

FUKUSHIMA DESK NEWS

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Greetings

Hello, everyone! As of May 4, 2014, the Fukushima Desk moved from Nihonmatsu Catholic Church to a house at 1-12-14 Nodamachi. With a very grateful heart to Ms. Takako Yaginuma who has done the work of the Fukushima Desk while running “NPO Corporation Fukushima Vegetable Field” so efficiently, we, Sisters Sakuma, Fujiwara and Nogami, took over the responsibility of the Fukushima Desk. Everyone has been very kind to show us our new work here. We also thank you in advance for all the help from our new friends here.

The first responsibility we are aware of at the Fukushima Desk is the connection and/or support needed by the active groups involved in the problems of Fukushima.

We feel that it is our responsibility to prevent the memories and necessities of the tragedy from fading. We know we must inform those in Japan as well as outside of Japan about the status quo and the needs of Fukushima, firmly and clearly. Fukushima Block Conference is searching for ways to respond to the needs of each parish and organization according to the new direction given out from the Episcopal Conference on the occasion of beginning the third year after the Great Earthquake. It is our earnest hope to respond to the needs and situations of each group, so that there may be efficient cooperation and dialogue.

It is our feeling that the Good News is about to grow out of Fukushima. It is our ardent desire to open our eyes to the invisible and our ears to things that are inaudible, to understand the cry of the animals, plants and the earth, so that we can situate ourselves where Jesus is. Please help us with your prayers and advice.

“The Temporary Housing Complex of Adachi Athletic Park”

The Dispensary of Namie is situated in the Housing Complex in Adachi Athletic Park. In this dispensary, they have a whole body radiation check service, and there are facilities for day service, too. When I visited, there was a specialist in pottery giving a day service course in Soma Pottery, and nine or ten elderly people were participating.



A man who used to draw wonderful horses is now advanced in age, and is no more able to come. His pictures are now pinned on the front wall. There was also a large pot with a gorgeous picture of horses at the entrance, in which some lovely flowers were arranged. A lady raised her fist saying, “I’m 83. I’ll not die before I am 100, as I want to witness to the result of the radiation.” That was unforgettable. However, this same woman said after the rationed noon meal, “Well, these guys, after being fed, say nothing and do nothing and leave. That’s not nice. You people come to visit us from far away and try to console us.” Her words moved me.

A couple arrived in a car to have their whole body radiation check. They seemed to have a reservation, and the men working in the Namie town office looked after them. It was Saturday afternoon, but they said they did not mind as they were committed for the whole day. One of the officers turned to us and said, “This is a beautiful place. Since you have come all this way, you’d better enjoy here, too.” I was somewhat sad to hear that.

A lady who said she was born in 1922 said to me, “I cultivated the land in Namie, built a house with a large warehouse; but see what happened! You don’t know your own future. I am glad that my husband died young, so he didn’t have to experience all this.” “I have nothing to do all day, and I am bored.”

“We are lucky here, though. Many people visit us.”(N.B. In this area there are many supporting organizations, and people have more visitors than at other temporary houses.)



From Conversations with Chairpersons of Residents' Association

- A day service center called “Hopeful Futaba” was opened in the Temporary Housing Complex.
- The total number of residents in this complex is 514, from pre-school age to adults over 90.
- Among the residents, there are many elderly persons living alone. What should be done for them? 22 men and 58 women. We hesitate to force them to come out. People try to pay attention to their neighbors, but they really don't know each other. They come from different villages. Namie consists of 49 regions, and the residents received here come from various regions, so they do not know each other, which makes it difficult to socialize. Those 49 regions are classified into three categories: (1) not recommended to return; (2) preparation to return can be considered; and (3) recommended to return. Each of these has its own difficulties.
- Our attitude towards radiation has changed. We used to be more careful, wearing a mask when tidying up in our house, but we are less worried. Only 19% of us still want to return, and a little over 30% cannot decide. Those who were eager to go back before are now hesitant to return; especially those who have little children are reluctant.
- When I went to my house in Namie this time, a pig was sleeping in my bed! (Pigs have a habit of creeping under something.)
- When I go back to my house in Namie for some hours with my child to clean and tidy up the house, my child says, “Daddy, it's time to go home. Let's go back.” (For him, the temporary residence is

already “home”.)

- Three men were frozen to death while lining up at the gas stand to fill up their cars.
- After evacuation, some of the people found out that where they were instructed to go, i.e. Tsushima, had the highest radiation. Most of them had to change the place of shelter 7 or 8 times. While their residence was not definitive, they did not receive any material or financial help.
- The people of Namie were placed in 280 different places, which had been prepared by Kosoku Tourist Company in a hurry. The local authority does not know who moved where. The Daiwa Housing Company decided who would live in which temporary house. This ended up breaking up into different groups people of various regions.
- Due to the delay of the acceptance of children from the public school in Namie, the children of Namie were not well organized. The children living in this temporary house complex go to various schools. That makes the population of school children of Namie only 17, while there used to be over 500. At the time of a disaster, it is preferable to organize evacuation by school areas.
- Some went out to the sea shore immediately after the earthquake, and fell in between sea wall pieces. They shouted asking for help, but those who wanted to go and rescue them were forbidden to enter the area due to the radiation accident. There are still areas that have not been investigated as to how many were killed there. The family members hope that TEPCO can find the bodies of their loved ones, as they do not hold a grudge against them.
- In the wide garden of their former houses in Tsushima, there are many kinds of plants, whether wild or originally cultivated. They look perfectly natural and normal now, but the people were not allowed to go in freely to take care of these plants for the first two years. Then suddenly they are told that they are free to enter the area. What was the meaning of the conclusion of the accident? No one can understand.

- All such stories and complaints can be heard as low murmuring.

The Children's Voices

- Children seem to be enduring everything so quietly. When we asked them to write their compositions at the parish Sunday School in the city of Fukushima, they wrote in simplicity all that they had kept in their hearts.
- Here is some of their sharing in the *Namie Heart Talk*. “my mother and my sister Mai escaped in a car. All we had in the car was a chocolate bar. How hungry I was! We slept in the car that night. I am still treasuring a stuffed frog, for I have no other toy with me.
- If it is at all possible, I wish to go back to March 10, and see the ocean, frogs, tadpoles, crayfish, etc. around our house. My strongest attachment is to Taro, my cat. I am worried about him. What do you think he is doing now?
- While at Namie, we visited the Marine Park, had a barbecue party and had lots of fun with my friends. In the elementary school which I attend now there are five classes in every grade, and I have a hard time learning all their names. My former school had only one class for each grade, so we knew one another and were all good friends. While I was still at Namie, my grandpa told me that rice was planted on my dad's birthday, and it was to be harvested on my birthday. My birthday will come after I go to bed eight more times, and I am really looking forward to it. My sister Mai lives in Tokyo now. She loves trains and buses, so she says she can enjoy Tokyo, but she misses frogs in Tokyo.” (Quoted from the interview with Nanami Izumida, 2nd grade, from *Namie Heart Talk*.)

The Nuclear Power Plant Exploded, But Not My Heart!

“After the earthquake, my family moved to Odaka Technical High, Soma City, Kakuda City in Miyagi, Saitama Prefecture, Adatara Gymnasium, Tsuchiyu Hot Springs, and just recently to a temporary house in Shinobu Dai, Kamitoriwata. Next to our house

on the south side live my grandpa and grandma, and Ichi, our dog. So we are all together.

Now I go to school to Arakawa Elementary School. It makes me happy to be with some boys and girls who I used to know at Ikusebashi Elementary School before the earthquake. I have new friends, too. Our athletic meeting will be September 18. I am looking forward to it.

I remember such events as the Bon dancing at Uihatsu Shrine, the Rice Cake pounding party, enjoying the rice cake Zoni, and the crayfish catching party in Namie. I also remember how we all enjoyed making straps with beads when we were third graders.

Yuma Harada, a very good friend of mine in Ikusebashi Elementary School, went to Joho Elementary School in Kori, the place of his evacuation. Imagine each of the children of Yuma's class that I had never met wrote me a letter to encourage me. They are really my treasure!” (Quoted from *Namie Heart Talk*, Interview with Takamasu Kori, 4th grade)

Workers at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant – Commandos Prepared in Haranomachi, Minami Soma City

Shortly after the accident at Fukushima First Nuclear Power Plant, we heard repeatedly the stories about the local men who were sent to work there.

For example, how the president of the cooperation company sent out his men called the Fukushima Fifties, who felt prepared to give their life for the solution of the problem; and how the young men remaining in Minami Soma said, “I wonder if I'll volunteer to work there,” and how their mothers were heartbroken as they were reminded of the women whose sons volunteered for the Special Attack Corps during World War II.

In the first place, the ground of Fukushima First Power Plant used to be Iwaki Airport belonging to Japan Air Force, and was used as a training base for the Special Attack Corps since February 1945.

One can verify the fact because of the monument at the foot of the observatory today. I have no time to go all the way to confirm it, but there is another airport in Haranomachi in the same area, where there is a Shintoist shrine which was built during World War II to pray for the protection of the young soldiers, and to this day there is still a monumental statue standing there of the boys prepared for the Special Attack.

The official report was submitted to the government in 1931, to state that the site was suited for an airport. At that time there was no such thing as the subsidy for a nuclear plant. The local people must have hoped for the development of the area by inviting the military forces there. (Quoted from "J-one 8")

Location	Direct deaths	Connected deaths	Notification	Total
Fukushima	6	9		15
Date		1		1
Kunimi	1			
Kawamata		19		19
Ootama		1		1
Koriyama	5	7	2	14
Sukagawa	9	1	1	11
Tamura		9		9
Kagamiishi		2		2
Ishikawa		1		1
Miharu		1		1
Shirakawa	12			12
Nishigo	3			3
Aizuwakamastu	1	3		4
Soma	439	26	19	484
Minamisoma	525	452	111	1088
Hirono	2	39		41
Naraha	11	100	2	113
Tomiooka	18	244	6	268
Kawauchi		72		72
Okuma	11	103		114
Futaba	17	99	3	119
Namie	149	329	33	511
Kasturao		24	1	25

Shinchi	100	9	10	119
Iitate	1	42		43
Iwaki	293	125	37	455
Total	1603	1718	225	3546

Missing in the Prefecture (reported by Prefectural Police: 267

(Quoted from *Fukushima Mimpo*, May 11, 2014)

The Workers Today

On the 11th of every month, Fukushima Mimpo Newspaper updates the daily documents concerning the nuclear plant.

- *The Kahoku Shimpo* (a local newspaper from Sendai), with the title "DO NOT TELL ANYONE" and the subtitle "Arrested Former Gang Executive Instructed Workers". The article reports that the workers who revealed the fact were menaced by Email that they would be victims of revenge. Among the workers involved in the decontamination, there are many who come from distant areas. They told the reporters that some of them are hired by the second, third, ...and even seventh or eighth subcontractor, and that meant each time they are subcontracted, their income is exploited. So some of them were receiving a truly slight amount of salary. They also told the reporters that working on mountainous areas and cliffs was scary, and the work could no more be called decontamination but forestry. The reporters were shocked by the fact that the workers are taking powdered carbon so that the radioactive substance they had inhaled may be let out. Where they work the radioactivity was 6muSv/h. They had known the facts theoretically, but meeting those men and hearing about it directly was really shocking.
- *The Fukushima Mimpo*, May 14, 2014 reported the suspicion of concealment of actual facts of accidents which happened during the decontamination work, to escape the Workers' Accidents Comensation Insurance.
- From *The Center News* issued from Nishinari Labor Welfare Center, Kamagasaki, issued on March 15, 2014. Compared with the investigation of last year,

they see a decrease of about 300 members. It is suspected that the decrease is caused by their move to Northern Japan for a job in decontamination, or to Tokyo area where the men are paid better if they wait for the work for Tokyo Olympics. According to the investigation of the Center, the majority of the business units answered they were not involved in the decontamination work. Those involved in decontamination were 13 companies out of 226, which was only 5.8%. The latter had also been approached by the decontamination organization but they refused, the reasons given were mainly “they were already shorthanded” and “the working conditions were not transparent.

- The reasons why the companies are reluctant to send their members for the work of decontamination are that 1) the men are not officially employed if they have no insurance card, i.e. they need to be identified; 2) the remuneration is too cheap; 3) people are busy enough at home, and they do not need to go far; and 4) lodging is usually common rooms, and the environment, poor.

The Government Built Apartment Complex

The present state of the government built complex differs from place to place. In Fukushima and Aizu Wakamatsu, the quorum is not reached. In cities like Koriyama and Iwaki have the highest number of applicants, counting 4.6 times as many. The overall average is 1.4 times.

The reason for the uneven popularity, according to the local officials, is suspected to be the change in environment of the evacuees since the first investigation. The questionnaires were taken 18 times in each of ten local units like cities and/or villages. The later the inquiry, the less enthusiasm to return. There are some people who are interested in buying their own houses if the amount of compensation is revised, rather than accepting the government prepared complex. Besides, many of them have become used to the present location, and are reluctant to start a new life in an unknown place. This inclination is prevalent among the elderly. (Based on Fukushima Mimpo, May 20, 2014.)

Encouragement to Return – The Administration and Inhabitants

The government is checking the product of the radiation in individuals who returned home temporarily, and the result is published each time. Based on this, the data of the feasibility of returning is obtained.

	families	persons	Produced numberof radiation
Tomioka	12	28	0~8 μ Sv/h
Okuma	34	81	0~23 μ Sv/h
Fitaba	32	69	0~26 μ Sv/h
Namie	22	51	1~24 μ Sv/h

(Quoted from Fukushima Mimpo, May 20, 2014)

Mr. Matsumoto, escaping from Naraha Machi and living in a house rented by Iwaki City, says he would like very much to return to his own house when the time comes to be allowed to live in Naraha, but when he visited his former residence recently, his house had gone wild with rats. Even if he prepared to live there, the amount of radiation bothers him. His house was decontaminated, but the hill behind his house showed 2 μ sv/h. The present situation makes him worry, so he cannot decide what he should do. (Fukushima Mimpo, May 15, 2014.)

(Prepared by Sister Nogami)