

To All Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Takamatsu
Pastoral Letter (Translation)

Moving Towards Unity and Renewal

The Pastoral Letter for Lent, 2009, contains the notification of the closing of the Takamatsu Diocesan International Seminary and recommendations regarding the future configuration of the Diocese.

The Process until the Present

The Takamatsu Diocesan International Missionary Seminary will be officially closed as of March 31, 2009. The Executives of the Religious Corporation of the Catholic Diocese of Takamatsu made the decision at their meeting of October 2, 2007. Following the approval of the College of Consultors, this decision was then submitted to the Presbytery Council (May 27, 2008) and the Pastoral Council for Mission (May 27, 2008), both of which gave their approval. On numerous occasions prior to making the decision we consulted with the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Secretariat of State of the Vatican and our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, all of whom approved the closing of the seminary.

When the Executives of a Religious Corporation make a decision regarding a change in the use of land and/or buildings within their jurisdiction, they are obliged by the laws governing Religious Corporations in Japan to make an official announcement of such a decision. This is called "Public Notice". On May 29, 2008 in order to announce the decision of the Religious Corporation to the people of the Diocese and to the Church in Japan, a Pastoral Letter addressed to "All Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Takamatsu" was sent to each parish and religious community in the diocese. On the following day, May 30, however, a letter from the Secretary of State of the Vatican, Cardinal Bertone, asked that the announcement regarding the seminary be delayed. As a result, on May 31, 2008, I directed the parishes and religious communities to withdraw the letter of May 29.

Some time later a document came from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Bertone. It stated that Redemptoris Mater Seminary in the Takamatsu Diocese would be closed and that it would become part of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Rome. It also stated that a Vicar of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples would be sent to Japan to discuss the intentions of the priests of the "Way" (June 27, 2008. Prot. No. 85.227). We have waited for more than six months for the promised

Vicar to come to Japan.

During that time, it was necessary for various reasons for the Religious Corporation of the Catholic Diocese of Takamatsu to make some changes in its regulations. In order to make such changes we began the consultation process with the section of the Department of Education and Science charged with Religious Affairs. In doing so it became clear that it would be necessary to deal as well with the issue of the International Missionary Seminary. In the letter from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Bertone, which I referred to above, according to Canon Law the Takamatsu Diocesan International Missionary Seminary had ceased to exist. The seminarians and directors of the seminary moved to Rome by the end of 2008 and from the point of view of Canon Law the seminary was closed. The Section for Religious Affairs stated that since the seminary no longer existed, the Religious Corporation of the Diocese was required to make a public and official announcement of that fact. It was further pointed out that since the purpose for the existence of the land and buildings had been changed, it would be permissible for the Executives of the Religious Corporation to make the decision for its use at a future meeting. Since this is an internal matter of the Religious Corporation, they would not interfere in this matter. The advice was that the Religious Corporation make a decision regarding the handling of this matter in a manner compatible with Canon Law.

In order to follow up on the above advice, we convened a meeting of the Executives of the Religious Corporation on January 15, 2009. We discussed the wording of the Public Notice regarding the closing of the seminary. A suggestion about its future use was also made, but this suggestion ran into difficulty with the Secretariat of State of the Vatican. We continued to negotiate with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. As a result, on the advice of the Section for Religious Affairs, the Public Notice states that the seminary as a place of formation for seminarians has been closed and that the land and buildings will not be used for the formation of seminarians. The title of the Public Notice is "Closing of the International Missionary Seminary and Change in the Use of the Land and Buildings" .

There is no change in the fact that the land and buildings situated in Mizushi, Higashikagawa City are assets of the Religious Corporation of the Catholic Diocese of Takamatsu.

Tracing the Path through the Process

There are people who say that the seminary has been closed because the law was not respected at the time of its foundation. That is a fact, but it is not the definitive

reason for the decision. If it were simply a case of legal problems, it would be possible to look for ways to rectify the illegalities. The fact that such corrections were not possible is because the deep chasm that existed in the Diocese made it impossible to make any compromises in this situation. When we use legal procedures from beginning to end to protect an organization, renewal becomes impossible. I wish to make the following analysis. More than twenty years ago, after NICE (National Incentive Conference for Evangelization) there was a period of renewed zeal, but it died down. Can we not say that there was an atmosphere of semi-resignation regarding evangelization in the Diocese? For several decades other dioceses engaged in various experimental projects, but in the Diocese of Takamatsu was there not a tendency to be dragged down by the way things had always been done in the Church and thus a failure to show development? There were no vocations to the priesthood and it became difficult to have hope for the future. It was at this time that a new movement in the Church, the Neo-catechumenal “Way” came to the Diocese and attracted many people. What is unfortunate is that the Diocese did not have much knowledge about this movement, and the movement began action here without an understanding of the circumstances of the Diocese. Without waiting for the consensus of the people of the Diocese, they started the train before all the passengers were on board (started action before obtaining the consent of all persons involved) and initiated numerous actions, including the foundation of the International Missionary Seminary. “Why do you oppose us when we are doing good?” is a question that has been put to me several times. “Good” is not suitable for all situations at all times. In “Good” there is “A Possible Time” and “A Possible Action”. Even if something is “good” there are “times” when we must not undertake an “action”. It is important to have the wisdom to become aware of this fact. The person in the Diocese who is responsible for discerning the “When” and the “What” is the Bishop. When there is internal division, and control of the situation is not possible, the only possible solution is to rely on the judgment of the Bishop. That is the reason why the Holy Father sends a Bishop to a Diocese. Now especially it is important that we center around the Bishop to determine the way we wish the Diocese to be. In order for it to be possible for a Bishop to make a discernment, the Church in its long history knows what is necessary and has set down such provisions in Canon Law. The Bishop administers the Diocese according to Canon Law and according to the laws of the country.

Searching for the Future Face of the Diocese

From the beginning of its history, Religious Orders have played an important role

in the Diocese. This is true also at the present time. For that reason there was a lack of awareness of the way of administering a diocese with its Bishop as its center. When we consider that fact, we realize that now is the time for the Religious Orders to think seriously about how they wish to work in the Diocese in cooperation with the Bishop. The members of Foreign Missionary Societies are diocesan priests and have the mission to work completely under the authority of the Bishop. It goes without saying that what is most important for diocesan priests is to follow faithfully the fundamental policy of the Bishop. If the priests of the Diocese are not closely united with their Bishop, then we cannot hope for unity and renewal in the Diocese. There have been circumstances in the Diocese of Takamatsu that have made it difficult to witness the building up of the Diocese with its Bishop as the center. It is important, therefore, to be open to the intentions of the Bishop regarding transfers to another area of the Diocese, and/or with reference to taking on responsibilities in the Diocese.

Pursuit of Collaborative Ministry in the Diocese of Takamatsu

A bishop does not make decisions by himself. He sets out the policies of the Diocese in collaboration with the College of Consultors, the Presbytery Council and the Pastoral Council for Mission. The Presbytery Council is composed of priests elected by the clergy of the Diocese, priests who have an administrative role in the Diocese and priests appointed by the Bishop. In the Pastoral Council for Mission representatives are sent from the Regional Councils of each area of the Diocese. In other words, what is meant by Collaborative Ministry is that opinions from a broad base are collected and become the foundation for decisions regarding the policies of the Diocese, the intentions of which are then spread through the sub-organizations of the diocese. Collaborative Ministry is definitely not a question of priests having to celebrate Mass in more than one church because there is a shortage of ministers. It is a system that makes it possible for all the people of the Diocese to participate as a united body in the affairs of the parish and of the Diocese. We have been used to a system by which there was one priest for each parish and he was responsible for everything that concerned ministry and administration in the parish. What we are striving to do at present is to work together with our priests in each area for pastoral mission. The priests in each area by using the wisdom and strengths of the consecrated religious and faithful in the area strive to find ways to truly become a church for that particular section of society. There are people who oppose this strategy by

saying that we have adopted this method because there are not enough priests. That is a mistake. The Second Vatican Council emphasized Church as the People of God. The People of God is made up of bishops, priests, consecrated religious and faithful coming together to build community. It is a system by which priests and the faithful work together to build community even when there is a large number of priests available for ministry. Some people say that this system divests the individual of his/her charism or special talents. The Church never squashes the charism (special talent) of an individual. As I have stated earlier, however, discerning the "Possible Time" and the "Possible Action" is important. With reference to such matters it is necessary to follow the directives of the Bishop. True charism leads to the building of community. It is not a question of doing what one wants to do, but rather of searching for what one can do for the church of one's local area.

Priority Issue in the Diocese of Takamatsu

There are many different forms of action in the Church of today, but what is of priority in the Diocese of Takamatsu is the invigoration of Youth Ministry. For the past four years under the leadership of Brother Yagi, OMI, Youth Ministry has been exemplary. What is unfortunate is that many priests and faithful of the Diocese showed no interest in or were ignorant of the activities being carried out by this committee. One of the conditions given us when we closed the seminary was that we work through our Youth Ministry to foster vocations in the Diocese. This is not simply an exhortation from the Secretary of State of the Vatican. I ask you to consider it as a command. If there is not an invigoration of our Youth Ministry, how can we expect an increase in vocations? The youth are not people far away from you. They are right beside you. When the Youth Ministry Committee makes plans for certain activities, all you have to do is to say to the youth near you, "How about taking part?" We have given priority to the work of this committee with generous financial support and we have no intention of letting up in this regard.

In conclusion, Collaborative Ministry means building your church yourselves. Until the present we have thought it natural to receive missionaries from Spain and the United States and for them to build churches for us. With time, to receive has become the "modus operandi". It is time for us to leave such an attitude behind. Now that the seminary has left the Diocese, what I ask you to consider is that it does not matter whether our parish or our diocese is small. What is important is that

you build it up yourselves. When I say “yourselves” , I mean each and every one of the Christian people in the Diocese.

I wish to re-confirm one other matter. Last year I stated that the Liturgy of the Easter Triduum that had been celebrated by the Bishop or by a priest designated to do so by the Bishop was not to be repeated. This year also I reiterate that the liturgical celebrations of the Easter Triduum are not to be repeated under any circumstances.

March 7, 2009

Osamu Mizobe

Bishop of the Diocese of Takamatsu