

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE ORDINARY TIME – HOMILY

### MASS FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE JOURNEY TOWARD THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE DIOCESE OF FUKUOKA

A year ago, we began our journey of preparation for the celebration of the diocese's centenary. We prayed that it would be a "year of grace" in which each person would deepen their faith experience, in which the Diocese of Fukuoka would strengthen its missionary commitment, and in which we could all renew our desire to proclaim the Gospel.

Ninety-eight years have passed since the creation of the Diocese of Fukuoka on July 16, 1927. During these years, through the work of lay people, religious, priests and bishops, the church has grown, and the light of the Gospel has shined in this region. We feel deeply grateful to those who have starred in this history. As indicated in the Pastoral Plan: "We look back on the road traveled by the community of the diocese of Fukuoka with **gratitude**. We are encouraged by the **passion** that is communicated to us when we are touched by the Gospel, and that inspires us to look at the future with **hope**". As I have said repeatedly "**gratitude**," "**passion**," and "**hope**" are the lights that will guide us on our journey.

At the same time, we must also recognize that, along this path, there have been moments in which, moving away from the Gospel, we have made decisions based only on our own interests, we have not been able to look at those who were marginalized or, there have even been occasions when we have wounded other people. We want to ask forgiveness from God and from those who were negatively affected by our attitudes and decisions and implore the necessary strength to be faithful to the Gospel. Our journey of preparation for the celebration of the centenary of the founding of the diocese has also a penitential dimension.

We have concluded the journey of the first year. We set ourselves the goal: "**becoming a church of communion in which we support one another**." Have we experienced the joy of journeying together? Have we felt happy to gather as a community, uniting our voices and hearts to praise the Lord and receive the bread of life around the Eucharistic table? Have we planned and held gatherings to share the word of God and our experience of faith, which are the foundation and source of energy for the community?

Have we taken an interest in connecting with those who, for various reasons, have distanced themselves from the church? Have we invited others to share with us the joy of knowing Jesus? Let us review our journey during this first year that we are concluding and thank the Lord for the graces we have received.

Before beginning the journey of the second year, it would be good to evaluate how we have lived this first year. Let us share our experience of the first year in our community or parish. Let us thank God for what we have been able to achieve. Let us acknowledge that we haven't done enough. Let us renew our commitment to live the new year with enthusiasm.

The theme for the second year is: **"Becoming a church that is open to the future"**. We will commit ourselves, above all, to strengthening our work in youth ministry and deepening relationships among all in our increasingly multicultural communities. In the "Diocesan Pastoral Plan," you will find various suggestions for putting this goal into practice. Suggestions are offered both for each individual and for the community as a whole. Let us take some time to discuss how we can put some of these suggestions into practice. Above all, the topic of children and young people is of utmost importance for all communities. I hope this year will be an opportunity for growth for all.

The readings we heard at the Mass today shed light on the beginning of our journey. What is asked of us to "inherit eternal life" are not extraordinary things. We are simply required to be attentive to knowing how to welcome into our hearts what God asks of us through the various events and encounters we experience each day, and to be ready to respond to this call from the Lord.

The Samaritan who encountered the person mistreated by robbers shows us what this means. This Samaritan fulfilled what the most fundamental precept of the Law required: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." The Samaritan helped the person who had fallen by the roadside after being attacked by robbers. This is what is required of us in order to "inherit eternal life." To the lawyer who asks about how to inherit eternal life, Jesus simply answers: "Go and do likewise." The parable of the Samaritan reveals to us the meaning of the words of the first reading: "All my commandments are very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts: you have only to carry them out." Listening to the word of God and putting it into practice is

the way to “building a church open to the future.”

We continue moving toward the celebration of the centenary of the founding of the Diocese of Fukuoka. This second year, we will focus especially on deepening our relationship with young people and with people who have come to Fukuoka from other countries and cultures. Both groups are fundamental as we think about the future of our diocese. Our communities are made up of people of different ages, from diverse professions, engaged in different activities, but united by the same faith. Let us strive to strengthen communion among all. Let us listen to what God asks of us and let us strive to be faithful to the teachings of the Gospel in the various places where we live and work.

Today we must pray together the prayer for the centenary of the Diocese. Take special care to focus on the following words:

Our Father,  
confident in your love and guided by your Spirit,  
we want to continue bearing the light of the Gospel.  
Bless us and guide our journey.

May we experience a year of grace.