

Apology,
Gratitude &
Work Together

Spoken by: Sr. Hiro Kageyama, SGS

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West Japan Newspaper Journalist**



Introduction

This series of articles is the result of interviews conducted by Mr. Yamagami, West Japan Newspaper journalist with Sr. Hiro Kageyama. The journalist met Sr. Hiro some years ago in Sasebo and found that meeting to be rich in content and public interest.

Years later when Sr. Hiro was already living and working as a missionary in Bacolod, he renewed their acquaintance and broached the suggestion of conducting these interviews with the intention of publishing them in their Newspaper as “Listening & Writing Series”. After some consideration with Congregation, she accepted his wish. He was intending to come to the Philippines for the personal face to face interviews, but on account of Covid19, he could not.

So the conversation started with lengthy telephone calls between Japan and Bacolod: twice a week for 45 minutes for almost 10 months. These articles are outcome of those conversations with Sr. Hiro and recorded and committed to writing by Mr. Yamagami.

The series consisted of 45 articles that speak of her life from childhood to her present life. They appeared in the Newspaper from early October to early December, 2020. In Japan, Catholics are very few and people welcomed to learn about Religion, Baptism, Religious life, etc. from her series. In the end responding to the readers’ voices, West Japan Newspaper company wanted to make the articles as one book. She accepted their wish and now we see the all in one book.

However, these translations in English mostly followed the newspaper style, each article presents a picture suitable for that article.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to receive eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”

²⁷ The man answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ ”

²⁸ “You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ Jesus answered, “There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead.

³¹ It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side.

³² In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side.

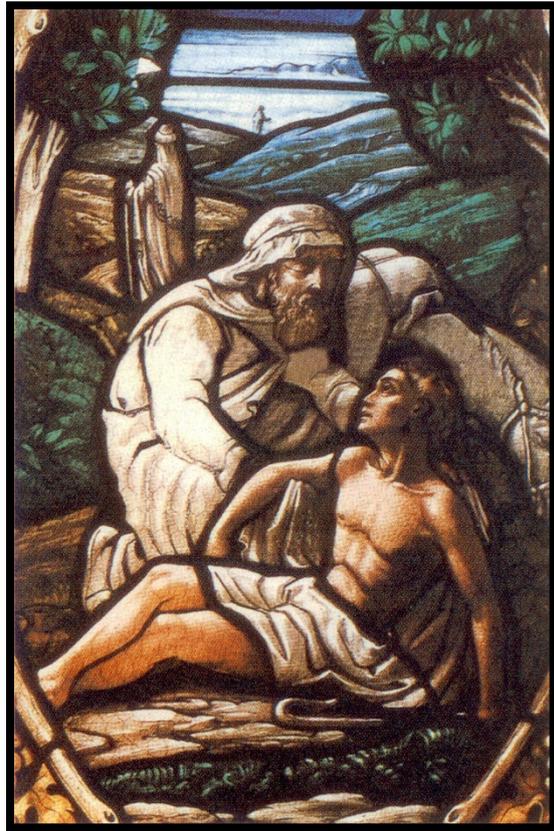
³³ But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity.

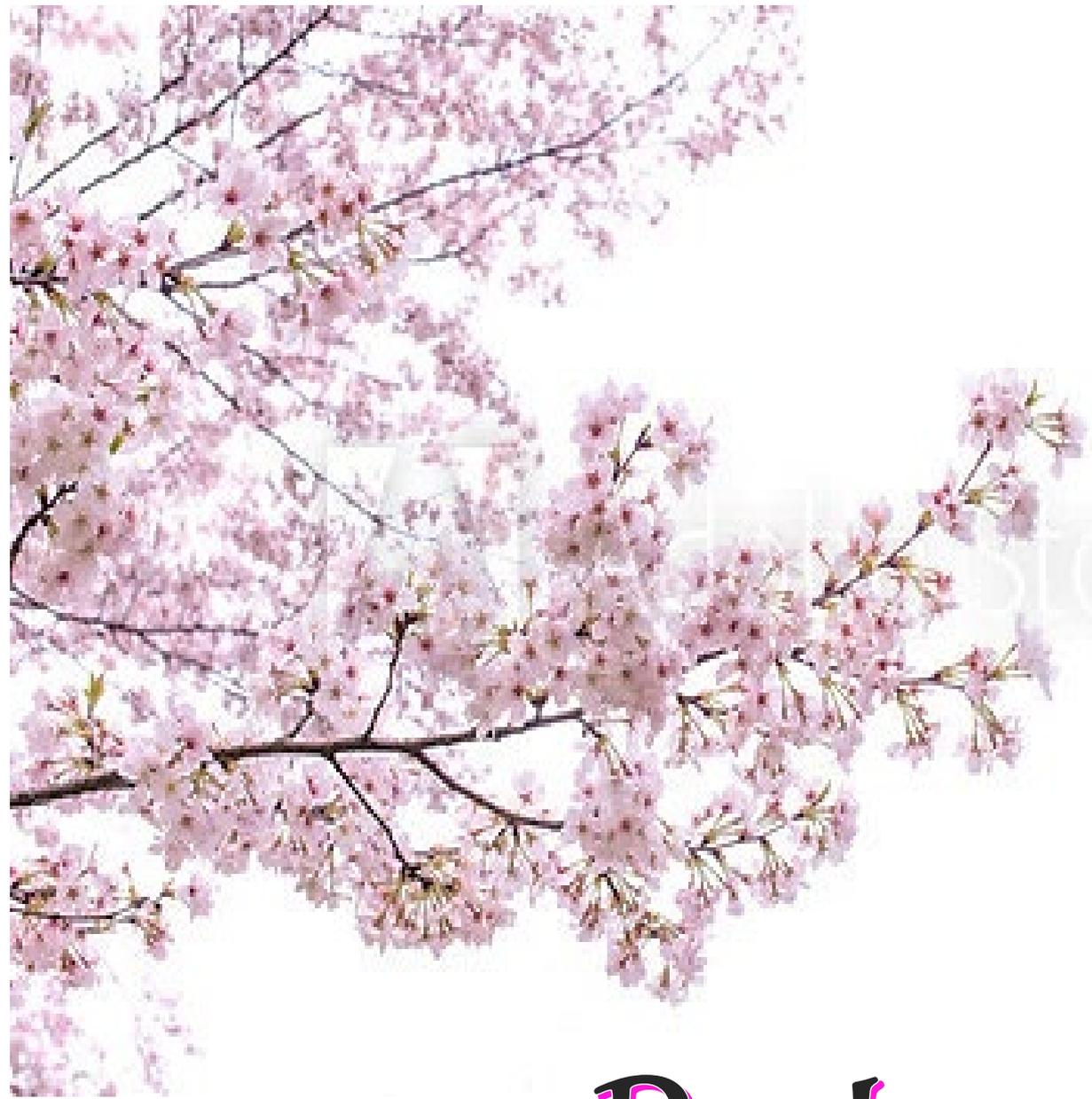
³⁴ He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay whatever else you spend on him.’ ”

³⁶ And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbor toward the man attacked by robbers?”

³⁷ The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.” Jesus replied, “You go, then, and do the same.” (*Luke 10: 25-37*)





Prologue

-with the people
in the
Southern country-

Greetings to all Readers



I am Hiro Kageyama and I wish you well. Autumn in Japan is well advanced and I hear that the morning and evening temperatures vary greatly.

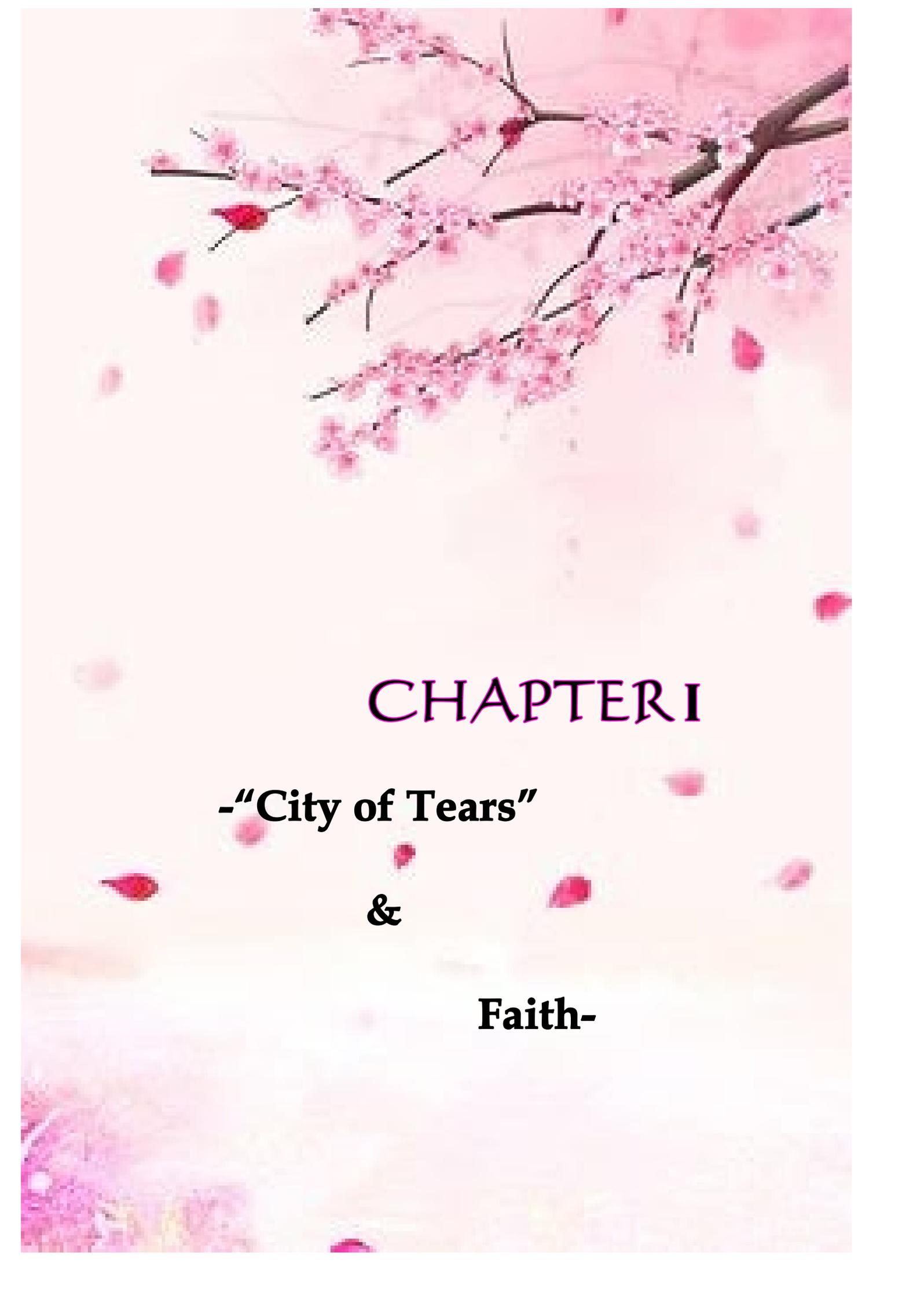
This year has been unbelievable! The Corona Virus has claimed many lives around the world. According to the NHK satellite news the infection is still spreading and I see pictures of

people wearing masks. In the city where I am living there are much stricter rules. We are in total locked down, and if we go out we are checked by the police. You may be wondering about where I live! I am living in Bacolod, a city in the Philippines which is about 3,000km west of Kyushu and is a country composed of more than 7,000 Islands. I am doing missionary work as a sister of the Catholic Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. At present I am engaged in working to support the local people. I hesitate to use the word "support" because really we are working together. Indeed it is a blessing that even at the age of 90, I still have work to do for others.

You probably have the image of the Philippines as a hot southern country, and you are right. People perspire all the year round! The sun shines intensely. There are not four seasons as you experience in Japan. People do not understand when we speak of summer clothes and winter clothes. In the rainy season in the evening showers give the opportunity for the poor people to wash themselves and their clothes. The trees are washed and refreshed and the dusty roads settle.

But above all, I would like you to know about the people: they are always warm and cheerful in their personalities.

I am from Tokyo. I worked for many years at Seiwa Girls Junior and Senior High school in Sasebo, Nagasaki. I call Kyushu my second home. I call Bacolod my third home! There are many benefactors in Kyushu who support our work in Bacolod for which we are grateful.



CHAPTER I

-“City of Tears”

&

Faith-

Greetings to all!

As I said in my last article, I am living in the Philippines. So first of all I would like to describe this country. As I taught for many years at Seiwa Junior and Senior High School, Sasebo, Nagasaki, this will probably seem like a Social Studies class!



The Philippines is composed of about 7,000 islands. It lies in the Pacific Ocean, with Taiwan to the north and Indonesia to the south west. The total area is about 80% that of Japan that is about 300,000sq. meters. According to the WHO statistics, 2020 it has the 13th largest population in the World, 106,651,000, while Japanese is

127,202,000 being the 11th largest. So in the near future Philippines population will surpass that of Japan. The average age is around 25, so this is a young and vibrant country.

The temperature of Bacolod, where I live, averages 30 degrees. It is hot! The capital city is Manila, situated in the northern island of Luzon. Here is the political and economic centre of the country. You may have heard of the world renowned seaside resort, the island of Cebu. Bacolod is not well known in Japan. There is a population about 560,000 and is the largest city on Negros. There I live as a member of the Catholic community of religious, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. At present there are 6 sisters working there, Filipino, Japanese and Australian.

As regards the people themselves, anyone who has lived with the Filipinos in Japan will speak of their cheerfulness. Bacolod is called the “City of Smiles”, because of their joyful attitude. Before the Corona virus pandemic the streets were full of people and the people I met often greeting me as “Sister”! Here the average of life span is low and so it is unusual to see 90 year old senior walking in the street. When I board public transport people always help me! However in the past BACOLOD has suffered greatly and was sometimes called the “City of Tears”.

Greetings to all!

I will continue to tell you about Bacolod, the city where I live in the Philippines as a member of the Catholic Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Bacolod is the largest city on the island of Negros in the Philippines. With other Sisters my main work at this time is the management of the many financial contributions we receive as a support of our work among the disadvantaged, the operation of the Kindergarten, for Scholarships for young students, and working for the independence of the women.

Before the Corona epidemic this was a very vibrant city, with streets crowded with people and cars. We felt it to be a progressive city. But there are slum areas, and it is not unusual to see many men without employment sitting in the streets. When the evening showers come, the children delight in being able to bathe themselves. Filth is flowing along the streets, and in all this create a very unhealthy environment. The streets are lined with fragile shelters which are called homes. I have heard that the poorer class in Japan is on the increase but because there is a good social welfare system, this situation cannot be compared to that in the Philippines.



I will explain the history of the Negros. From the time when the Philippines was a colony of Spain, growing sugar cane has been the main industry, so much so that the people began to call it the “Island of the Sugar”. We can still see the huge mansions built by the rich sugar nobles who acquired their great wealth through the sugar industry. This was often at the expense of the laborers. The gulf between the rich

and the poor became so great that at times the island was called “The Island of Hunger.”

At the beginning of 1980 the price paid for sugar dropped drastically worldwide and the Negros sugar industry collapsed. More than 200,000 laborers lost their jobs. We can read stories of children dying from malnutrition. Now it became a “painful and bitter sugar”.

During the Second World War the country was invaded by the Japanese army and the people suffered greatly during the conflict between the Americans and the Japanese, but I will speak about that later, except to say, that is the reason why I am working here.

Perhaps you, the readers, are wondering about the Catholic Good Samaritan Congregation of which I am a member. I will tell about that Congregation which in a sense is the backbone of my life.

Greetings to all!

Today I will introduce you to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. To you it may seem like a religion class!

I am a member of a sister of this Catholic Congregation which is not well known in Japan. Indeed, except for the region of Nagasaki there are not many opportunities for Japanese people to come in contact with Christianity.

The central convent of the Congregation is in Sydney, Australia. In 1948, at the end of the World War 2, six sisters from Australia came to Nagasaki to help the people in whatever way they could. This was in response to the request of the Catholic Bishop of Nagasaki. Since 1952 our central convent Japan has been in NARA. The name of the Congregation is taken from the Catholic Gospel of Luke 10:25—37. This is the essence (also called charisma) of our Congregation. Here I will explain the Gospel.



in

Who is my neighbour?

The word Gospel means good news. There are four Gospels in the Catholic New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The subject of the four Gospels is the life and teaching, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you wish to know Jesus, the best way is to read these Gospels.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is found in the Gospel of Luke. The story is set in Judea, the birth place of Jesus. The story tells of a man who is travelling from Judea to Jerusalem and who on the way was attacked by robbers who wounded him and left him half dead. The teachers of the Law at that time were angered by the popularity of Jesus, and tried to trick him. “Who is my neighbor”? Jesus replied by telling this simple Parable. A Jewish priest saw the wounded traveller by the roadside but passed by. Then a Levite Jew also saw him and passed by. Next a third man came up and saw the wounded man. The third man was a SAMARITAN and at that time there was much hostility between the Jews and Samaritan. What happened on the life of the wounded Jew?

Greetings to all!

I will continue to speak about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, from the Christian New Testament. As you remember, one Jewish traveller was attacked by robbers who left him half dead by the road. A priest and a Levite saw the wounded man but passed by. Then a third man came along, saw the wounded man, went over to him. Bandaged his wounds, put him on his donkey and took him to an Inn and asked the Innkeeper to take care of him at his expense. This man was a Samaritan. Now at that time in history the Jews and the Samaritans were enemies.

When Jesus finished the story, he spoke to the teacher of the Law. "Who do you think was the neighbor to the poor wounded man?" "The one who helped him." He replied. "Yes" said Jesus. "Now you go and do the same." In this way Jesus taught that the love of neighbor goes beyond all nations, races, and religion.



In this spirit of the Good Samaritan, in 1948 six sisters of the Congregation of the Good Samaritan, of which I am a member, came from Australia to Nagasaki to help the people recover from the devastation caused by the atom bomb. This was in response to the request by the Archbishop (then Bishop) Yamaguchi of Nagasaki. One of these six sisters was a qualified nurse and so was able to treat many people who were suffering from an after-effect of A bomb.

Then the Archbishop Yamaguchi asked the Sisters to assist girls' education. Sisters moved to Sasebo from Nagasaki. They founded Seiwa Girls Junior and Senior High School where I was teaching.

Australia and Japan had been enemies during World War 2 even so the Sisters came with warm hearts towards the people in this spirit that Jesus taught us in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Then what kind of religion is Catholic religion? I would like to explain it, since this teaching has been the focus of my life.

Greetings to all!

In my previous article I spoke about the focus of service of the Catholic Congregation of the Good Samaritan. Probably there are not many people in Japan who understand the distinction between Catholic and Protestant. Both groups follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. As this is linked to thoughts in this series I will explain further. The teachings of Jesus were passed on to His



followers, and in the course of history and for various reasons different groups appeared, all following these teachings, e.g. Catholic, Anglican, Greek orthodox and others. The Catholic Church developed under the leadership of the Pope in Rome, so sometimes called Roman Catholics. You may still remember when the present pope, Pope Francis visited Japan in November last year. At that time he visited both Nagasaki and Hiroshima and pleaded for the end of nuclear weapons.

The Catholics in the world number about 1,300,000,000. In the Philippines, once a colony of Spain, is 80% Catholic. In Japan the Catholic population is about 430,000, many of whom live in the Nagasaki region, which was the center of the first missionary endeavors.

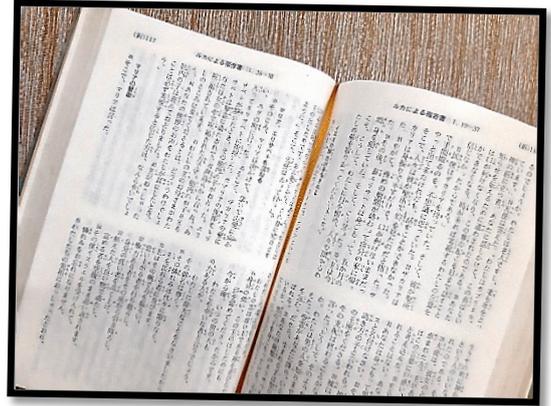
In the 16th century in the West there took place what is called the Reformation. This came about because a monk in Germany, Martin Luther, criticized one of the teachings of the church which said that for a certain donation of money to the church, sins could be forgiven. Many people became followers of Luther and the term protestants was given to them.

Catholics and Protestants both follow the teachings of Jesus, with some differences. Catholics value both Scripture and Tradition while Protestants place importance on Scriptures only. There are a few different terminologies. Catholics speak of priests, Protestants speak of pastors. Pastors may marry, priests may not. The Sunday celebration for Catholics is Mass or Eucharist, for the Protestants it is called Adoration. Such differences exist but the main focus of each is the spread of good news through the teachings of Jesus.

In Nara where the sisters had their main convent for many years, at the end of each year the followers of different religions join together for raise money to help the needy of the world. Buddhists, Shinto followers, Anglicans, Catholics and others join together. They shared a part of collection with the needy in the Philippines, too. This demonstrates the love of neighbor that transcends all barriers, unites all in the spirit of the Good Samaritan.

Greetings to all!

Today I will speak about the Christian Bible, which is the world's best selling book. The Bible consists of many different books in different literary styles, and we often call these the Christian Scriptures. The Scriptures are not well read books in Japan so I will briefly explain its contents.

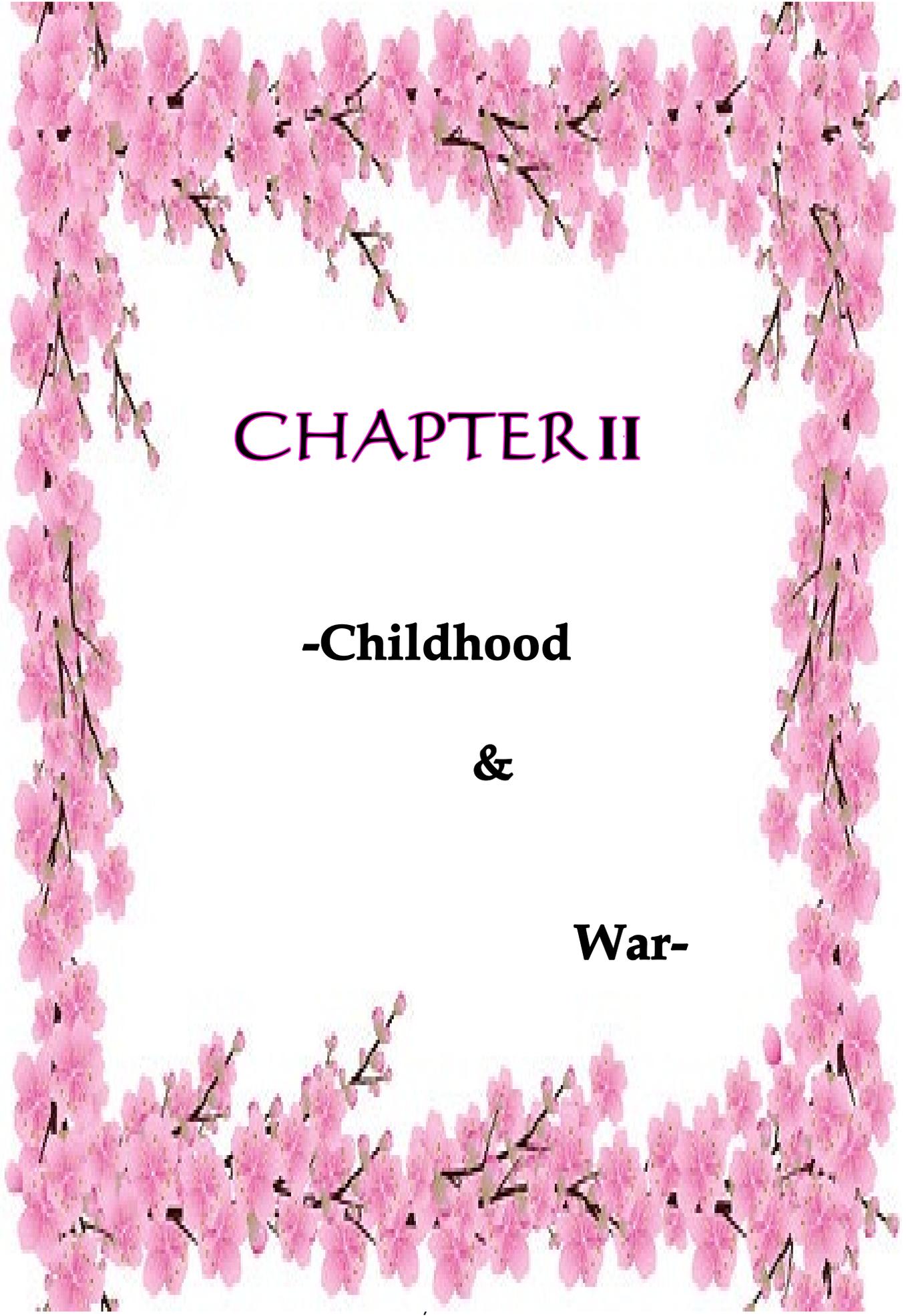


In general we speak of the Old Testament and the New Testament, a record of "The Covenant between God and men". The Old Testament written by many authors during the years extending for a few thousand years B.C. (before Christ) is a big volume. Genesis is the first book recorded in the Bible. It describes how the author experienced the presence of God in the world at that time with its beauty and its weakness. In Genesis we read the authors' interpretation of Creation of Heaven and Earth, the weakness of humankind in the story of Adam and Eve, God's constant care for His world in the story of Noah's Ark, and it gives us the basic moral code in the Ten Commandments. Above all it praises the great love God shows to the world.

The New Testament records the times of Jesus Christ and the early Church. The account of Jesus' life and teaching is found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. An account of the development of the early years after Jesus' death is told together with letters from the leaders to the believers.

Every week at Sunday Mass the priests read passages from the Scriptures and expounds the meaning for today. The format for the Sunday Mass is, apart from the language the same world wide. When I first came to the Philippines I was surprised at the celebration of Mass. The homily was long, and there was lively singing, often with the accompaniment of musical instruments and drums. This creates a joyful atmosphere for the participants. And yet, there is a church which has as very picture of an angry, frowning Jesus. This is expressing the anger of God towards the sugar lords who were exploiting the poor.

It is always very HOT, but the buildings do not have air conditioning. Instead the churches are built so that both side walls are taken away so that the air is able to circulate. This design is so suitable for the South East Asian climate. And I think this design is probably suitable of this time of Covid 19! From next time I would like to speak on a more personal level.



CHAPTER II

-Childhood

&

War-

Greetings to all!



Bacolod City in the Philippines where I am living has been in strict lock down to help stop the spread of the Corona virus. I love going out, breathing in the city air and meeting people, but during this time I had to stay at home. However, everything depends on how one approaches a situation, so I thought of this time as a good opportunity to recall my memories of the past.

I was born on the 10th February in the year of Shoowa 5th (1930). This is a date easy to remember in Japanese. I was born the second girl of Junkichi Kageyama and Masa Kageyama, the third child of a family of nine. My father was a Government Official in the Ministry of Communications. My mother was a full time cared of the family.

Our home was in Takanawa, a quiet area in Tokyo, and people say that the area is a high residential quarter. At that time there were very big residences of a few nobles and we laughed saying that our house looked like “The house of their gatekeeper”.

My father chose my name, Hiro. He told me it was taken from Kooboodaishi, KUUKAI, the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, so even as a child I felt I must become a splendid person like Kooboodaishi. There were six girls in our family Aki, Hiro, Nori, Shoo, Yuu, and Fumi. Often girls’ names in Japan end with ...ko, so when I asked my father why our names did not end with ko, he explained that in olden times ko was added to the names of only girls of the nobles. I have three brothers, one older and two younger.

We girls were all educated at the Sacred Heart School in Tokyo. This was my father’s wish. My father had spent time in France as part of his ministry, and at that time he was deeply touched by the Catholic culture, and had a strong desire that his daughters be educated by the Sacred Heart Sisters. These Sisters originally came from France. All of his six daughters were educated from Kindergarten to Post Graduate at the Sacred Heart School in Tokyo.

For the Kageyama family the Sacred Heart School holds a special place of learning. Eventually all were baptized into the Catholic Church. Next I will tell you about my parents whom I respect greatly.

Greetings to all!

Today I will continue to speak about my family and my childhood. I was born in 1930 the second girl in a family of nine. The house where I lived was surrounded by the houses of the royalty: Kitashirakawa family, Takeda family etc. ours was a small place but we were comfortable and able to employ a housekeeper who had nursing qualifications to care for my younger sister who was always delicate.



My father's book shelves were full with a wide range of topics...Rongo, complete works of literature, history books, Haiku and many others. If I was ever sick and had to stay home from school, my great joy was to choose and read books from my father's books. On most days after we returned from school, we would all spend study time together, and when that was finished my father would like us to go and to help mother. Of course there was no T.V. or private tutoring, so almost every day we went outside to play in the Morimura School grounds which were nearby. These were happy times and even at the age of ninety I can be touched by the memories.

Before the War father was a government official in the ministry of Communications, and was able to provide education opportunities up to University for all his children. I often wondered how he managed to do that on his salary. I remember that my father used to say "My nine children are my fortune!" He was such a gentle father. At weekends he would take my elder brother and sister and myself to the Ueno Zoo Park, the art museum, the observatory and sometimes even to a movie or to golf and when needed would help us with our studies. Truly he was called a devoted father.

He was a lot of Haiku of the Hototogisu school. He was a man of Meiji era, but he never got so angry as to turn over the dining table!. He never raised his hand against his daughters. Except one time I do remember. At the Sacred Heart School we learnt English from the first grade. When I was in second grade I was receiving special training in English from my father. Once when I had not studied well, he slapped my hand with his hand. Later I heard from my mother that he said "I should not have done that," My mother was the most gentle woman. We never heard a harsh word from her or a raised tone of voice. Tomorrow I will speak of her.

Greetings to all!

Today I would like to tell you about my mother. She was always supporting my father and willingly gave of herself. I saw this happen. It was after the war when there was a dreadful shortage of food, and we were always hungry. One day just we were about to begin our family meal one of our relatives came to visit. For a moment we were all at a loss what to do, because we had already shared out all the food we had. There was nothing



left. It was then that my mother quietly and quickly shared her meal with the relative. I think my mother had no meal that night. Even then in my heart I thought “My mother is wonderful!”. I admired her greatly and the memory of that scene in our dining room has never left me.

My father and mother met when they were university students. My father was studying at Tokyo University and he was introduced to his university friend’s sister who was studying at Japan Women’s University. She left her studies and married my father. We, the children, always thought that it must have been a love marriage.

My father always taught us to serve society and said that a good education given us so that we could serve society well. That is one reason why I later chose religious life, why I am now living in the Philippines. I hope I am living my life as my father taught me. My parents were truly wonderful and I am ever grateful that I was born their child.

In my childhood I spent much of my time with my elder sister. She is now a Religious sister involved in teaching and writing. Her name is Kageyama Aki, and she has published many books for both children and adults mostly on the topic of catechetical and methods of teaching with her pen name, Kageyama Akiko. I revered my elder sister for many things. Later I will tell you more about her.

Ours was a truly happy and lively family, but there was a dark time to come, as that who lived at that time will remember. We heard the sound of marching soldiers! The beginning of war in the Pacific!

Greetings to all!

This year in August was the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 2 in the Pacific. This was remembered in Covid style. On international T.V. I watched a programme about the atom bomb and its explosion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was struck by the appearance of the families of the victims and of how they had aged. As I recalled that event I prayed for everlasting peace. I had bitter memories of those times of war. Those born between 1925 and 1935 had their youth taken from them.



In 1941 the war impacted the Sacred Heart School where I was attending. The military entered the school and the sisters who came from other countries called at that time enemies of Japan, were told to return to their own country or be sent to a concentration camp in Japan. I can vividly remember the morning when the sisters boarded two buses and were driven away. We students had to work in a nearby arms factory. Classes were few, and English was forbidden being the language of the enemy. The Sacred Heart School we so loved was no longer a place of education. Every family dug an air-raid shelter in their own yard, and at the first sound of the air-raid sirens we hurried to go there. At that time my father had resigned from the government ministry of communications and worked in general business. My eldest brother was studying engineering at Tokyo University. Fortunately both were exempt from military service. But the situation in Tokyo worsened.

On March 19th, 1945 there were disastrous raids and Tokyo became a sea of flames. Miraculously our house was safe but much of Tokyo was in ruins. Over 100,000 people lost their lives. Even though I was only 15 years old I felt that the allies were much stronger than Japan. To stay in Tokyo was becoming too dangerous and so by the end of March we, my mother and I and four younger sisters and a younger brother and the nurse were evacuated to Mito. My father and elder brother and sister remained in Tokyo. Through my father's connections in Mito we were able to live in part of the post master's residence. I transferred to Ibaragi Prefecture Girls School. Mito was strange to us, but my mother encouraged us, "Everything will be alright". she said. However, after a few months my mother had to return to Tokyo with my three younger sisters and brother and nurse, because the children had taken ill with whooping cough and needed to see the family doctor. So my sister at 12 and myself 15 remained in Mito so we could attend classes. Our lonely life together began.

Greetings to all!

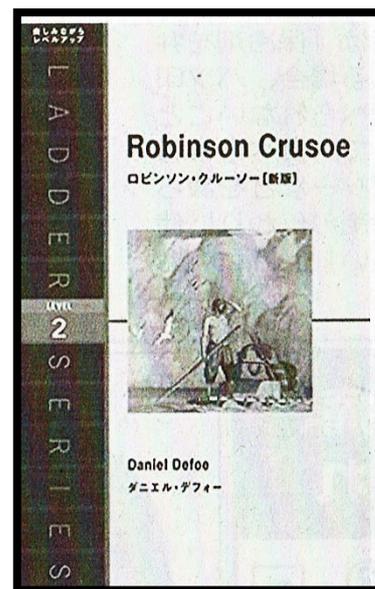
In 1945 at the end of March we evacuated to Mito, but not long after my three younger sisters and younger brother fell ill with whooping cough and so they, with my mother and the nurse had to return to Tokyo to see the family doctor. My young sister of twelve years and myself of fifteen years remained in Mito. I had to encourage her in those lonely days. My life became more tense.

Because of the kind help of our good farmer who supplied us with rice, barley and vegetables we had food to eat. In the lunch boxes of the girls in Mito High School I saw polished rice, while our lunch boxes contained barley or potato. We were always hungry as most of the people at that time were. Such simple diet might be recommended these days, where barley is promoted as a healthy food. In the Philippines now meals usually consist of one soup and two dishes. This might be the reason why I lived to 90! I have no recollection of what I studied in Mito High School. The school had become a munition factory and we worked there everyday. This was called Labor Service as we had done in Sacred Heart School before we evacuated. These were gloomy days. No, there was one good thing.

The headmaster knew that I had studied English at Sacred Heart and he organized an English teacher there to tutor me in English secretly. Learning or teaching English had been banned because it was the language of the enemy. She tutored me every morning in the corner of the school garden. I remember even now that we read Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe an English author.

However in March the bombing became more fierce all over the country and in Tokyo it was especially bad. Women, the elderly, children lost their lives. In Kyushuu, Kagoshima, Fukuoka, and Sasebo, my second home, the bombing was incessant. Around the summer of 1945 Mito city too, suffered continuous bombing. We went to bed fully dressed so as to be ready to run out. My mother always advised "if there is a raid never stop to put out the fire. Run away to the farmer's house on the outskirts of the city where it will be a little safer."

On August 2nd, before daybreak we had to follow my mother's advice.



Greetings to all!



Shoowa 20th (1945) for me a year I will never forget. I think that many of my readers, must feel the same. August 2nd is especially vivid in my memory.

As I mentioned before my sister, 12, and myself, 15, were left in Mito, when my mother and sisters and brother had to return to Tokyo.

There were ammunition factories nearby and so it was inevitable that sooner or later Mito would become a target for the B29 American bombing. And so it was. At midnight I was sound asleep, tired out from working in the factory during the day, when I heard my sister calling, "Sister, Sister, wake up." There was an invasion by the B29 planes. When I looked outside the sky over Mito was already a deep red and covered in heavy smoke. Truly a sea of fire! This was a blitz, a furious bombing raid. Quickly I grabbed the first aid kit by my bedside, and put it on my shoulder, then special head gear. I caught hold of my sister's hand telling her strictly never hand off mine, and ran, but not to the shelter.

My mother always told us to run to the farmer's house on the outskirts of the city. We desperately ran off into the dark. Air crafts were attacking us from every side amid a deafening roar. We flung ourselves flat on the ground. We ran, we fell to the ground, we ran, we fell to the ground, continually as we tried to dodge the bombs. Indeed, all night long I was frantic, desperate with the thought. Absolutely I must never never die. Once when I stood up there was a boy in front of me already on fire with his head gear in flames. Another person could not stand up.

I put all these terrible sights out of my mind as I ran and ran thinking I must never die. My sister and I kept on running towards safety with the deep desire to live. Never in my whole life have I experienced such dreadful, shocking night. Even now, even though I am living in the Philippines that memory is still alive in me. If you have ever had such an experience of war, please tell your children about it.

Greetings to all!

On August 2nd 1945 (Shoowa 20) before day break my sister (12 years) and myself (15 years) were caught up in the air-raid that blitzed Mito. According to Mito City Records on that day 1,145 tons of bombs fell on the city. The raid had continued for one hour and forty five minutes, during that time 300 people lost their lives and the city was left in ashes.

Somehow dodging death among the bombs we finally arrived at the farmer's house on the outskirts. We were deadly tired but not injured. Next day we heard that the house in which we had been staying in Mito city was completely destroyed. Gratefully I thought of my mother's wise advice.

Having lost the house and with it all our food and belongings, with only the clothes we were wearing we stood in the still burning city. Our parents in Tokyo would have heard of the bombings in Mito and must be very worried, but all means of communication was off. We must go back to Tokyo I decided and began to prepare.

First of all we had to go to Ibaragi Prefectural Office to obtain a victim-certificate which permits to receive a train ticket. Office was half burnt out and could not work normally but we did receive the permit as people stranded by bombing. This experience though hard to endure did teach me valuable lessons for my whole life. I learnt a person can live with nothing for some time and I learnt not to worry when situations are difficult.



I remember that the lines of the railway tracks seemed to melt away. We went to the station to buy tickets. Mito station was almost totally destroyed and could not operate normally. They said a few trains to Ueno would pass through the next day. But in actual fact we could not buy tickets and no train came. We just hung about the station.

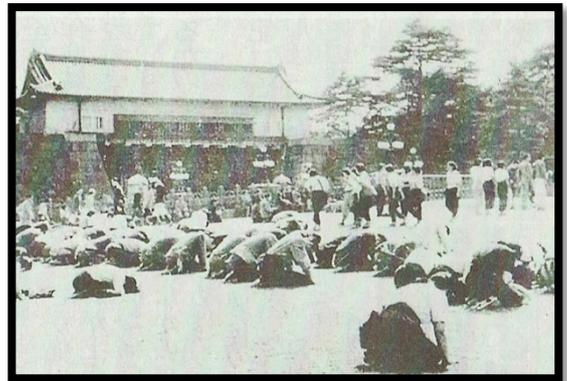
It was on the 5th August that we were able to buy two tickets and waited for the train for how long we did not know. At last a train came but it was already packed! We were pushed on to the train through the windows. Fortunately there were no raids that day so we arrived safely at Ueno station, changed on to the local train to Shinagawa. At the present time that journey by express train takes only one hour twenty minutes, but that day it took six hours. From Shinagawa station it was only a gentle hill walk and before evening we arrived HOME. There was only the deepest joy for us and for our parents.

Greetings to all!

My sister and I were caught in the bombing raid in Mito and after a terrible journey, narrowly avoiding death, we finally arrived home in Tokyo. As soon as I arrived home I became ill with high temperature. It was probably a reaction to the strain and danger of the journey which we, my sister, 12, and myself, 15, had to make to escape to a place of safety. I was so exhausted and there was such relief to be back with my parents.

Soon we heard that the bomb dropped on Hiroshima had unimaginable power for destruction. Three days later a similar bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Only later did we learn that it was an atomic bomb, the first time that such a bomb had been made and exploded. In both cities countless people were killed or wounded.

The end of the war was announced. On August 15th we heard over the radio the voice of the Emperor Shoowa announcing that Japan had surrendered and was defeated. For me this was more of a relief than a shame. Now we would be free...this was my only thought. Some people had been saying that if the U.S. landed in Japan they would commit Harakiri (take their own lives). But I thought, now I can study, now I can play with my friends, now I can live with my parents. These were the thoughts uppermost in my heart.



However after the war we were more hungry than ever, there was less food than there was during the war. In my family there were nine children and the rations of food were not enough for us. We did not deal with the black market. I remember that we planted vegetables, potatoes, greens in our Japanese garden to help supplement our rations.

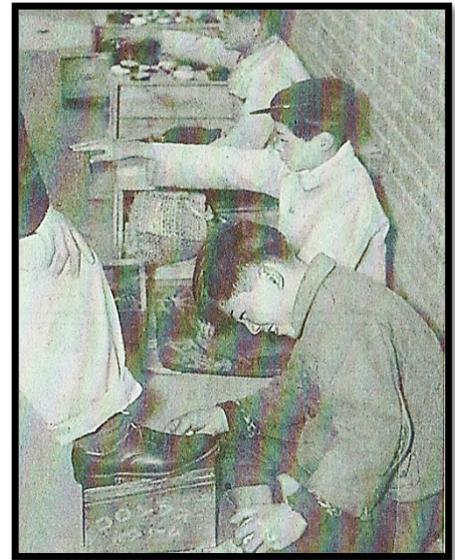
The winter of that year was bitterly cold. There was no heating system and few warm clothes, and many people died of cold and starvation. Those who died during this war numbered over 3,000,000. Besides those who died on the battlefield, many many soldiers died of starvation. Innocent children's lives were cut short. Many of my readers are probably among those who experienced these times.

I renewed my determination to make the best use of my life remembering those who could not do that.

I rejoiced in the blessings of youth and study. In Autumn that year I reenrolled in the Sacred Heart School.

Greetings to all!

When I watched the program from Japan on the international broadcasting channel, I was delighted to see the busy streets and beautiful scenery. It is so different to the view of the Philippines which has an all the year summer. Japan must be getting colder each day so please take care in the winter cold and at this time of Covid19. Until now I have spoken to you about my life till the end of World War 2.



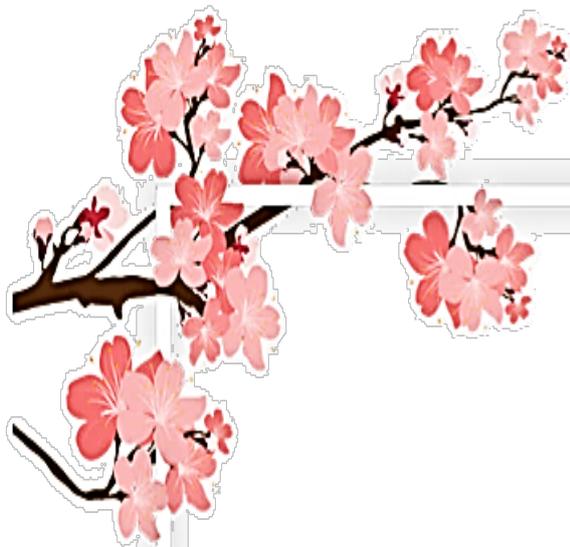
On August 2nd (Shoowa 20), 1945, my sister and I were caught up in the fierce bombing raids in Mito and after a perilous journey we arrived at our home in Tokyo. Then August 15th we heard the Emperor's announcement that Japan had surrendered. As I reflect back I realize that during the war we could not show our emotions. Was that from a loss of feeling? I think not. The government had taught us "until we win the war we do not want material goods", when working in the factories we were commanded to make part for the weapons. English, one of my favorite subjects, was banned because it was the language of the enemy. So in our daily lives we lost all sense of joy or sadness. Even when a beloved member of the family died we must not be sad, but happy, because he had died for Japan. This was a very heartbreaking thing to do. Really, we would want to cry out in grief, but we were taught not to show even a tear. Surely all of us who lived at that time wanted to say loudly: NO MORE WAR.

I was 15 years old and even during the war only thought and wish was to live. After the war our society changed completely and we felt free to express our thoughts and feelings. Now we could live freely.

But Tokyo was in a disastrous state. Everywhere there were burnt fields and we often saw wounded soldiers, and orphaned children were seen shining the shoes of the passers by. Day and night we were hungry. Reconstruction was slow. Yet we still kept our hope alive and trusted in the future.

Fortunately our house in Takanawa was not burnt in the raids and so both parents and children could gather once again at home and our lively daily family life began again. To our joy, the sisters of the Sacred Heart School, where I was re-enrolled, who had gone home or concentration camps returned.

On June 27th, 1946 (Shoowa 21) was a day I like to call my second birthday. On that day there was an event that was to influence my future life.



CHAPTER III

-Re-Enrollment

Baptism

&

Religious Sister -

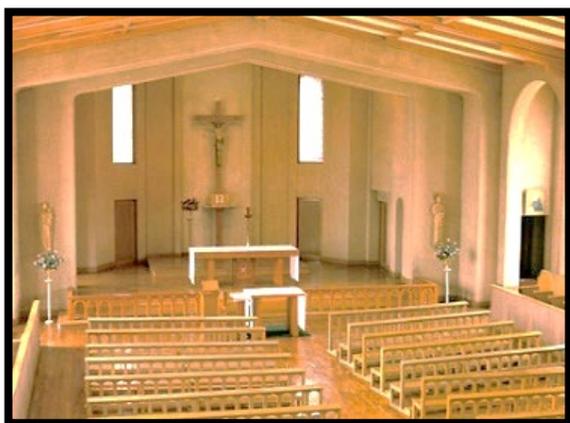


Greetings to all!

In the autumn of 1945 (Shoowa 20) I re-enrolled at the Sacred Heart School in Tokyo. My family had always been followers of the Joodoshuu sect of Buddhism, but in the year 1946, I was baptized into Catholic Church.

My mother often chanted the sutra prayers in a beautiful voice, and once a month all our relatives came together at the home of the head of the family and there a chief priest recited the sutra. I did mention before that my father had given me the name Hiro, a name taken from the founder of the Shingon sect, Kooboodaishi. Indeed my family were all devout Buddhists. Now as a Catholic Religious sister I read books related to Buddhism, as I find there the foundation of my philosophy and morality.

From grade 1 Primary School I had been educated at schools conducted by the Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic Religious Congregation founded in France. This had influenced me greatly. I thought long about my conversion to Catholicism and I reached the conclusion that Catholicism and Buddhism were not opposed. I was 16 years old and my thought went deeply.



I talked with my father who gave his consent with the words “If you will be happy” and so on the afternoon of June 27th, 1946 I was baptized. The Baptism ceremony was held in the peaceful chapel of the Sacred Heart School. My sister Aki and a few friends were baptized together by a Jesuit priest. In the ceremony as the water was poured on my head, the priest said

“I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen”. Through this ceremony the Holy Spirit came upon me and I became a Catholic. Then the priest summarized the teachings of Jesus and a white veil was given to me. And I received a lighted candle, which signified that the Light of Christ would be the guiding force of my life. My baptismal name was Marie Sophie. This event took place 74 years ago, I still remember it vividly, for it was my second birth.

From that day I have lived conscious that I am a child of God. In later years my parents and my younger brothers and sisters became Catholics. In 1948 (Shoowa 23) the education system was reformed and I was able to enter the Sacred Heart University as a first year student. There I met students who became life-long friends.

Greetings to all!



Today I would like to tell you about my University life. The education system had been reformed and I enrolled as a first year student at Sacred Heart University under this new system. My older sister Aki who had already graduated from a specialized training course enrolled at the same time. In the first year the students numbered about 30 most of whom were older than I was, so I became like one who followed.

The campus was located in Hiroo, a central district of Tokyo. It had been the childhood residence of Kuninomiya then the Empress Koojun (the empress of the Shoowa Emperor). Some of the buildings had escaped from bombing raids. With them a few Quon-set huts disposed of U.S. army became our school. Classes were sometimes conducted with only a fusuma, Japanese paper wall, between. At that time Western and Japanese ways and language were often mixed. We called "Otsune goten" Palace or Kuni House.

The first president of the University was Mother Elizabeth Britt, who was a great influence on the students. Mother Britt had been in Japan before the war, and had strong leadership and gave the impression of intelligence and gentleness. What she taught the students remembered!

"Don't be satisfied in doing one work. You must be able to do several." "Be independent. Be intelligent." "Don't be a woman who only cleans pots and pans." "Be a woman who sheds light to others wherever she may be in the society." All these teachings encouraged us to be socially independent and to see the importance of freedom and discipline.

Japan was making a strong but sometimes slow recovery from the war. The shortage of materials was still widely existed. Our school uniforms were disposal of the American women's army uniforms and so were khaki!! This was Mother Britt's idea.

Sacred Heart University specialized in English. There were international students and also Japanese students returned from overseas. Among the returnees was one, Sadako Nakamura, who greatly benefited from Mother Britt's influence. She was three years older than myself. Later she worked for the United Nations and became very active in assisting refugees world wide. She is a person I deeply respect and I tell you more about her.

Greeting to all!

The Sacred Heart University which opened in 1948 (Shoowa 23) in accord with the reformed education system, was in desperate need of financial support to construct new buildings and also to cover administration costs. The first year students numbered only 30 but the student Government Body was very active. The American occupation force had donated a Chivalry car to be raffled and even in the coldest weather the students stood in the streets to sell tickets. It must have been a very happy person who won that raffle, because at that time American cars were never seen on the roads!



It was Sadako Nakamura as president of the Student Government Body who showed great leadership in this venture. She later became Sadako Ogata. Her great grand father was Inugai Tsuyoshi at one time Prime Minister of Japan. When she was younger she had lived in the U.S. and in China. She belonged to the English drama group at University and I have found memories of her coaching me in my lines! At graduation it was at her invitation that we celebrated our graduation party at her house.

After graduation Sadako san studied in the U.S. and later through marriage became Sadako Ogata. After teaching at a University in Japan she was appointed to be UNHCR = United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees =. At one time her name was presented as a candidate for the Nobel Prize. At that time I was teaching in Sasebo and I remember I was interviewed by a local reporter about her. She did not receive the award but she was still a great person. Many people might remember seeing her on television, a small person wearing bullet vest visiting refugee camps around the world. She was carrying out what Mother Britt had taught. "Be independent woman". She was a forerunner of Japanese women's entrance on the international scene.

There were other students from that year who excelled in various fields. Suga Atsuko san became a famous writer and scholar of Italian literature, Watanabe Kazuko san, like myself, chose the religious life and her books on daily life from Christian perspective were best sellers. She was a most elegant lady and next time I will tell about her.

Greetings to all!

Previously I spoke about Sadako Ogata san and her great work for refugees. Today I would like to introduce you to Watanabe Kazuko san another of the first year students at Sacred Heart University at that time.

Have you ever heard of the book “Bloom where you are been planted”? This book written by Watanabe san and became a best seller 2,000,000 copies. It has deep thoughts written in a gentle style, speaking of the mind and heart we need to cultivate in order to live happily.



Often other people say to me how polite I am, but there is no comparison with the politeness of Watanabe san. This was obvious even in the time at Sacred Heart. We, the students, used to call her respectfully “Aunt of Ogasawara School (means school of Good Manners)”. We could see even then from her daily conduct that she was well-bred.

As a child Watanabe san had had a tragic experience. It happened on 2.26 in 1936 (Shoowa 11) at the time of attempted coup d’etat when the rebels against the government killed five of the most important officials in Tokyo. The father of Kazuko san held the position of Superintendent of Military Education. The rebels broke into his home and shot him down in the presence of his family. Kazukosan at 9 years old was a witness to his murder. The coup d’etat failed but Kazuko san was left without a father.

I remember that when we were at University she took part time doing English typing in order to help pay the University fees. After graduation she became a Religious sister of Notre Dame and at 36 years old she was appointed the President of the Notre Dame University in Okayama. Later when I became Principal of Seiwa College in Sasebo, Nagasaki, at a time of difficulty Watanabe san gave me good advice about the administration of schools.

I conclude with a word about her book “Bloom where you are Planted”. She explained that even when the situation or circumstances may be difficult, stay there and try to make your own flower bloom, make your own life flourish. This teaching gave energy and courage to many people. Kazuko san was an object of our great respect because of her beautiful, elegant speech and behavior. Even now I recall her graceful conduct.

Greetings to all!

My life at Sacred Heart University was very rich every day. In my last year 1950 (Shoowa 25) I began to think about what I wanted to do in my life after graduation. My dream had always been build up a happy family with many children, like the home I had known. I would be a good wife, supportive of my husband, a good mother of 9 children like my mother. I would be what was called a good wife and a wise mother.

However in my final year my dream changed. At University each year the students make a retreat. A retreat means that for a few days one leaves aside the ordinary routine of daily life and spends time in prayer, reading spiritual books and the Scriptures. This is a time to reflect on one's life and pray to God for His grace. During my retreat in the final year while reflecting on my life, what stood out for me was the life of the sisters who had not only taught us the academic subjects but committed their lives to care for us in every way. At the same time I was attracted to their lives of prayer.

After that I prayed fervently to God to show me the path I should follow in my life. I decided to walk the path of Religious Life. My father and also Mother Britt had always encouraged me to be a person useful to society. And my father advised me to continue my education to gain a Masters Degree at Sacred Heart before entering that way. My sister Aki was also thinking of becoming a Religious, so that was helpful to me.

There had been marriage proposals when I was considering that way, but now knowing my decision my mother tactfully and gently refused them.

Once the decision was made the road seemed to open out. After



graduation my sister Aki, a friend and myself planned a trip to Nagasaki, the Catholic center of Japan. Perhaps we could call it pilgrimage. A new path was about to open out before me.

Greetings to all!

In the last year of University I made the decision that my future path would be that of the Religious Life—but as yet I did not know which Congregation it would be. In the Catholic Church there are many Congregations. The word Congregation designates the group or community of people who live together and join together in committing themselves to prayer and the service of society. Most groups differ in the ways they offer service to people, in whatever society needs that time in the way of care through nursing, education or social work. Because since childhood I had always been with my sister Aki, I was interested to know to which Congregation she would go, but then I knew I must

make my own decision according to what I believed to be the better way for me.



In 1951 (Shoowa 26) my sister Aki, a friend and I went for a trip to Nagasaki, the center of Catholicism in Japan. What we call now “Graduation trip”! The student travel discount was available until the end of March, so we travelled by train to Moji and

then transferred to a ferry for the journey to Nagasaki. It was a LONG journey! There we stayed with a community of Japanese sisters and visited Ooura Cathedral and Uragami Cathedral. Further we could visit Dr. Nagai, well known for his work, “Bell of Nagasaki”, etc.. He was still alive, dying from the effects of the radio active atmosphere left by explosion. His small hut called “Nyukodoo”==Love your neighbor as yourself==, is a historical heritage now.

Then we met the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. As I mentioned previously a group of sisters had come from Australia at the invitation of the Bishop of Nagasaki to help the suffering people. That was in 1948 (Shoowa 23). Of course at that time there was a great scarcity of food and goods in Japan, and the Japanese government said that if the Sisters could be self supporting and provide their own food and needs, then they could come. It is hard to imagine such a situation in the affluence of Japan today! So with trunk loads of provisions six Sisters of the Good Samaritan sailed for Japan on the ship Changti. This became a month long journey at times very dangerously tossed about by typhoon on the China Sea. In the first days the Sisters main occupation was to study the Japanese language. One of the Sisters had nursing qualifications, so she and other sisters worked at the local medical clinic providing what care they could to the wounded people. We spent only one hour with these Sisters and I was very moved by the compassion the Sisters showed to the patients. After the trip I began to communicate by letter with the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in Nagasaki. These sisters had been in Japan only a few years as yet with no Japanese born sisters. Most of those who advised me did not think it wise that I consider my life to be with them. However I continued with my dream.

Greetings to all!



During my graduation trip to Nagasaki I understood what I wanted to do with my future, to apply to join the Good Samaritan Congregation. I was the first Japanese to do so.

The Congregation was founded in Australia by Archbishop Polding, OSB in 1857 to help many women who were in difficult situations. The central convent is in Sydney. The life of the Sisters was based on the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a Gospel Parable told by Jesus. This Parable shows us that our neighbor is every person irrespective of race or religion. That is the motive that inspired my work in the Philippines.

After my application was accepted, I needed to enter a time of training, a time when there is the opportunity to look more deeply into my desire and either confirm or change it. To begin I was to live with the Sisters in Sasebo and taught in Seiwa School. However, before that I must fulfill the assignment from my father.

As I had mentioned in article 21, my father had advised me to continue with my education which had been disrupted by the war, so that I would be able to serve society more fully. So I proceeded to do the Graduate Course at Sacred Heart University, majoring in English history. After graduating with a M.A. degree I moved to Seiwa School in Sasebo in the spring of 1954 (Shoowa 29). When I arrived at Sasebo railway station, I was warmly welcomed by the sisters, teachers and students.

The school had been founded just two years before and the new white building on the hill could be seen from the town. The first year students often told me, "We waited for the completion of white new School Building on the hill with a heart beating with joyful expectation!" As I learnt about the life of the Sisters I joined in their work in the School, teaching Social subjects, English and Religion. As there was no convent yet, the Sisters made use of classrooms as their living quarters. I lived in one classroom with another Japanese girl and an Australian lay missionary, nurse. There were curtain partitions between us to give us privacy.

That was my way of life for one year, and then I continued my training as a Sister in Australia. There I was to study at greater depth the living of Religious Life and the history of the Congregation.

Greetings to all!



One day in June 1955 (Shoowa 30), I was on the plane heading for Sydney, Australia, to begin the next stage of my training as a Religious Sister. I was called a novice.

It was my first time to travel overseas and I well remember my family gathered at the airport and waving

goodbye as I boarded the plane. I travelled Qantas an Australian airline that had just begun flights between Japan and Australia on that day. On board I saw a group of sunburned Japanese men, whom I later learnt were pearl divers. They were heading to Darwin and then to Broome where they were employed diving for pearls. From pre-war days these Japanese divers were highly appreciated for their skill in this industry, and as soon as the war ended, they were employed once more. It made me happy to think that these Japanese men were appreciated in a foreign country.

I, too, began my life in the foreign country of Australia. The novitiate building was situated at some distance from Sydney and it was there I began this stage of my life journey. I was to be there for two years. In all there were about 30 sisters living there, most of whom were in training as I was and our directors. There were private rooms for each separated by a board partition and curtain.

This was a big step to a more strict life lived in community with others, as we learnt the basic ways of living with self-sacrifice. Everything was in English. The subject matter of our study deepened as we learnt about the Scriptures, the Rule of Saint Benedict and spirituality. We were guided by wise sisters appointed to be our directors. The motto of the Rule was "Pray and Work". I dedicated myself fervently to this way of life.

The surrounding grounds were extensive beautiful with a view that would not be seen in Japan. There was a bush of orange trees. It was a truly the continent. I was only one Japanese. The Australian sisters were permitted family visits three times a year and letters to home were written once a month. I was not homesick as you might think, because this was a rich life and I had chosen it. My life at present in the Philippines is hard because of Covid19 but this is the life I chose. I always remember too what my father taught us "You cannot give happiness to others if you are not happy yourself".

I chose to be a Religious sister to give my life in service of God and people. My days in Australia were richly blessed and I was happy.

Greetings to all!

From June 1955 (Shoowa 30) I spent three and a half years in Australia at the Novitiate of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan learning what life as a Religious sister would mean.

This is a long distance journey! I experienced the first stage of the journey when I lived with the sisters at Sasebo and taught at Seiwa High School. The second stage of the journey was at the Novitiate in Australia. At the conclusion of this stage I made the firm decision to continue, and so I professed in public the three vows of Stability, Conversion of Life and Obedience, according to the Rule of St. Benedict. Then to deepen my experience of living the Religious Life I spent another year in Australia. Finally after another four years of living as a sister in Japan, I professed perpetual vows, in other words I committed myself to live these vows for the rest of my life. The journey has been long, as it is for any vocation in life e.g. medical, artistic etc.

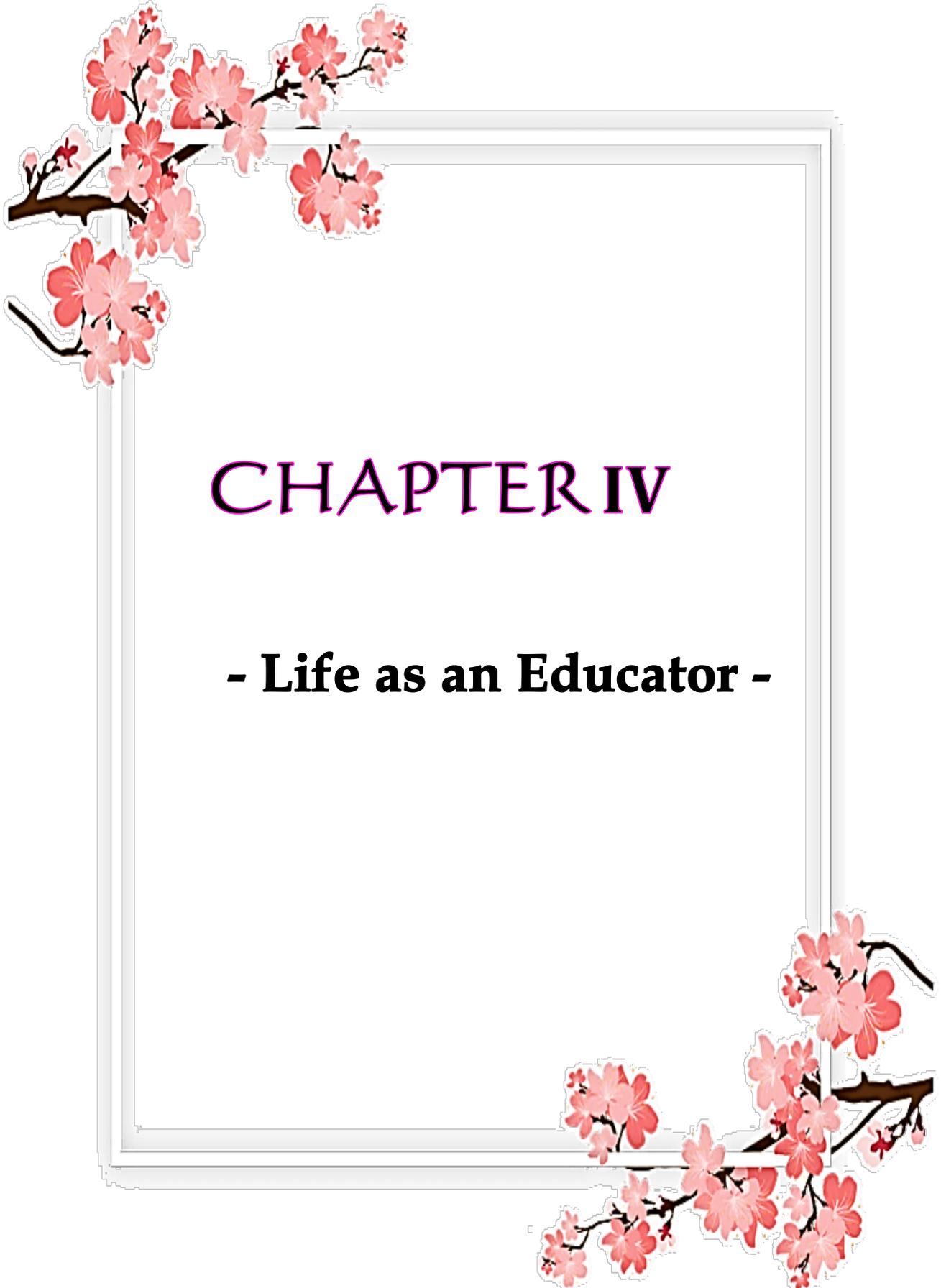
During the time of novitiate I had deepened my understanding of Scriptures, Christian Life and the Rule of St. Benedict, the foundational Rule of the Congregation. The motto of St. Benedict is "Ora et Labora" (Pray and Work)

At that time I was the only Japanese sister in the Congregation. Japan had been defeated in World War 2 and I was often asked in Japan, if I had experienced any discrimination because of this, but I never did. Perhaps that was because my life was sheltered in the novitiate, but even when I went out I was treated with kindness.



Once in three months the novices had what was called Visiting Sunday, a day when they were able to receive visits from their families. Of course I did not have family visiting from Japan, and so the other sisters thinking I might be lonely invited me to join in their afternoon tea.

In the back garden of the novitiate there was a grove of orange trees and I often watched them thinking of MIKAN trees in Japan. Our group of novices numbered 20 of whom all were Australian except myself. Now in 2020 there are fourteen sisters living. As a group we continued our friendship of those years by communicating for birthdays and special occasions, by emails etc. and sometimes by gathering for meetings. Like the oranges in the garden, like the MIKANs in Japan our lives have flourished. After these three and half years I returned to Sasebo, Nagasaki.



CHAPTER IV

- Life as an Educator -

Greetings to all!

As I previously mentioned, in order to become a Religious sister I spent three and a half years in Australia before returning to Japan in 1959 (Shoowa 34). In the Spring of that year I became again a teacher at Seiwa Girls High School in Sasebo, Nagasaki.



While I had been living in Australia great developments had taken place in Japan. Immediately after my return to Japan I spent some time in Tokyo and in Nara where the Congregation had established a convent. I had left Tokyo with many buildings in ruin, now on my return I saw tall buildings and new high ways. There were changes at Seiwa, too. When I had been there in 1954, the classes only went up to 2nd year High School. When I returned, there was a class of 1st year Junior High, and the Senior High had advanced to 3rd year. The white wooden building was full of young bright and happy students.

The center of my life as a Religious and at the same time my life as a teacher became very busy. We, the sisters, did not yet have a convent so we made our living quarters in two classrooms. My daily program usually went like this: We rose at 5:30 a.m. spent time in prayer, then celebrate the Holy Eucharist presided over by a Canadian priest from the local parish. After breakfast it was time for school. At midday there was some time for prayer and midday meal. As well as my being the responsible teacher for one class, I developed the Religion Club activities. I taught Japanese History, Social Ethics, Religion and English, mainly translation work. On Saturdays there were classes during the morning with half day holiday. On Sunday we attended the Parish Church and taught the Catholic children their religion. There was not one day we could call a holiday.

For me there was the added task of being interpreter for the Australian sister who was principal where there were Japanese visitors, translated letters and documents that came from the Government. Did I find it a hard life? No, I always appreciated the life of Australian sisters, who in Australia would have had a full weekend holidays.

That was also when religious sisters wore a uniform dress which was called a Habit. This made them immediately recognizable as Religious sisters. In winter this dress was made of thick black material, in summer a thinner black material. Then changes came and the sisters began to wear the usual dress of other people and of various colours. Seiwa was situated in Matsuyama Cho, half way up a steep hill. And so the walk to and from School for the students and to the parish church for the sisters was often a hot arduous climb.

The days were indeed days of Prayer and Work. We so wanted to provide a good education for the students of Sasebo!

Greetings to all!



It was in 1959 (Shoowa 34) after returning from Australia that I began again to teach at Seiwa High School, Sasebo. I enjoyed my life there although there was some tension in living as a Religious sister and being a full time teacher. As a teacher responsible for a particular class, each morning I carefully scanned the faces of the students in front of me. Children are honest. If there

is a worry or anxiety at home it shows on their faces so I was much relieved when I saw happy faces before me in the morning.

Because there were English speaking sisters in the school, it created a natural environment for speaking English. That had also been the situation at Sacred Heart School and University. And so many students who were especially interested in speaking English fluently, enrolled at the school. There were also exchange student programs: Australian students from Good Samaritan schools spending time at Seiwa, and Seiwa students spending time in Australian schools. The sisters in Australia and members of the Rotary and Lions clubs gave us great support for programs. So in that respect Seiwa provided an excellent environment for making progress in English.

Each morning the school day began with assembly. All the teachers, staff, and students would come to attention in their classrooms and with the help of the Chorus club and the broadcasting group would sing a hymn from the hymn book. They offered the coming day to God. The hymns were bright and joyful and you can imagine the scene a whole school community enlivened by this assembly prayer. The morning prayer had been a tradition of the school since the foundation.

As a teacher my highest value was to deal honestly with the students. There is a deep goodness in every person and I was conscious of this. I treasured each student sitting in front of me. If, after reflection I realized I had made a mistake in dealing students, I acknowledged that and apologized sincerely. We, human beings, have the inclination to lie because we fear the consequences of our word or act, i.e. being scolded. In order to overcome this tendency I tried to live with honesty before the students.

One day a parent said to me that her daughter had said, "If I stand in front of Sr. Kageyama I feel I can never tell lies." It made me happy to hear this comment! It is the duty of an adult to build a trusting relationship with the children.

Greetings to all!

Where I am living now in the Philippines I teach Japanese to the young people. I know from my experience of teaching English in Japan, that learning a foreign language is never easy, and that goes for the study of any language.



In such a study there are four aspects to consider. Hearing, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In Seiwa High School I concentrated mainly on Reading and Writing. I always told the students to learn a language by using their bodies! I encouraged them to hum the words or sentences as they were writing so that by using the mouth and the ears in humming, they could hear the same

time as they write. When we watch foreign films in English, we notice that the people open their mouths widely, whereas the Japanese do not tend to do that and often speak in a low voice. Perhaps this is because of a difference in culture. There is no short cut to learning a foreign language. It always entails effort and memory.

I remember, when I was teaching at Seiwa Senior High in Sasebo, almost forty five years ago, there was a student in the Junior High class who was most eager to be fluent in the English language. One day she asked to study English from Sr. Kageyama. She was truly a good student. I gave her extra assignment which she completed on time and returned to me. This continued consistently for sometime.

This reminded me of my own experience in 1945, when I was a fifteen year old student, I received special tuition from a teacher even though the use of English had been forbidden, because it was the language of the enemy. We, my family, had evacuated from Tokyo to Mito city in Ibaragi Prefecture. The head teacher, in spite of the danger, greatly supported me in my study. Now I could do the same for this student at Seiwa.

The student's name was Jimbo san. She was tall and fair for a Japanese. There was the rumor in the area that the local taxi drivers were stunned by her beauty whenever they saw her! Even so beautiful, drivers should not watch her, "Safe Drive, Please!". One day Jimbo san disappeared from school campus. After a while she was across a Braun tube.

Greetings to all!



As I have mentioned already, when I was teaching at Seiwa High School in Sasebo, there was a Junior High student who was very eager to become fluent in English. She asked me to teach her, so we began private lessons and she was a very good student. That was in 1975. Her name was Jimbo san. She was tall, fair and

very beautiful. All the teachers considered her an intelligent student. However after the summer holidays in that year, she left Seiwa and reenrolled in a school in Tokyo.

Then...she appeared on television! I do not know much about television programs but I heard that she was involved in such shows as “Discover an idol” “Birth of a Star” and in other entertainments. Jimbo san became well known as an actress.

I knew her mother well from meeting her at Seiwa mother’s group. She too was very beautiful and I heard she had wanted to be an actress when she was young, so her dream was fulfilled in her daughter.

That was 44 years ago and last year I met Jimbo san again after all that time. They were producing for television a program featuring an actress and a former teacher she admired. Jimbo san and the whole production team came to Bacolod to have an interview with me.

I explained to her why I was in the Philippines. I told her the story of the Good Samaritan from the gospel and how we had established a kindergarten to educate the poorer children of the area. She visited the kindergarten and another slum area, and she felt for the families who lived in such poor environment.

She apologized for having left Seiwa School so suddenly when she was a Junior High student, but she felt the need to follow her dream. I was pleased that she had become a successful actress, and especially pleased when I heard that she had continued her education to University level and was a qualified teacher of English. I always keep the memory of Jimbo san, the student facing me as she studied English. Now students are facing Jimbo san, the teacher, in the same way.

Greetings to all!

As a religious sister I was extensively involved in the field of education. Fortunately I had had senior to me who had influenced me greatly.

In my time as a student at Sacred Heart University Mother Britt, the president of the University showed me the importance of being an independent woman. She had advanced ideas.

In my time as a teacher at Seiwa School in Sasebo again I learnt much from the principal, Mother Catherine Teresa Mercovich, an Australian sister who had come with the first group of six sisters to help the suffering people of Nagasaki.

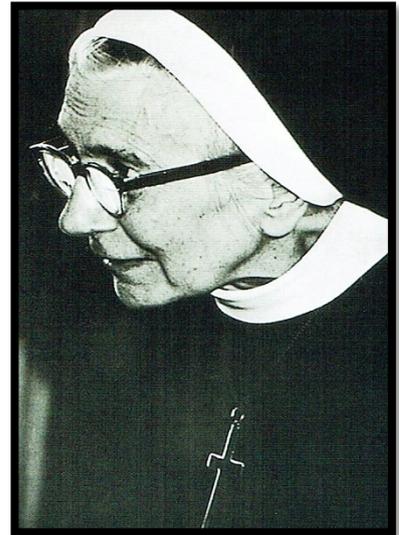
Archbishop Yamaguchi requested the sister to help in the education of the young girls in the area. From then Mother and the sisters began their plan to establish a school. There were many decisions to be made, the suitable land to be found, permissions to be obtained and approvals to be received, etc. The sisters were as yet not proficient with the Japanese Language or familiar with Japanese customs and their problems were countless. Yet they continued with great courage.

Besides the construction of school buildings entailed huge expense. At that time the sisters in Australia helped supply the finances by raising money through the generosity of the students and parents in their schools in Australia. There were bazaars, raffles, concerts and direct donations in order to send money to help Japan. Later on when I met exchange students I often heard such remarks as “My mother baked many cakes to sell to raise money for Japan” or “My father packed up many parcels of goods to send”. For many years the people of Australia supported the life and work of the sisters with open hearts. Indeed this was a living example of the Good Samaritan.

Mother Catherine Teresa (Mother is a title of respect) demanded discipline in the school both in the times of classes and the conduct of the students, their uniforms and their hair styles. I often wondered if this trait came from her German background.

At the same time she was thoughtful and gentle towards anyone in need of any kind of support...and quietly helped. It was only after many years later that I learnt about this side of Mother Catherine Teresa and that was another good lesson for me to remember.

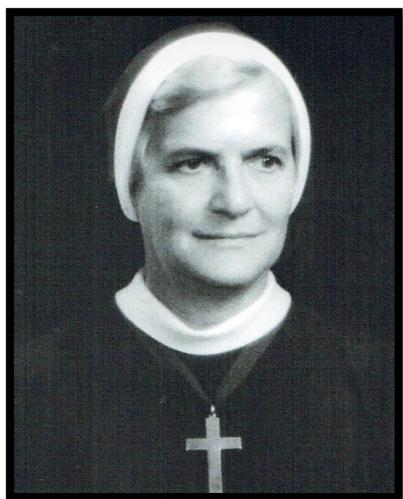
Next time I will tell you about the sister who became the second principal of Seiwa.



Greetings to all!

In my previous article I spoke to you about the first principal of Seiwa, Mother Catherine Teresa, who had been greatly respected by all. Sister Mary Clement Baseden succeeded her as principal. Sister Clement was also a Sister of the Good Samaritan from Australia, and she brought with her innovative ideas.

In 1969 (Shoowa 44) the school gymnasium was completed and Sister Clement put her energy into fostering sports clubs with a special interest in volley ball. In the local school competitions Seiwa volley ball team made its mark and it has been doing good competition against the nationally renowned Kyuubun School team in Sasebo.



Sister Clement gave vitality to the Japan-Australia student exchange project. To mark the 20th anniversary of Seiwa, she initiated the Seiwa Singers, a chorus which made a great impression in local, and national areas. The Singers made trips to Australia and gave concerts in a spirit of gratitude to the Australian people for their generous support in the foundation of the school.

Sister's friendship was also extended to the mothers of the students. She thought that while mothers spent their energies for their children they did not spare time for themselves. She introduced the Mothers Club. This group not only worked for the support of Seiwa but found time to plan for themselves social activities. Once a term, three times in the year, they had such experiences as trips to the Arita Pottery market, the Hot springs at Ureshino and Beppu and a pilgrimage to Nagasaki. For the mothers of the graduates a group was formed to continue these meetings and they named themselves the Chrysanthemum Club, KIKU no Kai.

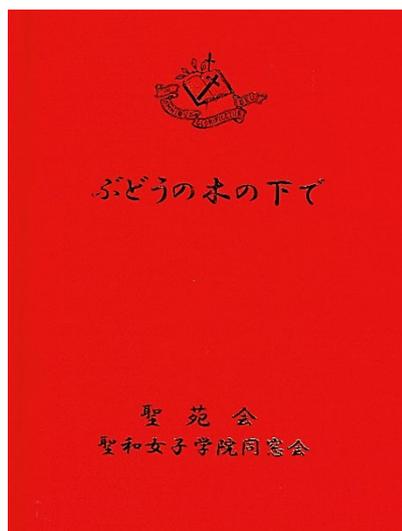
In 1983 (Shoowa 58) to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the foundation of Seiwa, plans were made for the construction of a ferroconcrete building rising four floors to replace the existing school building. At the completion of this building Sister retired as principal of Seiwa. On that occasion she was awarded by the city of Sasebo "International Friendship Honorary Member" for all she had done to promote international friendship.

Under the leadership of these two principals we saw exemplified the tradition of Seiwa which could be summarized in the words of the Scriptures as School Motto:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice,
And be sad with those in sorrow
Bring the Love of Christ to everyone you meet".

Greetings to all!

For many years I was involved in education and in that work my basic principle was “Students are like treasures and the teachers work is to polish these treasures. Graduates are the soul of the school”. The teachers and Board members would continuously change over time, but the foundational spirit would live on through the students and the graduates. The Alumni of Seiwa School in Sasebo, Nagasaki, is very practical.



In the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Seiwa in 2007, the alumni published a booklet entitled “Under the Vine Tree” with the subtitle of “The Story of the Messengers of Peace.” This book tells the story of the foundation of the school. The alumni hoped that the present and future students of Seiwa would nurture and spread this spirit. It became supplementary reading for the first year students in their Religion Class. In the same way new teachers study it also. It is an important supplementary text in order to live on with Seiwa.

Also for the memory of 60th anniversary of Seiwa, a panel of photos was made of all the sisters that had been involved in Seiwa, and this hangs in the Office at the entrance of Seiwa School. There were about thirty sisters. In previous times there had been many sisters involved in either the Cherry Blossom Kindergarten, or Seiwa Junior and Senior High School, but in the course of time number has decreased and at present there are no sisters at Seiwa. Through the panel of the sisters’ faces the alumni hoped to show that memories.

Another activity of the alumni was to plan a talk given by one of the first graduates followed by a panel discussion by graduates from previous years. As I was in the Philippines at the time I could not be present, but I did receive all the students’ comments of the event. I keenly felt hearing the news from those present that not only the zeal for study but also a zeal for the spirit of love of neighbor still flourished. Truly the alumni are the soul of Seiwa.

At Seiwa the students, teachers and alumni are one spirit, but because the number of children in Japan had decreased, Seiwa School faced a financial crisis. It was at this time that I was asked to be the president of School Corporation Board.

Greetings to all!

For the Sisters of the Good Samaritan who live according to the Rule of St. Benedict the motto is "Pray and Work". Every day I lived following this Motto but at times I felt my life was more work than pray. This was especially so when I assumed the responsibility of Being the President of the School Corporation Board in 2006 (Heisei 15).



At the time I was acting as Principal of Cherry Blossom Kindergarten, affiliated with Seiwa School. Before that I had been engaged in mission work in the Philippines, and also with work at our convent at Nara.

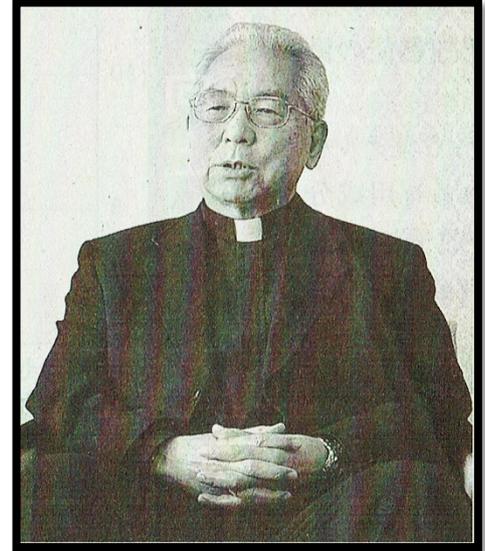
In Japan at that time the number of children was declining rapidly in nationwide. This became a significant issue for the private schools. Our School Board, too, had to deal with this situation. In 1953 (Shoowa 28) Seiwa was established as a Girls School and many of the students came from the north Prefectures of Nagasaki and Saga. Language study and religious education were what attracted the students to the school. Enrollment numbers were high.

But the School could not ignore the fact of diminishing numbers of children in Japan. Into this situation I entered as President of the School Corporation Board, and I resolved to tackle the financial crisis while still keeping the School attractive. When the number of students was high they numbered over 500, but already that number had become under 450. Yet the number of the teachers and staff remained the same. This guaranteed that the students could receive the specialist education needed to pass university entrance examination. In many cases there was a teacher for a few or even one student, and we realized this situation could not continue. Each year there was a loss of revenue of great millions yen, and we began to use the capital that had been accumulated.

Personally I was very inexperienced in the field of finance. Every day the head officer and trustees anguished as they sought for the best way forward. So I sought the advice of those with experience, in particular that of Watanabe Kazuko san who had been in class with me in Sacred Heart University and was the President of Notre Dame University in Okayama and whose story I have mentioned previously.

Greetings to all!

It was just at the time that Seiwa was facing a financial crisis that I became the President of the School Corporation Board. As I explained previously the number of students had declined because of the general decline of birth rate in Japanese society, but the number of teachers at Seiwa remained the same. To manage this situation sum of great millions yen had to be used from the reserve capital every year.



This could not continue. I consulted with Watanabe Kazuko san, President of the Notre Dame University in Okayama whom I knew well. After the general meeting of the principals and presidents of School Corporation of Catholic schools in Japan held every year in Tokyo I met up with her at a nearby restaurant, or sometimes visited her in her convent. She strongly encouraged “...ultimately it is you, as the President, who must make a firm decision for the school at this time of crisis”.

We finally made the decision that we must ask some teachers to retire. This was a difficult decision for me, but as President I knew that I must be firm in proposing this solution. There were three points to consider regarding this decision to ask some teachers to retire.

(1)Both husband and wife working; (2)The children already financially independent; (3)Had the person already achieved her/his dream and experienced that dream of being a teacher over a length of time. Often we explained and discussed with the teachers the financial situation and the decision. And so after some months the crisis was over for a time at least. I felt relief, but more deeply I felt for the teachers who had so thoughtfully retired.

The person who constantly encouraged and supported me in this painful time was Archbishop Joseph Takami, who with us had sought a solution to the crisis. Whenever I went to him for help, with generous heart he consoled and gave practical advice. I was also very grateful to Members of the School Corporation Board, the Trustees, the councilors, teachers and the alumni for their advice and generosity. Recently I heard that people called me “The Iron Lady”, like they called Margaret Thatcher, former prime minister of England. I was surprised and laughed. I am not strong enough to be called by that name! I am just a religious sister wanting to do the best for all.

I retired from this position of President in 2010 (Heisei 22) and once again became a missionary in the Philippines. Next time I will tell you how and why we began our mission in Bacolod.



CHAPTER V

- Work Together -

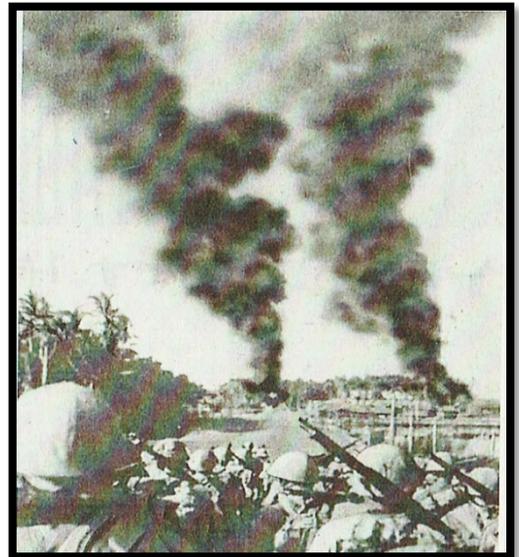


Greetings to all!

I am now living in Bacolod in the Philippines, sharing in the missionary work of a group of Sisters of the Good Samaritan Congregation helping the people especially the poor in the best way we can. It is thirty years since we began our mission here.

After the World War 2, when Japan was reduced to a state of immense need, the Catholic Congregations from other countries reached out to help us materially and spiritually. As I mentioned before the first group of six sisters of the Good Samaritan came from Australia to Nagasaki to support the people in the aftermath of the atomic bomb explosion. That was in 1948.

In the nineteen seventies many Catholic Congregations in Japan wanted to reciprocate by sending missionaries to the needy of South Asia or Africa. For the Good Samaritan Congregation it was to be the Philippines. During the war in the Pacific Region, the Philippines had been a strategic place for the conflict between Japan and America. More than 500,000 Japanese soldiers lost their lives there, but for the Philippines the victims numbered about 1,100,000. The people of Manila in particular suffered greatly. The Japanese and the anti Japanese guerillas and many people were involved in this conflict. It was only later that we learnt of the atrocities that had been committed by the Japanese army.



At first we did not want to believe these stories but then we realized they were the truth. We felt very deeply the desire to make amends for this behavior of the Japanese and so we came to the Philippines with this strong feeling of “Apology”.

In spite of the suffering they had endured, the Philippine people were forgiving, not holding any feelings of hatred towards the Japanese in their hearts. So in this spirit of “Apology” and “Gratitude”, we then Sisters of the Good Samaritan came “To Work Together” with the people in the city of Bacolod.

In 1981 (Shoowa 54) at the General Chapter of the Congregation held in Sydney, we, the sisters in Japanese Province, put forward the proposal to send sisters to the Philippines. However, because as yet there were not many Japanese sisters and still no realistic plan, the project was not approved.

But later, the Japanese Province expressed a strong desire to send sisters to help in Asia even they sacrifice their own safety. In 1987 (Shoowa 62) the mission was approved and preparations were set in motion.

Greetings to all!

It was in the latter half of 1980 that the Congregation began to plan realistically for the mission in the Philippines. First we needed to know which areas in the Philippines were most needing support. At that time I was engaged in work at our Good Samaritan Convent in Nara, so it was Sister Keiko Goto who undertook the first steps in our search. Sister was at the time doing a course in missiology in Manila so she was in a position to visit many places in person. She reported that one of the most needy areas was Negros island.



This island was sometimes called “Starvation Island”!. As I said previously the distance between the life styles of the rich and the poor was immense. There were a few wealthy land owners in the Sugar Industry and many laborers, often unemployed. The island depended on the sugar industry for its economic survival but the world wide price of sugar had fallen drastically. There was severe hunger at

times among the laborers and their families. In anger the laborers everywhere revolted. The military tried to control the revolt causing deaths.

The next year 1986 the notorious Marcos Government collapsed, and was followed by the Aquino Government. That Government raised the status of the farmers, and in 1988 the Reformation Farmland Bill was passed. Even so the life of the farmers was still desperate and N.G.O. brought in the living Project which concentrated on the education of the farmers and the nourishment of their families.

Into such a confused situation what was the best way for us to proceed? First of all we looked toward the needs of the children. I personally remember the hunger I had experienced and the hardship after the World War 2. In 1990 Sr. Haruko Morikawa and Sr. Keiko Goto began to live and work in Bacolod. It was a dangerous time in the history of the island. A Japanese Official from an International Aid Group had been kidnapped by the communist guerillas. At first we began by joining in the work of other missionaries, until we gained some knowledge of the area and its needs. When I finished my commitments at Nara, I was able to join the sisters in their work in Bacolod. It was 1994 (Heisei 6).

Greetings to all!

I began to live as a missionary in Bacolod, in the Philippines in 1994 (Heisei 6). As a member of a group of Good Samaritan Sisters we began a Nutrition Program for the needy children of the area.

As I mentioned previously there was a great difference between the lives of the poor and the rich. Unlike Japanese society the middle class were very few. The owners of the Sugar Companies live in unimaginable big residences and their children go to the best private schools or study abroad. On the other hand the poor people are not sure where their next meal will come from. So we especially tried to help the families of those who were unemployed. We regularly visited the needy areas and provided nourishing soup. The chicken soup was a simple dish of chicken bones and green vegetables. For the babies we provided milk. Using the generous donations of our Japanese friends we were able to work together with the local people to buy the food they needed.

The mothers themselves did the cooking while we gathered the children for play or study. The cooking was done in the open area called "Blue Sky Kitchen". The babies were weighed...a simple procedure of wrapping the baby in a cloth and hanging it on a fishing hook! At Christmas time we prepared a spaghetti dish which brought big smiles to the children's faces. Our hope was that they would grow up to be healthy independent children.

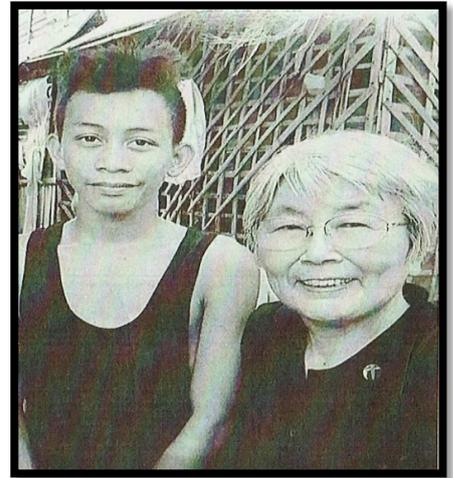
One day as we rode in the jeepney on our way to the sugar cane workers area, the jeepney got bogged in the muddy road. A carabao (buffalo) was sleeping in nearby muddy pond so we, passengers and driver, waited patiently for it to wake. When it finally woke up the driver caught it, put a rope around its neck and harnessed it to the jeepney. A wonderful solution!



The carabao moved forward pulling the jeepney behind it. We moved and finished our journey! We planned other activities to give joy and education to the lives of the people.

Greetings to all!

Previously I told you about the Nutrition Program we had set up for the children of the area. Then we turned our attention towards the school education. In response to a need expressed by the parents and church leaders we set up what we called a “Scholarship Program”. At present in Bacolod the compulsory education extends over thirteen years: one year kindergarten, six years grade school, four years junior high school and two years senior high school. Of course education in public schools is free but many poor people are not able to afford to pay for uniform, text books or essential stationary, so in reality they cannot attend school.



When I was teaching Japanese in Bacolod, I became aware of two particular responses to education. The question “Do you like to study?” was a superfluous remark. For them to study is a dream fulfilled, a privilege, a joy. And they have a good ability in developing their knowledge. Many students live in a house that most people would call a shack, without running water or electricity, yet they, when the opportunity is given them, absorb and respond to what they study.

Parents too desire an education for the children and sacrifice themselves at times to provide opportunities for their children. To respond to this situation we offered support by putting the “Scholarship Program” as one of our main works. In this way we were able to give financial support to children who would otherwise be unable to attend school. This project began from the beginning of 1990. At first we concentrated on students in grade school, and gradually developed it to include students up to college standard. It was the responsibility of the teachers and leaders of the areas to select students who would benefit from the scholarship. To graduate college with a degree and to gain suitable employment was the dream of every student...and their hope was to provide a house for their parents.

All this needs finance. In Japan our sisters and friends formed the “Bacolod Friendship Foundation”, which supported us very generously. In Australia too there were countless financial supporters. My friend from Sacred Heart School days, Machida Chizuko san was a great benefactor. She is the founder of “JOMAS” (Japan Overseas Missionary Assistance Society). She is a best selling author and writes under her pen name. I will talk about her next time.

Greetings to all!

Now I will introduce you to Machida Chizuko san whom I mentioned before and recall the first time I came to know her. One day, when I was in Grade three at Sacred Heart School, Tokyo, the Japanese Language teacher read to the class a composition, the composition written by then first grade student at our school. She said it was such a well written composition that she wanted to read it to us. The writer was Machida san. She completed her education at Sacred Heart University.

Machida san later founded “JOMAS” (Japan Overseas Missionary Assistance Society), and we, the Good Samaritan, in Bacolod received generous support from the Society ever since 1997.



Just as “The sandalwood is fragrant from its first foliage”, so Genius will assert itself at an early age. Machida san became well known as a novelist and essayist. She has published many works such as the best seller “Dirty Hands of God”, under the pen name of Sono Ayako. She is a

Catholic and donates much of the rewards from her writings to JOMAS. She married Miura Shumon san. As I said our Congregation has received generous support for the Scholarship Fund from 2002, and we have been able to finance about 1200 scholarship and almost 200 college graduates. We are deeply grateful to JOMAS.

The scholarship Program Fund began as the “Bacolod Friendship Fund” and is managed by the Good Samaritan Sisters’ in Japan. Innumerable benefactors have supported us spiritually and materially and it is almost impossible to express our gratitude adequately. Recently, with the help of the Australian Foundation, we have been able to open the Good Samaritan Outreach Center where women can learn skills for independent living. The Center provides cooking, sewing and craft classes as well opportunities for spiritual growth. Here the women can learn independence, and they also provide meals for Nutrition Program.

We acknowledge with immense gratitude the constant support of “Nagasaki Charity Volunteer Group” who apart from providing finance, also provide encouragement by their visits with us. They are called “The Shinapisu Kai” (mustard seed association).

Greetings to all!

Every year I retire to Japan for one month, but this year because of Corona19 I could not. I could go neither to Tokyo, my native place, nor Sasebo, my second home town, a place of which I hold many nostalgic memories of my time as a religious teacher. That was difficult for me.



Today I tell you about the wonderful assistance we, the sisters in Bacolod, received from the “Japanese Shinapisu Kai”, a Nagasaki Charity Group, in support of our mission work. This group was founded in Nagasaki in 1999 (Heisei 4) by Catholics. It’s first President was Hirota san and there were more than 1,500

members. With the help of donations from this group, we were able to begin our Farming Training Center where we trained framers to be self supporting.

This grassroots group continued in existence for 25 years until 2017. During that time President Hirota san and the second President Yamaguchi san with the members from their group visited us in Bacolod several times. One of their memorable contributions was to assist the local government to construct roads and pipelines around Manapura Hacienda area. When I visited Manapura in 1990, the living conditions were very primitive...no water system. no electricity, no toilet facilities, and whenever we spent time there on programs for the children, we had to prepare to live in these conditions.

Then the Shinapisu Kai stepped in and with their donations to local government was able to improve the infrastructure of Manapura area. When I visited there in 2018 (Heisei 30) the conditions had changed completely! In 2017 the Shinapisu Charity Group closed down but they left a wonderful legacy of support. In 2018 I visited Manapura and I was happily surprised to receive a very big welcome from the Grade School, and Junior and Senior High School students as well as the local government officials and the people. I was touched when I heard the students give a musical performance using the musical instruments that had been given by the Shinapisu kai. These gifts and the gifts of so many of our benefactors brought such joy to the people, a joy that could be seen in the shining eyes of the people.

Our next venture in Bacolod was to establish the Kinder school. I recalled by experience as principal of the Cherry Blossom Kinder in Japan and looked forward to once again the joyful faces of little children.

Greetings to all!

The Good Samaritan Kinder school was established by the Congregation as an important part of our work in Bacolod. In 1990 we, Sisters of the Good Samaritans a group, of which I am a member, formally began work in the Philippines, and as I previously mentioned we set up the Nutrition Program, Home Project, Living Program, Scholarship Program as well as other local activities.

After ten years of living and working there, we welcomed a Filipino woman as a member of our group, a Sister of the Good Samaritan. We consulted with the local people as to what they considered was needed in the areas, and unanimously they agreed that the education of their children was an urgent need.

In the Philippines the second year of Kinder is compulsory but the poor families cannot afford to send their children. So, with the help of donations from Japan and Australia we were able to build one story ferro-concrete rooms on the land borrowed from the local Catholic Church. The school facilities consist of classrooms, playground and the Nutrition Program.

One requisite for enrolment was lack of finances to enter the public school. We wanted to respond to the desires of the people that somehow their children would be able to be educated. Thus new Catholic Kinder School opened in May, 2004 (Heisei 16). One of our Filipino sisters was the first principal and a Kinder teacher in Japan came to work with her. In 2014 (Heisei 26) the first Principal was succeeded by a qualified local teacher which was an important step forward. Our sisters' work was to set up a response to the needs expressed.



The uniform was similar to that of the Cherry Blossom Kinder in Sasebo, and in order to get uniforms ready for the Opening, teachers and mothers worked hard up to the last minutes. Blue color uniform looks so nice here in southern countries. 120 children were enrolled, 60 for Kinder 1 and 60 kinder 2. Morning class and afternoon class,

double shift system. Kinder School was always wrapped with bright and enjoyable voices, but at present on account of Covid 19, children cannot come to school. Teachers regularly visit each home and tutor one by one. Parents will bring child's finished assignment on every Friday to Kinder School.

What parents could not do on account of poverty, parents entrust their children can do. Affectionate love for the children has been the same in all history.

Greetings to all!

In 1994 (Heisei 6) I began my life in the Philippines. Some years later I had to return to Japan to take up the position of President of the Seiwa School Corporation Board. But now I have completed my 15th year in the Philippines. There is continuous summer in this country and there are different ways of thinking, different customs to learn.



Take the example of TIME. This puzzled me in the beginning. A promise to meet at 3 o'clock only a very few will be there at that time because there is the unconscious knowledge that three o'clock means up to 3:59! In Japan everyone is meticulous about punctuality. Even the railway office

apologizes if the train rolls into the station one minute late. There is neither right nor wrong in this way of thinking-in fact there can be advantages in this slow pace of living, but it can be frustrating to have to wait 59 minutes!

Again the customs of weddings surprised me. In Japan without a personal invitation people will not attend a wedding. In the Philippines a personal invitation can be received and any member of the family or friends if they wish, attend the wedding ceremony. In Japan it is difficult to decide how much money to put in the special gift envelop. In the Philippines guests are free. The important part is that family and guests all enjoy themselves. There is much kissing and hugging, much talking and feasting. Under Covid 19 rules the social distancing regulation must have been difficult.

So many things to learn! I am teaching Japanese language at the weekends, and as I mentioned before I stress the importance of using body movement to help in the study of a new language. I suggested to the students that before they retire at night they look in the mirror, open their mouths wide and practice. One day I visited the home of one of the graduating students and realized such a practice was not feasible in her home. There was no electricity and at night they used candles, no study desks, and no mirrors! I explained their poverty and it made me think deeply of my way of living and teaching. I realized that what I considered normal was not normal for every one and how easily we can make mistakes.

Indeed many world issues are aggravated by the lack of understanding and consideration of others. Daily we can keep learning.

Greetings to all!



I am the second daughter in a family of nine, and I am 90 years old. We are a healthy and united family although one sister had died. In our family Aki has always been reliable and has been a big influence in my family. Today I will speak of her.

Aki is 92 years old and like me she was educated from Grade school to University at Sacred Heart Schools. Soon after the end of the World War 2 in 1946 (Shoowa 21) on June 27th we were both baptized into the Catholic Church. She also chose as a Religious sister, but in a different Congregation, the Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls. She later took graduate course at Sophia University, Tokyo, and even later continued her study in Paris where she spent time as a member of her Congregation. She became a teacher of catechetics for students from kindergarten to University as well a professor at Major Seminary, Tokyo. Under her pen name Akiko Kageyama, she published many books on catechetical subjects.

As the eldest girl in our family she has a strong prudent character. As well as being a published writer she is also a well known lecturer. Even from childhood I always followed her, listened to her and I wanted to be always close to her even giving her a share in my snacks. I wanted to spend all my life with her and I remember only one time when there was a disagreement. We were small and I forgot the reason behind it, but I was mischievous and cut off the end of her handkerchief. Aki did not get angry or even raise her voice to me. I was the one who is ashamed now!

This year we were not able to meet because of the restrictions of Covid 19, but we were able to meet up through international telephone communications, and I was able to converse with her about Religious life, about missionary life in the Philippines and about my family activities. Her voice sounded younger than mine, and I am always encouraged by our conversations.

I am ever grateful for my parents' total love for the welfare of their children, and especially grateful that I was blessed with such siblings and so without concern I can dedicate my life to missionary work.

In the Philippines there are many big families like ours, and so I feel close to them even though our background upbringing is different. Whenever I visit families here I recall my time with my dear family.

Greetings to all!



I watch the situation of the Covid epidemic in Japan every day and I fear that it seems to me there may be another outbreak, so my thoughts are with you all.

This year more than 1,400,000 people have died during this epidemic, so the world is in a time of crisis. Here in Bacolod under an ever more strict lockdown the children under 16 years are forbidden to attend school. The Sunday Church gatherings were also severely restricted in order to stem the spread of the virus.

In Japan you are experiencing or trying to avoid “Three closeness” ie, closed room/ closed gathering / & close distancing. However we must extend our care to elderly neighbors living alone without the joy that visitors bring. It is essential to keep social distance but not forget the importance of social communication. We human beings are social animals. We cannot live healthy lives without social communication. As the experts tell us without heart to heart communication our daily lives will be spiritually and physically effected. In these times of limitations imposed by Covid19 we must be ever more vigilant to keep heart to heart contacts alive either through telephone conversations, letters, technology and happy greetings: “Hello”, “Good day”, “Are you fine?”, and in the Philippines, “I love you”. Even one word of thoughtful greeting can show that others care, that I am not alone, that there is hope. The warmth of heart to heart contacts gives life and will not be a victim of the virus.

At present I am teaching Japanese language on line and I take special care to give not only knowledge but especially to spread the warmth of affection for each student. In large families which are common in the Philippines we do not suffer from loneliness. Let us be mindful of “Closeness of heart to heart” in our daily life.

Soon this section about my life in this “Series of Listening and Writing” will come to an end. Next one will be the last one.

When this series began in October, Bacolod, where I am living, was experiencing the rainy season with fierce squalls and high humidity. Now we are still in the rainy season, but the daily temperature has dropped sometimes below 30 degrees and that makes life easier.

This is unlike Japan with its four seasons but I still experience the passing of time. In Bacolod I like to look up at the sky. The clouds in the Southern Hemisphere are very expressive, and I am told they are favorite and valuable subjects for photographers. The patterns the clouds form in the sky are intriguing, sometimes floating slowly by, sometimes racing across the sky. It makes me

feel very small. To me it can represent our lives. As KAMONO CHOOMEI writes in the "HOOJOOKI" "The water continuously runs in the river and its water is always new", truly such is the life.

Reflecting on my own life I can see that is true. I picture the time when I was a young girl dodging enemy bombs as I ran between life and death; as a religious teacher in Sasebo, Nagasaki, I walked with teachers, staff and students as my Faith developed; in Bacolod as a missionary, my life was rich as I lived beyond country, language and culture working together with the people in a spirit of apology and gratitude.

In Catholicism we speak of death as a going to heaven, to God. For me I think of death a third birthday...my natural birth, the second birth as a Catholic by baptism and then my third birth into a new way of life by death. Gradually my friends are going there before me. The second principal of Seiwa School, Sister Clement died on November 18th this year. Sister Goto Keiko who began our missionary work in Bacolod has also died. Next year on February 10th I reach my ninety first birthday so the time when I will go to heaven must be coming nearer. Until that day comes I hope I can continue to help others.

December 25th is the day we Catholics celebrate the birth of Jesus. This year because of the Covid19 restrictions in Bacolod the people were not able to celebrate with the usual lively festivities, but more importantly we made such that no one, no one would go hungry at Christmas and New Year. Together with the local people we deliver Food, Parcels with festive meals and cakes. In this way we hope to warm the hearts of all people with Christmas and New Year joy.

Like the clouds time keeps moving on in different patterns. One day the Corona virus will be overcome, the sun will shine again and there will be clear blue skies. Until that day comes, let us greet and call each other, let us walk on together in Love. I sincerely thank you, all the be ever blessed.





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I want my concluding words to be
“MAY GOD BE GLORIFIED IN ALL THINGS”.

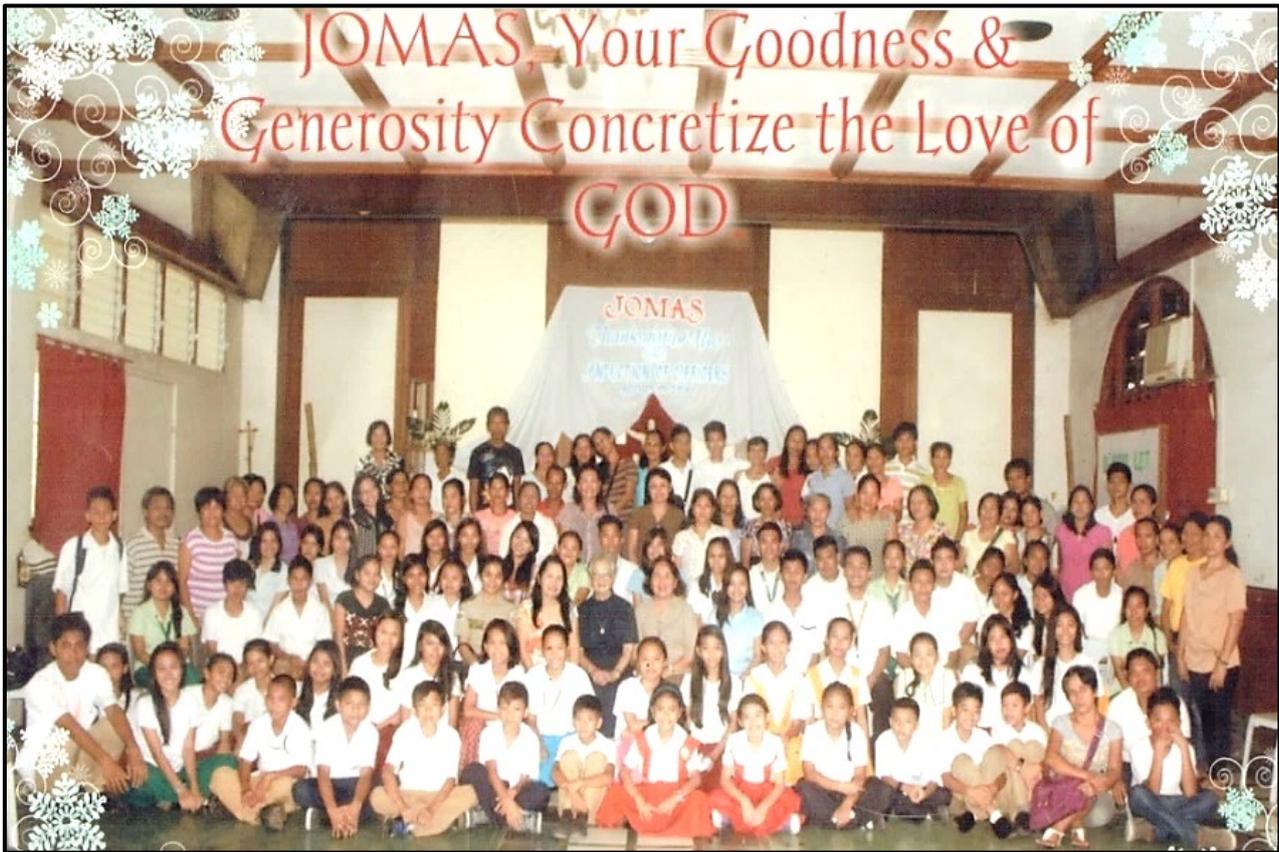
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May 15, 2021

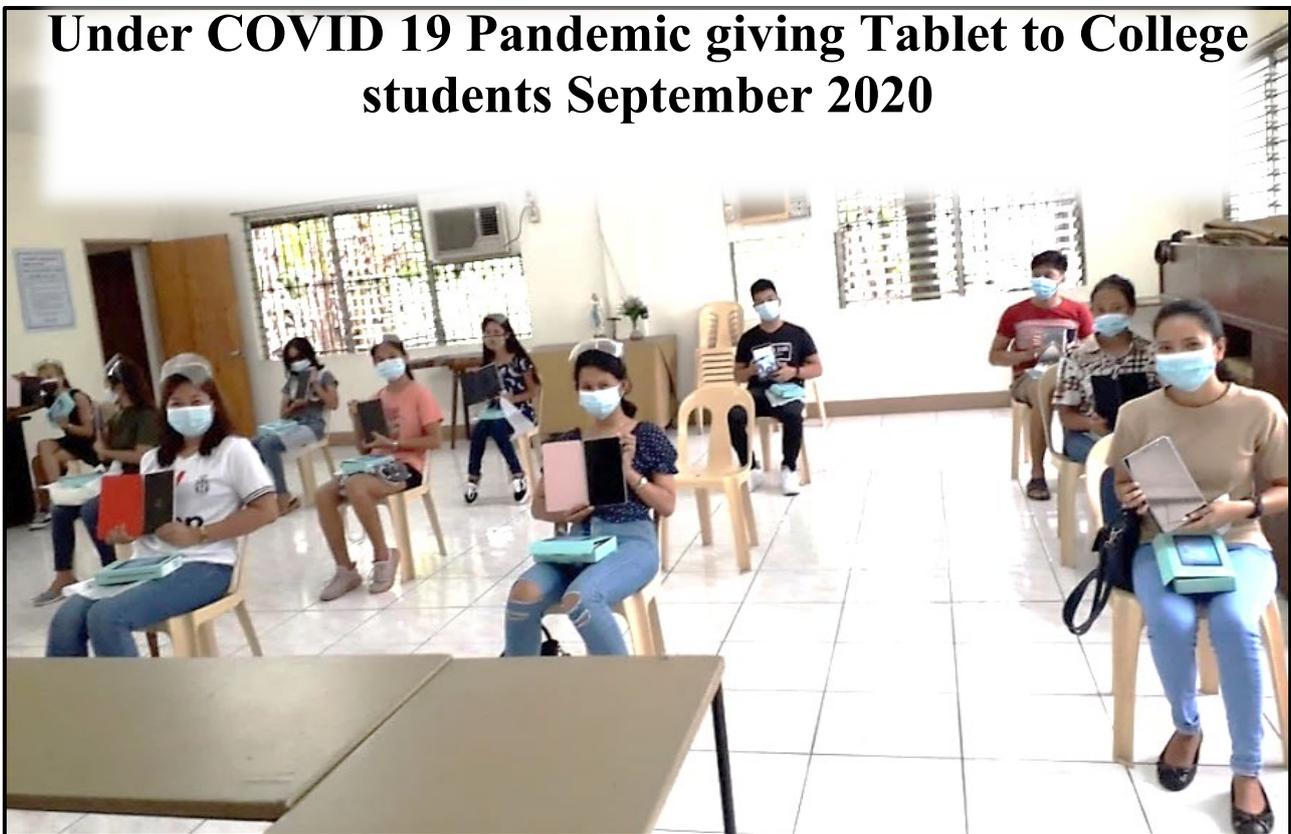
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