

# **The Role of Kyoto Catholic Diocese in Providing Social Services to Filipino Migrants in Japan**

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*Abstract: The combination of an increasing low-wage service sector, an aging society, a declining population, and a yawning income gap between Japan and other countries means that the “global age of migration” has arrived in Japan (Douglass and Roberts 2000). The Philippines is one country that has seen many of its people migrate to Japan. Between 1970 and 1998 alone, figures on Filipinos who migrated to Japan soared from 20,477 to 129,053 (Ballescás 2003). Coinciding with the Filipinos’ migration to Japan was the creation of non-profit organizations (NPOs) that aimed to help migrants (Nagy 2008). One NPO that helps migrants in Japan is the Catholic Church.*

*However, one gap in the studies on Filipino migrants in Japan is the nonreligious role that the Catholic Church plays, especially in offering them “survival and adaptive strategies” (Mateo 2000). This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on the social services Kyoto Catholic Diocese has for Filipino migrants, which as of 2009 numbered 8,643 in the diocese. Since 1989, the diocese has hosted members of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (SFIC) of the Philippines to work as pastoral workers to Filipino migrants. This paper answers the following question: How does Kyoto Catholic Diocese work with the local government and Japanese NPOs in providing social services to Filipino migrants in Japan? Using the concept of the “third sector” as its framework, this study seeks to 1) know the issues the diocese, local government, and Japanese NPOs work on with regard to Filipino migrants and 2) know the social services the diocese offers Filipino migrants in coordination with the local government and Japanese NPOs.*

*Archival materials and in-depth interviews reveal that the Sisters have acted as intermediaries to the local government and Japanese NPOs to help Filipino migrants in legal and health concerns. The Sisters also give counseling to Filipinos, especially to those who are married to Japanese men and those who have Japanese-Filipino children. This study sees the value of the Catholic Church as a conduit of social services that helps Filipino migrants integrate into Japanese society.*

## *Background of the Study*

Mike Douglass and Glenda S. Roberts assert that the combination of an increasing low-wage service sector, an aging society, a declining population, and a yawning income gap between Japan and other countries, mean that the “global age of migration” has arrived in Japan (2000, 2). Strict immigration control has resulted in the existence of many illegal migrant workers, but even those with the necessary visas have to endure “institutionalized discrimination” (Ibid.). Douglass and Roberts add that “government policies and public attitudes share a common perspective: they see the presence of foreign workers as a phenomenon to be tightly controlled and kept at arms’ length from routines of Japanese life, rather than one that is to be accepted” (Ibid.). In spite of these difficulties, there have been positive developments. Foreigners have made their presence felt in Japan – even to the point of coaxing the Japanese to attend their festivals. Also, not all Japanese are affected by xenophobic rhetoric about immigration. There are

Japanese, including those in non-profit organizations (NPOs), who advocate equal rights for foreigners (3). National and local governments have adopted different approaches in dealing with foreigners. There are local governments that are leading the way in giving foreign workers social services – with some even permitting foreigners to become civil servants. The Tokyo municipal government created a foreign residents’ council to counsel the mayor, while the Kanagawa prefectural government set up committees composed exclusively of foreigners to get their thoughts about local government policies (4). While these efforts are very laudable, Douglass and Roberts believe that Japan still has to choose its preferred policy on foreigners: one that would establish the “political and social atmosphere for a multicultural society to flower” or one that would billet foreigners in specially designated areas. It is not yet clear which of the two will prevail, but as of the moment the isolationist stance is still prevalent and being strengthened by the “myth of a pure Japanese culture” (Ibid.).

The high economic growth of the 1980s seduced foreign workers and lured them to Japan, especially since companies in the manufacturing industry needed many workers, whether legal or illegal (Nagy 2008, 36). In the 1970s, women from the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand became entertainers in Japan – with a number staying behind even when their residential visas lost their validity. It was the males from the Philippines, Iran, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who became migrant workers in Japan in the mid-1980s. They engaged in the so-called “3D” occupations in manufacturing and construction companies – which went against the government’s policy against unskilled migrant labor. During the bubble-economy period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a deluge of these male workers and were classified as “foreign workers” to deal with labor needs (Takaya 2015, 26-27).

Coinciding with the coming of the foreign workers was the creation of NPOs that aimed to help these people, particularly the illegal workers (Nagy 2008, 36). These irregular migrants formed varying degrees of relationships with NPOs in Japan (Takaya 2015, 23). One such NPO is the Catholic Church, which Mendez says has a long history of dealing with migration and development. Indeed, Mendez assigns the Catholic Church, as well as other Christian churches, an important role in helping and protecting migrant workers in Japan (Mendez 2014, 108). She further asserts that “faith-based” NPOs in Japan sprung from Catholic dioceses, other Christian churches, and even Buddhist organizations (Ibid., 114).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan (CBCJ) acknowledges that the arrival of foreign workers in the 1980s was a "major social problem" of the country at the time. Asian women working in Japan, among them Filipinos, had their human rights violated. As a result, the CBCJ (upon the request of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines) created the Committee to Help Asian Women Residing in Japan in April 1983 in partnership with the Catholic Committee for International Cooperation. The committee organized was transformed into the Committee for Solidarity with Foreigners in Japan in 1987 when male migrants also flocked to Japan. The committee dispatched representatives to all dioceses in Japan to help foreign workers (<http://www.cbcj.catholic.jp/eng/ehistory/jphis.htm>). Under the CBCJ is the Catholic Commission of Japan for Refugees, Migrants, and People on the Move or J-CaRM. According to J-CaRM, "This Commission, based on the Gospel, is aiming at a society that lives together with peoples of other races, nationalities, and cultures . . . As children of God we respect equality and basic human rights, the mutuality of cultures and the uniqueness of different peoples. Toward this end we cooperate with pastoral activities related to refugees, migrants and people on the move of the different dioceses" ([http://www.jcarm.com/eng/eng\\_jcarm.html](http://www.jcarm.com/eng/eng_jcarm.html)).

The Philippines is one country that has seen many of its people migrate to Japan. Filipino sociologist Ma. Rosario Piquero Ballescas notes that between 1970 and 1998, figures on Filipinos who migrated to Japan soared from 20,477 to 129,053. These phenomenal figures pale in comparison to the number of Filipino migrants in Japan in 1960, which was 5,508 (Ballescas 2003, 547). With regard to sex, the number of male Filipino migrants in 1970 was 11,688 compared to 8,789 Filipino female migrants. In 1980, there were 14,962 Filipino female migrants in Japan—slightly outnumbering the 12,940 Filipino males who entered Japan. Ten years after, there were already 88,336 Filipino female migrants in Japan as compared to 24,956 Filipino males. This feminization of migration was still evident in 1997, when there were 96,041 Filipino females in Japan and 28,815 Filipino males (Ibid., 549).

Ibarra Mateo mentions that many studies have been made on Filipino migrants in Japan. However, one gap in the studies of Filipino Catholic migrants in Japan is the nonreligious role that the Catholic Church plays, especially in offering them "survival and adaptive strategies" (2000, 192). According to Mateo, the nonreligious services of the Centro Filipino in a Tokyo church called *capilla* include "legal and medical assistance, counseling, temporary shelter, and other types of 'community' services" (Ibid., 195). The *capilla* also has other units that offer other

nonreligious services: 1) support groups for rape and sex-related cases and alcoholics and drug addicts, 2) a group that conducts prison visits to incarcerated foreigners, 3) a group that visits patients (including foreign ones) in Catholic-run hospitals, 4) a group that gives *onigiri* (rice ball) to homeless persons in Shinjuku and Asakusa, and 5) a group that supports women. The Centro Filipino has dealt with a gamut of problems experienced by Filipino migrants (Ibid., 197).

One institution that also offers social services to Filipino migrants in Japan is Kyoto Catholic Diocese. The diocese has partnered with the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (SFIC) since 1989 to help Filipino migrants in the diocese. This will be the focus of the present study.

### *Research Question and Research Objectives*

This paper aims to contribute to the literature on the nonreligious function of the Catholic Church among Filipino migrants in Japan. This paper answers the following question: How does Kyoto Catholic Diocese work with the local government and Japanese NPOs in providing social services to Filipino migrants in Japan?

This study seeks to 1) know the issues the diocese, local government, and Japanese NPOs work on with regard to Filipino migrants and 2) know the social services the diocese offers Filipino migrants in coordination with the local government and Japanese NPOs.

### *Review of Related Literature*

Father Felipe Muncada, SVD, a Filipino missionary in Japan, discusses the work of Filipino Catholic missionaries in Japan. He recommends that the missionaries be given a thorough Japanese-language education since they will interact with Japanese employers, in-laws, and husbands. As it stands today, the missionaries are only given six months of Nihongo lessons before being sent to Japan (Muncada 2008, 36-37). The missionaries also need a break from their work among Filipino migrants, since their advocacy in Japan is “very draining, to say the least, physically and psychologically” (Ibid., 37). Father Muncada gives us a vivid overview of what Filipino missionaries do in Japan: “Filipinos are spread far and wide across the country. Problems that missionaries have to deal with are complicated. They range from marital problems to labor contract violations, as well as life-and-death situations involving yakuza” (Ibid., 37).

Father Muncada notes that “Supposing that all the foreign priests and sisters were English speaking and actively and directly involved in parish ministry, the ratio between Filipinos and religious workers would still be very low” (Ibid., 40). He adds that in Tokyo there is one missionary for 78 Filipinos (the lowest ratio), while in Urawa diocese there is one missionary for 386 Filipinos (the highest ratio). Filipino missionaries banded together and created an organization, Philippine Missionaries in Japan (PhilMiss). The work of these missionaries, however, does not only cover work among Filipino migrants since a number of the missionaries also engage in school-related activities and other apostolate work. Because of this, there is actually only one Filipino religious worker for an astounding 1,359 Filipino migrants. Father Muncada concedes that this is actually “a very low ratio compared to the ratio in the Philippines,” but the key difference is that Philippines’ population is composed mainly of Catholics (Ibid.). There is a division of labor, so to speak, between Filipino priests and nuns in Japan. Filipino priests mainly celebrate the sacraments. The sisters and lay missionaries interact more with Filipino migrants. They minister to these Filipino migrants not only in churches but also in clubs, hospitals, prisons, ships, and houses. This can be explained by the fact that priests are traditionally regarded as authority figures; hence, Filipinos can easily open their hearts to nuns and lay missionaries (Ibid., 41).

Ofreneo and Samonte enumerate the other issues that Filipino migrants are confronted with, as articulated by migrant advocacy groups in Japan. Some of the pertinent issues are discussed in this paper. With regard to rights and welfare of undocumented workers, the undocumented Filipino migrants cannot avail of health and medical services. But instead of running to the Philippine Embassy, these undocumented Filipinos turn to church-affiliated groups and other NGOs for help. However, these Filipinos also want the help of the Philippine government to make their status legal (Ofreneo and Samonte 2005, 37). There are also accounts of Filipinos whose human and labor rights, as well as their contracts, are not observed by Japanese employers. Filipino migrants, especially those who recently arrived in Japan, also experience adjustment difficulties especially because of their poor Japanese-language skills. Hence, they cannot blend in Japanese society. Filipino migrants also experience ill-treatment, prejudice, and discrimination – whatever their employment status is – because of the public’s thinking that all Filipina migrants are entertainers (Ibid., 38-39).

To find solutions for their myriad problems, Filipino migrants in Japan turn to what Ofreneo and Samonte call “*Samahan* or organization of migrant workers.” These *samahans* can be informal or formal and are organized because of religious affiliation, geographical location in Japan or the Philippines, advocacy, employment, etc. Filipino migrants are especially involved in religious groups, a number of which created centers for migrants. Churches have become a place where problematic Filipino migrants visit. The Franciscan Philippine Center in Tokyo, the Maryknoll Philippine Migrant Center, and the Tokyo International Center for Migrants are just some of the organizations that work for Filipino migrants’ rights (Ibid., 41).

Inaba et al. state that the Yokohama Catholic Diocese created the Solidarity Center for Migrants (SOL) in 1992 which featured a Philippine desk that had reintegration programs, labor’s programs, and women’s programs. SOL helps foreign women who have problems in trafficking and in intermarriage. SOL also has a program that goes beyond counseling of victims of domestic abuse. This program recognizes the longitudinal nature of supporting victims of abuse. The program entails sharing of experiences with other abused women, abuse prevention and awareness (Inaba et al. 2001, 11).

### *Framework*

This study used the concept of the third sector as its framework. According to Hasan et al. (2008), the third sector “is composed of that vast array of organizations that are not part of government and not operated to profit their owners” (2). Organizations that belong to the third sector have been established to give “goods or services for their members or for others” (2). They further note that

“Third sector organizations” refer to the organised form of the third sector civil society, and include organizations variously known as charities, foundations, NGOs, associations, clubs, societies, unions, cooperatives, churches, temples, mosques and the like. Third sector organisations are important actors in many sectors, especially the social services, social development, health, education, arts and culture, sport and recreation. They advocate the interests of their members or other causes, such as the preservation of the environment or the elimination of poverty (3).

Other terms used to refer to the third sector include civil society, social economy or non-profit sector (3). The concept of the third sector can be used to explain the existence of various

NPOs in Japan that help migrants. It can also be utilized to frame Kyoto Catholic Diocese's nonreligious role in the lives of Filipino migrants.

### *Methodology*

This paper used archival research and in-depth interviews. The researcher was able to access archival materials at the SFIC Residence (formerly Saiin Catholic Center) in Kyoto City. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three SFIC missionaries who have served in Japan. To ensure confidentiality, their names are omitted in this paper. Instead, they are referred to as "Sister A," "Sister B," and "Sister C." Sister A was one of the early missionaries in Kyoto Catholic Diocese. Her service in Japan amounted to 18 years. Sister B and Sister C belong to the current batch of SFIC pastoral workers in the diocese. The Sisters were interviewed in St. Joseph's College in Quezon City, Philippines and in the SFIC Residence in Kyoto City.

### *Findings*

The Catholic Church in Japan is considered as one of the prime supporters of migrants' rights in the country. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan's Committee on International Cooperation is the one in charge of migrant support (Inaba et al. 2001, 6). There are three reasons for the Catholic Church's strong support for migrant workers in Japan (Ibid.):

First, the Catholic Church has been formally seeking solidarity with migrant workers worldwide since the Pope declared solidarity with migrants. In addition, when Filipina entertainers began to enter Japan in the first half of the 1980s, the Bishop's Conference in the Philippines requested that its Japanese counterpart provide pastoral care for them. Priests, nuns, and lay missionaries have also been invited to Japan from migrants' countries of origin (e.g. the Philippines, Brazil) since the 1980s.

Second, these movements from 'above' aside, many Catholic churches met with migrants at the local level. Compared with the Catholic population of approximately 400,000 in Japan, the number of Catholic migrant workers—at about 300,000—is far from negligible. In this respect, the impact of migrant influx has been felt far more by the Catholic Church than by society in general. As a result, many churches began to offer masses in foreign languages: more than 150 churches serve masses in English or Tagalog.

Third, Christian organizations have been actively engaged in social activities, for both Catholics and Protestants. It is in a sense natural to support migrants based on Christian universalism that espouses social justice.

One of the key features of Japanese Catholic Church's response is to import missionaries from the Philippines whose primary duty is to care for Filipino migrants. As the intermediaries between the Japanese Church and Filipinos, the missionaries must have knowledge – as well as openness to – of Japanese culture and a working knowledge of the Japanese language (Zarate 2008, 36).

In 1987, Bishop Raymond Tanaka of the Kyoto Diocese sent a letter to Sr. Giovanni Faustino, SFIC Philippine Regional Superior at the time, via Father Gerard Salemink, a Franciscan priest. Bishop Tanaka wanted the Congregation to minister to Filipina entertainers in the diocese. The SFIC Provincial Board gave an affirmative answer, but there were no nuns who could go to Japan then. It was only in September 1989 that the Congregation sent Sr. Altagracia Miguel and Sr. Emiliana Encarnacion to Kyoto. The two Sisters worked as pastoral workers in the Kyoto Diocese, the pioneers among the many SFICs who would serve Filipinos in Kyoto (Razon 2003).

According to Sr. Mary Lou Razon, the problems that the two Sisters found were:

1. Marital problems – because of differences in culture and lack of communication and dialogue. Several Filipina wives [of Japanese men] suffer from domestic violence which end up in divorce.
2. Problems with the in-laws (mother and father in laws) who live in the same house. What makes it harder is that Filipina wives are foreigners so [sic: so] that the experience of discrimination is obvious from some of the in-laws.
3. Experience of discrimination not only in the home but also in work place, in schools by the children and even in the neighborhood.
4. The relatives from the Philippines who expect regular allowance, financial support from Japan. Financial dependency is re-inforced [sic: reinforced] by the value of “utang na loob.” As a result, Filipina wives are forced to work as entertainers at night to earn more money to be sent to their relatives back to their home. This practice becomes reason of conflict between husband and wife (Razon 2003).

Kyoto Catholic Diocese and the SFICs made the following objectives:

1. To create “the Christian community of the Filipinos with people of other ‘nationalities to witness to the Kingdom of God that bring about new humanity.’”
2. To help set up [a] Pastoral Program for the Filipinos to facilitate an integral evangelization through holistic Christian Education and formation to “bring the transforming power of the Gospel to bear on the Church and society alike.”
3. To set up Programs for the Japanese-Filipino families in the Diocese “to bring more humanizing dimensions to the human person, to restore dignity to the value of the family and marriage.”



4. To set up appropriate services and programmes for the integral human development of the Filipinos in the Diocese of Kyoto, for the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of the migrants working closely with the Japanese Church and local government to make services available to them (Razon 2003).

The programs and services that they came up with were the following:

1. Celebrations of Life: Sunday Mass, prayer meetings, Advent and Lenten recollections, baptisms, retreats, pilgrimages, block rosaries, Novena-Masses to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.
2. Formation and Youth: Study groups, seminars on human development, Bible studies, studies on Filipino and Japanese cultures, workshops on basic human rights and Japanese laws, leadership training, marriage encounters, Christian formation of children and youth.
3. Social Services: Counselling, temporary shelter, visits to homes, detention facilities and hospitals, referrals, financial and medical assistance, job opportunities, information dissemination and translation.
4. Socio-Cultural/Temporalities: After-Mass tea parties, cultural presentations, Flores de Mayo, Philippine Independence Day celebrations, Christmas Masses and parties, pear/grape picking, picnics, sports, bingo games, bazaars, and fund-raising activities (Razon 2003).

The relationship between Kyoto Catholic Diocese and the SFICs is governed by a contract, signed by the Bishop of Kyoto and the Provincial Superior of the SFICs and other SFICs. Found in the archives of the SFIC Residence (formerly Saiin Catholic Center) are contracts between the two parties dated 2006, 2009, and 2013. All contracts were signed by Bishop Paul Yoshinao Otsuka. The 2013 contract states the specific role of the SFICs in Kyoto Diocese (“Kyo.Prot.N. 76/2013”):

1. The Diocese of Kyoto invites the Congregation to send Sisters to work with its Committee for International Cooperation, mainly with regard to Filipino migrants in the Diocese.
2. In response to the invitation, the Congregation sends the number of Sisters requested for, who will form the SFIC Community in the Diocese of Kyoto.

As of 2009, there were 8,643 documented Filipinos in the diocese (<http://www.hkjp.org/files/files/focus/humanright/You%20Are%20My%20Sister.pdf>). SFICs assigned to the diocese have been closely connected to the Filipino community. “*Kami yung mga taga-ano sa grassroots. Kami yung tumututok* (We are ones who are in the grassroots. That’s where we concentrate on),” says Sister B. “Filipino activities *kami*. . . . *Nakarating sa kanila mga problema ng mga Pilipino noon. So naghanap sila ng may tututok. Na kami yung pastoral*

*worker* (We are in charge of Filipino activities. The diocese had learned about the problems of Filipinos so they looked for someone to take care of Filipinos. So that was how we became pastoral workers of the diocese).”

Sister A shares that the following Kyoto City government departments work with the SFICs as well as other NPOs: 1) Shiminka (“Citizen Section”) of City Hall, 2) Immigration, 3) Police, 4) Nakagyo Ward Office, and 5) Courts. They have also worked with Asian People Together (APT), Rights of Immigrants Network in Kansai (RINK), and the Center for Health and Rights of Migrants (CHARM) to work for Filipinos’ rights in Kyoto.

The SFICs bring victims of domestic violence to the Shiminka, where the victims get protection. The Shiminka helps the SFICs to bring battered women to women’s centers. The SFICs also help Filipino women obtain divorce from their abusive Japanese husbands. As befitting Catholic religious women, they first try to salvage the marriage. According to Sister A,

*Sila* [the migrants] *ang mga lumalapit sa amin*. Especially *yung mga* victims *ng mga* domestic violence *o yung mga tungkol sa* divorce. We try to save their marriage first. *Pag* second time *na*, that’s the time when we go to the APT.

(The migrants are the ones who approach us, especially those who are victims of domestic violence or those who want to obtain divorce. We try to save their marriage first. When it’s already the second time, that’s the time when we go to the APT.)

Sister A says that the Shiminka and the SFICs also work together in giving benefits to single mothers and their children. The Shiminka also gives the Sisters and Filipinos medicines and health insurance as well as hospitalization. The Sisters also try to get social services for Filipinos.

The Sisters also work with immigration to deal with Filipinos’ problems with visas. As Sister A came to Japan when there were so many Filipino migrant workers, it was inevitable that the SFICs ministered to undocumented workers. “*Parang flood na nagpunta mga Pilipino sa amin* (The Filipinos came to us like a flood),” she relates. Sister A clarifies that she did not look for these undocumented Filipinos. On the contrary, they came voluntarily to her and she surrendered them to immigration. Immigration then turned over these undocumented Filipinos to Sister A to house them temporarily, sometimes even for one week – especially when there was no more space in immigration and the detainees had no place to stay. It was Sister A and the

Kyoto Pag-asa Community that raised the money needed to send the undocumented Filipinos back to the Philippines. Immigration was actually appreciative of what the SFICs have been doing. They told Sister A, “You know, Sister, we’re very grateful because the Filipinos trust you as ‘church women.’ You are helping us.” Immigration also approached Sister A to help an undocumented Thai worker. She contacted Thai NPOs, but it was still she who brought the man to a center in Osaka. Being nuns and having the Religious Activities Visa have actually helped the SFICs in working with immigration. According to Sister A,

They have that respect and they know that you are working for the Church and the migrants. They always say “*kyōkai*” [Church]. When I would go to the immigration, they would say, “Sister, please sit down.” They would always say, “You know when I was a kid, I went to a kindergarten run by Catholic Sisters.”

When undocumented Filipinos are caught by the police, the SFICs are informed so that they can visit them in jail. Also, the Sisters are notified if there are missing Filipinos. The police know that these undocumented need to be visited so the Sisters are informed. The Nakagyo Ward Office, where Sister A stayed, also gives health services to the SFICs and the Filipinos. It also gives the Sisters brochures so that they can give them to the Filipinos. If Filipinos get in trouble with the law in Japan, the SFICs also help them. They look for Japanese lawyers with the help of Japanese NPOs and accompany them to court hearings.

The SFICs have also helped many Filipinas adjust to their Japanese husbands and in-laws. According to Sister C, “*Nakita din namin kasi kahit na yung mga past na madre namin at present nakakatulong din talaga dahil napapaliwanagan namin yung mga Pilipina sa kultura ng Japan* (We saw that our fellow Sisters have helped Filipinas by explaining the culture of Japan).” Once such problems occur, the SFICs explain Japanese culture to Filipina wives. Filipina wives’ Japanese husbands and in-laws have also been appreciative of the SFICs’ work. “*May mga cases na masaya daw sya* [the Japanese in-law], *proud daw siya sa in-law daw niya kasi Pilipina* (There is a Japanese in-law who is proud that his/her in-law is a Filipina),” shares Sister C. “*Maganda kasi ang experience niya* (The Japanese in-law has had a good experience),” she adds, because the SFICs were able to help the Filipina wife how to deal with a Japanese husband.

Moreover, there are Japanese Catholics (especially those who with Filipina in-laws) who appreciate the work the Sisters are doing in Kyoto Diocese. ““Sister, thank you so much for coming.’ *Sasabihin nila yan. Kasi alam nila na iba pa rin pag may Pilipinong madre. Dahil nari-reach out namin yung mga Pilipina nilang mga in-laws* (They would say, ‘Sister, thank you

so much for coming.’ They would say that because they know there are Filipino nuns who reach out to their Filipina in-laws),” says Sister C. Sister B adds that their partner priests are also happy with the SFIC pastoral workers’ ministry. “*Ito si [Sister C] kahit nasa inaka siya pagdating dito natutuwa ang mga pari na andaming nagiging active, na andaming sumisimba* (Even if Sister C is in the *inaka* [countryside], the priests are happy that many are active and are attending mass),” shares Sister B. Just like what Father Muncada says in his study, the priests and the SFICs fulfill different roles in the diocese. The priests stay in the churches, while the Sisters visit Filipinos in their homes. According to Sister B, “*Kasi kami lang naman ang pumupunta talaga sa areas e. Ang mga pari, sa simbahan lang e. . . Kasi kung di mo mata-touch ang buhay nila, di mo sila madadala e. E ang ano naman namin hindi sila madala e, basta ma-touch lang* (We are the ones who go to the areas. The priests stay in the church. If you cannot touch their [the Filipinos’] lives, you cannot bring them to church. Our role really is to touch their lives).” Sister C adds, “*Pag di tayo magbabad ang hirap kunin ng loob* (If we don’t immerse, we cannot gain their trust).” Sister B agrees, saying “*Oo, kasi papasok ka muna sa kanila e* (Yes, because we have to enter their lives).” Sister C’s experience in the *inaka* has also led the Japanese there to be happy because of the Sisters’ presence. “*Grateful sila naandun po ako, dahil nari-reach out ko yung mga Pilipino. . . . Ka-partner ko sila dahil kaya kong i-explain sa mga Filipina yung mga problema, yung kultura ng Japan* (The Japanese are grateful that I am there, because I reach out to Filipinos. The Japanese are my partners in explaining to Filipinas their problems and in explaining the culture of Japan),” Sister C relates. The Sisters’ Japanese partners are the ones who talk with the Japanese husbands of the Filipinas. Sister C also states that Kyoto Catholic Diocese has activities that promote harmony among Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Brazilians like *matsuri* (festival).

The Kyoto City Government and the Kyoto Diocese also partnered to host intercultural encounters at Kibō no Ie (“House of Hope”), a property owned by the diocese. Japanese and migrants from many countries like Korea come to present at Kibō no Ie. Sister B and Sister C say that the SFICs are among those who come to participate in the activities.

## Conclusion

This paper’s findings reveal the role of Kyoto Catholic Diocese as a third sector organization in providing social services to Filipino migrants in Japan. With regard to objectives,

the diocese ensures that the rights of Filipino migrants in Japan are protected. It aims to also provide nonreligious services to Filipino migrants. With regard to issues and services, Kyoto Catholic Diocese hears problems related to adjustments to Japanese culture, the Filipinos' problems with their husbands and in-laws, the Filipinos' health problems, as well as legal issues. The SFICs, as pastoral workers of the diocese, act as intermediaries between Filipino migrants and local Catholic religious and lay personnel, non-government organizations as well as government departments.

Just like any endeavor, the SFICs' work as pastoral workers has a few challenges. Sister B says that one is the language barrier between them and the Japanese. This is being addressed by the Sisters' continuous Japanese-language education. Another is the physical limitation of the Sisters. "*Kasi di naman mahati sarili namin* (We cannot be in two places at once)," shares Sister B.

Nonetheless, the SFICs in Kyoto Catholic Diocese are satisfied with the effects of their work among Filipinos. According to Sister B, "*May natuto kung paano ipaglaban yung dignidad, kung paano yung gagawin, at magtulungan* (There are those who have learned to fight for their dignity, learned what to do, and learned how to help one another)." She is happy that their work has facilitated dialogue between Japanese husbands and Filipina wives. She reports that "*Tapos sumasama na sila sa mga recollections, yung sumasama yung pati yung mga bata. . . yung Japino* (There are Japanese husbands and Japanese-Filipino children who join church recollections)." The mere knowledge of the Filipino Sisters' existence in the diocese has spurred many Filipino to continue their participation in church activities. "*Nakakatuwa yung mga pari, sasabihin nila – kasi di namin mahati sarili naming – yung ‘Sister, even if you are there in Kusatsu there are still many Filipinos who come here.’ Kasi marami nang mga Pilipinong hindi nila alam kung nasaan yung simbahan. So kapag nabibisita namin o napupuntahan o nalalaman na ano tapos nagkakaano rin yung kanilang loneliness....* (The priests say – because we cannot be in two places at once – ‘Sister, even if you are there in Kusatsu there are still many Filipinos who come here.’ Many Filipinos do not know where the church is, so if we visit them it helps ease their loneliness)," Sister B relates.

Bishop Otsuka himself has been thankful to the SFICs for their work in Kyoto Diocese. Part of his letter in 2003 to Sr. Josephini Ambatali, SFIC Provincial Superior, says: "I would like to say that I appreciate the evangelizing work which your congregation is engaged in every day

and to offer a work [sic] of encouragement. I would like also to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the sisters who have been sent here from your Congregation to work in Kyoto diocese especially for their pastoral care of Filipinos who are resident [sic] in Japan” (Razon 2003). Truly, Kyoto Catholic Diocese has been a viable conduit of social services that helps Filipino migrants adjust to and integrate into Japanese society.

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