

October 13, 2013



MARIANIST WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



Chapel of the Bombed Madonna

NAGASAKI, JAPAN



Conseil Mondial de la Famille Marianiste – World Council of Marianist Family – Consejo Mundial de la Familia Marianista

Special gratitude to the Marianist Family of Japan !

1. Beginnings of the Christian faith in Japan



When Francis Xavier, the great Jesuit missionary, arrived in Japan in 1549, it was a conglomeration of 66 feudal holdings, independent of one another and at times fighting with one another. When he left Japan for China in 1551, there were already 2000 Christians, including some princes. The evangelizing work continued to grow at a dizzying rate: thousands of conversions, construction of primary and secondary schools, churches,

But the intrigues against the Christians began in 1587 with the decree of deportation of the missionaries and the demolition of their schools and churches. The period of

the catacombs began. On February 5, 1597, Paul Miki and his 26 companions, including children, Franciscan religious and lay persons, were martyred in Nagasaki.

In 1863 the French missionary Fr. Petitjean arrived in Japan to care for foreign Christians; two years later he began building a church in Nagasaki dedicated to the descendants of the martyrs of that city. In 1865 a small group of Catholics who had maintained the faith clandestinely during more than 250 years timidly and emotionally approached the image of Our Lady holding her son Jesus in her arms.

2. The Sanctuary and image of the Bombed Madonna

In 1873 the persecution of the Christians ended. Construction of a cathedral dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary was begun in Urakami. Years later, early in 1900, the Spanish Ambassador Uribarri donated a wooden statue inspired by Murillo's *Immaculate Conception*. On August 9, 1945, the atomic bomb exploded over Nagasaki, destroying the city and killing thousands of people. The cathedral, which was at the center of the explosion, was totally destroyed. Two months later, a Trappist monk, Father Noguchi, returned to his city and, while he was praying to Mary among the ruins of the cathedral, he discovered the head of the statue of Mary Immaculate. He retrieved it and carried it to his monastery where he continued to pray for peace. In 1975 the image returned to Nagasaki, where it continues to be venerated as the Bombed Madonna.

This image, which had the face burned and the eye sockets emptied by the bomb, poses to us a question about the culture of life and of death, of destruction and of creation, of care and of abandonment. But curiously, the image transmits a feeling of maternal compassion and of pardon. She seems to be gazing at the tragedy in which she herself was damaged, but in her look there is no shadow of rancor, of hatred or of vengeance. Mary, who was at the side of her Son at the foot of the Cross, remains at the side of those who suffer and of all who follow the commandment of peace, justice and mercy. The eyeless Madonna can turn her gaze inwards, seeing into the depths and calling us also to look out upon the world and humanity with the eyes of Christ.



3. A concrete fact of the current situation in Japan : the tsunami



On March 11, 2011, in the northeastern region of Japan, we had the terrible, unexpected and devastating earthquake and tsunami. 25,000 people died and still today there are 3,000 missing. The explosion of the nuclear plant of Fukushima caused a further tragedy and panic in the region and in all of Japan. Recovery from the contamination will take at least 25 years. These facts put us face to face with the challenge of energy use, of technology and economic interests, that must not become more important than caring for people and for nature. Mary intercedes for us at Hiroshima and Nagasaki,

but she hopes that we commit ourselves to solutions.

4. Marianist Life and Vision in Japan

The Society of Mary

We are celebrating the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Marianist religious in Japan. Their presence has been very significant in the evangelization of Japanese society, above all through Catholic education for boys. At the present time our Region has 34 religious, 2 of them Americans. We have 4 secondary schools, 3 of which are more than one hundred years old. We also have a parish that is already over 25 years old.

But today we are turning a new page. We are receiving various Vietnamese candidates for the Marianist religious life. We are immersed in the restructuring of the Society of Mary in Asia, following the guidelines of the General Chapter of 2012. Our motto for this year is: Fly to the highest. Hishô. 飛翔.

Marianist Lay Communities

The beginning of the MLCs goes back to 1979, but it was in the decade of the 1990's, and above all in 1997, that they were officially recognized. There are currently 14 MLC's that include 128 registered members. Besides monthly meetings, they give financial assistance to the poorest communities in the Philippines and Ranchi (India). They support the *Marianistes* review, together with the other branches of the Marianist Family. We recently held the Conference of the Marianist Family of East Asia in Chofu, Japan. It provided a very rich exchange and we felt very motivated and encouraged by the MLC's of Korea. We hope to revive and reanimate the Marianist lay path with the celebration of the World Day of Prayer in Nagasaki.

Alliance Mariale

There is one consecrated laywoman who lives in the midst of the world in a very quiet way but with a great Marianist spirit and a strong missionary commitment. She shares her faith, her life and her prayer with those who suffer most in Japan.

Daughter of Mary Immaculate (FMI)

After the end of the war, Japanese society went through an inversion of values, confusion of mentality and material shortages. Pope Pius XII asked the Church and the religious congregations to send missionaries. Responding to that call, two Spanish Marianist Sisters, Aránzazu and María Inés, arrived in Japan on September 21, 1949, to live in the village of Jindai (now Chofu City) where they founded the feminine Marianist religious life. The Province today has 52 religious. The “Koka Gakuen” school includes all levels of education from primary grades through secondary school. Furthermore, the sisters collaborate in the retreat house, in parishes, in catechesis and social works such as help for tsunami victims, besides participating in a Justice and Peace movement. The Province of Japan helps to fund the Region of Korea. And today they are receiving Vietnamese candidates and religious. In the near future they will establish a foundation in Vietnam.

The challenges for growth of the Marianist Family in Japan are:

- The in-depth assimilation of the Marianist charism
- Learning to transmit the Marianist charism to others
- The new way of being Marianist among new members and the young
- Having a common space: the Meeting and Social Center for the Marianist Family.



5. Prayer intentions

1. THAT, AS IN MARY AND IN FATHER CHAMINADE, OUR FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE PRODUCE FRUITS OF:

- **PEACE, RECONCILIATION AND RESPECT FOR THE WORK OF CREATION**
- **CARE AND RESPECT FOR THE POOREST AND THOSE WHO SUFFER**

2. FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE TSUNAMI OF 2011 AND THOSE CONTAMINATED BY THE RADIATION OF FUKUSHIMA

3. FOR THE RESPONSIBLE AND EQUITABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE

4. FOR THE RESPONSIBLE AND JUST USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

5. FOR THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH IN ASIA

6. FOR VOCATIONS TO THE MARIANIST FAMILY IN JAPAN AND ASIA



The Cathedral of Urakami (Nagasaki) nowadays