

Bishop's Message
2016

Let's Open the Door of a Church

-Sustained by God Father's Mercy-

Preface

The Pope Francisco decided one year, from December 8th in 2015, the Feast Day of Immaculate Mary to November 20th in 2016, the Feast Day of Christ the King, as "the Special Sacred Year of God's Special Mercy". The reason why the Pope elected December 8th as the opening day of the Special Sacred Year is because the day is exactly the 50th anniversary of the closing day of the Second Vatican Council. On December 13th, Sunday immediately after the Feast, Pope Francisco will hold the ceremony to open the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome, that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran.

On the day, we, as Nagoya Diocese, want to start, in order to fulfill our mission, opening the door of the church and seeking "Jesus Christ, the Father's Face of Mercy".

The Second Vatican Council called the Church "the Pilgrim Church". In order to travel it is important for us to have the clear destination (direction) and also always to be able to have the place where we can return when we get tired or lose our way. We can neither have the meaning nor the driving power to travel until we can have these two. It is Jesus Christ, the very face of our Father, that is our aim and the place always to return. We can continue our journey encouraged by the conviction that "This is the Right Way" and moved by the joy "to Live This Way".

To travel never means to stay in the same place. We should always take a step forward. The Pope Francisco expresses the meaning of the opening of the Second Vatican Council as follows.

"The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world." (BULL OF INDUCTION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY 4)

We are always going out (Exodos) to the promised land." The promised land" means

that all the people will become one with God, that is the completion of God's kingdom. This will be completed in the time to come, but it begins in this world and is being realized in this world. We should not forget that we are sent for this. We are encouraged by the fact that God is with us, and we pray so that peace and union may be born to divisions or battles, and we have to do with all these.

I have now been sent to Nagoya Diocese, and thank God from the bottom of my heart for being able to work for you and for all the people who live in the district which is entrusted to me. I have a big hope, too. I want to tell you all, at the beginning of this "Special Sacred Year of God's Mercy", what I think about what way Nagoya Diocese will have to take and what kind of Diocese it should become.

Fundamental Principles

Sustained by God the Father's mercy, Nagoya Diocese, as a local Church, fulfills the mission entrusted. This mission is to serve for all the people's salvation. :

Note: local church__ One and only one Catholic Church exists in local churches, and is composed of local churches. A local church is, first of all, a diocese. (New Canonical Law 368)

In concrete: through contacts with people, we express, and show the joy of the Gospel that you are loved, and invited to salvation, with new eagerness, new methods, and new expressions.

God's kingdom has already been brought among us, and it is becoming to be perfect. That is, encouraged by the fact that there is no wall which separates God from us, with hope we break down "the middle wall of separation (Ef.2:14)" and wish, and pray, so that the peace based on Christ's justice may be established here and there (in territories).

We make Church communities which give strength to those who are sent to these missions. In order to realize this, first of all, each one of us should be aware of his or her personal vocation that is the "vocation of Baptism", and should co-operate, respecting one another's role.

In order to realize these fundamental principles, I set the following targets.

1. To become a church which expresses God's mercy

If we experience even a little how mercifully, and how carefully God, our Father treats us, our life must be changed from its very foundation. Usually we are apt to

think that if we do good things, we shall be saved. However, what the Gospel says is the contrary. First exists God's unconditional "salvation (forgiveness)" and its joy pushes the man, and moves him to live "good way of life". cf. Lc.19:1-10 Lc.7:36-50

- + God's mercy spreads, through each one of us responding to the joys and sorrows which occur to others as if they were our own. The Pope says, "God's mercy is not an abstract idea, but it is a practical reality by which God shows His own love as if parents' love springs from the depth of their heart. It is expressed as follows, "Indeed it is love "heartrending". "Bull 6" If we are only interested in our own salvation and in the stability in the church, we shall be a "closed church" far away from God's mercy.
- + We, the members of the church, show the deep interest in the social realities, and the human realities, and want to be deeply worried together, to pray, and to be involved in. Our children, too, naturally absorb our way of thinking, and will deepen their faith.

Practical attempts:

- First of all, let's have chances to share lives, and the realities which we have. It is not so easy to live our faith in our place of work, our districts to live, or in our homes. Not putting up "what Christians should be like", we may start from "the reality of what we are". For example, sharing what is concretely important for me in my place to live, at home or in my working places, or how I find them difficult there, or when I am interrogated of my faith, etc.. including what I cannot, at the same time let's listen to the others. Through these sharing we open our heart to Christ who is walking with us.
- Then Christ who is God's Word will show us the direction and lighten our way. And it is Christ Himself that invites us to take the first step toward the direction He shows us.
- We wish to think what kind of community we should make, where anyone is accepted and can feel God Father's mercy. We wish to think about the matter and want to put the plan into practice, even little by little.

2. To aim to make a society where the people in the weak position are in the center

All the people are equal in front of God and should equally be made much of. However, the truth of the matter in God's kingdom is in the relationship. Therefore, each person is not made much of separately. It is necessary to think human dignity from the point of view of seeing if the relationship of loving one

another as members of God's family is realized. In reality, it happens that in this world the strong govern the weak, and as the result, there come the states of sins, inequality in the distribution of wealth, poverty and violence, discrimination and exclusion. When the disciples excluded the children (in those days "children" meant the people who were not worthwhile to be thought as a person), Jesus expressed his anger clearly. He took them up in his arms, saying, "Let the children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."(Mk. 10:14) His taking up the children shows the figure of the world as it should be. It is the society where the people made weak are in the center. It is the true human relationship.

. We, Christ's disciples, are serving in the most outside place so that any one, especially those children who are in the weak position can go first to Christ. This is not the work only for those who are interested, but this is the essential mission for all of us as Christians.

Practical attempts

- In Nagoya Diocese, we have committees which are concretely working for the society, assistance, welfare works, refugees and justice, human rights etc. and they are working actively . As the diocese, these committees are not independent, but in order to be one to evangelize the society, we are keeping in close touch with one another , and sharing the same vision
- In some parishes, they prepare and distribute emergency food, or helping the people in poor countries. However, seeing from this point of view of the Diocese, we have no committee in our parish organizations. What happens in the society happens among the people, and it is the problem of us, Jesus' disciples. (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; Preface) I will make committees which convey messages or callings from dioceses or bishops to their communities and answer to the claims on these problems.
- It is desirable that as many people as possible take part in the concrete activities of the parishes. Of course, it is not possible that anyone can take part in those concrete activities. However, although we cannot take part in these concrete activities, we can be united by living together for the same purpose. Nothing is more important than praying and living in order to realize the evangelical world, in the place where God wants us to be (where we work, in the district, at home etc.) and "with the point of view of the people who are made weak". Through doing so, what we do in the places can be united and respected one another.

3. To make ourselves one community where the faithful, religious and priests are united, irrespective of social standing, having each one's roles as God's people, and discerning God's will.

Everyone of us given different gifts should fully be aware that we are the Church, and respecting each one's differences, seek and choose where God's will to leads us is. In National Incentive Convention for Evangelization (NICE, 1987), the proceedings were not done by someone's leadership, but Bishops, Priests, the faithful were sitting round the same table and shared equally and chose the future direction of the Japanese Catholic church. We call this, that is, to chose the direction which God wants us to take from sharing like this, "discernment" The Church is neither simply clergymen-centered, nor democracy. She is discernment-centered to follow God's leadership. Basing on this, the priests and the faithful carry each one's roles and responsibilities.

Practical attempts

- As a Diocese, in order to become ourselves a discerning community ,we are thinking to begin formation courses. But I wish that each community will think what method you will be able to take so that you may be able to" become aware of God's will" through each community's concrete sharing or learning. For example, when we have to decide some important matters in parish council meetings (steering committees) – although which we have already done , not through "what I think" but seeking where "God's wants" is, while priests and the faithful talking together and praying together. Thus, church's meetings or gatherings may be the place of formation.
- This discerning is also necessary in making important decisions such as your children's choice of his course, getting a job, marriage etc. We have to do important decisions in life. This is exactly what we mean "to live one's life with faith".
- From the point of view of this discernment principle, the most important meeting among the decision meetings in the diocese is the Mission-Pastoral Council Meeting. Putting this in the center, I want to reexamine the ways of proceeding of various meetings of the diocese, their way of process, frequency, and attendees, etc..

4.To make a community which aims to be "God's kingdom beyond the nationalities"

The big characteristic and the sign of hope of Nagoya Diocese is that we are a community of peoples of various nationalities and of many cultures. It is because we

have the sign of “the Kingdom beyond the nationalities”. When we think the Church, it does not mean “the Japanese people’s church”, but it means the Japanese church made up of all the Christians who live in Japan, whatever their nationalities may be.

Practical attempts

- Equally, up to today, the diocese considers so that Catholics from other countries can praise God , hear masses, listen to homilies in their native languages.. To be concrete, mainly, parish priests plan masses in the languages necessary. It would be possible after consulting the matter in the blocks, to announce in which parishes, and in what languages the masses are possible. In case there are necessities but there is no priest who can speak the foreign language, and even if the canon is read in Japanese, the faithful can read the Scripture, sing songs, and say common prayers in their own languages. Of course, in those cases, it is desirable, that some times in the year to invite some priests who can speak in foreign language(s), and ask them to celebrate masses, and also to preside meditations, to administer the sacrament of permission, and other formations or studies.
- We have to see to it that the community of the parishes should not be divided by hearing masses in foreign languages. In order to prevent this, we have to consider to have “international masses” regularly, or to have reading the Bible , or common prayers in foreign languages. It is necessary to find out some ways to celebrate baby baptisms, and confirmations.
- The priests who say mass in foreign languages make effort to the formation of the group. They teach the people speaking foreign languages that they should not only walk round the parishes, finding the chances to hear masses in foreign languages, they should belong to some parish and should take part in making the community. Especially to educate their children in our faith, it is important for them to be fully aware that they are the members of the parish community. For this purpose, it is necessary that they should consult with and co-operate with their parish priest. .

5. To teach our faith to our next generation

First of all, to teach our faith to our next generation is our important duty. The family is the most responsible. Of course, this is not simple. Schools or the conditions of this society not only deprive the children of the chances to come to church, they even make them insensible to the value of our faith. However, even when they stop coming to church through various causes, it is possible for us to let them know Christ and to bring up their faith. Friend-relationships, study records, courses in future, etc.

are especially important for the teenagers, exactly in these days, and we can give them advices, or guidance toward Evangelical direction. It is a big faith formation we can make, too. At least, nothing is more important to pray together at these chances.

Especially middle or high school days are the time when they begin to have many doubts about the faith. It is very important seriously to answer their doubts.

and parishes can cover what their homes cannot. Furthermore, on bigger level, blocks, or the Diocese can co-operate with parishes to lead the young people.

Practical attempts

- For the faith-formation, let's invite the youth, not only to the plans made by parishes, but also to various projects made by blocks, dioceses, or Japanese Catholic Church. In these cases it is necessary for the parish to make it easy for them to participate in the program, including the economical aids.
- We, as a diocese, consider that all the information of the projects for the youth will periodically be sent to them.
- It is important to think and prepare before-hand about the faith-formation for the time when the youth can leave the Church with whatever reasons possible. As a parish, if we have concretely chosen the persons to follow them (those on whom the children and the youth can rely), they can periodically take contact with them, and can think with them about their worries such as their future courses or human relations.

6 To make ourselves one diocese with Missions, Religious Congregations, and Catholic Institutions

When Nagoya Diocese had only few priests, and was poor in human resources and also in finance affairs, how greatly many male and female religious Congregations, and Missions helped us! Moreover, we entered into the society through various projects, and we are now doing the same. I want that we engrave in our mind that when we say "Church", we do not only mean parishes, but it includes Catholic schools, hospitals, other institutions, convents, etc. All of them are places which carry the Evangelical missions and can co-operate in solidarity from all the sidelines. From this point of view, it is important for parishes (blocks) to keep in close touch with their near institutions.

On the other hand, the faithful who belong to the parishes of which religious Congregations or Missions are in charge are inclined to feel themselves as the members of the religious Congregations or of Missions, more than as the members of the parish. At the same time, in the parishes of which parish priests are in charge, the faithful are apt to think that they are in far relationship with the parishes entrusted to Congregations or Missions. Whoever may be in charge, we have to change our understanding and to make helping relationships one another so that we may be aware and walk together as the members of Nagoya Diocese. In order to realize this, I want to make effort in making priests' posting, and also in making economical plans which include priests' living expenses, so that we can show that all the parishes are one Nagoya Diocese.

In Conclusion

As for this Fundamental Principle and the attempts to realize the Principle, there exist various ways which can be realized as the Diocese, as blocks or as parishes. Further, there are many which can be put into practice immediately, and others to be completed after taking much time. What is important is "toward which direction?" and "what kind of Church we want to be?", and the above mentioned suggestions are courses for us to reach there. I want you, in your place, after sharing the fundamental principles, to choose the suggestions which you can think to be able to put into practice, and examine how to realize them in your parish.

While we are practicing together what I have suggested today, they will be given new life and may be changed. The Pilgrim Church sometimes swings from right to left like a pendulum. However, the pendulum called Church is always advancing ahead while swinging, because she is united with Christ at the cardinal point.

Let us imitate St. Mary, who was surprised, and badly shaken, but followed God's will, trusting in Him, and went out, opening the door, believing in Holy Spirit pushing us forward.

December 8, 2015, the Feast Day of Mary Immaculate,
the first day of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Catholic Nagoya Diocese
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