

Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Fukuoka

I rejoice with you on the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord.

When, trying to avoid the proliferation of the corona virus, almost all the activities of the church are stopped, I received a telephone call that surprised me.



On the other end of the line was the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Joseph Chennoth, announcing to me that the Holy Father Francis had decided to send me to the Diocese of Fukuoka. As you can guess, I was perplexed by the news. In any case, since the assignment was coming from the Holy Father and it was surely the result of an accurate process of discernment, my answer was, “yes, I accept”.

I did not have much connection with the Diocese of Fukuoka so far. Only last year I was asked to guide the yearly retreat to the clergy of the Diocese, and we were able to spend a few days together in prayer. However, from now on we shall journey together. Yes, I want to stress the word “together”. Please, let me walk together with you, keeping alive the journey of the Diocese of Fukuoka and being attentive to the present reality. I have a lot of things to learn, so I ask you to accompany me in this journey.

Why am I being sent to Fukuoka diocese? This is the question that I asked myself and most probably you are asking too. At the end, I decided to take this appointment as a call from the Lord. As we journey together, I am sure we will be able to enjoy our being together, to discern which are the main points we must prioritize and how to implement the mission entrusted to us. This is what I hope from the deepest of my heart. Responding to the grace of the visit of the Holy Father last November, let us try to bear the light of the Gospel in the midst of our society.

Through the coat of arms I chose as bishop, I have tried to show my own understanding of this mission. Let me introduce it to you.

- 「キリストの愛に驅り立てられて」 (The love of Christ impels us). These words are taken from the Second letter of Paul to the Corinthians (2Cor 5:14). This is the very source of our Christian life and our missionary commitment. Our only aim is the Kingdom of God.

- The open book represents the Word of God which is the light that guides us.
- The pigeon represents both, the Holy Spirit and the desire for peace.
- The flames represent the Heart of Mary, filled by the Holy Spirit and by a great love for the people.

We have just celebrated the memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus during the Holy Week. Let the light of the resurrection guide us in our journey. We are going through a difficult time, but I am sure that joining our hearts and our capacities we will be able to overcome it. We are experiencing several restrictions because of the coronavirus. Nevertheless, I will try to transfer as soon as possible to Fukuoka and decide the future timetable.

I am looking forward to meeting you all. May the good Lord bless you. Fraternally in Christ,

Josep M. Abella

April 14, 2020