

# DIOCESE OF SENDAI

## GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE NEWS

No. 1

30 April 2011

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Publisher: Tetsuo Hiraga Editor: Fumiaki Komatsu  
Postal Money Transfer Account : 02260-9-2305  
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### Thank you! Your help has arrived!

To all who have supported the Sendai diocese:

As soon as the earthquake and tsunami occurred, we received many phone calls, faxes and letters to encourage us. It is impossible for words to express how much your prayers and thoughts have helped us. "Thank you" is all we can say.

When the disaster struck on March 11, we immediately lost telephone, electricity, gas and water service at the Motoderakoji Cathedral. We were unable to learn conditions in the worse-hit areas.

Only on March 14 were we able to make contact and get a fuller picture of the situation. It became clear that damage due to the earthquake and subsequent tsunami was extensive and that it would take quite some time to get the full picture. Not knowing what had become of priests and parishioners, workers in Church institutions, children in our schools and kindergartens heightened our anxieties.



The tsunami flooded the Kamaishi Church in Iwate prefecture to a depth of 70cm and left a mountain of debris just below the church. Immediately after the tsunami, the parish began relief efforts.

The upper right corner of this photo shows the Ofunato church grounds. The tsunami reached just below the grounds and nearly washed away the kindergarten bus.



Of 53 parishes in the diocese, 14 in three prefectures suffered significant damage. In Iwate: Ofunato and Kamaishi; in Miyagi: Kita-Sendai, Shiogama, Higashi-Sendai, Motoderakoji, Yagiyama, Tsukidate, Yonekawa, Furukawa and Shiroishi; in Fukushima: Aizuwakamatsu, Yumoto, Shirakawa and Sukagawa. Twelve other churches were damaged less extensively. An April 7 aftershock added further damage. It is still too early to know how much it will cost to repair all the damage. And, the Haramachi Church in Fukushima is within the radiation pollution zone of the nuclear power plant that was damaged by the tsunami.

To see the scope of the disaster, see this internet site:  
<http://maps.google.co.jp/maps/ms?hl=ja&ie=UTF8&brcurrent=3,0x34674e0fd77f192f0xf54275d47c665244,0&msa=0&msid=212684037041389941190.00049fdac9ff74bb703c1&z=7>



The entrance to a Catholic's home. The sludge sends a stench throughout the house.

We wanted to send this report and our thanks to you much sooner, but we have been so busy with relief work that we have not been able to do so. We are very grateful for all the assistance we have received, and ask your forgiveness and understanding for the delay. Following newsletters will describe the work of the Sendai Diocese Support Center since March 16.



A letter and origami cranes from Sri Lanka assuring us of prayers and fellowship.

Many messages like these from New York school-children promising their prayers have arrived at our office.

Similar assurances of prayers and support have come from dioceses and parishes throughout Japan.



A banner from the Osaka diocese hangs in the Shiogama Church with messages in Japanese, English, Korean and Persian.

### The Situation in Diocesan Institutions

**Parishes:** As of April 5, we know of 12 Catholics who are confirmed dead and seven who are missing. There are 58 households whose homes were either destroyed or badly damaged.

**Convents:** There have been no reports of injuries, but the Notre Dame Sisters' Hanasono convent in Fukushima suffered structural damage that makes it unusable. A spiral staircase on the front of the Ursuline Sisters' convent in Sendai is unusable. The Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph of Osaka convent will also need major repairs to its outer walls. In addition to these three convents that will need major repairs, 18 others had lesser damage.

**Kindergartens and Nurseries:** No staff of the 57 kindergartens and nurseries in the diocese died, but six children and seven family members of children died. Twenty-four homes of children were totally destroyed and another five had major damage. Two institutions were badly damaged, while 16 others suffered some degree of damage.

**Schools:** There have been no reports of deaths among staff of the 16 schools and colleges in the diocese. Two family members of students at St. Ursula High School in Sendai died. Thirty-three homes of students were destroyed. Two schools, Sendai Shirayuri and St. Ursula's, had ceilings collapse, requiring about three months to repair, and seven other schools reported various degrees of damage.

**Medical, Social Service and other Institutions:** There are no reports of deaths among staff. Repairs to Spellman Hospital are expected to cost ¥50 million. Two homes for the elderly will require ¥12 million worth of repairs.

**Note:** Because construction firms are extremely busy, and a strong aftershock on April 7 has caused further damage, it has been impossible so far to get absolutely accurate estimates of repair needs and costs.