



That they may be one! Jn. 17:21

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Be Strong Wherever You Are!

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Greetings from Yokote!. May the peace of the Holy Triune God rest upon us all.

First of all I would like to `confess` that neither English nor Japanese are my native languages, although I have used these two languages as tools on my pastoral work to both Japanese and non-Japanese here in Japan.

As a member of Societas Verbi Divini (SVD), I was sent to Japan after my ordination to the priesthood. I studied in Japanese language and culture in Nanzan University, after which I was sent to Akita Church for about two years as Assistant Parish priest. In 2006, I was assigned to Yokote, a city of Kamakura. A place that is also blessed with many natural resources, and of course with very warm and friendly people. It is here in

Yokote that I was asked to celebrate English Mass by a group of faithful Filipinas. It was hard for me to give a quick `Yes` right away since English is not my mother language. But after reflecting upon their request, I began to be aware that language is not only a matter whether one is a native or non-native speaker but also a matter of whether `you want to use it or not`. Furthermore, the Filipinos are not only speaking English, but also Tagalog, etc, and some are fluent in Japanese due to the length of stay, while I myself am using Manggarai (my mother tongue), Bahasa (Indonesia's national language), and English and Japanese for pastoral works. And so English is being used as a medium of communication among the foreigners in the parish which are not only the Filipinos but also young English teachers who came from around the globe like Singapore, USA, Canada, New Zealand, England, and other European countries.

During these nearly 5 years now, we have been using both English and Japanese as official languages for the Eucharist. We pray and sing in both Japanese and English. Sometimes we have Tagalog songs which I myself could not understand, but can feel the spiritual power by just listening to the way they sing it. To this point I am blessed, by the way they express their Christian faith in their amazing and beautiful voices. Although there are misunderstandings out of language differences, we enjoy our small community and try to insert ourselves into the Japanese. We are not going to create a separate community within the parish. We are now on the way of building up a strong bridge to reach our Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ. We know that this is not an easy way, but we believe that it is possible as long as there is an open hand, heart and mind.

To end this article I would like to cite the second part of Joseph Medlicott Scriven's song , "What a Friend We Have in Jesus": *Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.*

To my brothers and sisters in the district of Akita, I would like to tell you that it is an immeasurable blessing for me to be with you. I do hope that everyone finds a good time to praise the Lord not only in the Holy Eucharist, but also wherever you are. Try to bring your Japanese family, and invite your friends as well to the church, share your sorrows and joys with others, for in Jesus we come to draw spiritual power that makes us strong to move forward. In the name of the Lord, Be strong wherever you are!

Ang Mabuting Balita ay...

To Look for the Good Things in Life

(Luke 11:37-41)

A REFLECTION FOR MEDITATION:

The gospel reminds us of a truism: if you point a finger to someone else, three of your fingers point back at you. The Pharisees tried to justify attacking Jesus by accusing Him of violating Jewish cultural and moral norms. They saw Jesus usurping their authority and becoming a threat to the Jewish nation by incurring the ire of the Roman rulers. Actually they knew deep down in their hearts that they brought upon themselves the wrath of the people and the Romans, because they missed the whole intention or spirit of the law. They saw the little violation of the law but missed the glaring sinful spectacle of their shortcomings. Laws are meant to make life better and in the process, make ourselves better.

The gospel warns us not to be afraid of so many things. Jesus invites us to look for the good things in life. Are we not blessed with life? Are we not surrounded with friends and family? Are we not blessed everyday? To paraphrase Stephen King, monsters and ghosts truly exist but mainly in our minds. Most of what we fear is the product of our own insecurity. Let us focus instead on the good we can do right here and now. Life is too short to be lived in fear. (Word in Other Words by Fr. Reynaldo Jimenez, SVD)



The Gathering of Christians from different churches is an annual event in Nagaoka District. This year, the 35th Shinto Taikai, was held in Itoigawa on June 5 with the theme, “Kyoukai Koso Majiwari no Ba” (The Church: A place of Bonding and of Togetherness). There were more than 200 participants including children, and the presence of the Filipinos from Sado Island added spice. Fr. Fumio Goto, SVD, of Kichijoji Parish in Tokyo, was the invited speaker. He shared his apostolate experience in Cambodia through slide-shows. After lunch, Bp. Isao Kikuchi, SVD shared about the out-reached activities of Niigata Diocese to the disaster-hit area in Sendai, and challenged the group for volunteer works which is still on-going. Then the Nagaoka chiku Shinto soukai was presented by Sawada-san of Takada. Later, the group gathered outside for the picture-taking, then the Flores de Mayo procession started going to the church for the celebration of the Holy Mass. There were five young Christians in Itoigawa, all were children of Filipina mothers, who received the Sacrament of Confirmation administered by the Bishop during the Mass. (ced)

The Gathering of All Christians: A Reflection

I was able to join the gathering of all Christians last June 5 in Itoigawa Church. While we are on our way to Itoigawa, we prayed the Holy Rosary and sang religious songs. We also brought the statue of Our Lady for the Flores de Mayo procession. I was enlightened by the inspiring words of the speaker, and I was also moved by the encouraging words of the Bishop. In respond, I hope to be more active and also motivate my self and others in serving the church. The Philippines is the most predominantly Christian country in the Asian region. I can say that as a Filipino I am unique not only among Asian countries but to the world because of my religion, political history and cultural heritage. And as a Christian I have also to be a light to others as by the way I live. The gathering was an opportunity to look forward with openness to the new experiences and challenges in life as I continue serving God in my community. (Imelda Nezu - Muikamachi)

NEWS and EVENTS



FAMILY DAY in MYOKO

In a natural atmosphere of Myoko, the Itoigawa and Joetsu group celebrated the 5th Family Day on July 17 with the theme: *“Buhay Pananam-palataya: Mahalagang Sangkap Para sa Patuloy na Paglago ng Sarili, Pamilya at Komunidad”*. The opening liturgy started at 10:15 A.M. in the chapel, after which the group had a short game as unfreezing activity while the a

group of men prepared the BBQ for lunch. The mothers and Filipino trainees gathered again in the church for the input activity presented by Fr. Ferdimar Faminialagao, SVD. This year’s family day was a different one. The participants had the chance to portray the Gospel parable of *“The Prodigal Son, The Good Samaritan and The Workers in the Vineyard”* in a form of a drama. Through this activity everybody had the chance to interact with openness to each other and share their views, and reflections about the gospel. Each one acted out their role very well and portrayed the challenges of the gospel message in real life situations. The whole day activity culminated with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist together with the Japanese parishioners. With much gratitude to God for the gift of family, for the unconditional love and patience of Fr. Ferdy in guiding us in our spiritual formation, and to all participants (including our special guest from Sado) who joyfully supported this celebration, we can sing *“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.”* May everyday be a Happy Family Day for your family, all the days of your life. (ced)

FAMILY DAY in TOKAMACHI

This year’s celebration of Family Day in Nagaoka District I (Tokamachi, Kashiwazaki and Nagaoka) was held last July 24, and hosted by the Tokamachi Filipino Community. It’s in forth year, and attended by 104 active participants. This year’s theme was stated in Filipino language as: *“Pamilya na Nagbubuklog sa Pag-ibig, Tanda ng Pagiging Kristiyano”* and in English it means that Family that binds in Love is a symbol/



sign of being Christian. The theme was based on the prayer of Jesus and on the situation where He prepares for His departure then afterwards gave the new commandment to his disciples: *“...Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.”* To concretized the theme, group games were held, singing and dancing were also performed by participants. The event was highlighted by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided by our own Filipino Priest, Fr. Ferdimar Faminialagao, SVD, and our Parish Priest, Fr. Manabu Takahashi. Fr. Ferdy pointed out in his homily that only love can bind families. Bonding in families are in danger when the time of not eating together anymore becomes visible, and so the Filipinos are advised to always gather before the banquet. It is therefore, we as Christians, as followers of Jesus, should always gather together in the banquet of His Body and Blood, in the Holy Mass. The more we gather at the banquet of the Lord, the more we can get closer to one another, and we will truly build the Body of Christ which is the Church. We ended the event with a prayer and a song. (ml)

THE FAMILY DAY IN MYOKO

Family Day is a yearly activity that I have longed to take part with my family. But because of hectic schedules with my work and family, this year's Family Day was just my second time to experience bonding with other Filipinos and their families.

The challenge of Family Day of last year which was in a form of a question; "Why we are here and where are we now?" gave me an insight on how I have grown in terms of my faith-journey. How I have grown in my faith as a Christian? This year's theme was: **Life of faith is of great importance in order to grow in our relationship with God, our family and with our neighbor in the Christian community.** In order to serve God and the church with love and commitment, I was challenged to be formed and be transformed by the word of God.

I can say that the input activity - Bible Drama - was a chance to be more open in sharing our ideas, and expressing ourselves as we interact with one another. We were tasked to portray the Gospel stories given to us. As we read the story and acted it out, I can say that in some moments in our life, we have identified with the characters in the parable. In this activity, I can say that each one of us were able to connect and so built new friendship. There were laughter and cheerfulness, and we have enjoyed the group presentation though the challenge was great on how to apply the message of the Gospel by heart in our real life situation. Indeed, there is no vacation in our spiritual life, we have to continue to reflect and examine ourselves, if we want to grow deeply in our faith. As parents we are also models and we are responsible in the formation of our children in their life of faith, to help them grow and become better Christian in the future. *Rosanna Ikeda* – Yasuzuka (Takada Church)

The FAMILY DAY in TOKAMACHI According to Participants

☉ It was a very fulfilling affair again. We have proven that with love, unity and cooperation, we can build a strong Christian community and be one in Christ. *Wilma Yamanishi* (Kashiwazaki)

● It was an experience of real happiness. All were very happy even though some just met for the first time, it seems we knew each other for a long time. We became one family by the love that binds us. *Susan Ichikawa* (Matsudai)

☉ Indeed, we became one family of God, brothers and sisters to one another. *Veronica Higuchi* (Tokamachi)

● I enjoyed participating at Tokamachi Filipino Family Day. The program was well planned and implemented. Everyone actively joined the every activity. May they continue to love each other, and become a one big family. *Mila Hotta* (Takada)

☉ It was an enormous event. My experience cannot be explained by any words but only by faith. I agree to Fr. Ferdy when he said that a family that is not eating together anymore will be at the edge of breaking. My appreciation to the Filipinas who brought their husbands and children to the event. Keep up the good work. *Josie Takeuchi* (Kakizaki)

● It was a great event for I experienced here in Japan the Filipinos' tradition of "Close Family Ties". Thank you so much to all participants, to Sr.Mila, and to the staff who made this event possible & successful. May our Almighty God bless and strengthen all of you so that we can have this great event again. *Flor Takahashi* (Muikamachi)

☉ I had a great time with everybody especially with my co-dancers in Tokamachi Universal Dancers. I am glad to know that everybody enjoyed the event. *Annie Marie Henson* (Tokamachi)

● My congratulations to all the leaders. Thank you to Fr. Ferdie, Fr. Chito & Sr. Mila in leading the wonderful celebration. It was a well planned event. I've seen a United Filipino! May we continue to have the activities that will deepen our faith in God. *Isabelita Sugisawa* (Takada)

☉ Masaya ako at sana kayo rin, and I am proud to be a Filipino! May we always be united in building God's family. Thank you to all participants. *Analiza Mijares* (Tokamachi)

● Thank you for the very enriching experience I had here in Japan. I wish that everyone be united. and become brothers and sisters to one another. May the happiness be doubled next year. *Wilma Mijares* (Tokamachi)

☉ The celebration became a great feast that made everybody happy. Everyone felt the belongingness to God's family. I think it's the greatest family day ever, and that I will not forget. *Nenita Suzuki* (Tokamachi)

● It was a wonderful day we all had on our Family Day last July 24, and I am glad my whole family was able to join the said gathering. Not only did my children enjoyed a fun-filled day of activities and games but also meeting new acquaintances and gaining new friends was truly a fulfilling experience. I would like to salute the people behind the event who had given their heart and time to make this years Family Day not only possible but a huge success. Our group from Ojiya only readied ourselves to represent Nagaoka Church, and we were not there to compete but to be in equal membership in our Catholic Church. However, we were too much overwhelmed by the atmosphere of oneness with all other churches, unity to share in the fun, and winning games is just a bonus for our group. With this I could say that Tokamachi, Kashiwazaki, and Nagaoka Church has become a one big family, really a unified whole church. *Ellen Calimlim* (Ojiya)



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