

Reviving a Sense of Unity Will Promote Respect for the Environment

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Four-and-a-half years have passed since the great earthquake and tsunami disaster in northern Japan. This tragedy devastated the land and people's lives over an extensive region and Japan has had to pay an enormous price for the lessons learned – especially those learned from the destruction of the nuclear power facilities in Fukushima.

The destruction has destroyed the family lives of local people and has forced the rest of us to face the costs of our temperature-controlled lives of comfort. This event has prompted among perceptive individuals a nationwide discussion regarding the responsible production of electric power.

If we abolish nuclear power plants in Japan, we will have to find other ways to generate the power we need. The alternative use of coal and other fossil fuels will result in the same or even more damage to the environment.

Concerned people encourage the use of non-polluting means of generating electric power such as solar panels and water- and wind-powered turbines. The Parish Committees in our Diocese of Fukuoka has held workshops for raising awareness on how we, as households and as individuals, are wasting electrical energy.

I have come to see that in our daily lives the wisdom and supervision of women is our best source in the prevention electrical power waste in our daily lives. We of NCWL Japan are planning workshops for our member associations throughout the nation on how to prevent energy waste, and by such efforts take at least a small step towards protecting the environment.

However, finding an energy solution is not simple; our lifestyles and economy - all aspects of our lives, in fact - are greatly entwined with the issue. Even just trying to alter the method of power generation in a responsible way is difficult because changes may cause disruptions in the workforce, which may lead to disruptions within families.

I believe, therefore, that reform or change needs to be taken in small steps. We must take into consideration the large impact that change will have on a great many people. When bringing about change, we must have faith that when small efforts are put together by a large number of individuals, these small efforts becomes a strong power towards change in our lifestyles and protection of our environment.

To give an example: the cost of shifting to eco-power generation systems is so expensive that most of us as individuals simply do not have the financial resources to do so. However, we can promote eco-power by supporting such citizen-led groups as the People's Living Co-op, among others.

In Japan we have what we call "Living Co-ops" which anybody can freely join. Those co-ops evaluate product safety and how and by whom the products have been produced. Their trading practice is based on a face-to face relationship with producers. They also introduce production skills to poorer communities in different parts of the world and make contracts to buy their products.

Such face-to face commercial/trading systems are what we need to revive even beyond national borders. We must regain people-to-people connections in our purchasing activities. Without these connections, people forget, for example, that meat comes from living animals, not from supermarkets.

WUCWO is a worldwide network. We can best utilize this network to connect with people of producing countries and educate people of consumer nations regarding the products we buy – how they were produced, how producers work, how production affects the environment, etc.

Behind any environment problem, there is always conflicts of interest distress.

Fukushima is no exception. Fukushima was a site for generating power for the people living in urban Japan. After the nuclear power plant accident, local residents lost their jobs.

A NCWL member association of the Diocese of Fukuoka decided three years ago to provide special support to those in the Fukushima region who could not avoid having to move away from their homes in or very near the Fukushima nuclear power-plant disaster area. Our support program was set up for families with children under 15 years of age to provide some relief from the pain and stress of being forced to move from

Fukushima to other prefectures. These families had lost their homes, their possessions, their jobs, and they had to leave their friends. Children had to adjust to new schools and forge new friendships.

The program provided an all-expense-paid four-day/three-night vacation at the seashore. This provided an opportunity for relocated families to enjoy breathing fresh and clean air, eating safe and uncontaminated food, swimming in a safe and uncontaminated ocean, and playing in a safe and uncontaminated park without worry.

This is just one example of creating face-to face connections to understand the reality of those in weakened straits. I believe the loss of face-to face connection has numbed our sensitivity to the weak and the exploited. This loss of face-to-face connection might be one of the barriers that Jesus taught us to destroy in order for two to become one.