

Greetings from Bishop Mizobe

My greetings to all of the Priests, Religious and Laity of the Diocese for the year 2006. I want to thank all of you for the cooperation you have shown during the past year. Thankfully by the end of the year the Pastoral Council and the Priests Council were established. With these two groups the government of the diocese will continue. This year, as also for last year, my hope is that the "Unity" of the diocese will become much better. I ask for your full cooperation.

Last year was "The Year of the Eucharist". The Universal Church joined in the desire of the Holy Father to see that there were expressions of piety shown toward the Holy Eucharist. Unfortunately, with the many problems that faced me upon becoming bishop of the Diocese we were not fully able to properly celebrate the Year of the Eucharist. This is my second year as bishop and many of the problems that faced me in the beginning are behind me, therefore, I wish to have this year also as "The Year of the Eucharist". Last year much was published concerning the Holy Eucharist. Also with the International Bishops' Conference ended much is offered for strengthening our faith in the Eucharist. Utilizing much of this material our activities, study sessions and plans will be directed towards increasing our devotion to the Eucharist.

## 1. Understanding the Sacraments

In order to understand the meaning of the Eucharist it is necessary to know what a sacrament is. A sacrament is a gift of God made known by an external sign to affect a person's life. We should be able to read the signs that are used in the sacraments. In Baptism the sign is water, in Confirmation it is holy oil, in the Eucharist it is bread, in Marriage the

words of promise are the sign, as for the Sacrament of Holy Orders it is the laying on of hands, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation it is the words used. These signs and words are referred to as "the great sacraments". God utilizes these visible signs to bring grace to the world. In the church there are seven sacraments. During the coming year it would be almost impossible to cover all of the sacraments but at least we will try to get a better understanding of the Sacrament of Initiation, Baptism, and the Eucharist in the Mass. Why have we as Catholics been called by God, What does it mean to be joined to the church. Why attend Sunday Mass, and receive Communion. How are we different from those who have not received baptism. What really is the meaning of receiving communion. These are some of the items that we will look at during the coming year.

## 2. The year of instituting the New Ritual for the Mass

Fortunately, at present the Bishops' Conference is looking forward to the re-print of the Japanese version of the Ritual for the Mass. It is not just a repeat of the present Japanese version. In Japan it will mean much to beautifying the liturgy. The revision will show the Japanese language in its beauty and tradition. I would like to concentrate during this year on how we can incorporate the liturgy into making the Sunday Liturgy one that is fitting and productive.

In order to accomplish this, the local leader of liturgy and the responsible Diocesan leader will have to come to fully understand what liturgy really is. Much will depend on the Japanese. Up until now the Japanese Church has depended much on foreign missionaries. From now on it will have to be the responsibility of the Japanese laity to build the Japanese church. This is true for the church in Shikoku. I appreciate the many sacrifices that have been made and are being made by the foreign clergy. They have brought the liturgy to the stage that it is at present. The responsibility of the liturgist

is not only posting the hymnal numbers or determining who will be the lector at the Eucharist. It is their responsibility to see that the congregation's participation in the liturgy is raised in quality.

At the same time the responsibility of the presiding priest at the Eucharist is most important. He must preside with care so that the liturgy will be understood by those attending. This is very important. The actions and gestures should produce an attitude of prayer for those who are participating. During the coming year there will be a seminar held for the priests at which time we will attempt to have some basic conformity with regard offering the Mass and the gestures used during it.

With regard the revised liturgy for the Mass, it is important that we follow also the directives of the Rome Office of Liturgy. The application of these items has, for the most part, been entrusted to the Bishops' Conference, to which we must pay heed. The Office of Holy Liturgy has felt the need to take into consideration the local cultures. We must remember that The Conference of Japanese Bishops has always been strict in the matter of changes and when it came to any change they always conferred with the Sacred Office. As for the liturgy, when we have a solid understanding of it, then we are able to put it into practice. The liturgy can be applied to Mass for the youth, for children, and for special occasions. However, we must remember that these adaptations are for the renewal of the church. Following the directives of the Mass regulations will bring about change. The Diocese of Takamatsu will strictly follow these directives.

### 3. Regarding the Eucharist

In order to understand the Eucharist it is necessary to fully understand the meaning of the Mass. Fortunately, from April, a desk for On-going-information and a responsible person in charge will be set up. A Chairperson and a committee will be appointed. This shows the Diocese's determination

for the necessity of on-going-formation. Naturally, in the on-going-formation process there will be included study sessions on "The Holy Eucharist and the Mass". We will have to work out how the on-going-formation program can be inserted into the four prefectures in the diocese. It will be possible to have study sessions for the clergy and laity to foster "The Year of the Eucharist". As there will be an Osaka Priests' Seminar on the Eucharist. I encourage the clergy to take advantage of it.

#### Conclusion:

There are still many unsolved problems. However, with a little patience we will continue to move forward. I am confident that renewal will come about. What is important is that we be not too concerned about externals but make a greater effort for spiritual renewal. In order to accomplish this, I am convinced that it will be done by strengthening our faith in the Eucharist which is the summit and the fountain of our faith.

Diocese of Takamatsu, Bishop Francis Xavier Mizobe Osamu