

# Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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Catholic Sendai Diocese

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## From the Empty Tomb



Bishop Edgar Gacutan

### Happy Easter!

The shortest Bible narrative of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is found in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 16, verses 1-8:

<sup>1</sup> *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they might go and anoint him.*

<sup>2</sup> *Very early, when the sun had risen on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb.*

<sup>3</sup> *They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"*

<sup>4</sup> *When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large.*

<sup>5</sup> *On entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed.*

<sup>6</sup> *He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him.*

<sup>7</sup> *But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"*

<sup>8</sup> *Then they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

This passage is read at the Easter Vigil Mass every three years (Year B), although the final verse is omitted. I would like to reflect on this overlooked verse.

This verse tells us that for the women who saw the empty tomb, the reality of the resurrection was so overwhelming

that it was beyond human comprehension. Their frightened silence in response to the angel's message reminds us that throughout Mark's Gospel, people frequently react to Jesus' deeds and revelations with amazement, silence, fear, and even terror (e.g., Mark 1:22; 1:27; 4:40-41; 6:50-51). The teachings and miracles of our Lord Jesus unveil the profound mystery of God's personal coming among us.

In biblical narratives, silence often follows a direct encounter with God. The women remained silent until the angel's message was passed on to the disciples – the rightful recipients of this divine revelation. Upon hearing the message that Jesus had risen (16:6) and that he would appear in Galilee (16:7), the women fled, trembling, surprised, silent, and afraid. These reactions are fitting responses to God's greatest act: the raising of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

The women had witnessed Jesus' death and burial. They expected to find his crucified body in the tomb. However, in a dramatic reversal, God transformed the human condition, leading both the women and us into the dawn of a new day.

The three women in the Gospel stood in awe, caught between joy and fear, unable to find words to express what they had seen. Like them, we too are invited to silently contemplate the wonderful and wondrous event of the resurrection. Our journey of faith begins at the empty tomb, time and time again. The crucified Lord Jesus is alive and goes before us. Let us follow Him.

## The 14th Anniversary of March 11 Memorial Mass for the Victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Prayer for Healing and Renewal



Every year, since 2012, Sendai Diocese holds a Memorial Mass at the cathedral to remember the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. This year, over 200 people gathered. At 2:46 p.m., the bell tolled, and attendees bowed in silent prayer. Bishop Edgar Gacutan presided the Mass. Concelebrants included Bishop Emeritus Tetsuo Hiraga and several priests. In his homily, Bishop Gacutan reflected on human fragility, suffering, hope, and recent events like the Ōfunato wildfires. He also shared some March 11-inspired poems he had encountered. Bishop Gacutan's message emphasized God's mercy and how challenging life experiences result in resilience and perseverance.

Sr. Masako Hasegawa  
(Sendai Diocese Communications Committee)

### Feast of the Christian Martyrs of Sendai

The Feast of the Christian Martyrs of Sendai, held on February 23, gathered over 200 participants despite the cold winter winds. Organized by representatives of the Fourth District of Sendai Diocese, the pilgrimage began after Mass, with many walking to the Hirose River, where the martyrs were executed 401 years ago. Bishop Edgar Gacutan led the prayers and delivered a message. In his message, he said that the martyrs must have drawn

their strength from Jesus' words, like the Beatitudes. The martyrs did not live for success, power and money because they knew that those who set aside treasure for themselves are not rich toward God. They believed that the Lord is life's treasure, and love for neighbour the true source of gain. The words of our Lord serve like road signs for us as we make our own life journey. Our Blessed Mothers and the martyrs lead us in our journey. After a moment of reflection, representatives of the participating parish communities took turns in reciting their prayer intentions.

Sr. Masako Hasegawa  
(Sendai Diocese Communications Committee)



### Day of Prayer and Atonement for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

On Friday, March 21, at 6:00 p.m., Sendai Diocese held its



annual "Day of Prayer and Atonement for Survivors of Sexual Abuse" Mass at Mototerakoji Church, the Cathedral of the Diocese. Established

by Pope Francis' directive, this day calls for the Church to take responsibility for past wrongs. The Mass was presided by Fr. Yoichi Onodera and three other priests assisted. Fr. Onodera read the letter of Cardinal Isao Kikuchi for this occasion.

Sr. Masako Hasegawa  
(Sendai Diocese Communications Committee)

## Diocese Updates

### Gathering of Pastoral Ministers

On Monday, February 17, the final "Gathering of Pastoral Ministers" for the 2024 fiscal year took place at Mototerakoji Church with 27 participants. Bishop Edgar Gacutan began with a prayer and announcement of the 2025 pastoral appointments.



Participants were divided by districts to reflect on the past year and discuss priorities based on the New Year Message of Bishop Gacutan. Discussions focused on post-Easter personnel changes and preparations for the Jubilee Year. After lunch, they made a pilgrimage to the Hirose River Martyrs' Memorial, offering prayers for the martyrs and seeking God's guidance for the Diocese's future. The gathering concluded at 3:00 PM.

Fr. Ignacio Martinez, MG (Chancellor, Sendai Diocese)

## District News

### District #1

#### Conclusion of 75 Years of Missionary Legacy: Thanksgiving Mass and Gathering for the Ursuline Sisters Convent

After 75 years of missionary work in Hachinohe City, the Sisters of St. Ursuline closed their convent in Shiocho on March 31, 2025. On the third Sunday of Lent, March 23, Fr. Moriya Sato presided a Thanksgiving Mass at Hachinohe Shiocho Church for the 75 years presence and work of the Ursuline Sisters in Hachinohe. Parishioners of Samecho



Church also attended. A gratitude gathering followed, featuring a slideshow of the Sisters' 75 years history, and exchange of gifts between the Sisters and the parish communities. A representative of a group composed of 88 individuals presented to the Sisters a Spiritual Bouquet of a Mass Enrollment for 88 years.

### District #3

#### Joint Retreat of Furukawa and Ishinomaki Parishes

On March 9, the First Sunday of Lent, Bishop Edgar Gacutan led a Lenten retreat at Ishinomaki Church. The



event started with Mass concelebrated by Bishop Gacutan and Fr. Miguel Varela, parish priest of both parishes. After the Mass, Bishop Gacutan delivered his Lenten reflections in Japanese and English. He offered guidance on faith, prayer, and the recent Synod. Participants shared a fellowship lunch with Bishop Gacutan. Exchanges between Ishinomaki and Furukawa Churches include joint pilgrimages and Eucharistic celebrations.

### District #4

#### Children's Prayer Gathering: Pilgrimage to the Hirose River Martyrs' Memorial

On February 11, 20 children and their parents participated in a two-part pilgrimage. First, they processed through the Jubilee Door of the Mototera cathedral, prayed, and received Jubilee Year keychains. Next, they visited the

Hirose River Martyrs' Memorial, joined by Bishop Gacutan and several priests. Despite a sudden snowstorm, they spent some time at the martyrdom site for reflection on the suffering of the martyrs and prayer. About 50 people participated in this grace-filled pilgrimage.



#### Start of the Jubilee Year – Feast of the Christian Martyrs of Sendai (Sendai East & West Blocks)



On February 23, the Feast of the Christian Martyrs of Sendai was celebrated with Bishop Edgar Gacutan as the main celebrant.

Despite the cold, over 200 people gathered near Ōhashi Bridge, many joining after the Vietnamese Mass. Organized by four parishes, the event embodied Pope Francis' message, "Hope Does Not Disappoint." Participants felt a deep sense of unity, resembling the Jubilee Year logo—pilgrims walking together in faith, supporting one another on their shared journey of hope.

## Diocesan Activities

### The "Light of Life 3.15 Fukushima"

event took place on March 15-16, gathering 90 participants.

#### Day 1: Testimony & Mass in Haramachi



Photographer Jun Nakasuji shared insights on the Fukushima nuclear disaster, emphasizing its invisible dangers and the link between Tokyo's electricity use and affected areas. Inspired by filmmaker Noriaki Tsuchimoto, Nakasuji established the "3.11 & Fukushima Nuclear Disaster Legacy Art Museum." Bishop Kazuo Koda presided the Mass held after the artist's talk. In his homily, Bishop Koda urged reflection on nuclear reliance.

#### Day 2: Radiation Lecture

Dr. Masamichi Nishio's lecture at Sendai Cathedral addressed radiation's health effects and societal manipulation by nuclear policies. Despite



challenges, the organizing team remains committed to continuing this annual gathering and keeping alive the memory of the dreaded events of March 15, 2011.

### Sendai Diocese Communication Committee & Regional Communication Committees General Assembly Held

On March 20, the Sendai Diocese Communication Committee held its annual general assembly at Mototerakoji Church. Fr. Yoichi Onodera, Fr. Ignacio Martínez, and nine regional representatives attended. Discussions covered the diocesan bulletin, website, Jubilee Year activities, and the Synodal process. Participants emphasized the importance of effective communication in strengthening the Catholic community.

# Assignment of Priests in Sendai Diocese for the Fiscal Year 2025

As of May 1, 2025

<b>Chancery of the Diocese of Sendai</b> <b>Ordinary of the Diocese:</b> Bishop Edgar Gacutan, (C.I.C.M.) <b>Vicar General:</b> Fr.Yoichi Onodera, (Sendai Diocese) <b>Chancellor:</b> Fr.Ignacio Martinez, (M.G.)		
District	Bloc Parish, (Mission Station)	Assigned Priest / ◎ indicates Vicar Forane / ( ) indicates affiliation / ▷ indicates place of residence
1	<b>Hirosaki</b> Hirosaki, Goshogawara, Kuroishi	Fr.Shiro Komatsu, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Hirosaki
	<b>Aomori-Shimokita</b> Honcho, (Matsuoka), Namiuchi, Ominato,Noheji	◎Fr.Lee Souk, (Gwangju Diocese, South Korea) ▷Namiuchi
	<b>Sanpachi</b> Hachinohe Shiocho, Samemachi,Towada, (Gonohe), Misawa, Kuji	Fr.Patrick Castroverde, (C.I.C.M.) ▷Hachinohe Shiocho <b>Fr.Justin Lukusa</b> , Associate Priest, (C.I.C.M.) ▷Hachinohe Shiocho
2	<b>Morioka</b> Yotsuya, Morioka Kamido, Shike	<b>Fr.Tsutomu Itagaki</b> , (Sendai Diocese) ▷Yotsuya
	<b>Iwate Chubu (Central)</b> Hanamaki, Kitakami, Mizusawa	◎Fr.Marco Antonio de la Rosa, (M.G.) ▷Mizusawa
	<b>Iwate Engan(Coastline)</b> Tono, Miyako, Kamaishi	Fr.Setsuro Horie, (S.J.) ▷Kamaishi
3	<b>Iwate Nanbu(Southern)</b> Ichinoseki, Senmaya, Tsukidate,(Shinseien)	Fr.Akihiro Watanabe, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Ichinoseki
	<b>Sanriku</b> Kesenuma, Ofunato, Yonekawa	<b>Fr.Ignasius Kristianus Basa</b> , (S.V.D.) ▷ Ofunato
	<b>Miyagi Hokubu(Northern)</b> Furukawa, Ishinomaki	◎Fr.Miguel Varela, (M.G.)▷Ishinomaki
4	<b>Sendai Tobu(Eastern)</b> Shiogama, Higashi Sendai	<b>Fr. Henri Badibanga</b> , (C.I.C.M.) ▷ Higashi Sendai
	<b>Sendai Seibu(Western)</b> Kita Sendai, Nishi Sendai	◎Fr.Yoo Jong-Pil, (O.P) ▷Kita-Sendai
	<b>Sendai Nanbu(Southern)</b> Ipponsugi, Tatamiyacho	Fr.Garry Gesteveo, (C.I.C.M.) ▷Bishop's Residence
	<b>Cathedral</b> Mototerakoji, Yagiyama	Fr.Ignacio Martinez, (M.G.)▷Mototerakoji Fr.Kentaro Takagi, Associate Priest, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Mototerakoji
	<b>Kennan(Southern Miyagi)</b> Watari, Kakuda, Ogawara, Shiroishi	Fr.Yoichi Onodera, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Shiroishi
5	<b>Nakadori Kita(North)</b> Matsukicho, (Koori), Nodamachi, Nihonmatsu	Fr.Mathias Antonio, (S.P.) ▷Nodamachi Fr.Nguyen Cao Tri, Associate Priest, (S.P.) ▷Nodamachi
	<b>Aizu</b> Aizuwakamatsu, Kitakata, Minamiaizu	Fr.Takashi Aizu, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Aizuwakamatsu
	<b>Nakadori Minami(South)</b> Koriyama, Sukagawa, Shirakawa	◎Fr.Osamu Sato, (Sendai Diocese) ▷Koriyama
	<b>Hamadori</b> Haramachi, Iwaki, (Yumoto)	Bishop Emeritus Kazuo Koda, (Tokyo Archdiocese) ▷Haramachi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transfers Outside the Diocese:</b> Fr. Paul Too, (M.E.Q), Fr. Jose A. Lopez,(M.G.), and Fr. Naoki Morita, (Kyoto Diocese)</li> <li>• <b>Formation:</b> Deacon Shin Dong Bin, (Gwangju Archdiocese, South Korea) ▷ Bishop's Residence</li> <li>• <b>Collaborative Priests:</b> Fr.Hiroshi Sasaki, Fr.Masashi Takahashi, Fr.Moriya Sato, and Fr.Tadanori Kawasaki</li> <li>• <b>Retired:</b> Bishop Emeritus Tetsuo Hiraga, (Sendai Diocese), <b>Fr. Nozomi Shiota</b>, (P.F.J)</li> <li>• <b>Second Priest House In-charge:</b> Fr.Kazuhito Ujiie, (Sendai Diocese)</li> </ul>		