



That they may be one! Jn. 17:21

Magdayan

BONDING 絆

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We Are All Missionaries

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It is now over two months since the March 11 big earthquake and tsunami on the east coast of Japan. Hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge in evacuation centers in schools, sports centers etc. when their houses and indeed their towns were completely destroyed. Life there was difficult in those places with no privacy as well as no electricity, water or heating and the stress of many aftershocks. There were many Filipinas married to Japanese and staying with their families among hundreds of other people. The Catholic Church assigned an evacuation place for Filipinas and their families and asked them to move if they wished. Many refused to move saying they could not leave their elders behind, the grandparents they lived with since getting

married in Japan. They felt a sense of responsibility to the old people and could not abandon them. I was very impressed when I heard this as I had similar feelings myself.

My life in Japan began in 1965 when I came as a young missionary priest from Ireland, a Catholic country full of traditions and devotions centered in the church. I studied the language and history of Japan and tried to understand the culture, customs and religions here. Preaching the gospel and teaching Christianity through the catechism were some of my duties which at first were difficult but gradually became enjoyable. The more I know and appreciate the people and the culture the more I can speak in a way they can understand. When we get to know and understand each other real communication begins to take place.

The Filipino people living in Japan come from a Catholic country full of traditions and festivals centered in the church. Japan is so different from your own country and as you live here you begin to understand the culture and customs and participate in them with a greater appreciation. The joy of our Christian faith should radiate on the people we live with and meet every day. Meeting in a church on Sunday and celebrating the Eucharist sustains us among many difficulties in our daily lives. Celebrating together at the Mass and sharing a meal or party afterwards is necessary to bring us closer to each other in the joy of being Christian. Remember, we are all missionaries, and we should be happy to share our joy at being chosen by God to live in Japan as a Catholic. Be happy in your faith and be happy to show through your daily lives others that God loves you.

NEWS - EVENTS

LENTEN RECOLLECTIONS HELD

Series of Lenten Recollections were conducted in Nagaoka District to deepen the spirituality of the Filipinos on the meaning of Christ's Passion and their passion, and to challenge them to live fully as was brought by the Risen Christ. Here is a sort of Reflection from one of the participants. (ff.)

It is truly a memorable and timely experience attending the Lenten Recollection led by Fr. Ferdy last April 8. The Recollection focused on the Passion of Christ and God as the Resurrection and the Life.

Lent is a time when many Christians prepare for a period of FASTING, REPENTANCE, AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. The purpose is to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ - His suffering and His sacrifice, His Life, Death, and Resurrection. Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world and purchased pardon for all. He restored our fellowship with God opening the way to Eternal Life. Spiritual fasting, on the other hand requires self-control and discipline. It clears the mind and body of earthly attentions and draws us closer to God so as we gain spiritual clarity of thought while fasting, it allows us to hear God more clearly. Fasting should be done privately and in humility it should never be public display of spirituality.

WHATEVER GRAVE YOU ARE IN, GOD WILL FIND YOU...COME OUT OF YOUR GRAVE AND BE ALIVE.... We may sometimes be at the lowest point of our lives. We experience a lot of trials which almost breaks us. It is the time when we are almost ready to give up and almost dying---dying spiritually...we feel that there's nowhere to run to; the road seems to be endless, and we feel that we have no one to lean on to-- the world seems to be friendless...It is like we don't belong and just wanted to be alone... Our Faith in God fades and diminishes. During these times, God is testing our Faith in Him, and if we fail to realize that He is watching us and he's just waiting for us to go back to Him...

He wanted us to BELIEVE IN HIM that HE WILL NOT GIVE US LOAD WHICH WE CANNOT CARRY....We must not lose our Faith in Him and we must come out of ourselves. We must trust in the Lord all the days of our lives and live in a righteous way. As the Lord says....CAST YOUR BURDENS UPON ME, THOSE WHO ARE HEAVILY LADEN...COME TO ME ALL OF YOU WHO ARE TIRED OF CARRYING HEAVY LOADS...FOR THE YOKE I WILL GIVE YOU IS EASY, AND THE BURDEN IS LIGHT... COME TO ME AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST....We must ELIEVE IN HIM and FOLLOW HIS WILL...

I hope, I was able to share some of my thoughts about the Lenten Season. Again, I would like to thank Fr. Ferdy for the Lenten Recollection, where I have learned a lot and has made me a better person. I would also like to acknowledge Sr. Cherry and Sr. Mila for assisting our Choir... GOD BLESS US ALL... TO GOD BE THE GLORY.... *leilani P. Watanabe* (Itoigawa Catholic Church)



EVACUEES SHELTERED IN SHINJO CHURCH

The Terada family who evacuated from Iwaki city in Fukushima Prefecture arrived in Shinjo Catholic Church on March 22. Before they came to Shinjo, they have been staying for some time in Yamagata Sports Center until Fr. Kenji Honma invited them to have shelter in the church. The family was one of those affected by the recent earthquake and tsunami in Eastern Japan. While staying in the compounds of the church, with the help of the community, the youngest in the family who are twins, namely Reimi and Reira were baptized on April 3. After almost a month in Shinjo, through the help of International Organization for Migrants, the family was given free airfares in going to the Philippines. *Vivian P. Takahashi* (Shinjo Catholic Church)



EMBASSY OFFICIALS VISITED NIIGATA

The Philippine Embassy's consular mission led by Consul General Sulpicio Confiado and Defense Attache Innocencio Silbol came to Takada Catholic Church on April 12 to inform the Filipino communities in Niigata prefecture on the latest developments after the March 11 twin-disasters, and asked the Filipino communities to help in case an emergency evacuation to Niigata prefecture happens. The Filipino communities represented by their leaders together with some of the religious responded positively. (ff.)

Moments . . .

GETTING READY

Indeed, the world is in trouble. How are we supposed to react with the disasters that is happening around us? There are upheavals and uprisings against government in the Middle East countries, just recently a tornado hit part of Arkansas in the US, a couple of months ago less than 200 people died in the 6.3 magnitude earthquake in Christchurch, NZ. And the 9.0 magnitude Great East Japan Earthquake (Higashi Nihon Dai-shinsai) disaster that mostly affected all our lives here in Japan, also posing a threat to world economy. Aside from the effect of radiation, prices of basic commodities are getting higher making our lives more difficult. I can't help but be scared, be alarmed, and wonder... if these are already the signs of the last days prophesied in the Holy Bible. Are the people responsible for the creation of the movie 2012 right all along that the world will face its end in 2012? One thing is certain - no one knows the exact date and time of the end of the world. Maybe these tragedies are happening as a warning signal to all of us, making us hold on to prayers and dragging us closer to God. The only thing that makes any person fearful of the future is the lack of assurance of salvation. Aren't we just glad we have more time to enjoy life with our loved ones, an opportunity to surrender to Him our weaknesses and follow Christ's teachings, make ourselves worthy of His death. And I, instead of worrying with the effect of all these disasters and the end of the world, gladly accepts Jesus' offer of salvation, through His death my sins are forgiven. For as long as we know deep in the depths of our hearts where the final destination of our soul is, there is nothing to be afraid of. While it could be true that there will come a time when the world will face its final judgment, I believe that only the Almighty God holds the future of this world in His mighty hands, then we have nothing to fear. We may never understand His plans for His ways will always be higher than our ways, and so are His thoughts. But one thing I know, He wants us to have eternal life. So help me strengthen my faith, because in His time the world will be better again. We will die anyway, it is just a matter of when. *Ellen Calimlim* (Omotemachi Catholic Church)



TRUST AND FAITH IN GOD CONQUERS EVERYTHING

GOD is LOVE and LOVE is GOD. And I believe that He is so. GOD created everything in this world for us. Because God loved us so much He sent His only Son JESUS to save us from our sinfulness. Jesus suffered so much emotional and physical pain for love of us. He was betrayed, crowned with thorns and died on the cross and after three days He rose again. This is the message of Easter. There is life after death. After so much pain and suffering, there is overwhelming victory because Jesus conquered death. Just like our Lord Jesus, man also experiences it's own passion, death and resurrection. The world today is suffering from chaos, disunity, hunger, greed and disaster especially here in Japan. With our suffering brothers and sisters, we are one with you in praying to God that you will be able to recover soon and we know you will, just remember whatever sufferings we have, God is first to carry its weight, just continue praying, give your full trust to God and our faith in God conquers everything. God Bless Us All. *Mercy Takizawa* (Omotemachi Catholic Church)



AN EASTER REFLECTION

Jesus suffered for us, died for us and triumph death for all of us. All these resemble to our present lives. We have witnessed and felt the sufferings of the Tohoku earthquake victims. Whose thousands of innocent lives were taken and left numerous people homeless. But amid the pains and hurts they now feel, they face this catastrophe with hope and perseverance. A hope that gives them strength to face tomorrow and their future recovery ahead. Because of this tragedy, I realized more the value of life and it's deeper meaning. Moreover, to be more humble in mind, spirit and heart. Let us all continue to share a prayer to all those directly affected and may God bless Japan. *X-ryl Reyes* (Omotemachi Catholic Church)

MESSAGE

Sr. Maria Lourdes Santos, SFIC
SFIC General Superior

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The pain of loss, death and suffering we experienced in the recent calamities that struck us in Japan leads us to the powerful message of Easter. The rhythm of death and rising to new life becomes a reality.

Our community in Kyoto was gathered at table for a late lunch when the ground quaked on March 11, 2011. For its entire duration of two minutes, we called on the Lord and all the saints. The coverage in the media of the events that followed the first earthquake had been and will continue to be a reflection and a revelation of what is essential that we could hold on to. When buildings collapsed; when people as well as possessions were swept by the raging waves; when we searched endlessly for missing relatives in evacuation centers; when we buried the remains of our beloved ones; when we had to vacate our homes for fear of radiation - these were the trying times when we could only anchor all hope to the faith in a Creator, Who rules all.

What happened to creation in Japan this year will be part of our history that we could always go back to. Pope Benedict XVI during his 2011 Easter Vigil homily referred to the readings from the Scriptures as means by which creation and history become transparent to what is of essence. "They bring us in contact with God, the Source of all things and take us by the hand towards the True Light. As we relate to God as Creator, then we can place ourselves completely in His hands and share in the responsibility for creation. Only the Creator can give us life forever. The joy, thanksgiving and responsibility for the whole creation belong together."

Let us then thank the Risen Lord for the gift of new life, a new beginning at Easter, 2011 and take to heart our responsibility for God's creation.

A blessed and joyful Easter to all!

Share Your Story or Insights

Ugnayan is the official newsletter of Niigata Diocese Migrants Commission. Since it reports and shows the lives of migrants and people on the move to all believers in the diocese, may it become a bridge in understanding each other's cultures and sharing of one's faith. Hence, **Ugnayan** is looking forward of publishing your article or story. Please send your article/story to ugnayan@faminalagao.com or give it personally to our beloved SFIC Sisters Cherry and Mila. May God bless us all.

Ugnayan

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