

Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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From August 1 to 6, 2023, delegates from Sendai Diocese joined the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal .

On July 23rd, a Eucharistic Celebration was held at Mototerakoji Church to send off 3 young delegates and Fr. Rafael Mejia (Youth Minister) to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Mako Senzaki (Mototerakoji Church), Maika Ishigaki (Mototerakoji Church, and Yuki Komo (Ishinomaki Church). The Holy Mass was presided over by Bishop Edgar Gacutan.

Another young delegate from Fukushima, Hikaru Haga was send off at Nodamachi Church which was presided over by Fr. Aime. The Japanese pilgrims received a warm welcome in Coimbra, Portugal. They visited the holy city of Fatima, Lisbon and attended the Pope's send-off Mass. This experience has strengthened their relationship with other young people from all over the world.

What is World Youth Day?

World Youth Day (WYD) began when Pope John Paul II invited young people to gather in Rome at the closing Mass of the Special Jubilee Year of Redemption in 1984, the year before the United Nations designated 1985 as the International Year of Youth. Since then, every year Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) is designated as the World Youth Day. The World Youth Day is held every two to three years in various parts of the world.

The World Youth Day was changed from the "Passion Sunday" to the "Feast of Christ the King" in 2020. Since the start of WYD in Rome in 1985, Japan has been participating officially as pilgrim .



■ Hikaru Haga (Nodamachi Parish)

Grace of Unity in the Eucharist: What I realized after participating in WYD ~ Bom dia !

Ten years ago, when I was a student at Sophia University's Faculty of Theology, I was invited by one of my classmates to participate in a trip under the guidance of then Fr. Nagamachi, SJ, Philosophy Professor.



Ten years have passed since then. It was not that I was not interested in going abroad, but I had a strong aversion to English and foreign languages, and I had neither the financial resources nor time to do so. I decided to go on the pilgrimage after a friend from college contacted me at the beginning of this year and advised me that this would be my last chance to participate in the World Youth Day (I am 30 years old already). I thought, "If he is an experienced traveler, I can rest assure that he will take care of our journey. The plan was to meet at the Lisbon airport and move to Fatima under his guidance. However, when I arrived there, he was not around. The flight he was supposed to take had been canceled. Just like "Hajimete no Otsukai," my "first trip abroad alone" began. By the way, my English is level 4. I have not studied any Portuguese at all. This was my situation when I arrived. I was able to get on the bus and checked in the hotel without any problems.

Why? Because everyone was so kind. Even though I couldn't understand their words, they tried their best to accommodate me. I also tried to be kind to foreigners.

Let me also mention about faith. There were probably more than a million young Catholics from all over the world, but the many different languages were not a problem at all. The sound of the bell was all it took for me to know that the consecration was taking place. The crowd, which had been lively until just before the Mass started, became silent at the moment the consecration took place. I was convinced that the power of unity that transcends language converges in the mystery of the Eucharist. I am grateful for God's work that goes beyond language differences.

■ Maika Ishigaki (Mototerakoji Church)



Upon our arrival at Haneda airport, observing all the unfamiliar faces of those whom I would spend my 16 days with, I could sense the vibrant spirit emanating from the Japanese youth, a mixture of excitement and anxiousness for what lies ahead. Exhausted from the 20+ hours flight from Japan to Portugal, the people of Coimbra greeted us warmly by singing the World Youth Day theme song "Ha Pressa no Ar" which translates to "Feel the Rush in the Air". Young people from around the globe gathered, singing and dancing to the rhythm of the theme song.

Our time in Coimbra was the beginning of the excitement of our stay in Portugal. A way of getting to know all the young people, priests, locals, and religious men and women. We formed a connection and established a bond by engaging in activities like painting and pottery, exploring the town, a two-hour hike to reach a river, and an enjoyable never-ending youth festival. From strangers we became friends. Just like the host family that wholeheartedly welcomed us, with warm hugs and kisses, delicious Portuguese food was readily served on the table as we entered the house. In return, I presented a Japanese souvenir, a cherished rosary, and a heartfelt letter before we left Coimbra.

Our bond deepened even further on our days in Lisbon. Exhausting walks for hours and hours with millions of youths who came together to participate in the Way of the Cross, Vigil Prayer, and a Mass with the Pope. 1.5 million people, all kneeling in silence as the Eucharist was elevated, adoring Christ. People from all over the world, unite and support each other to ensure a safe journey back home. It was not an easy journey, but witnessing all of these, made the exhaustion and

heat we endured all worthwhile. It was the day I truly experienced the Universal Church. We are no longer strangers, but a family all sharing the same faith in God. The farewell was not easy, I met many wonderful people, and experienced a lot of enjoyment, and hardships with them on the way. But one thing is for sure, that I have got a friend all over the world. I pray that many young people will participate in the next World Youth Day.

■ Yuki Komo (Ishinomaki Church)

Selflessness



The words of the Pope still linger in my mind when he said, "Be careful of selfishness disguised as love". So, what is the difference between love and ego?

Whenever I see a homeless person selling The Big Issue magazine, I try to buy a copy. Not only because I find magazine interesting but I want to give a contribution. However, it still makes me wonder if this act is a gesture of love or selfishness. The Pope said, "When you stop loving others and become self-centered, you lose your light." Hence, what is the difference between love and selfishness?

I am still searching for the answer. However, this trip has given me some perspectives. In particular, I would like to share 2 things I learned from this pilgrimage. First, I got coronavirus. I slept for 2 days in a church with other sick people. One of them was a nun who served as a nurse. while she was suffering from a high fever, she offered her mattress to others and rested on the cold floor with a sleeping bag with no complaints. What was more impressive was that she did it as if it were nothing. Then, I heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Go and do the same thing." This reminds me of the parable of the Good Samaritan that "my neighbor" is the person right in front of me. Another thing I felt throughout this journey is something I have always sensed: kindness towards others in small acts. The first time I felt the essence of WYD was the music performance by the volunteers who welcomed us as we got off the bus. The second time was when strangers from different countries greeted me with warmth and friendliness which made me feel a bit lighter and warmer.

Becoming selfless and loving others can be highly challenging. However, I have witnessed many models in facing such challenges during the pilgrimage. I believe this journey has become an experience that is hard to replace with anything else.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for all my encounters during this journey. Especially to the friends who endured illness and nights spent in the sandy wilderness together. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Proverbs 17:17

■ Mako Senzaki (Moterakoji Church)

I remember feeling a vague yearning to go to WYD, which gradually turned into a strong desire to go to WYD! Thinking back, the reason why I joined the activities of the Youth Association was to make friends who would go to WYD with me. The event was postponed for a year due to the Covid-19, and I was wondering which I should prioritize, finding a job as a new graduate or participating in the WYD Lisbon. I chose to go to WYD. Now, I would like to share with you some of the "joys" I felt through WYD.



The first is the interest my parents have shown in the Mass and the Church as a result of my participation in WYD. I do not come from a Catholic family. Therefore, even though we talked about the Church at home, I felt a sense of loneliness in their reactions. That is why I felt great joy when my father attended the Send-off Mass with me and when my mother personally watched the WYD Masses and gatherings. At the same time, I am grateful that they understood and supported the activities of the church in their own ways. Next time, I would like to attend Mass with my whole family.

Second, I spent my "parish days" in the city of Coimbra. At a youth festival, I met a local woman whose grandparents lived in Mizusawa, Iwate, and who cherished the local martyrs. She was so happy to see the postcard of the Hirose River Martyrdom Monument that I brought as a souvenir and she was moved to tears. Fr. Calvaro, one of the martyrs, is from Coimbra, Portugal. He studied hard at the University of Coimbra, was

ordained as a priest, and later served as a missionary, preaching the Gospel to the people of Tohoku. Next February will mark the 400th anniversary of his martyrdom, and I felt that the passion of the martyrs still alive and well today.

Third, I was able to meet fellow members of the Japanese church who are working hard every day to provide liturgical services, such as serving as attendants. I had the opportunity to perform liturgical services for each church jurisdiction at the Mass after catechesis. I was the usher at a Mass where there were three bishops in the church and members I had never met before. I believe that I was able to serve successfully because of my passion for the liturgy. At the same time, we shared a lot about the liturgy through the preparation, which will encourage us in the future.

This WYD was not only "joyful" but also "painful" due to my poor health. However, after returning to Japan, I realized once again how many people had been praying for me. The Pope said "Thank you" many times at the end of the Mass. I also want to say many "Thank you" to those who prayed for me and supported me in various ways. The road to WYD starts from the moment you think "I want to go! I hope to see you in Rome and Korea next time! We are looking forward to seeing you in Rome and Korea!



Fr. Rafael Mejia

Yuki Komo

Mako Senzaki

DIOCESE NEWS UPDATE

Eucharistic Celebration for the 16th World Synod of Bishops was held at the end of the month of Mary

On Wednesday, May 31, the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all the churches of the world were called to walk in unity of heart, allowing the Holy Spirit to abundantly breathe upon and guide the work of the Synod under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At Mototerakoji Church, a "Prayer with the Blessed Virgin Mary for the 16th Ordinary Session of the World Synod of Bishops" was celebrated by Bishop Edgar Gacutan, Fr. Ignacio Martinez, Fr. Lee Seok, Fr. Miguel Varela, Fr. Hiroshi Sasaki, and Fr. Tadanori Kawasaki.

In his sermon, Bishop Gacutan said that the word Synod means "to walk together". Mary set out on a journey from Nazareth to the Jewish town of Elisabeth, a distance of about 163 kilometers (from Ofunato to Sendai). Seven months later, Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to register. The distance was about 150 kilometers.



When Jesus was born, they traveled about 700 kilometers to Egypt, and a few years later they returned to their hometown. Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem every year for Passover. It is 145 kilometers from Nazareth. When Jesus was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem together. At that time, Jesus was alone in the temple talking with the elders and the scribes. Mary was surprised, but she kept all these things in her heart. What does this mean? It means to think deeply about what we witness, experience, and marvel at. What was amazing? That God has done great things, and that God is faithful.

It means thinking over and over again. Mary reflected on God's mighty acts. God's powerful actions and remained convinced that God is on the journey with us. Mary's journey with Jesus' brothers, her children, she was traveling with them because she knew that God was indeed walking with his people. Mary knows the way. She continued her life of faith together with the disciples because she knew that God was truly with his people.

In a recent homily on the feast of Pentecost, Pope Francis said, "The Holy Spirit likes to descend when 'all are gathered. Yes, he chose the time and place of the gathering to reveal himself to the world. God's people must share the journey of "doing the Synod" to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this journey together, centered on the Holy Spirit, the harmony of the Church is renewed. The Church is obedient to the Holy Spirit.

As priests, we are to be obedient to the Holy Spirit through our monthly meetings, presbyterian meeting, district meetings, church community, study groups, and various meetings.

In the general intercession, representatives of the congregation, men, women, religious, priests, youth, and foreigners recited intentions. Finally, the prayer for the Synod, "Holy Spirit, we stand before you" were recited by everyone.

Tsuyoshi Seki

Diocesan Public Relations Committee member

Presbyterian Council Report

The first meeting of the Sendai Diocesan Presbyterian Council was held on Tuesday, April 11, after the first anniversary of Bishop Gacutan Edgar's ordination, with ten council members gathered around the bishop. After reciting the Synod prayer, "Seek the Holy Spirit," the Presbyterian Council members began by reading the "Rules of the Council of Priests of the Diocese of Sendai" chapter by chapter. After confirming that the Presbyterian Council would be operated in accordance with these rules, the election of the two officers of the Council took place. As a result, Fr. Yoo Chongpil and Fr. Osamu Sato were elected. With the intention of building a bridge between the Synod of the World Church and the Synod of the Sendai Diocese, three members of the Council were

appointed from among those in charge of the Diocesan Synod under the name of "Sendai Diocesan Synod Team": Bishop Kazuo Koda, Fr. Lee Seok, and Fr. Ignacio Martinez. Immediately, upon request from the Vatican's Synod Committee, the Synod Secretariat sent a message requesting to pray for the Synod on May 31, the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, but since it was so close, the Diocesan Synod Team discussed the matter and decided to meet on May 31, Wednesday, at 6:00 p.m. The second meeting of the Presbyterian Council was held on Tuesday, June 6, and the report was on the "Guidelines for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults". In the future, all priests must protect and advocate for minors and vulnerable adults in accordance with these guidelines.

The five District Coordinators then reported about their districts. Next came a report on the Asia Synod document on "Fellowship, Participation, and Mission. The use of the former "St. Paul's Bookstore" building was discussed, with Fr. Gary taking responsibility for the second floor for pastoral care of foreigners, and the first floor to be used as a church information center by Mototerakoji Church.

The third meeting was held on Tuesday, July 11. After a report on the current situation by the coordinators of each district, the current members of the "Committee for the Protection of Children's and Women's Rights" are preparing a "Declaration on the Prevention of Harassment". The main topic of discussion was pastoral care for foreigners in the diocese. The discussion was centered around the vision of "the Kingdom of God in the Diocese of Sendai in all its diversity," and the District Coordinators shared their concerns about the pastoral care of the people from different nationalities, the catechism of their children, the education and formation of their families. The discussion did not come to a conclusion. The discussion will continue in the future. The proposed revision of the "Rules and Regulations of the Pastoral Council for Mission" was also discussed. The Council of Deacons is also moving forward in its efforts to become a Synodal Church.

July 20, 2023

Fr. Ignacio Martinez, Chancellor

NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

Thanksgiving Mass of Fr. Kentaro Takagi

After his ordination Fr. Takagi celebrated First Masses in various parishes and convents.



Sacrament of Initiation

••On Easter Sunday, 5 people were baptized in Hachinohe, 2 people were baptized in Samemachi Church and 1 infant baptized in Towada Church.
••4 children received First Communion in Hachinohe.
••5 people received confirmation in Mototerakoji Church.

Summer Camp (Nodamachi and Matsukicho Church)

On July 17, 50 people participated in the Fukushima Catholic Church, Natsu no Tsudoi.



Vietnamese Tradition of Offering Flowers to Mary

Vietnamese tradition of offering flowers to Mary was held in the following churches:
••Mototerakoji Church on May 21st
••Koriyama Church on May 28th

