

KEYNOTE ADDRESS GIVEN BY BISHOP OSAMU MIZOBE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIANS OF KOCHI PREFECTURE, SHIKOKU,
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When I read the contents of the topics you wish me to talk about, I felt that a sword with many blades was threatening to pierce my throat. Since I do not wish to speak in any way that will involve the individual problems of other people, there are some issues I can talk about and some that I cannot. Since I am the Bishop and, therefore, a pastor, I do not wish to hurt anyone or thoughtlessly criticize anyone. Rather than answering each of your questions individually, I will speak generally about the matters referred to in them, and accept questions from the floor after my talk.

Problems in the Diocese of Takamatsu

It is two years and three months since I was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Takamatsu. First of all, let me explain how I came to be appointed. It was not because Bishop Fukahori was no longer here. I think it is permissible to give you some background information. As you probably know, the retirement age for a Bishop is 75, but Bishop Fukahori had already extended his time here by six years. The reason was that a replacement for him could not be found because of all the problems in the diocese. One of the biggest problems was that the Bishop was tried in civil court because of the establishment of the International Seminary. The seminary was not established according to the laws of Japan and in keeping with the rules governing Religious Corporations in Japan. The fact is that the Bishop lost the case. There have been many problems in the Catholic Church in Japan, but there has never been a case where one of the faithful has taken a Bishop to court, not in a Church Court but in a Civil Court. Because of such circumstances in this diocese, it was very difficult for the Pope to make a decision about the kind of person who should succeed Bishop Fukahori. At that time I was Bishop of the Sendai Diocese. At every Bishops' Conference I attended the problems of this diocese were the main concern of the Bishops. That is true to this day.

The Seminary and the Neo-catechumenate Way

The central issue in the diocese is a combination of what we call “The Neo-catechumenate Way” and the establishment of the seminary. As Bishop of Sendai, I was aware of the problems, but since I was not directly involved, I was more or less removed from the pain of the situation. At the Bishops’ Conference there was often hot discussion about this problem, but I was personally physically removed from the problem by distance. I did think, however, that the new Bishop would have great difficulty in solving the problems. The Bishops all felt that the person appointed would have to know clearly what the duties of a Bishop are. After one’s appointment as a Bishop, it takes two to three years to understand the diocese, and the role of the Bishop in the diocese. It was felt that the Takamatsu Diocese would not survive such a process. The decision was that Rome would send a special delegation to the Takamatsu Diocese in order to assess the situation.

Delegation from the Vatican

The first official visitor was Archbishop Kim from Korea. He stayed in the diocese for a month and after meeting with all the priests, and representatives of the Christian people, he sent a report to Rome. The next visitor was Archbishop Pittau of the Congregation for Catholic Education, who came because of the seminary. He likewise presented a report to Rome. I have read both reports. The fact that the problems of Takamatsu Diocese became the concern of Rome is one of the reasons why the whole issue is so complicated even to this day. The advice of Archbishop Kim that an experienced Bishop should be appointed was made known to all the Bishops here in Japan, but though I knew that one of us would be appointed, I never dreamed that it would be myself.

The Appointment Process

One evening when I was relaxing during the Bishops’ Conference, Bishop Nomura, chair of the Conference, came in and said, “The “terna” has come. “Terna” refers to the list of three persons for whom we are asked to write a recommendation, which is then sent to Rome. Using that information, Rome then makes a decision. The list that came to me, however, had only two names, and when I mentioned that fact, Bishop Nomura did not respond. After

that, Archbishop Okada came into the room, and again I mentioned that there were only two names on the list I received. Archbishop Okada did not comment either. That was when I realized that my name was also on the list. At that time I was chair of the Committee for Catholic Education and one day when I was having lunch with the members of that committee after our general meeting in Tokyo, every five minutes there was a call for me on my mobile phone, so I decided to take the message. It was from the Embassy of the Vatican in Tokyo. I was asked to go there immediately in a car that they would send to pick me up. On my arrival at the Embassy, I was given the appointment as Bishop of Takamatsu Diocese signed by Pope John Paul II. I was not consulted at all. The Apostolic Delegate asked me to stay at the Embassy for two or three days and to read all the documentation regarding Takamatsu Diocese. I went back to Sendai, and not knowing what to do, I notified Bishop Fukahori about my appointment. He hadn't been told, but he asked that it be announced that same week. The Apostolic Delegate had also said that he would like to make the announcement in five days, but I asked for a delay because that would mean that it would be announced on May 5, the day that a new priest was to be ordained in the Sendai Diocese. At my request, the announcement was delayed until May 12. In the meantime, I notified the official representative of the Bishop, and the Chancellor of the Sendai Diocese about the appointment. I spent three days at the Embassy reading the reports about the Takamatsu Diocese, including those written by Archbishop Kim and Archbishop Pittau, and although I don't pretend to have understood all the details, I realized what a task I was facing. The reasons why I was appointed were also written there: the fact that I was a senior Bishop, who already had experience as a Bishop; that I was already well connected with Rome and had ability in languages; and that I was gifted with patience, etc. I was told that I was the only one who had such qualities. The official documentation for the appointment came two days later. I was asked to leave the Sendai Diocese in two months, which meant that I would begin my mandate in the Takamatsu Diocese on July 14. In the two months I had left in the Sendai Diocese, I put all its affairs in order and also visited every area of the diocese.

Deep Wounds in the Takamatsu Diocese

From what I have said so far, I am sure that you understand that this

is not just a case of an appointment of a new Bishop. I was sent here to find a way to solve the problems of the diocese. The presence of the Neo-catechumenate Way, a seminary with close connections to Rome, the civil court case against the Bishop - all these problems were still unresolved. The Apostolic Delegate's words of missioning were, "You are sent to rebuild unity in a diocese that is divided" . That is the principal reason why I was sent here. Not knowing these details, you probably thought that it was just a case of an appointment of a new Bishop. I was uneasy about what I could do, for I had been in Sendai for four years and was just beginning to find my stride. I have been here for two years, and in three years I will be 75 years of age. When I was appointed, I asked myself what I would be able to do in only five years. Because of mutual hurts, there was discordance and disharmony among the priests and among the Christian people. Since you are a distance away, you may not be aware of that situation, but in Kagawa Prefecture there is still a deep chasm and it is very difficult to create unity. Healing and conversion of heart is never an easy task. Just because the person at the top has been changed does not mean that everything will immediately get better. It is not possible for the person newly put in charge to throw away the policies that had been followed until the change. Businesses don't even work like that. That is even truer for us in the Church. The biggest question for me is what I should do in such a situation.

Remedy Needed in our Diocese

You asked me to speak about "the face of our diocese in three years time" , but truthfully I cannot. The only thing I can do at the present time is put all my strength into living each year. Even if I am advised to do this or do that, it is really difficult. In working for unity, however, I do think that our efforts in Collaborative Ministry is a good way. It means that the priests, religious and Christian people of the diocese walk together as one people. Everything is not left up to the Bishop, nor are the Christian people left on their own. As I wrote in the Diocesan Paper, it is a collaborative effort where we use the wisdom given to each one of us to think collectively about our diocese. It means that each individual person in the diocese must think about its affairs as his or her own personal problem. If we have no vocations, if there are not enough people to do

the work of the diocese, it is not enough to use the solution of former days, e.g. asking for priests from the Nagasaki Diocese or from foreign countries. This way of depending on the outside to solve our problems must be changed. We must take the initiative to work out the problems of our churches and of our diocese ourselves. If we do that, vocations to the priesthood will surely be fostered. True vocations to the priesthood will be born from among ourselves. I think that we need to become a missionary church. When we become truly pastoral, we do not think only of what we need to do in our own church, but we reach out to society as well. Pooling our wisdom to think together about what we can do for mission is what Collaborative Ministry is all about. For example, the Collaborative Ministry Team in the Matsuyama area is planning a celebration of the Christmas Mass to which they will invite people of the area. It will be held in the auditorium of the St. Catarina High School with the cooperation of that school, and the three parishes of Matsuyama. The parents and students of the two Catholic schools– St. Catarina and Aiko Gakuen– will be invited, and the music and singing will be provided by the two schools. They will also contribute music for the party to be held after the Mass. This is an effort to make the Catholic Church better known in the Matsuyama area. In the Takamatsu area, there was a meeting of religious people as a follow-up of the WCRPVIII Congress that was held in Kyoto. I was asked to chair the preparatory committee for the event in Takamatsu. About 300 people made up of Buddhists, Shinto and Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, came together for a symposium on peace. At that time I felt very strongly the confidence that is placed in our Church. There is a movie called “Nagasaki 1945 , Angelus Bells” , which I hear will be shown here next year in a project of Kochi City, but in Takamatsu our Church took the initiative this year to show the movie to the people of the city. A committee of Catholics, Protestants and people committed to peace was formed to carry out the project. In many ways, therefore, cooperation and collaboration have begun. To come back to the idea of Collaborative Ministry in our churches, it doesn’ t mean only that the priest who offers the Sunday Mass will change, but rather is a way that helps us all think and work together for our Church. By working together in such a way, we free ourselves from the fetters and cliques that we have experienced until now.

The Importance of Collaborative Ministry

We need to move from being a passive church. Even if what we attempt to do is only a small effort, working together is what Collaborative Ministry is all about. That is why I put so much importance on Collaborative Ministry and my desire is that we all move forward in that direction. That is the best way to free ourselves from any bias we might have. When we work together in such a way, everything is out in the open and nothing is done secretly behind closed doors. The decision of all to move in the same direction toward a common goal is Collaborative Ministry. I do believe that your area is making great efforts to foster this cooperation. We need to do some consciousness-raising in this regard even if it is only gradual. Since it is collaboration that we are talking about, it means that we help one another and work together. There cannot be any kind of exclusion. If each one of us thinks of what he or she can do to help, things will begin to happen.

The Footsteps of the Last Two Years

Let me explain now what I have tried to do these past two years. In Sendai I had experienced the organizational skill which is one of the characteristics of people in the Tohoku area - the organization of the diocese and its finances, financial reports and such matters were clearly delineated. My first impression when I came here was sloppiness in these areas. Taken positively it was accommodating, but from the legal point of view it was not a good situation. There was little organization in the diocese. Soon after I came here, the chancellor drowned in a river. In Japan it is very difficult for a non-Japanese to be Chancellor. Since he has to know about financial matters as well, it was very hard for me to find a replacement, with the result that I ended up doing the work myself. During my first year, therefore, I did the work of the chancellor and with the help of a certain person, I also did most of the finances.

Problems in the Diocesan Finances

My first project was to organize the finances according to the directives of Canon Law. One important point is to make sure that the financial report is given to all the parishes. With the entrance of the Neo-catechumenate

Way into the diocese and because of the court case against the Bishop, several parishes no longer sent the required allotment to the diocese and its financial situation was precarious. The diocese was being supported by the Mass offerings received by the priests from the Diocese of Nagasaki and by donations received by Bishop Fukahori. It is our duty to pay the salaries of our priests, including the priests of the Neo-catechumenate Movement. How to do that is a big problem. Because of all these problems, administration of the central office of the diocese is a difficult task and, therefore, I took over more than half of the duties of the treasurer and gave my opinion freely in drawing up the budget and the financial report. There are 16 dioceses in Japan, but there is no other Bishop who has had the experience of being Chancellor and Treasurer as well as Bishop of his diocese.

Support Offered by the Apostolic Delegate and Other Dioceses

The Apostolic Delegate gave me the following advice. He said, "Do not go to Takamatsu Diocese alone. You will find yourself isolated and unable to move one way or the other. Choose five people you can trust. I personally will contact the Bishops concerned and ask that they honor your request." I first asked for a Chancellor. The Apostolic Delegate promptly phoned Bishop Takami of Nagasaki Diocese. He also phoned the Salesian Fathers of Don Bosco. At that time, Father Sua had just finished his work in Kobe and was slated for a sabbatical. Archbishop Ikenaga felt badly that the Osaka Diocese had done nothing to help the situation in Takamatsu and wanted to do something, with the result that Father Sua came to help us out. A personal friend of mine from 40 years ago - Father Murakami, SDB - also came to Shikoku and is now the pastor of Imabari Parish.

Improving the Functioning of the Diocesan Central Office

In this second year, I do believe that the central office is functioning well. The financial allotment from each parish is being forwarded to us. It is now double what it was the first year. I think that that is a sign that confidence has been restored. I cannot say that we have no financial problems, but we are certainly moving forward. In the financial reports of both the diocese and the parishes, we have revised the items to be reported and set up a form that is shared by all areas in the diocese. My

experience in the Sendai Diocese has been a big help in the reorganization of the central office. I am also very grateful to the Osaka Archdiocese. They have sincerely committed themselves to supporting us in every way they can, including the organization of the finances. It is a beautiful example of brotherly care and concern. I am also grateful to the Nagasaki Diocese, which not only sent personnel but also continues to support us financially. Without their financial support we would not be able to function.

Restoring Normalcy in the Administration of the Diocese

The administration of the diocese must be carried out according to the code of Canon Law. There must be a Priests' Council and a Pastoral Council of Christians. There was a group called the Conference of Christians but there was no Pastoral Council of Christians, whose role is to be a consultative body for the Bishop. It is important for the Bishop to question and to listen to opinions about matters being considered. In a case where a big project is being undertaken; for example, the establishment of a seminary, there must be consultation. The fact that we have now established the two above councils is a big step forward for our diocese. I am very sorry that no such system was in place at the time of the court case. The opinions of the Christian people were divided and there was no way to achieve cooperation from the whole diocese. The fact that the Bishop must consult the above councils is the wisdom of the Church. Another problem arose over the fact that our diocese was negligent in setting up the proper administrative structure. It has to do with the laws for Religious Corporations in Japan, which have become a great deal stricter after the problems with the Ohm Sect. The Government of Japan requires Religious Corporations to report on property and finances. Unfortunately, the understanding of such matters in this diocese was limited and the people in charge were of the opinion that the old way of looking after such matters was sufficient. We need to use our Financial Council to work in these areas, and remember that, because we work in Japan, we are governed by the laws for Religious Corporations.

What Was Lacking in the Diocese

As a Religious Corporation, it is necessary to have a meeting of the board members of the corporation and to take official minutes of the proceedings.

We have an obligation to make a public announcement when property or a change in the by-laws of the corporation is involved. When a new establishment is being considered, a period for questioning about the matter must be accorded. In order to proceed with any matter having to do with the Religious Corporation, minutes of the meeting(s) signed by all the board members must accompany the request. Unfortunately, the fact that such legal procedures were not followed in the establishment of the seminary caused the ensuing problems. There was very little concern shown about such matters, and that became the point of dispute in the court case. It is for that reason that it is essential for us to begin the regeneration of the diocese by setting up an administrative structure that follows the laws for Religious Corporations in Japan.

Remedies Already in Orbit

We have been able to accomplish much in the past two years. We are now in the process of making our central office stronger by establishing committees. The work of these committees enables us to promulgate the policies of the diocese. My experience in Sendai is again a big help to me. We have committees for the liturgy, youth ministry, mission, information and publications, and from this year, a committee for ongoing formation. Two other committees, the human rights committee and a committee for multi-religions are being formed at this time. They will work slowly, but I am sure that they will bring results. I was asked what I could do in three years, and whether I thought it was possible to bring new life to our diocese. I do not know. Now that we have the Central Office working well, we have to look at the administrative structures of each region of the diocese. How we are to answer the needs of each specific region, how we can follow up on the establishment of Collaborative Ministry are big concerns for me at this time. As I explained earlier in my talk, Collaborative Ministry involves the sharing of wisdom in deciding what must be retained before any action is taken. Everyone is informed about which priests will offer Mass at each church, about what meetings the Christian people will attend and so on. Nothing is done on impulse. Everyone will know what is happening in their church at any given time. There will be no secrecy. Through this sharing of information, each person will be able to ascertain what he or she can do to cooperate. The clergy, religious

and Christian people meet together to set up their objectives and to plan for their execution. For example, the celebration of Christmas, Holy Thursday, the Sacrament of Confirmation and so on could be planned as a common project in each area.

The Direction We Must Take

As I stated before, I am not sure whether we can accomplish the regeneration of our diocese in three years, but what I can say with certainty is that I do not intend to stay on as Bishop after I have reached the age of retirement. I do not believe that it is a good idea to do so. One should work as hard as one can to carry out the mandate confided to him and then give the task over to his successor. For me at this time the biggest problem is the lack of vocations to the priesthood and the aging of our priests. I have been asked to think about training Eucharistic Ministers and plan to do so. I would like to have suggestions on this matter from the teams for Collaborative Ministry.

The Birth of a Permanent Diaconate

We will ordain our first permanent deacon in the Takamatsu diocese next year. He is not a priest. He is a married layman. If there is a shortage of priests, it is not enough for us to think of asking for priests from elsewhere. We have to think of what we can do ourselves to remedy the situation. This is one possibility. Depending on the outside for help when we do not have enough priests is what I fear the most, for it means that we do not take initiative ourselves and this leads to further trouble. If there is a shortage, then we have to think about what we can all do together to remedy the situation. We need to become the kind of church community from which leaders will be born. Leaders are born in a church community deeply rooted in faith. A committed priest works hard at building community. The person at the top must never discriminate, be divisive, or alienate people. It is from a fervent community that the next leaders will be born.

Vocations

We also have to work hard for vocations. At present we are working hard to bring the youth of our diocese together at various events throughout the year. Brother Yagi is working very hard as head of the committee for

youth ministry. This is an area where great patience is required. How to make the church appealing to our youth is one of the tasks of the Collaborative Ministry Team and of the Pastoral Committee. The Dominican priests in the Matsuyama area told me the other day that they had made ministry to youth their main objective for the year and that they were going to staff each of the events and projects planned. I thought that was really wonderful. They added that they came to that decision in order to cooperate with the policies I have promulgated. The discussion with them made me very happy. In the Sendai Diocese also I had put a great deal of energy into youth ministry, and at World Youth Day in both Toronto and Cologne, I realized that they were indeed being formed in the faith. There are some among them who wish to enter the seminary. Slowly but surely we need to make our churches and diocese open and welcoming to youth. We need to think concretely about what we can do in this area. When I was in Sendai, I set up a group for young people who were studying to become teachers: "Study Group for Teachers of Religion". I also had a group that studied "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" and a team that met once a month to plan for retreats. They planned for retreats to be held six times a year (every two months). I have left Sendai, but they are still functioning and I believe that vocations will be born from such groups. What is very unfortunate, however, is the fact that the priests are slow at understanding these efforts of the youth. They say that the youth do not do anything. They do not realize what great work our young people are doing. This inability to understand could be fatal, don't you think? I want you, the Christian people, to understand that our youth are active. I wish, too, that you make efforts in your own families. Invite people and try to be there when there are events. That is all you have to do. I do believe that something will be born from such efforts. It is very important for us to take the initiative to invite youth.

Vocations and the Clergy of the Diocese

In Takamatsu there are many different courses being offered as part of the work of the committee for ongoing formation. We wanted to make the Bishop's House a gathering place for as many people as possible. What happens, however, is that the Christian people come, but they do not bring along anyone else. We need vocations. But how much do we think about that?

The average age of our priests is very high. Is it soon enough to think about the problem when it is right before our eyes? Is this not the time to take action? What will be the situation in the Dominicans, the Oblates, and the Spanish Missionaries in ten years time? If we do not count the priests of the Neo-catechumenate Way, there are only four Japanese priests in our diocese. The other Japanese priests now working in our diocese are here on contract and will return to their dioceses or religious community in the future. Three of the Japanese priests are retired men in their 80's. The only Japanese priest who is active is already 64 years of age. There hasn't been a vocation to the priesthood in this diocese for 30 years. What are we to do?

The International Seminary and the Administration of the Diocese

If there are no Japanese priests, then could we not rely on the seminarians in the International Seminary? That creates another big problem. Some parishes refuse to accept priests who belong to the Neo-catechumenate. There was a big problem in the parish of Shodoshima and it is impossible to send a priest of the Neo-catechumenate Way there. That is true of other parishes as well. What are we to do in this kind of situation?

Efforts of the Tokyo Archdiocese

Many dioceses in Japan are working very hard, and as a result the Tokyo Archdiocese will send 8 men to the seminary next year. I was invited to the workshop held for the priests of the Archdiocese, and in talking with them, they said, "We consider ourselves very blessed. 8 men will enter the seminary next year and every year we have 2 or 3 men ordained. 80% of them are young men who came to Tokyo from other areas of Japan to go to university. They are now in the Tokyo Archdiocese, but we would like to think of a plan to send them back to their home regions." In Saitama Prefecture there were no ordinations for 20 years, but Bishop Okada and Bishop Tani worked very hard to reinvigorate youth ministry and now 2 or 3 men enter the seminary every year. We cannot say, therefore, that vocations to the priesthood are scarce in Japan. The Major Seminary in Tokyo has to build on an addition. People say that things are difficult in remote areas, but how about changing our way of thinking? Dioceses can also work together to help other dioceses.

The Permanent Diaconate

Because of the lack of vocations, we have begun to think about the permanent diaconate in our diocese. It is not advisable for the priests to be swamped with the office work of the diocesan central office. I would like to see them freed from such work so that they can dedicate themselves to the pastoral work of the Church. Men who are ordained as permanent deacons could take over the role of Chancellor or Treasurer in the central office. They could also serve as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the School Corporation for our kindergartens. We want to try different ways of sharing responsibility. The experiments we carry out are all done with the future of the diocese in mind. This way of thinking is part of what we call Collaborative Ministry. If we share our wisdom, we will be unable to say there is only darkness five years down the road. We are trying to make it possible for our priests to be truly pastors.

Anxiety regarding Diocesan Finances

You asked the question “Is the diocese in financial difficulty?” I do think that I can answer that we are solvent. As you know, the money we use for the running of the diocese is received from the parishes. What I need for the work of the diocese comes from that account. This is the function of the finances handled by the Central Office, namely, the administration of the diocese. As I said earlier, since each parish is now sending in their allotment, if we do not undertake a big project of some kind, there is no problem. We have the obligation to make sure that our priests are adequately cared for. Since the International Seminary was founded, the number of priests in our diocese has increased. That is something to be happy about, but their salaries have to be paid. When they go abroad to study or when they study for certification here in Japan, this also has to be included in our budget. This is a critical problem for the diocese. Until now the older priests in the diocese have been supported by the tithes of the parishioners, but for those priests that is no longer possible.

Problems in Administering Kindergartens

There are people who say, “If priests are working in a kindergarten,

won' t everything be alright?" When a priest is the director of a kindergarten, the amount of his salary that is over and above the regular salary of a parish priest is put into the Priests' Fund of the Diocese. It means that the money obtained by the priests is equally shared. In order for a priest to be the director of a kindergarten, he needs special qualifications. Unfortunately many priests do not have such qualifications and not everyone can become the director of a kindergarten. The administration of kindergartens in Japan is becoming more difficult. To give one example, kindergartens will have to be combined with nurseries. It is not an easy task to assure the continuation of our kindergarten education. It is not necessarily true anymore that a parish priest can also be the director of the kindergarten. It is necessary for the priests to talk together about their financial situation. We began that process at the most recent assembly of the priests of the diocese.

Finances of the International Seminary and Salaries of the Priests

The finances of the International Seminary are a problem. Until I came here, it was impossible to grasp the situation. We received the financial report, but there were many questions about the accounting methods, the way of budgeting and so on. Now they are making efforts to adopt the methods required by law. We have set up a special fund in the diocese with the money bequeathed by Father Yamashita, and will use it only when it is necessary to do so. If we have to start using such a fund, then there is a real danger of financial difficulties in the diocese. However, we are not in crisis at the present time. In your fifth question, you asked, " Will the diocese be bankrupt in two or three years?" What we will not have in two or three years time is money for our priests. That is a problem the priests have to think about, and the Christian people whom the priests serve must also think about this problem. Neither the priests nor the Christian people should think only about receiving.

In Conclusion, the Message I Wish to Leave with You

Questions six and seven are very difficult to answer. I want to say only one thing. With regards to the problems of division and unity in the diocese, the seminary is a big problem. What makes the problem more complicated is that the seminary is closely connected with Rome. The Prefect

of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples established the seminary and came here for the laying of the cornerstone. I am the Bishop of Takamatsu but I am not free to act alone in this matter. In September I was asked to meet with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and at that time was encouraged to sincerely dialogue with the Neo-catechumenate Way about a way by which they can remain in the Takamatsu Diocese. Their founder Mr. Kiko is also slated to visit Japan. A letter also came to the Bishops' Conference encouraging them to dialogue with the Neo-catechumenate Way. In other words, the fact that they have encouraged the Bishops' Conference not to leave this problem only to me, but to work together to find a solution is a sign of their care and concern. The fact that the Neo-catechumenate Way is in the Takamatsu Diocese means that there are people who are zealously involved in it, but it also means that the parishes are becoming stagnant. People in the parishes are fewer and gradually aging. It is into such a situation that they have come with their overflowing zeal. "Movements" are very common in the Church of today. Many movements have sprung up around the world, and the Neo-catechumenate Way is one of them. Maybe there are problems in their way of doing things. But it is also true that it is the time for us to think about our traditions and our way of doing things. In order to build something new by incorporating new movements in the Church and the older structures, I do believe that Collaborative Ministry is the only way.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ADDRESS

Question 1:

Today's theme is "Unity". When we hear the word "unity" we often try to deal with it only on an emotional level. At the Assembly of Christians in Ehime Prefecture, you said, "When Christian people come together at Mass, the Church is renewed, unity is born, and our salvation begins anew." Would you please explain in plain language what you meant?

Bishop Mizobe:

At the present time, in the Priests' Council, we are discussing Part II of my Pastoral Message on "The Year of the Eucharist". We have already discussed it four times. It will mainly be about "The Lord's Day". We

are emphasizing the importance of the principal Mass of the Sunday and asking that we all try to make it life-giving. What can we do to help bring this about? We need to have a committee for the liturgy. I want you to put as much effort as you can into thinking about what you can do. The Mass is the best sign of our unity. I believe that it is in the Mass that our unity is born. We will discuss the contents of the message once again (Nov. 7). We will talk about Masses for special groups. For example, the Mass that is held once a month for children, the Mass for foreign people and so on. Rather than having a special Mass every Sunday for foreign people, we would like to see them join with the Japanese community for Mass at least once a month. We are also asking that both adults and children assist together at the same Mass. I wish, therefore, that you think about what you can do regarding these Masses for special groups.

The same is true for those who follow the Neo-catechumenate Way. Rather than thinking only of having their own liturgies, I encourage them in the Pastoral Message to give importance to the Mass of their respective parishes. This has generated a lot of discussion and so far I have not been able to complete the text. How we can make the principal Mass of the Sunday more meaningful is a very important issue. If everyone works together on this issue, surely unity will be born. The Sunday Mass is the pre-eminent sign of our unity. Everything we do as Church is concentrated there.

Question 2:

In your talk you didn't speak about what you think of our youth. Brother Yagi, who is here with us today, is working hard as a leader in the recently formed youth ministry committee. I hope that such a group will become very active. In the olden days there were many altar servers. Our sons attended Mass when they were in elementary school, but now they don't come. Why? Because there is nothing to attach them to the church. Here in Kochi the youth group used to visit Hakuaien (an institution for the protection of children), but now there are no activities like that. If there were such activities, I am sure that young people would come to church.

In your talk you mentioned the Neo-catechumenate Way. Are any priests of the group here today? They are not here, are they? That is why it is difficult to build unity. I would like you to speak about that issue also.

Bishop Mizobe:

Model Priests

There are priests in the Neo-catechumenate Way whom we can call model priests. I live and work with one of them. He is a dedicated and good priest. We have a staff meeting of all those who work in the central office, of which he is a part, on Wednesday of every week. We all discuss our plans, and pray, work and have our meals together. As a result, we all know what the schedules of the others entail. We are carrying out our ministry with one heart and soul. From that point of view, he is a model priest. Today he had to go to Ikeda Church. Otherwise, he would be here.

The Essence of the Problem

The problem arises from the way that the group entered the diocese and the process that was followed in establishing the seminary. The Christian people were not consulted or notified. This is probably the problem of the group as a whole rather than any one individual. As I said before, it is the wish of Rome that I find a way in which they can remain in the diocese. The group realizes that they can only be here if they accept the conditions of the diocese. They, too, are looking for clear ways to establish their connection with the diocese. If the group decides to be here, then Rome is asking that we work out what it is necessary to do to make that possible. Setting aside relationships on a personal level, the many emotional issues involved make the problem more complicated.

Establishing Networks with Youth

The first point you made had to do with youth. The committee for youth ministry has set up a plan for different activities: Children's Camp, Camp for High School Students, Youth Assembly (to be held on Nov. 18-19) and so on. Each time this kind of event is planned, the networking among the members grows. They become connected. What we have to do is be with them and think and plan with them about what we can do. We need to work out a plan for systematic networking, for at present our method is more or less haphazard. At the Assembly of Christians in Ehime Prefecture they showed the video that was taken at the Children's Camp, attended by 80 children. At Matsuyama Church Archbishop Okada came to celebrate the "Rotating Mass" and do catechesis with the youth of the diocese. The second meeting of that group will be held here in Kochi. Networking has certainly begun among our youth.

Searching for Ways to Work with Junior and Senior High Students

It is hard to know what to do about the junior and senior high school students. In the summer we invited the junior and senior high school boys from the Salesian Junior Seminary to come to Takamatsu to sing at the Sunday Mass. At that time junior and senior high school boys and girls assembled. Now we are planning a camp for that age group in February. We do not know whether it will succeed or not, but we are going to try. When the committee for youth ministry makes such plans known, I wish for the priests and Christian people to show interest and to contact as many young people as they can. If we do not have a sense of solidarity which enables us to “walk with”, if we turn our backs, then no matter how hard Brother Yagi works, we will not meet with success.

Question 3:

My daughter, who is still part of the youth group, says it is difficult to find new members. She attended the meeting in Matsuyama and is part of the planning for the meeting to be held here in Kochi. When the youth are in university, it is relatively easy for them to meet, but when they start to work, it is not easy to find the time. That is the problem right now.

Bishop Mizobe:

We realize how difficult it is and are doing our best to find ways around such difficulties. I really do believe that it is important for each one to invite others to join them. Attendance at such gatherings is where networking begins. Personally I always work that way. Once I have made an acquaintance I take great pains to keep in touch. I have been in close contact with youth for the 40 years I have been a priest. That is something I wish to treasure all my life. Now I would like Brother Yagi to speak about your question.

Brother Yagi:

The institution for children that you spoke about is indeed a good place for activities, but with all the changes in society, it is now very difficult to be accepted for volunteer work in such institutions. What happened was that the high school students who took part in such programs did not always

have good manners and there were many problems. At the same time, however, we are hoping that with the different activities we plan, our youth will learn to use their gifts to work in and for society. At present we do not have the kind of activities we had before, but rather than doing something suddenly, I think we need to move in that direction.

Question 4:

Since I was baptized only 6 years ago, I still do not know much about the church. This is the first time I have heard a talk about unity. With regard to youth, I often brought my grandchildren to church with me, but gradually they stopped coming. The fact that they became adolescents is probably one of the reasons. They say, "We don't understand the contents at church. It is too difficult." When I ask them what they mean, they line up all kinds of concrete examples. I, too, have felt the same way as they do several times. I think that if we could clear that kind of hurdle, they would come to realize that the church is a good place. Right now they do not have the chance or the strength to do that by themselves. What is important is that we find meaningful ways to pass on the meaning and greatness of faith to our children before they become adults. Even when entertaining assemblies are planned, sometimes the assemblies do not meet the expectations of those attending them. No matter what age a person is, it is very difficult to truly move a person's heart. I want to ask you if it is not possible for the Church to hear and answer to the concerns of both youth and people in the prime of life.

Bishop Mizobe:

When I was younger, I was able to take part in many activities. Since I liked basketball, I used to play basketball. I also liked mountain-climbing and often went to the mountains with groups. I think we need leaders who can be and act together with the young. As one gets older, however, one has to find new ways to do so. At present I often make a meal with them. Rather than taking a group out to eat somewhere, we make the meal together. As we prepare the meal, we can talk together and have an enjoyable time. No matter what kind of meeting we have, at the end we always have time for feedback. I have been following that method for 40 years. It is important for each one to speak about what was important to

him/her in the time just spent together. I always see the group to the door, shake hands with them or show some other sign of my care and affection. I think that is very important. It is not just a question of coming together and studying something. Neither is it a case of meeting each individual to talk about their problems. When we make an effort to contact even one or two of our youth, we gradually become friendly. We can use e-mail. Since I am so busy, one of the young people keeps track of what is going on and gives me the information by e-mail. It looks like we are all scattered here and there, but we are connected. When I was in Sendai, a young man and woman who had been baptized looked after this kind of networking for me and were a big help in our activities. It is true that Sendai is a big city, but at the beginning we started from zero and gradually reached the point where 70 to 80 young people were gathering. They had many different kinds of gatherings, but many attended each time. They also helped out in Children's camps in six different churches in the summer. What we need are good ideas and leaders who are able to think and act.

Question 5:

This is not a question. I belong to Enoguchi Church and am the person responsible for the Neo-catechumenate Way in this area. I have followed this Way for 18 years. I want you to understand us. I entered this Way of my own volition, and personally believe that I was called to it by God. I have received much. In Toyoshima Church in Tokyo I asked for and received permission to enter the Neo-catechumenate Way. I would like to explain to you what we do here in Kochi. Every Wednesday we meet in the parish hall for Bible study. On Saturday, when a priest is available, we have Mass in the same place. I leave the future of our group in the hands of God and in your hands. If it is at all possible, I ask you to give us your protection.

Bishop Mizobe:

As I said earlier, there are many new movements in the Church that are approved by the Church. We must understand that fact. If that helps any individual to find salvation, then it is good. We cannot hide the fact, however, that many problems have been caused by the entrance of this group into the diocese. I want you to understand what the reasons were for the

problems. What the group has to do in order to continue to be here is decide what they must keep and what they can give up, and how they can support the vision and direction of the diocese. I ask that the Japanese people in the group understand their position in the church and act accordingly. There are limits on what foreign people can do, and if the Japanese members do what the foreign members do, that will again be the cause of friction. I would ask that the Japanese members of the Neo-catechuminate Way show some autonomy and make efforts to understand the situation. I will say it again. I will not desert you. I ask you to think earnestly about how you can serve the Church in Japan and in this diocese.