

"In the noble tradition of the Capuchin Order in Japan, do the best that you can. If you are afraid or nervous – that is to be expected, the situation is not normal. However, the Holy Spirit is there with you. Every Capuchin, from the Minister General, to our Provincials, and to all the Brothers of the Custody and beyond—is with you in prayer."

[Wayne Berndt to the brothers in Japan, 16 March 2011]



Communications from the brothers **UNITED IN PRAYER**







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Our eighteen brothers in the Custody of Japan Seated-Denis Fernandes, Martin De Porres Schmitt, Peter Baptist Ishigami, Edwin Monis, V. Praveen Kumar, Claver D'Souza; Row 2- LaSalle Parsons, Peter Von Essen, Louis Chiusano, Maxim D'Souza, Wayne Berndt; Row 3- Francis Hashiya, Ajitkumar Rodrigues, Alexander Daniel, Roland Daigle, Patrick Sullivan, Paul Tamano, and Johnson D'Souza.

A massive 8.9/9.0 magnitude earthquake hit the Pacific Ocean nearby Northeastern Japan at around 2:46 p.m. on 11 March 2011 [JST] causing damage with blackouts, fire and tsunami. The large earthquake triggered a tsunami warning for countries all around the Pacific Ocean. The death toll in northeastern Japan has risen to 4,164, police told NHK television.

On Friday, 11 March 2011, at approximately 6:30 a.m. [EST], our brother John Gallagher received a message from Wayne Berndt, Custody Minister in Japan, relating the devastation in the hardest-hit city of Sendai, located in the Miyagi Prefecture on the northeastern coast of Japan.

John Gallagher returned a message to our eighteen brothers ministering in Japan, assuring them of our prayers of support.

That same day, work began through the efforts of Celestino Arias, Capuchin Mission Director, Henry Ackermann, Director of the Office of Development and in cooperation and assistance of John Conway of the Office of Communications, to design a WEB presentation to solicit prayers and donations for our brothers' work among the people of Japan. [See: www.capuchin.org]

This publication is an attempt to record the on-going communications of our brothers in Japan; allowing us to share their experiences through their words; and who are most grateful for the efforts of our fraternity united in prayer.

The number of people unaccounted for as of Wednesday [16 March 2011] stands at around 12,000.

International rescue teams have been arriving in Japan to join an all-out relief effort, with the Russian team by far the largest. Engineers are battling to avert nuclear fuel from boiling at quake-stricken Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, and helicopters are being used to dump seawater on the facility to cool the reactors and storage units.

TEPCO is now battling to avert a catastrophic meltdown at three of the six reactors at the Fukushima facility, with a second hydrogen explosion early Monday morning signaling the difficulty of that effort.

11 March 2011-Greetings! Thank you so much for your fraternal concern, mail and prayers. I appreciate it very much. The earthquake took place exactly at 14.46 p.m. as I was taking my walk. I then found myself unable to stand properly while hearing people shouting and crying for help. Keep all of us in your prayers and especially the victims of the earthquake and tsunami. God bless. Fraternally-**Alex [Daniel]**

11 March 2011-Thank for your kind thoughtfulness. With love and prayers let us continue to pray for the victims of this terrible disaster. **Ajit [Ajitkumar J. Rodrigues]**

14 March 2011-Greetings of peace and joy to you! Thank you very much for your messages, phone calls and prayers. Japan was badly affected by the 8.9 earthquake and Tsunami in northeast and central part of Japan. Many people have lost their lives and those who survived, have lost everything they owned.

In Fukuoka [southern Japan], where we are ministering, has not been greatly affected. All our Capuchin brothers are safe. I sincerely thank you for remembering and praying for us and for the people of Japan. With gratitude and prayers-**Edwin Monis**

14 March 2011-As always, we are deeply grateful for your constant concern and prayers for us. This is the latest briefing:

Bishop Tani concerning Saitama Diocese: [Saitama Prefecture: Maxi, Claver, Denis; Tochigi Prefecture: Alex; Gunma Prefecture and Ibaraki Prefecture] Many of the places have minor damage - broken windows, collapsed block walls, rooms in utter disarray after the initial earthquake. Ibaraki is the only Prefecture directly on the ocean.

Some people have damaged houses that are uninhabitable. Religious Institutions and churches are intact. People are suffering in two ways: Emotionally, due to repeated aftershocks and the uncertainty over the nuclear facilities and of course physically. Denis told me that many gas stations are closed; also food outlets are closed when the inventory runs out. Scheduled blackouts are occurring, some days the trains are not running or run sporadically. Many places of work are closed and deliveries of essential items and packages etc. are on hold.

So far the brothers are supporting one another and trying to offer spiritual help to the people. Claver is in charge of Caritas Saitama and through this organization will collect funds for those in need. Tamano and I are scheduled to go to Kumagaya this coming Sunday. I plan to stay for about two weeks. I will know more about the actual situation after I get to Kumagaya.

Bishop Hiraga has not posted information on the Sendai Diocese Web site, however, his Chancellor has sent a brief preliminary report on Sendai Diocese.





This diocese is composed of four prefectures, three of which are at the epicenter of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear problems: Fukushima Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture [includes Sendai City] and Iwate Prefecture.

One priest from the Foreign Missionary Society of Quebec has been confirmed to have been killed. It is impossible for the diocese to assess the situation as the roads etc. are virtually impassable. Telephone, water, electricity is still down and will be for some time. However, the major churches in the diocese have seemingly only minor damage. Those in cities close to the ocean are assumed to be destroyed.

It is unknown at this time how many Catholics may have died as a result of the tsunami or earthquake. For Catholics and support groups wishing to donate to assist the victims of the earthquake and tsunami, the main organization handling funds will be Caritas Japan.

The government response has been impressive, especially when you consider the scale of the disaster. Access to the disaster area [Fukushima Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture, and Iwate Prefecture] is very limited - roads, trains etc. are all closed. Phones are not fully operational. Our ability to know the whole situation depends on new outlets for information. In an Asian society this is normal procedure. Access to information is often restricted by governmental authorities.

Contact has been made with former friar Mark Frazier and his family who are living in Fukushima Prefecture. They are about 60 miles from the ocean and the same from the problem nuclear plants. While they have no running water and food is scarce - they say they are doing all right considering the situation.

We appreciate your continuing support for the people of Japan. It will take a long time to get over the shock of the earthquake and tsunami. The people I have been able to contact in Sendai City report that the people have remained extraordinarily calm and have supported one another heroically. No riots, no looting, people waiting every patiently in long lines at train stations. The Japanese people are truly amazing in their ability to endure. My friends in Sendai City say many people are afraid to return to their homes or apartments because of the continuing aftershocks. The emotional scars may remain long after much of the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami has been cleared. Total death tolls will probably be well into the thousands. I will get back to you with further information. Fraternally-**Wayne**

15 March 2011- Thanks for your mail and your brotherly concern. I am sure the whole International community is watching Japan and the recent news about the Fukushima nuclear plant radiation. I am keeping in touch with the media.

Yesterday, we attempted our regular weekly gathering of evening prayer and sharing a meal but to our dismay no restaurants were opened. We later learned that no food supplies were available due to the tragic earthquake and tsunami effects.

At home, food supplies are dwindling but we seem to be managing. Since we commute from one parish to another to celebrate the sacraments, travelling is becoming difficult because of the two hour or more wait for ten liters of gasoline.

The continuing aftershocks are quite scary and I frequently have sleepless nights. At the same time, when I see the many victims removed from the debris and the sea, you simply cannot help shedding tears for those who have suffered so greatly. May Almighty God save and protect these beautiful people and nation. Best wishes and love to all. Fraternally-Alex [Daniel]

16 March 2011-We are grateful to you for spreading the news about receiving donations for Japan Emergency Relief. Thank you also for letting people know about the Capuchin Franciscans in Japan and their desire to help people in need. We'll do what we can. May the Lord bless us all. Louis [Chiusano]

[Wayne Berndt to the Friars in Japan, 16 March 2011]

John Gallagher has sent an appeal for prayers and donations to various people in America. Others have also written and are willing to donate to assist us help others. So it is time for us to get organized. When I come to Kumagaya and we have our meeting on Tuesday, I want us to have a concrete plan to help people in need.

I will offer our available funds to you to assist people in your immediate area. It is not good to be at home and just feel anxious and worried. It is better for us to move to help people. I will give each of you some cash for your personal safety but I also want you to have some money to help people personally, especially the migrants who may not have proper access to food.

Brothers, I think it would be good if you would organize your parishes groups and speak about the earthquake and tsunami together. Many are still in shock and may need to talk about it.

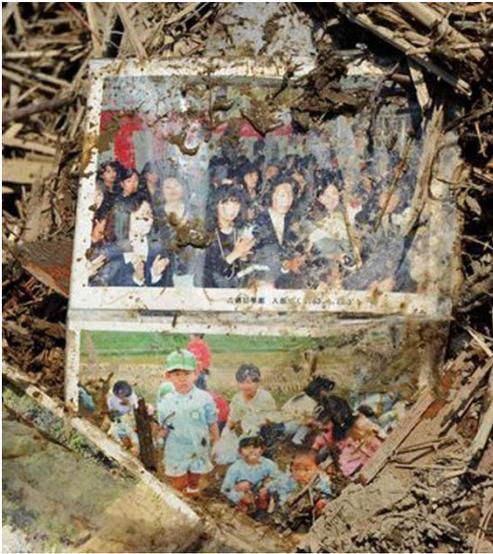
Ishiminesan [Peter Baptist] will send some food to you at Kumagaya and to Alex at Oyama in the coming days. I will make an assessment when I am with you of what you might need and Louis [Chiusano] will help to organize here in Okinawa to make sure you get the food that you need.

We will talk about and develop a plan in case things get worse. I do not expect that to happen but it is a good idea to be prepared. Edwin [Monis] will be available to receive any brother in Fukuoka who is tired and needs a bit of a rest from the stress of the situation. But for now, we are much needed by the people of Saitama and Sendai.

Brothers, since you are on the scene you know better than anyone else what is needed. Please think carefully about what we need to do, and then we can develop a concrete plan together. I have decided to spend two weeks with you in Kumagaya. Much affection-Wayne







16 March 2011-Thank you for your care and concern. We are all the more consoled and encouraged that we are not alone.

At present, many people seem to be in a panic trying to buy food and supplies. Their anxiety is being fueled by the many rumors found on the Internet. Gasoline is now extremely difficult to purchase so we travel by train with little difficulty. Essential food is more or less available but the people have to wait on very long lines.

Those in the area are trying our best to keep in contact with each other, walking hand in hand through this crisis. Here in Saitama-ken, except for the long lines for gasoline, all things look normal.

We are most concerned about the immigrant population. Most are calm and continue to try to keep in touch with one other. We hope and pray that all will be well soon. Thank you once again for your love and prayers-**Claver [Anthony D'Souza]**

[Wayne Berndt to the Friars in Japan, 16 March 2011]

There have been tremendous events in Japan over the last week – earthquakes, tsunami, aftershocks, and nuclear fallout. Now there are shortages of food and gasoline etc. in the Kanto Area. I am sure that all these events are very taxing on the five of you as you are so close to the affected area. Know that you are in our thoughts and prayers every day. I will, God willing, be joining you on Sunday. The Sacred Heart Fathers have cancelled their Chapter until October – so they will not need me as a facilitator from the 27th to the 3rd. However, I do need to see you all to make sure that you are in good health and I am looking forward to spending some time together next week.

As your minister and, because each of you is so important, I have some requests to make of you during this crisis.

At least three times, over the last two days, Tokyo has been bombarded by radiation from the disabled nuclear plant in Fukushima. It has been determined that this level of radiation is not dangerous to human beings as of yet. However, the crisis is not over. I want you to carefully follow the news and any public announcements over the coming days concerning radiation. I want you to follow any announcements made to evacuate, if they are issued by the local government. Keep your windows closed. Wash frequently. When you go out wear clothes that cover your entire body – gloves if possible.

If conditions remain as they are now – these simple precautions are all that you need. However, if the situation worsens you may have to take additional measures indicated by the local city government.

The French, German and Israeli governments have issued traveled advisories to their citizens. Some have closed their embassies. It may be good to be in touch with the Indian Embassy in case they issue advisories as well. For Peter [Von Essen], the American Embassy is taking registrations of citizen's names so that they can contact you regularly and offer whatever advisories or updates are available.

We have plenty of food here in Okinawa. If you need rice or other food items I want you to tell me. The ladies at Oroku have sent food by the Kuroneko Company to their children in various parts of the mainland and it has arrived the next day at the designated destinations. Tell me and we will do the same for you as quickly as possible.

We are very proud of you for being in the “eye” of the storm with the Japanese people who are suffering the most right now. I expect that in the tradition of the Capuchin Order, you as a priest-brother, will offer consolation and hope to the people that you serve. Everyone near you is nervous and on edge – some may need you to listen to them, to be with them and to console them. I have no doubt that the five of you are up to this task. This is the time that people at your churches will need you the most. The foreigners will be the most worried – take time to console them.

That being said, I also want you to take care of yourself. If the strain becomes too much, I want you to tell me. Support one another by praying together often. If possible (Claver, Denis and Maxi) sleep each night at Kumagaya and say Mass together in the morning.

When I come to the mainland I will bring extra cash with me. You will need cash on hand to handle various contingencies.

Please stock some food in your rectory and at Kumagaya. The government has said that there is no food shortage but the stores are empty. So where there is food or gasoline buy some for the days to come. The government has said that there will be more food in the stores in the days to come.

I have had communications from former friar John Szamreta. His school is closed for the duration of the crisis. He is fine and has been in communication with his superiors etc. [Anthony Ciorra]

I have written this letter to you and the community, not to cause more anxiety, but rather to help those on the front line of this crisis to be prepared for the worst case scenario. Most likely these preparations will not be necessary but it is best to be prepared.

After World War II, Charlie [Bantle], Valentine [Thibedeau], Alban [Bartoldus] and others came to Okinawa, and despite unexploded ordinances, no electricity or water – they together with the Okinawan people rose from the ashes of war. When a plane crashed into an Ishikawa City school, it was Louis [Chiusano] who ran down to the school to save lives. Now Brothers, the people who are suffering the most are in the Northern Kanto region of Japan– and you are there with them.

In the noble tradition of the Capuchin Order in Japan, do the best that you can. If you are afraid or nervous – that is to be expected, the situation is not normal. However, the Holy Spirit is there with you. And every Capuchin - from the Minister General, to our Provincials, to all the Brothers of the Custody and beyond –is with you in prayer. See you shortly. Your brother-**Wayne**





Communications from the brothers
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