

## Living with Fr. Nicolás in the suburbs of Tokyo

When Fr. Nicolás was the Provincial of the Japanese Province, the St. Ignatius Church under the Jesuits' leadership, in Tokyo, was demolished to give room for a bigger new church; it was also the opportunity to restructure the provincial curia. At that time, then, Fr. Nicolás had to look for a new community where to live. Apparently, he could among five established Jesuit communities

Then, one day, I received a phone call from him. He asked me whether I would 'accept' him as a member of my community... it was a one-member community at the time. Of course, I did not object!

At that time, I was working in Sophia University but living in a small apartment house in a low-income workers' area, outside of central Tokyo, where many migrant workers from the Philippines were housed. There, Fr. Nicolás started pastoral activities in a nearby diocesan parish where I was also involved. When Fr. Nicolás left his responsibility as Provincial, he had been selected to work full time at CTIC (Catholic Tokyo International Center), an institution taking care of the pastoral planning first of all for migrant Filipino workers. He dedicated himself mainly to the *El Shadai* Filipino charismatic group of which he became the chaplain. We were serving over 600 Filipinos and Filipinas. He will often tell me, "They are very devoted Christians with a simple faith and they need support".

Our small apartment was close to the living quarters of many of these Filipinos. One day, we had to leave the apartment and look for renting a different dwelling. We decided to stay in the same area and started a painful process to find an apartment to rent. In Japan, the rental of a place to live is usually done through local state agencies which act on behalf on house owners. And it not enough to prove that you have the necessary funds, but you must provide two credible guarantors. Fr. Nicolás assured me that there was no problem, because the Jesuit Province curia could take care of that that. We went through the application process but, to our surprise, the authorities denied us the access to the apartment. Instead, they asked us to provide local guarantors. Two acquaintances of mine, running small local shops, became guarantors for Jesuits and helped us to rent a place to live! It was a learning experience. Fr. Nicolás and I lived there together for about three years, before he moved to stay in Manila for his next mission.

After being elected as Superior General, Fr. Nicolás paid two short visits to Japan and could find some free time to visit again his former dwelling, but then, things had changed. What he found was the small *Adachi International Academy* (AIA), dedicated to the education of migrant adult workers and their children.

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