven. We take the words of our Lord as truth and strive to live with them. There are times, however, when we doubt if God is with us at all. When we feel an overwhelming crisis, we feel angry and think that God is unjust to us. We may even cry out: "Lord, why do you allow this?" We know of moments when having someone listen to our lament helped us resolve to walk through our valley of tears. "You are not alone" – there were times, indeed, when we felt as if those words were said by a voice from heaven.



God's plan of salvation has already begun and is unfolding. I hope that as we journey through Advent, we may together recognize God's presence and purpose, reaffirm the values common to us human beings, and realize that as we are saved, we also need to help one another. Even if we feel we are not fully ready to encounter the Lord, let us say in our hearts: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you but only say the word and I shall be healed." I believe the Lord will gladly come to meet us.

42nd National Catholic Justice and Peace Gathering 2025 – Sendai Conference

Theme: “Hope Does Not Disappoint”



The 42nd National Catholic Justice and Peace Gathering was held in Sendai under the Jubilee Year theme “Hope Does Not Disappoint.” In preparing for this event, the committee reflected on what the Sendai Diocese could uniquely offer and share with the nation. From these discussions, three main pillars were formed:

1. Fourteen Years After March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Disaster

Expressing heartfelt gratitude to all who supported the diocese after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and continue accompanying the people of Tohoku.

2. Building a Community Beyond Nationalities

Embracing diversity as a gift, participants are invited to create a community centered on Christ, transcending language and cultural barriers.

3. Seeking the Path to Peace

Emphasizing that peace begins locally, through concrete actions of understanding and solidarity.

October 11 (Saturday) “See” : Fieldwork



Participants visited three areas of the diocese, Minamisoma (Fukushima), Ofunato and Minamisanriku (Iwate), and Ishinomaki and Onagawa (Miyagi), to listen to survivors and support workers. They learned about the ongoing challenges of reconstruction and the long-term impact of the nuclear disaster. Encounters with civic groups and local Church members provided deep insight into the realities of postdisaster life and the importance of continued engagement.

October 12 (Sunday) “Judge” : Reflection and Discernment

The day began with Sunday Mass at Mototerakoji Church, presided by Bishop Edgar Gacutan with concelebrating bishops and priests. In his homily, Bishop Gacutan reminded participants that, despite differences, all share the same earth and air, and are called to live and work for peace.



At the Opening Ceremony, Bishop Gacutan warmly welcomed participants from across Japan and from Korea and Vietnam, encouraging all to deepen their understanding of

justice and peace through dialogue and faith. Greetings from bishops across Japan followed, along with a keynote lecture by Bishop Kazuo Koda (Tokyo) on “Experiences of the Earthquake and Nuclear Accident: What Can We Do for Peace?” and a symposium titled “Facing Nuclear Power: Searching for the Future We Should Aim For.”



October 13 (Monday, Public Holiday) “Act” : Workshops and Sending Mass

Nine workshops were held at Mototerakoji and Kita-Sendai Churches, followed by a Mass for Peace and Sending Forth, presided by Bishop Gacutan together with bishops and priests from various dioceses. The conference concluded in an atmosphere of thanksgiving, hope, and renewed commitment to peace.

(Details of the keynote lecture, symposium, and workshops will be published in future diocesan reports.)

2025 Jubilee Concert “Pilgrims of Hope” Exploring the World of Liturgical Music



As part of its Jubilee Year celebration, the Mototerakoji Church hosted a concert after the 9:00 mass of the 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time on September 21. The mass was attended by some 200 faithful. Most of them stayed for the concert. The main singer of the concert, Ms. Hisayo Nakagawa, had expressed her wish that churches be filled again after the Covid-19 isolation.

The concert began with organist Ms. Keiko Watanabe performing Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, followed by soprano Ms. Nakagawa singing Wagner's *In the Holy Hall* and other liturgical hymns. Under Ms. Yuko Akao's direction, the parish choir performed a selection of hymns reflecting the joy of faith. The Filipino community

rendered a liturgical song entitled *Pag-aalay ng Puso*, which means “Take my Heart, O Lord”. The song expresses the desire to follow the Lord faithfully. Bishop Gacutan encouraged his co-singers to convey the Filipino spirit of the song.

The concert concluded with the song “Protect all Life”, with accompaniment by Ms. Julie Fecteau on guitar and Mr. Osamu Tsuchikura on flute. The song was the official song of the 2029 pastoral visit of Pope Francis to Japan. All attendees joined in singing *Pilgrims of Hope*, in Japanese and in English, awakening in them the desire to walk on God's path: “Like a flame my hope is burning, may my song arise to you: Source of life that has no ending, on life's path I trust in you.”

Two days earlier, Ms. Nakagawa held a smaller concert at Sendai Aramachi Music Box Museum. Proceeds from the concert were donated to the government of Ofunato City as support for its recovery after the city was devastated by wildfires earlier this year.

— Diocesan Public Relations Committee,
Sr. Masako Hasegawa

News from the Districts

From District 1 Sanpachi Bloc Summer Camp



On August 11, eighteen children attended the Sanpachi Bloc Summer Camp at Hachinohe Shiocho Church, guided by two priests and two seminarians. Activities included SDG's-themed Sugoroku games, Congolese dance, ice cream-making, a film viewing, watermelon splitting, and a discussion on Noah's Ark. Evening folk dances and fireworks concluded the camp safely, fostering friendship and joy.

— Tomohiro Makiyama (Hachinohe shiocho Church)

Sanpachi Bloc/Hachinohe Shiocho Church Convent Closure

Following the closure of the Ursuline Sisters' Shiocho Convent, a Thanksgiving Mass and key handover ceremony were held on August 5. Sr. Ishii transferred the convent keys to Parish Council President Mr. Ishihara, and participants shared memories of the sisters' service. Plans for the future use of the building are being considered with input from parish members.

— Dai Matsuda (Namiuchi Church)

From District 2 Joint Okago Pilgrimage

Parishioners from Kitakami, Mizusawa, Tono, Kamaishi, Yotsuya, Morioka-Kamido and Shike churches participated in a pilgrimage to Okago Church, one of the pilgrimage churches of the Diocese. The group prayed the rosary on the bus that brought them to Okago, a place where martyrs were executed some 400 years ago. In his homily during the mass, Fr. Itagaki said that the



Okago Christians had paved the way for the faith journey of the present believers. The pilgrims visited also the Christian Martyrs' Museum, located not far from Okago Church.

— Yoshiko Numata (Shike Church)

From District 4 Sendai Southern Bloc Appointment and Transfer

On September 7, Ipponsugi and Tatamiya churches bid farewell to Fr. Garry Gestoveo and welcomed Fr. Armando Romero as their new parish priest. Bishop Gacutan presided over the Mass and the Rite of Installation for both churches. A farewell and welcome gathering followed after each mass.

Cathedral Bloc/mototerakoji Church



International Mass and Fellowship Gathering

Mototerakoji Church celebrated the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on October 5 with 350 participants from 40 countries. Hymns, readings, and prayers were conducted in multiple languages, and the Jubilee Hymn *Pilgrims of Hope* was sung. A fellowship party with cultural performances encouraged international interaction and community building.

— Tsuyuoshi Seki (Mototerakoji Church)

From District 5

Nakadori North Bloc/Nodamachi Church Matsukichō Church Pilgrimage Bus Tour

On September 20, Nodamachi Church and Matsukichō Church organized a Jubilee Year pilgrimage for 40 participants. Visits included Nihonmatsu Church, Matsukichō Church, and Nodamachi Church, with prayers, Scripture readings, and singing of the Jubilee Hymn. Participants expressed gratitude and inspiration from the shared spiritual journey.

— Yuko Watanabe(Nodamachi Church)



Diocesan Activities

Diocesan Pastoral Workers' Training



From August 25–26, pastoral workers took part in a field study program in Ōfunato and Rikuzentakata to better understand the impact of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The program combined training with on-site learning, including forest fire observation, museum visits, and

fellowship gatherings. It focused on the long-term development of both clergy and lay missionaries in diocesan pastoral work.

— Ignacio Martínez

Parishioners' Reflections: "By Noto's Side"



Masato Goto shared experiences assisting earthquake victims on the Noto Peninsula in early 2024. Support included evacuation aid, delivering funds, and contributing to the Caritas Support Center ("Noto-sen"),

emphasizing ongoing recovery, mental health support, and long-term volunteer engagement. Goto highlighted the importance of remaining "By Noto's Side" to provide sustained spiritual and practical assistance.

— Masato Mitomo(Ipponsugi Church)

Knowing our Priests in the Diocese

Fr.Armando Romero Tumaliuan CICM



- **Date of Birth:** May 8, 1983
- **Birthplace:** Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Province, Philippines
- **Diaconate Ordination:** March 20, 2012
- **Priesthood Ordination:** November 17, 2012: St. Louis University Chapel, Tuguegarao City, Philippines

Peace be with you!

I am Fr. Armando Romero, a religious-missionary priest of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM). I was born on May 8, 1983, in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, Philippines. I come from a loving family—with me as the youngest.

My missionary journey in Japan began on September 11, 2009, when I first arrived and stayed at Kongo Catholic Church. I pursued Japanese language studies in Osaka Umeda, while engaging in pastoral immersion and integration in the Sakai Bloc of the Archdiocese of Osaka-Takamatsu. After two years of language studies and one year of pastoral formation, I was ordained to the priesthood on November 17, 2012.

I served in the Sakai Bloc for seven years before being

assigned to the Himeji District, where I ministered as parish priest in both the Himeji-Sayo and Kakogawa-Nishiwaki blocs. During this time, I was also entrusted with the role of provincial secretary for our CICM Asia Province, a responsibility I carried for six years.

After nearly 15 years of mission in the Archdiocese of Osaka-Takamatsu, I received a new assignment—my first outside the archdiocese. On September 1, 2025, I arrived in the Diocese of Sendai, where I now reside at the Catholic Sendai Bishop's Residence. I have been installed as the parish priest of Ipponsugi Catholic Church and Tatamiyacho Catholic Church.

My heart is full of gratitude to God for this new mission. I pray for the grace and strength to fulfill it faithfully, and to be a living witness of His love, mercy, and goodness to all those He entrusts to my care. I humbly rely on the support, guidance, and prayers of the parishioners as I journey forward, seeking to discern His promptings in this new chapter of missionary life.

Together with the people of Sendai, I hope and pray to grow—as a person, as a missionary, as a religious priest, and above all, as a servant of God.

May our journey be marked by faith, hope, and love. May we walk together in communion, and may the Lord who called us continue to lead us ever deeper into His heart.