

Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

No.9 Issue(245)

December 5, 2021

Catholic Sendai Diocese

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Celebration of the Novena of Peace

On Sunday, August 8, Fr.Sasaki celebrated the Mass for the Peace Season 2021 at the Sendai Cathedral. Each parish in the Sendai Diocese also offered a "Mass for Peace" on the same day. At the Cathedral, Fr.Sasaki, offered the Mass on behalf of the diocese.

During the homily, Fr.Sasaki began by asking in a friendly manner, "Do you all know what Peace Season is? In 1981, Pope John Paul II came to Japan for the first time before Pope Francis came last year. He visited Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Hiroshima, where the first atomic bomb was dropped, he issued an "Appeal for Peace" to the whole world. There were some very memorable words in the appeal that touched the hearts of people all over the world. The words were, "War is the work of man. War is the destruction of human life. War is death. I came to Japan as a pilgrim of peace." He said, "and to look back on the past is to take responsibility for the future."

In response to the Pope's words, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan decided to commemorate the 10



days from August 5 to 15 every year as the "Peace Season". Those 10 days include August 6 and 9, the days when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let us always remember this, especially today, as we continue to pray and celebrate Mass for peace. At the end he said to rejoice that the Mass could be offered in the midst of pandemic. There were about 100 participants who came to attend the celebration.

Sendai Catholic Youth Ministry Sharing the Journey



I am Mako Senzaki, the new representative of the Sendai Diocesan Youth Ministry. I would like to take this opportunity to greet you.

We, the Sendai Diocesan Youth

Ministry, are working together with Fr.Rafa, our priest adviser, and our friend. Particularly this year, we begun with a new priest adviser, new leaders, and a new journey. Also, we have started holding masses, meetings, and social events for the youth as the need arise so that they can share the same journey of faith.

However, there were various restrictions on the planned activities due to Covid-19. We have to change or cancel plans because of the increasing number of infected cases in the area. The summer camp that was scheduled for August was postponed and was eventually cancelled. This experience made me realize once again that we need to cherish every activity we do together. Like for example, it was a great joy to celebrate together the Priest Ordination Anniversary of Fr. Rafa on August 4. Some members of the youth group, the Provincial Superior of Guadalupe

Missionary, Seminarian Kentaro Takagi, and the parishioners of Ishinomaki Church graced the occasion.

As a token, the youth group gave Fr. Rafa a message card with a cherry blossom motif that decorated the cassock he wore on his ordination day which symbolized his mission in Japan. It was an important moment for us to express our gratitude to Fr.Rafa and pray that he will be able to fulfill God's mission.

Due to state of emergency, the holy masses and other gatherings in the church were suspended. However, the youth group started the rosary prayer online in early September and I tried to be more active in networking online. The rosary prayer is available on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook homepages of the Sendai Youth Ministry.



In addition, in late September, I attended the biannual steering committee meeting of the National Catholic Youth Network as an observer. The purpose of this meeting is to share information about youth activities in different parts

of the world. I am also thankful to ,the Oriens Institute of Religion who published an article on the "Introduction of the Sendai Diocesan Youth Ministry" in its weekly magazine "Kojika" (No. 2755, October 10).

Although we come from different walks of life, I believe that through prayers and collaboration, we can become one because God gathered us together here. And so, the

new journey of the Sendai Diocesan Youth Ministry has begun. I would like to continue to respond to God's call and work in gathering the youth so that we can share the same journey of faith.

Mako Senzaki, Leader of the Catholic Youth Association of Sendai Diocese

District News Update

District # 1

Farewell to the Sisters of Maria-in



On Sunday, May 9, a thanksgiving service was held during the Eucharistic Celebration for Aomori Fuji Seibo Maria-in. Those who attended were able to bade farewell to the sisters. On May 12, Aomori Seibo Maria-in was closed. The sisters were transferred to different Maria-in Convents in Hokkaido.

After World War II, November 1946, the Franciscan Sisters of St. George the Martyr were asked to open a nursery for war orphans to cope with the needs created by the chaotic period at the end of the war. For more than 70 years, the sisters continued to devote themselves in taking care of the orphans.

Congratulations on your baptism, Zion Izumi !



On Sunday, September 5th, an infant baptismal service was held during the Eucharistic Celebration. The baptized child is Zeno Izumi Zion, who was born on December 4, 2020,shi is 9 months old. Zion is the second daughter of Takashi and Marisa Izumi, who live in Sotogahama Town, and her godmother is Mana Marie Kosaka. Fr.Patrick Castroverde baptized the child.

Taku Sotozaki, Honcho Church

District #2

Baptism and First Communion

In the midst of pandemic, Masumi Kubota was baptized under the baptismal name of Francis during the Easter Vigil Mass on April 3. Mr. Kubota has been teaching at Sei Urusula School in Hachinohe for many years. Mr. Shigemi Fujimura, the godfather, is his senior colleague of the same school, who comes from a devout Catholic family of Shiocho Church.



On August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Hiroki Tanose and Clara Yoshida, 3rd year students, received the First Communion.

Makoto Yachinaka, Shiocho Church

District #3

Vietnamese Mass at Yotsuya Church

The Vietnamese youth group have been coming regularly to Sunday Mass at Yotsuya Church in Morioka since last year when Fr. Phong started the Vietnamese Mass. They brought a very vibrant atmosphere in the church and their joyful faith. Even if Fr.Phong has been transferred, the Vietnamese youth group regularly gather and attend mass in Iwate Church.

Recently, they have invited a Vietnamese Priest from Odate Church (Akita) to preside the Vietnamese mass in Yotsuya this summer season.

Shigehiro Mayama, Yotsuya Church



Celebrating the First Anniversary of the Vietnamese Catholic Group in Iwate

To all the priests, sisters, and members of the Yotsuya Parish, we would like express our great joy and deep gratitude for your support as we celebrate the first anniversary of the Vietnamese Catholic Group in Iwate.



First, we would like to thank God and all of you who supported us. As we look back, time is not just a number, but it is God's grace, pouring out His infinite love and mercy to all of us. We came here for different reasons, but you have always welcomed us like we are part of Iwate family.

Like the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have gone through many struggles and joys in organizing the Vietnamese group. With the grace of God, we want to follow our saints and do our best to be a witness to the Kingdom of God.

Like a one-year-old child, we still need your support and guidance. I also pray that God will continue to bless all of us. Thank you very much.

Nguyen Van Chi

District #7 Baptismal Ceremony

On June 27th, a baptism was held in Nodamachi Church, Fukushima. Ms. Abe, the newly baptized Christian, spent almost her entire youth at the Sakura no Seibo School, from kindergarten until she graduated at the Junior College. She gradually developed a desire to be baptized. However, due to various reasons, the timing did not work out. She continued to wait for the right time. In the meantime, she was strongly convinced that she wanted to live a life in relationship with God.



About three and a half years ago, she joined the bible study class with the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame. After waiting for 50 years, she finally got baptized. She was so happy that she wanted to know more about God.

Yuko Watanabe, Nodamachi Church

Foreigner Support for those affected by the pandemic

In July 2020, Matsukicho and Nodamachi Parishes jointly started supporting foreigners living in Fukushima City who were affected by the pandemic. There are many foreigners living in Fukushima City, which includes the technical interns, foreign students, and those foreigners married to Japanese. Alice Sakuma did some research and found out that there are 68 people from 24 households who have lost their jobs due to Covid-19.



We collected donations from the parishioners, both in cash and in kinds. The most appreciated item was the rice. Mr. Sakai purchased 24 sacks of 5 kilo rice and delivered to the beneficiaries. We also delivered household regular medicines to 10 families who do not have health insurance. As long as the Covid-19 is around, the two parishes will continue to work together to support the foreigners.

Mizuho Komada, Matsukicho Church

Funeral Mass of Fr. John Hiraku Kawai



Fr. John Hiraku Kawai passed away on October 9 at the age of 95. He was born in Yamagata in 1925. He was ordained priest in 1956. He has been assigned to Mototerakoji, Tsukidate, Nishi-Sendai, and Furukawa parishes as well as director of Gyosei En Nursing Home and Furukawa Catholic Nursery School.

Many messages of gratitude received on the occasion of his passing away mentioned his dedication to prayer and mass, his passion to speak about God, his enthusiasm to teach the spirit of Christianity, his respect for children as an educator, his wise advices and above all his 65 years of fidelity to his priestly vocation.



Introduction of Priests

Fr. Joseph, Hiroshi Sasaki

Date of Birth : March 3, 1935

Place of Birth : Minami Soma City,
Fukushima

Ordination Date : June 8, 1963

Ordination Place : Ottawa Cathedral,
Canada



When I was a student at Haranomachi High School in Fukushima Prefecture, Bishop Kobayashi Arikata came for his first canonical visit to Haranomachi Church and he asked me, "What are you doing now?". I replied, "I'm preparing for my entrance exam to Tohoku University." He replied, "Why don't you join Sophia University? If you are admitted at Sophia University, you can enter the seminary in Tokyo. Then you have a chance to study aboard." I immediately talked to my mother and told her of my desire to become a priest (my father died of illness in Manchuria at the age of 34) and she agreed.

I was ordained a priest in Ottawa, the Capital of Canada, by Archbishop Lemieux, the first bishop of Sendai Diocese. I spent the next three years studying canon law at the graduate school of St. Paul University in Ottawa. During those years, I had a very enriching experience as a student and as a priest at a parish in the Ottawa suburbs. When I came back to Sendai Diocese, I gained more experience in mission and pastoral ministry when I was assigned in the Diocesan Office and the different parishes of Miyagi, Iwate and Aomori Prefectures.

As one of the priests of the 6th Pastoral District, I am extremely aware of the inadequacy of my involvement in the mission and pastoral care of each parish. In other words, if we are not careful, priests can only offer Mass on Sundays and say good-bye until next month, which is a very limited service.

Anyway, the Sendai Diocese has experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake and has been guided by the "New Creation" plan for 10 years, and has continued to become an open church. But the ongoing faith formation and education of the parishioners to live out the gospel, which is the original mission of the church, remains an issue. Specially the family of the parishioners, which is the microcosm of the church, where they live out their faith and pass it on to the next generation, their children. For this, an ongoing faith formation for parents has to be implemented.

The foundation of this ongoing faith formation is the Bible study. It should be conducted regularly and consistently in each parish involving everyone. Besides, Pope Francis encouraged us to shift the church's activities to be more open to the society so that it can become a "church that goes out".

As Pope Francis emphasized in his general audience upon his return to the Vatican, that Japan should be a leading country in "realizing world peace" and in the "protection of the global environment". It is my hope that the Catholic Church in Japan can be a pioneer in this regard.

Fr. John the Baptist, Naoki Morita

Date of Birth : June 23, 1965

Place of Birth : Kyoto City, Kyoto

Ordination Date : April 23, 1993

Ordination Place : Kyoto Cathedral,
Kawaramachi Church



My name is Morita Naoki. My baptismal name is John the Baptist. I was born in Kyoto, Japan on June 23, 1965. I was a premature baby and sickly. But I grew up healthy up to now. I spent the rest of my life in Kyoto until I graduated from a Catholic junior high school and high school.

I was ordained a priest on April 25, 1993, at Kawaramachi Church in Kyoto Cathedral of the Diocese of Kyoto. My desire to be a priest coincides with my Christian Baptism when I was a sophomore high school. My first-year high school Ethics and Social Studies teacher was a priest. It was a hot day in early summer, and he had probably passed by the school on his way home from the funeral. But he took off his black Roman collar formal wear in front of us. It's called a gilet. I remember laughing out loud when I saw the priest's robe that looked like Kintaro's apron. At the same time, I was fascinated by Father's unpretentious way of revealing himself, so I asked him if I could go to the church to see his real work. He said yes. But unfortunately, it did not happen because he died of cancer the following year. During the prayer of the rosary, I overheard the women talking, "with the death of this priest, there will be fewer priests in the Kyoto Diocese." Upon hearing such concern, I wondered if I could become a priest. And, that was the beginning of my vocation as a priest.

When I became a priest, Bishop Tanaka told me, "Do not ask the bishop for money, and do not refuse any job that he asks you to do." Even now, it has become my motto to never turn down any job that is requested, as long as my schedule allows it. Another thing that I try to value as a priest is the various encounters I have with people. In my daily prayers, I am grateful for the encounters I have had and offer prayers for various people.

Not only in the Sendai Diocese, but also in the Church in Japan, I feel that the "joy of faith" is not sufficiently witnessed. I believe that faith is not a burden or a hardship, but joy itself. I believe that each one of us is sent into the world filled with joy and filled with God's grace every day. I want to firmly accept God's overflowing grace every day.

Last but not least, it has been 10 years since I was dispatched from the Diocese of Kyoto to the Diocese of Sendai after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. I believe that your prayers have always helped me in my journey so far. I would like to thank you for your prayers and ask to continue praying for me.