

(For the Laity)

## Welcome to the Catholic Diocese of Nagoya

### **Preface:**

Although we come from many countries, we are one people called to gather in one church. For this reason, this pamphlet has been prepared for all the faithful of the Diocese of Nagoya, irrespective of nationality.

### **Church Registration**

#### **1. Church Registration**

The Church in Japan values each one's membership in a particular parish besides one's membership in the Church through the sacrament of baptism. Through membership in a local parish one fulfills the responsibility of supporting the Church. This membership, also, helps the ministry of the church to be more efficient and effective. In your parish you can receive the sacraments, the faith education for your children, and consultation. Of course, you can attend Mass and participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in other churches. (It is best to think of our parish church as the one easiest to travel to. There is no rule that says that your parish is the only place you can attend Mass. There is also a type of parish called a "Personal Parish." For example, in Nagoya Diocese there is Mikokoro Center and Toyama Church. You can also belong to these churches.)

#### **2. Transferals In and Out**

If you are not registered in a church, please go to a pastor in the church nearest to you and ask him to put your name in the parish register. When children are baptized or receive First Communion their names are recorded in the parish registers. Parents can be registered at this time also. The contents of the church register are kept confidential.

Along with the official Church Register, many Churches also keep a less formal Directory of names, addresses and phone numbers. While care is taken with this Directory as well, please inform your pastor if for reasons of privacy, you do not want your information included in this directory. (If you intend to remain in a district over three months you have the right to register at your local church.)

#### **3. When Moving**

When you are going to move to another district, please contact your pastor and request a Parish Transfer Certificate which you can bring to the pastor in your new church. If you are going overseas, it is possible to request your

pastor to prepare baptismal certificates and other documents to take with you.

### **Church Offerings**

As the Church in Japan has few Catholics, the Church is small. The offerings of this small number of faithful have to be used for church maintenance, apostolic activities, and the support of the priest. For this reason, in Japan there are two Church contributions: the Sunday collection and a monthly donation for the purpose of maintenance.

#### **4. Mass Collection**

Churches all over the world take up offerings during Mass. They are used not only for the local church but also for church activities elsewhere in Japan and overseas.

#### **5. Dues of the Faithful**

This donation is called 'Dues of the Faithful', 'Church Offering', or 'Monthly Offering'. Individuals donate about three percent of their personal income each month to their own parish. This donation is used to maintain Church facilities, to fund parish activities and to support the priest.

### **The Mass**

The Risen Christ lives on in his body which is the Church, and continues even now the work of salvation. There are special signs by which we know that the blessings of Christ have been given to us. These signs we call sacraments.

Among the sacraments, the Sunday Mass holds special importance. Christians of the same district gather in a community, the Body of Christ, listen to the word of God, and participate in the mystery of the death and Resurrection of Christ. There we give thanks for God's saving work and by receiving the body of Christ we are united to him and to one another. That is why it is important that we come together in one place. There is of course the dimension of our duty toward God, but on an intimate level there is also the mutual need of Christians for each other. We need to get together, encourage one another and support one another. In this way our bond of faith is strengthened, our awareness of solidarity is deepened, and thus united we are sent back to our lives in society. (Extract from 1997 Church Calendar and Addresses)

#### **5. Which Church for Attending Mass?**

For Japanese and others who have permanent or semi-permanent residence, the usual thing is to attend Sunday Mass in the Church you belong to, that is

the Church where you are registered. If need be, you are free to attend Mass in your native language in another Church. If you are a short term resident, you can attend Mass at your local church or at a church where Mass is offered in your own language. If, however, you have your children baptized or confirmed, or you are going to be married, please decide on a parish church and receive the sacraments there. Please request information about Masses in different languages and Mass times from the parish priest, the diocesan office, or the Nagoya Diocesan Commission for Refugees, Migrants and People on the Move.

## **5. Communion**

A suitable preparation is needed before receiving the Eucharist. Our lighter sins are forgiven when we participate in the prayer of contrition at the beginning of Mass.

## **Baptism of Children**

By baptism we are united to Christ and become members of the people of God. We are born anew through water and the Holy Spirit and all our sins are forgiven. In this way we are not only called children of God but do in truth become his children (1 John 3:1; Rom 8:15). (Catholic Rituals, Baptism of Infants)

Because Japanese society is not a truly Christian environment, if the children are to grow up as Christians it is important that the family provide a Christian atmosphere for the children and educate them in the faith. It is important too that parents attend Mass and understand the need to share and become part of the parish community. Small children have the right to the love and assistance not only of their parents but also of the church community. That is why the Catholic Church in Japan recommends that parents be adequately prepared for their children's baptism.

## **8. Consult with the Pastor**

In order to baptize your child consult the pastor at your parish church. Complete the baptismal application form as requested.

## **9. Study Preparation for Baptism**

Upon consultation with the pastor, as far as possible both parents attend 5 or 6 talks to prepare for the baptism. It is important that the non-Christian parent also learn about his or her partner's faith and that of their children and give approval to have the child baptized. The talks are in Japanese, but if the language is a problem, it is possible to attend the program in other languages.

Please ask your pastor about this.

## **10. Set a Date for the Baptism with the Pastor**

When you have completed the study program, contact the pastor to decide on the day for the baptism and who will be the godmother and father. (A godfather or godmother should be a Catholic who has been confirmed. The ideal would be someone who can again be godparent when the child comes to be confirmed. Customs differ from country to country but where there are many godparents, at least one must be a Catholic. When thinking about a name for your children try to choose a saint's name or one that is suitable for a Christian. Regarding the Baptismal Certificate: when a child is baptized, that data is recorded in the parish register. Later, at the time of confirmation or marriage, you will need a baptismal certificate issued by the church where you were baptized.) As a general rule in the Church in Japan, a girl has a godmother and a boy has a godfather. Please do not decide the day for baptism on your own and then go to the church, for in Japan baptism can not be performed in this way.

It is important to remember the church where the baptism took place. A baptismal certificate is needed for confirmation and marriage. If you apply to the church where your child was baptized, the pastor will issue the certificate.

## **Christian Education of Children**

Because we live in a society where the culture is non-Christian, in order for our children to grow up as Catholics it is important that parents be able to live their faith with joy and be part of the community at their local church. Basic ways in which to build a Christian atmosphere for our children and educate them in the faith is to participate in the Mass, bring the children to Sunday school, and pray together as a family.

## **11. Family Prayer**

Praying together as a family is very important. Please teach your children to pray before going to bed and before meals. Remember that Jesus is always at our side.

## **12. Sunday School**

When your children reach school age please bring them to 'Church School' or 'Sunday School' at your parish church. When they enter Middle School their time will be taken up with school tasks and club activities. Attendance at church will become difficult. Talk the problem over with your children. Help them to deepen their faith and discover the joy of being part of the church community.

## **Children's First Communion**

In the sacrament of the Eucharist we partake of the Lord's Supper, receive his body and blood, and strengthen our union with the people of God. At the same time, we offer ourselves with Christ and are united to the Church which Christ redeemed and offered to the Father. In the Eucharist we pray that the Holy Spirit be poured out in greater abundance and that the whole human race become the one family of God. (Cf. Rites of the Catholic Church: "Infant Baptism.")

### **13. Reception of First Communion**

Children should receive the Eucharist at an age when they can understand sufficiently the meaning of the sacrament, usually after the age of seven, or when they begin to attend elementary school.

### **14. Preparation for First Communion**

The children prepare for First Communion by attending Sunday School at their parish, and 'by learning about their faith at various times and places' according to their ability to understand. Please consult your pastor.

## **Confirmation of Children**

Through Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father, and filled with this Spirit we are transformed more closely into the likeness of Christ. Thus we are enabled to live more fully the faith professed at baptism. By our words and deeds we witness to Christ in society, and we work to build up the Body of Christ. (Cf. Rites of the Catholic Church: "Infant Baptism.")

### **15. Age for Confirmation**

In Japan, confirmation is not conferred at the time of infant baptism. Children are confirmed at an age when they can understand the meaning of the faith (10-15 years old.) Please consult with your pastor. (According to No. 891 of The New Code of Canon Law and "The Rules for the Implementation of the New Code of Canon Law in the Japanese Church," the suitable age for receiving Confirmation is between 10 and 15 years.)

### **16. Preparation for Confirmation**

We prepare for confirmation by attending talks and learning more about our faith. Please consult the pastor of the church to which you belong.

## **17. Conferral of Confirmation**

In the Diocese of Nagoya, Confirmation is normally conferred by the bishop. Please consult with your parish priest about the Confirmation schedule.

## **Marriage**

Marriage is a contract entered into freely between a man and a woman. It is an unbreakable bond founded in love and a solemn covenant sealed by God. Marriage, therefore, is sacred and has its own unique mission to fulfill in society, since it is in the context of married life that children are born and raised. Consequently, the marriage ceremony is no mere ornament or formality. Through the marriage ceremony the bride and groom express their commitment in the presence of God and the Christian community to bind themselves to one another, and they pray that God will bless their union. (Cf. Church Forms for Official Use.)

## **18. Consult with Your Pastor**

As a rule, Catholics have their wedding at the church to which they belong. The first thing to do is to consult the pastor. Even if you intend to have the ceremony at a different church please tell your own pastor first. After that you can go ahead and fix the time and place. In case you are not attached to one special church please talk it over with the parish priest at your local church.

## **19. Complete the Required Application Forms**

When applying to get married you must follow the pastor's instructions, fill in an application form and present it to him. You will need other papers also, for example, a Baptismal Certificate issued as a pre-marriage document. (When a "Certificate of Baptism for Marriage," or a "Certificate verifying the Absence of Records of Baptism, Confirmation, or Marriage," cannot be obtained, a substitute document can be issued. Please ask for one from the chancery of the diocese where you were baptized. Ideally, Catholics who are about to get married should be confirmed.) If you are a foreign national, you may need what is called a "Certificate Requisite for Marriage", which is required for civil marriages. (Depending on the country, there are cases where a "Certificate Indicating Freedom to Marry" is not issued. In such cases a sworn statement can be used as a substitute. This sworn statement is a requirement for marriage in civil law.) These certificates are issued by the various foreign embassies in Japan.

## **20. Pre-Marital Seminar**

In order that the church can assume responsibility for your marriage, and to

make sure that your married life will be richer and fuller, please attend a pre-marital seminar. The content, schedule and language of the talks differ from church to church so please consult the pastor about this.

### **21. The Importance of Dialogue between the Couple**

Engaged couples need to talk over with each other their views on marriage and religious faith. In cases where one partner is not baptized, it is important that the non-baptized person have a good understanding of what the Christian faith means. In the case of international marriages, mutual respect for one another's culture, customs, life style and family attitudes is very important.

### **22. Second Marriages**

When it is a second marriage for either partner, please explain this to the pastor, and he will tell you what documents the church requires.

### **23. International Marriages and the Civil Law**

In cases of marriage between two foreign nationals, or between a Japanese and a foreign national consult about the documents required by civil law with your parish priest, the diocesan office, or the Nagoya Diocesan Commission for Refugees, Migrants and People on the Move.

## **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

### **24. The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Catholics should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year. This sacrament may be received at any church. Recently, many parishes have a communal preparation for the sacrament during Mass in Lent and Advent, with an opportunity also for individual confession. Another good way is to attend a retreat and use that opportunity to go to Confession. If you wish to receive the sacrament in your own language contact a priest or a church.

## **The Sacrament of the Sick**

### **25. The Sacrament of the Sick**

When we are hospitalized due to illness or accident, or when we have grown weak from old age, the priest anoints us with the Oil of the Sick. In this sacrament we ask Christ in his mercy and through the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive our sins, relieve our suffering and grant us salvation.

## **Baptizing in Danger of Death**

## **26. Baptizing in Danger of Death**

If a person in danger of death wishes to be baptized, it is permitted to do so. If time allows, a priest may be called, but anyone can administer the sacrament by pouring water on the person's forehead and saying the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Later please report the person's name, place of baptism, and other details to your pastor.

## **Funerals**

### **27. Preparation for Death**

When a Catholic is in danger of death due to illness or accident, contact your pastor or a priest in the nearest Church to consult about the administration of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Sacrament of the Sick.

### **28. Ministry to the Deceased**

When someone dies please contact the person's pastor and ask him what to do. If the person dies at home, you will need a death certificate, so you must call a doctor or telephone 119. Be careful not to transport the body to the church or any other place until the death certificate has arrived.

### **29. Japanese Customs**

In Japan the usual custom is to have a wake, followed by a funeral. After the funeral, the body is taken away to be cremated. A few days later, the ashes are laid to rest in the cemetery. The western form of internment is very rare. If you wish to take the body of the deceased to its home country, please consult with the pastor. (In cremation, the body is burned at a crematorium. The ashes are then placed in an urn and taken home. Normally the urn with the ashes is placed in a tomb, but it is also possible to keep the ashes at home or take them back to one's native land.)

### **30. Repatriating the Body of the Deceased**

In the case of returning the body of the deceased to its home country, after talking it over with the family, relatives and close friends of the deceased, please consult with the pastor. Also, please contact your embassy to find out what formalities are required. Please remember that transporting the deceased to another country is very expensive.

This pamphlet has been adapted for the Nagoya Diocese from the



information booklet published by the Tokyo Province of the Catholic Church of Japan. It contains the thinking of the Catholic Church on the Faith life and especially the Sacraments.

WELCOME TO NAGOYA DIOCESE  
CHURCH'S GUIDLINES IN NAGOYA DIOCESE  
(PARISHONERS' USE)

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