

October 3, 2022

To develop a Mission and Pastoral Policy for the Diocese of Niigata

Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Niigata,

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

At the end of April last year, the Diocese of Niigata held a pastoral council meeting to discuss the 2012 Diocesan Mission Declaration and its priorities, how the diocese as a whole has been working on them, and whether there are any new issues that need to be addressed in light of the significant changes in both society and the Church. Based on the opinions expressed, I decided to review the mission declaration and priorities of the diocese as a whole, exchange opinions on the future mission and pastoral care of the Diocese of Niigata based on the results of the review, and create a mission and pastoral policy for the Diocese of Niigata.

Just as Pope Francis made the Synod on "The Church that Walks Together" to be about the journey of the entire Church, which was discussed by Church communities around the world, we believe that in the formulation of the mission and pastoral policy of the Diocese of Niigata, the important thing is not only to make and implement the policies, but also to discuss it together with all the faithful of the diocese from the first stages of its formulation.

Based on the responses from the discussions in your communities, we are sending you the questions for discussion prepared by the Mission and Pastoral Council, a summary of our reflections on the priority issues for your reference, and the current status of the Diocese of Niigata.

We ask that each community discuss and email their responses to Father Koichi Otaki at the Diocesan Office by January 31, 2023 (cancelnig@ne.ncv.jp).

It is my hope that through these discussions we, the Diocese of Niigata, can grow as a community that lives "always together with the Gospel". May God, who gathers people to Himself and walks with them, bless and guide our path.

Diocese of Niigata

Bp. Daisuke Narui, SVD

What is the Mission and Pastoral Policy?

It is a policy of the Niigata Diocese community to live and witness the Gospel of Christ together, both within the Church community and outside of it. The Diocese of Niigata is a group of brothers and sisters from many different backgrounds, which include regional differences, different religious congregations that have worked in the diocese over the years, and differences in national origin and generations. The realities they face and the atmosphere of their communities are also different from each other. The Mission and Pastoral Policy is an instrument for one large community, the diocese, to walk together with a common policy as branches connected to the single vine of Christ, even though each has a different background.

Questions for discussion in each community

We are aware that it is difficult to have discussions in the face of the Corona pandemic, but we hope that you will devise ways to have sharing, such as holding several discussions in small groups when it is difficult to take measures against the covid infection. Also, please make sure that the questions should be answered by people from various backgrounds, such as those from overseas, youth, parents with small children, the elderly, and those who find it difficult to come to church for various reasons. Please note that although there are many questions, it is not necessary to answer all of them. The parish council could prioritize the questions and parish community could share the selected questions. Also, please discuss and report on any matters not listed here that are important for the mission and pastoral work of the parish.

Begin the discussion by saying the prayer for the Synod, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As much as possible, allow all participants to speak when exchanging ideas. Please listen to each person's opinion rather than dismissing anyone's ideas.

In preparing responses to be sent to the parish office, be sure to have a summary discussion at the parish council meeting about what you have discussed as a parish. The response should include brief bulleted comments on each question. Also, please keep your parishioners informed of the content of the responses that you send to the diocesan office.

About the Parish Community

- (1) How can we nurture our faith, share and convey our thoughts to each other with people of different generations, nationalities and cultures?
- (2) What can I (we) do in a time when the number of priests is decreasing?
- (3) What can I (we) do to help the youth who will lead the next generation and parents with small children so that they will come to church in joy?
- (4) What can I (we) do for those who have difficulty coming to church or who are currently away from church?
- (5) What do you do to make it easier for people from any status (e.g., social minorities, people who can participate in church activities only a little, etc.) to attend Mass and activities?
- (6) What role do you expect your district (Akita, Yamagata, Shibata, Niigata, Nagaoka) to play? Do you think the current district assignment is appropriate for this purpose? If changes are necessary, how would you suggest they be made? Is there anything you would like to do in cooperation with neighboring churches?

About the Church's Mission Activity

- (7) How do you share the gospel with people in your community? How do you want to share the gospel from now?
- (8) Who are the people in your neighborhood who are in particular need of help, and with whom should you journey together as a church?
- (9) How will you interact with Catholic educational and welfare institutions and parishes (even during the Corona pandemic, whether visible or invisible activities.)
- (10) How will I (we) be contact with the neighborhood (neighborhood associations, social welfare councils, etc.)?

Inside and outside the Church

- (11) There are people both inside and outside the Church who are neglected and lonely. Do you speak to anyone, even if it is just to say a few words? What kind of people will you (we) talk to and listen to?
- (12) How will I (we) prepare for disasters (for the Church, for the faithful, and for the community)?

Prayer for the Synod

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.