



PART IV

MESSAGES FROM
OTHER PEOPLE





JOY



Dominican and Honorary Oblate
Stephen Yoshio TAKEDA, OP

cheaper prices from the American Occupation Forces.

All he needed otherwise were people to help at the bazaar. For this purpose, he proposed that I begin various sodalities in the parish: the Joseph Men's Society, the Mary Women's Guild, and a Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). With this I came in contact with young people working in various companies.

Fr Gill had said: "A Church Bazaar also has evangelical dimensions and therefore it brings joy and profit to all the people. All financial profits will go toward building a church. When it is built we will praise the cooperation of the citizens of the city and share our joy and pride with them. The other expenses, I will cover myself."

With that the first bazaar was held. It was a marvelous success. Fr Gill chartered a boat to visit the prefecture and we held a wonderful party for those who worked so hard to make it a success. Fr Gill was both an astute man who got things done and also a wonderful human person.

As time went on, more and more people came to the church, catechumens and candidates for baptism flourished. Fr Gill continued to write letters.

After evangelizing with the OMI for 5 years, draped with the kindness and good will of the OMI and full of astonishment at your achievements, I was recalled to Ehime Prefecture to the parish in Uwajima.

Within a few months I received a letter from Fr Gill. "The provincial headquarters are all finished but we cannot have a real dedication of the Church without your presence!" The ceremonies were so long that Bishop Taguchi, after covering every inch of the church with prayers and incense, looked very exhausted. This was the first Consecration to be held in Shikoku.

With great love and respect, the OMI made me an honorary Oblate and I received not only the documentation that goes with this honor but also the OMI Cross was draped around my neck. For me there is no greater honor or prize that I could receive on this earth. There is no greater joy or satisfaction that could supercede this.

Dear Brothers who have welcomed me as a brother, you have made many strides on the spiritual scale and have met with great success in your evangelization. May you continue to grow and have the same success in the future for the glory of God. I have reached the age of 89 now and with great love in my heart, I still pray every day for the success of your mission. Till we meet again.

To my very dear Oblate Brothers,

I want to congratulate you, the OMI, on your 50th anniversary of arrival to Japan. I believe that arrival to be November 29, 1948. At the time, the country, having been devastated both spiritually and physically, by the loss of the war, was in the midst of devoting heart and soul to the recovery from its difficulties.

When I recall the OMI, I recall especially 3 who worked in Kochi, Robert GILL, William McLAUGHLIN, Nicholas NEVILLE.

At the wish of Father Gill, I introduced him to a good carpenter, whom he asked to draw up plans and give an estimate of costs in order to build living facilities for the missionaries. Within a few months everything had been built. Later, many goods arrived from the USA and filled up the rather large garage on the property.

One day Fr Gill was able to purchase from the USA a military Jeep with a trailer hooked on it. Then, he purchased a small car which he told me to use at will. I was simply dumbfounded with all this kindness. I was also impressed that right from the start your group was so kind to the Dominican Fathers on Shikoku Island. You furnished us with greatly needed altar linens, albs, chasubles and other altar supplies as well as Mass stipends. Even today, when I recall these things, I am still very grateful.

Fr Gill related to me his plans of holding 2 bazaars a year, spring and fall, which would last 3 days apiece. I wondered how we could get hold of material to last 3 full days of a bazaar! But Fr Gill wrote everyday to friends of good will back in the USA. He also went to the various wholesalers in Osaka in order to buy merchandise as cheaply as possible in great amounts. He obtained goods at



CONGRATULATIONS

Pastor, Sambonmatsu Mission
Yoji MATSUNAGA

I want to congratulate the Oblates of Mary Immaculate on the 50th anniversary of their arrival in Japan. First of all I want to thank them for all their trials and tribulations, from the time of their arrival soon after the end of World War II, when the country still had many livid scars, till today. We can say that the missionary thrust of the OMI in Japan paralleled the history of post-war Japan. It was at the same time the history of the post-war Church in Japan.



Most of my career as a priest was in the brotherhood of the OMI after my arrival to Kochi at the Enokuchi Parish (formerly Shinhonmachi Parish). I

am thankful I could fulfill my pastoral and missionary ministry with them in that parish. At all times I was able to receive real information about the Church throughout the world. I deeply realized the benefits of a Congregation with worldwide roots! Since the Oblates here in Japan come from various countries they manifest diverse spirits which reflect each country. But this diversity was a source of riches as they constantly attempted to find a common thread and contributed to each other in various ways.

I can also feel how the Canonization of the Founder of the OMI has given them a new thrust to live the Founder's Charism with more vigor. From now on also, the Oblate Spirit and missionary needs of Japan will face difficult moments as they try to find a common ground. This is especially true where they face life in a parish. While keeping their spirit alive I hope they are able to continue offering something unique to the Japanese Church.



A CHRISTMAS SERMON I WILL NEVER FORGET

Parishioner, Enokuchi Mission
Muneshige TSURUMI

Japan, after the defeat of the war, was able to regain its feet thanks to the aid from the USA. The Korean War that occurred right after that helped the Japanese economy. I had heard that Fr Robert GILL came from a rather wealthy family and he came to Kochi at the Enokuchi Parish as Pastor. His coming was just at this time. My strong impression of him was that of a big man with a very red face who had a real sense of humor.

He didn't use the word "rich" when he spoke but the word "zaibatsu" (financial dynasty) in a very accented Japanese. Because of that we had a strange feeling. People, especially young people after the war which had had its psychological impact on them, would assemble easily at the Enokuchi Church because they found peace and quiet there.

New community games, hymn practice, talks on religious themes were the order of the day and many stayed back till late hours to play around. This sort of get-together took place twice a week for the youth and it was fun time.

That year, on Christmas Eve there were Christmas Parties all over the city. Some young people, boys and girls, wore red three-cornered hats, some blue, some yellow and would drink themselves to a heavy stupor. They would have Christmas cake in one hand and screaming "Merry Christmas" as they wandered in a flip-flop way along the roads. We



Enokuchi (Shinhonmachi) (original church)

wondered if they got safely back home.

On the other hand, Christians and non-Christians alike would come in droves to the church till there was no room to move. Fr Gill stood at the lectern and said: "Throughout the city all these people are screaming all over the place. They have no idea what they are celebrating. But those who are here know our Savior Jesus Christ and understand what he was born for and therefore know what they are

celebrating.

As a believer I felt that this was a wonderful sermon but as a Japanese I was very embarrassed.

Afterwards, as years went by there was less of this loud celebration and slowly Christmas became a family celebration.

Every year when Advent comes around I recall that first sermon of Fr. Gill.



THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF OBLATE ARRIVAL IN JAPAN

Parishioner, Enokuchi Mission
Former Oblate seminarian
Masahito MIYAMOTO

Congratulations to the Oblates on the 50th anniversary of their arrival to Japan. My age kind of parallels the OMI here, so I will recall their history by comparing it to mine.

Up to 10 years old. After the war there was no church left in Nakajimacho. My biggest impression of that period was when the new church building went up in all its magnificence.

In my teens. In Kochi we had the Suginoki Kai and the Wakagi Kai, run at the church for Middle School and High School students for English Pronunciation and Conversation. Because I wasn't so good in English, I joined the Altar Boy Society. In those days there were many get-togethers between both the Enokuchi and Nakajimacho parishes.

In my twenties. I thought of joining the Oblates and during that time I bounced around a lot between Sekimachi in Tokyo, Fukuoka, Naruto, back to Sekimachi in Tokyo, Hoya in Tokyo, Enokuchi in Kochi. The 4 years in Fukuoka were the longest stretch I stayed in one place. The attached picture is a picture of the Children's Society we had at the OMI Tokyo Seminary in Sekimachi. We had about

40-50 children attending various activities such as the Christmas party, hiking, summer camps, and of course English Conversation. We also had university students living with us, so that during this period there were many people coming in and out of the seminary compound. At this time also the relationship with society around us was at its height.

In my thirties. From my time in Hoya I was already involved with the pastoral care of the young people in the Takamatsu Diocese. Not too far from one Oblate parish there was an orphanage that we frequented with High Schoolers of the "Iba Kan" (Ibara no Kammuri - Crown of Thorns Society) as the central group involved. We went as a volunteer group. We also held activities for the Middle School students and Young Adults groups by going around and staying at churches throughout the diocese.

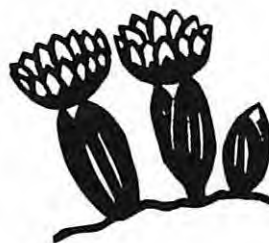
In my forties. I have been able to cooperate with the Oblates and a Japanese diocesan priest in the Enokuchi parish. I've also received permission for volunteer and social welfare activities. The Enokuchi parish has now been passed over to the diocesan clergy from the Oblates.

Since I was asked to send a picture I went through my album. Most of my pictures in some way have a relationship with the Oblates, either individual Oblates or Oblate parishes or the Seminary.

Even my lifestyle has been greatly influenced by the spirit of St Eugene de Mazenod. May the OMI keep trying to spread this spirit, which is the spirit of Christ himself, to as many people as they can.



Sc. Masahito MIYAMOTO with Saturday School children





DIARY OF FOND MEMORIES

Parishioner, Tokushima Mission
Asano KANAYAMA

In 1948, three years after the end of the war, we finally had a church. The parishioners had been looking for a haven to pray in peace and quiet, so they went through the entrance with great expectations. Father Ei-kichi TANAKA had started to teach catechism to a growing number of catechumens when in November of that year a group of Missionaries arrived in Japan. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate had been entrusted the pastoral care of the Kochi and Tokushima Prefectures. The 3 first OMI, Frs. Robert GILL, Leonard ROBITAILLE and Charles MC BENNETT, visited our church in December of that year. A year later, on November 17, 1949, Fr. Robitaille was installed as the new pastor. From that moment on, with no previous experience, I started working in the rectory. Soon Mr. Sueho TSUDA was authorized to teach catechism in the parish and I then became a live-in cook.

At this point it made 4 years since the war ended, yet, the scars of the war were still very deep so that a good number of people continued to come to the church for food and monetary aid. Fr. Robitaille was always able to come up with some type of solution. At times, he met up with people who were frauds and he certainly had some unpleasant experiences but he never let these things stop him from helping out.



Old Tokushima Church
(the author and Fr. Robitaille in front of the famous red Jeep!)

Of course the apostolate did not limit itself to Tokushima. Father and his catechist would ride the Red Jeep to Naruto at the Omura family's house, to

the Itanishi medical dispensary, to hospitals in order to celebrate masses for the sick in the northern and southern districts of the Prefecture. As the only priest in the whole area Father expended himself greatly, but the results were that in 1950 and 1951 there were many baptisms on the great feast days of the year. A good number of these new Christians became sisters.

In 1950 we held our first Parish Bazaar. This yearly event is still one of the important activities held without fail until today. The following year was the first time we went to the leprosarium on Oshima Island. This was the beginning of many years of some type of relationship with that institution.

Also that was the year that Fr Robitaille was sent to Aki in Kochi Prefecture where the Oblates had just opened a new parish and novitiate. He was the first pastor and Novice Master. At that occasion we opened a long awaited Legion of Mary Group in the parish. This was Father's parting gift as he left for Aki. Mr Tsuda, who wanted to enter the religious life, soon left us in order to start his novitiate in Aki as a Brother.

These 2 years have remained for me the source of a precious experience. Among the great experiences I had, there were two statements of Fr Robitaille which I will never forget. One was when I first met him. "I lost two younger brothers who were twins in the Pacific War. It was from that time that I wanted to spread the teachings of Christ, who is God's love, among the Japanese people. For that reason I wanted to come to Japan." The second one consisted of his last words to me in March of 1979 just before he died. "I want my body cremated and the ashes to be put in the parish ossuary." These last words which he left us made a lasting impression on us all in the parish. His two statements have been accomplished as he wished. When any one of us who knew him visit the ossuary, we recall those words and they become for us a great source of consolation.

By recalling memories of the first OMI priest to work in this parish, I want to thank all the priests who worked in this parish and contributed to the diocese through these 50 long years.

I will always pray for you from the bottom of my heart. Bless the Lord.



TOKUSHIMA

Parishioner, Tokushima Mission
Former catechist
Sachiko MIZUNO



Patrick BRADY (rear left),
Sachiko MIZUNO (rear right),
Asano KANAYAMA (center)

When the Oblates arrived in Tokushima Prefecture, there was only one Church and that was the one in Tokushima City. I finished the Catechist Course in Nagoya in 1955. In June of that year I began my apostolate in the Tokushima Parish. The pastor at the time was Fr Patrick BRADY. The Parish Church acted as a center from which we covered great areas to the south, up to the border with Kochi Prefecture, to the west, Awa-Ikeda and to the north we went as far as Naruto. Our means of travel was a flaming red Jeep. At the Catechist School we were deeply taught about evangelization and so I came out full of enthusiasm. But I had no experience in these matters so I received very concrete practical tips from an ever patient pastor. Everyone knows what is going on at the moment so I would like to limit myself to the things of 40 years ago.

Since we are speaking of 40 years ago, it goes without saying that the roads were atrocious, even with a Jeep at our disposal. On Sundays, before the parish Mass in Tokushima, we celebrated Mass in a borrowed space within a sewing school. My role was to teach catechism to the children during Mass.

To the west, deep in the country from Ikeda

there was one Christian in a Medical Dispensary. Since that person was a patient there, the pastor and Mr George Nakatome would bring everything needed for Mass. In those days the fast before communion was from midnight and they had to get on the earliest train possible in order to go to the mountains. Mass would finish around noon and only then could they take a bite to eat. Their return to Tokushima was late at night. I learned from this the importance of even one person.

To the south, there was a very fervent Christian, Mrs Toyosaki, living in Mugi. She wanted badly to have some type of class for instructions in the faith. So the pastor, Mr Nakatome and myself started going on a regular basis. This was only once a month, but seeing the beauty of nature, with colors changing on every trip, made the 2 hour trek a joyful event. The mountains and the ocean, the fields and rice paddies were many occasions to enter into meaningful conversations with God. Since Mrs. Toyosaki's mother owned an inn, we would have the instruction classes in the evening and then spend the night. It was a small group, but eventually we had the joy of seeing the mother and one more person receive the grace of baptism.

One bitter experience took place when we visited a Christian near Tsutsumi in Nakagawa which is quite a distance from Anan. I had gone there for the preparation for first communion. One day, on my return, I missed the last bus. It was in a rather unattainable place. The husband of the household we visited put me on the back of his motorcycle and crossed the river. At that point, the all too familiar police officer on a white motorcycle stopped us. I had been sitting sideways on the vehicle and that was against the law! Since I was wearing a skirt, it was impossible for me to sit any other way, as there was a wide platform at the back of the motorcycle in order to carry luggage.

In that area I also visited one Dispensary once a week and another once a month.

Now there is a church in all these places, Naruto, Anan and Ikeda. With that there are 4 churches in the prefecture. However, with the aging of the personnel, I can see a time when there will probably only be one church in the area again. In order that this does not happen we must pray very much that the health of those priests we do have holds on and that we can have an increase of vocations to the Oblate way of life.



THE OBLATES AT THE BEGINNINGS

Parishioner, Itami Mission
Akiko OKADA

It was in November 1948 when the first Oblates arrived. Afterwards they helped the Japanese in many ways, materially, spiritually and psychologically.

The first to arrive were Frs Robert GILL, Charles McBENNETT and Leonard ROBITAILLE. Then about 2 months later Frs Timothy MULVEY, Leonard SCANNELL and William McLAUGHLIN arrived. At the beginning the Fathers lived in the Bishop's residence in the Toyonaka Parish. I remember Fr Gill, who was the superior, as having sharp eyes but I detected a very gentle soul in him. I found Fr McBennett very humorous. To me, Fr Robitaille was a quiet man. Fr Mulvey loved to fish and listen to good music and was a prolific writer. Fr Scannell was very good at golf and Fr McLaughlin was small and I found him cute. What these six priests did was to set out and learn the Japanese language within a foreign culture and in the atmosphere of post-war Japan and the ravages of the war surrounding them.

In February of 1949, Frs Gill and McBennett suddenly appeared at our house in Itami City. My father and I had just received baptism the year before. What the two had in mind was to ask my father to cooperate with them in establishing a Church in Itami. The first cooperation took the form of opening up our library and having a temporary chapel established in it for Sunday service. So this is the first step of the OMI in Japan as well as the first step of the Catholic Church in Itami. The first mass was at our house in April with Fr McBennett presiding. Attending the first mass were a military man who was assigned in Itami as a responsibility and his family plus a few Japanese Christians who normally went to other churches, a total of 10 to 20.

As time went by, new faces showed up and the group got bigger. During that time my father, Rihei Okada, spent some time looking for a piece of land that would be proper for a church. Once he found one he showed it to Fr Gill and was involved in buying the property. That is the present land where the church stands. In order to start a building fund

we held a bazaar in the garden of our own property. This was Itami Church's first bazaar. In order to introduce the Fathers to Japanese culture, every once in a while my father would have special activities at our house. They were a lot of fun.

While the church building was going up Fr McBennett suggested a name for the church 'Church of Christ the King'. He then decided to hold the Christmas of December 25, 1949 in the hall of the new kindergarten. So on Christmas Eve that year we moved everything from my home, and at midnight we started the mass in a grand fashion. That night we had 70-80 people present. The kindergarten hall

was filled. The following January Bishop Paul Taguchi came for the dedication ceremonies. The 100 people present included the bishop, 6 Oblates, other priests, sisters, Japanese and Americans.

From that time on new Oblates arrived and unloaded their baggage in Itami. Frs Richard HARR, John BARRETT, Jan van HOYDONCK, Patrick BRADY, Nicholas NEVILLE all stayed some time here. Then they would leave for Japanese Language Studies at the parish in Aki City of Kochi Prefecture.

Afterwards, Frs John

MEYER, Bertram SILVER, Daniel WARD, Xavier DELPORTE {Editor's note: now Yoshikazu TOSA}, Angelo SIANI, John Kenney MAHONEY all arrived in Itami. This group went on to Tokyo for Language Studies and were later assigned to the areas of Kochi and Tokushima. Later on we saw the birth of Japanese Oblates, and with that the OMI became more acculturized and foreigners and Japanese became a team.

50 years have gone by so quickly. Some of the original priests have gone to their eternal rest. I am sure that they are praying in heaven for those who are still laboring in Japan.

Lastly, on this occasion I want to say Congratulations and Thank You. Please remain with us for 50 more, 100 more years. Then I want to thank God who sent us the Oblates.



Jose DEFUYT (left), Akiko OKADA (center)



OBLATE 50 YEAR PRESENCE IN JAPAN

Parishioner, Itami Mission
Kanakano IKEZAWA

Congratulations on celebrating your 50 years of presence in Japan. It sounds simple to say, but it is just a few words to express a lifetime for some people. The arrival of the OMI in Japan almost coincides with the beginning of the Itami parish. The Itami parish will celebrate its 50th in 1999.

On December 3, 1995, I was able to attend the pilgrimage that went to Europe for the Canonization of the Oblate Founder, St Eugene de Mazenod. My joy and enthralment at the time has remained and will remain with me all my life. I'm so proud of being a part of a parish run by the Congregation which was founded by St Eugene. St Eugene put on Christ and devoted his whole life to evangelization and leads us through the Church. The Holy Spirit, without fail, leads us from generation to generation according to the needs. During the trip we were able to see the history of the Church in the various locations where we had mass together, the place where the Saint was born, where he worked, the various things he left behind. The Oblates were born from the simple tip of his pen. Because of the canonization we were able to meet him and his followers. Accompanied by some young aspirants, this has become one of the most important pages in my life, since it was a grace from God and we also could feel the protection of the Saint. I was also able to bring to mind the future development of the Oblates.

On May 26, 1996, we held a commemorative Mass of thanksgiving at the Christ the King Itami parish. The Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Carew, the Ordinary of Osaka Archbishop Ikenaga, many



Oblates, priests from other churches, a total of 21 concelebrants took part in the celebration. This important event held in the Itami parish is a page of parish history never to be forgotten.

Being a member of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate is also a great joy. Hopefully the members will grow and become stronger and be able to be one heart and one soul with the OMI for it to continue to develop in its apostolic work. I also pray that we be able to give hope to the future OMI. Once again I would like to congratulate the Oblates on their 50 years in Japan. I would also want to continue walking with them with one heart and one soul. May God's fruitful grace be upon them, and from my part thanks to God.





FOND MEMORIES

Parishioner, Takarazuka Mission
Former Itami Parishioner
Fujio SAKAGAMI

Congratulations on your 50th anniversary of arrival to Japan. You've done a great job over half a century. Right after the war, when Japan was left with nothing, facing unknown customs and lifestyles, I believe you must have had to struggle. Especially when it comes to food and bedding, toilets etc., I can imagine your hardships. I recently went to out of the way places in China and I thought that that was what you had to go through.

When I was 13, I went to the church with a college student and that was my first meeting with a priest. The co-pastor at the time was Fr. Edward WILLIAMS. I believe he was about 30 years old then. I was only a middle school student but he asked me if there wasn't a store where he could get slippers to use in the church. I introduced him to a friend. Since that time Fr. Williams has spread the word around that I'm a business man. When I started High School I used to go to the church to learn English from Fr. Robert GILL. He was very strict. If I were a little late or with a smile tell him that I hadn't done my homework, his face would get red and he'd tell me to leave! We were 2 and very often we'd get onto the bus and return home.

In 1965 Fr. Williams became the pastor and I was invited to help around. Especially I would accompany him on his buying sprees which he loved so dearly. I was a great help in deterring him from buying too much! There was a younger man than I who would also go at times and he liked to spend also so that the 2 of them would finish shopping only when they had just enough for the train ride back. Father helped me a lot before exams in English. Whenever he meets my own children he lets them know that it is due to him that I graduated from High School. And they believe him!

At the time of the Osaka World's Fair in 1970, I was without a job and I lived at the rectory so that my friends came over very often. On Saturday nights Fr. Williams would make a cream stew for 10 people and invite all of us over, so that those of us who were starving knew where to go. The atmosphere at that time was the basis for the present energy coming out of Itami Parish. One day there was a request from one of the cram schools in town to use the facilities at the kindergarten and that gave us an idea to open up an English classroom where Father and we could teach the kids. We sent out invitations to the graduates of the kindergarten. Would you believe some kids were already lining up at 5 in the morning! It was a great start. We are now on a different scale but the classroom still goes on after 25 years. We celebrated our 25th Christmas



Itami Church Ossuary

candle service in December 1997. When I applied for work at the Airlines, since I had been hearing English even if it was mixed with Japanese, I scored very well in the interview of candidates. I insist that Father got good in Japanese because of my presence, but he keeps on claiming that it is due to his efforts.

Among the other OMI there were many with special talents. There was the regretted Fr. Daniel WARD who not only painted the whole kindergarten wall with animals but was also good in sports. I also recall Fr. Raymond BOURGOIN who was very good in ice hockey. Many of the priests were good in tennis or golf. A remarkable repairman, Fr. Jan van HOYDONCK repaired many things in the church and rectory. "Can't you do that?" would be his refrain. On the other hand, even if I tried very hard I couldn't say he was a very good driver. When international passengers would have to be taken to the airport at times he would end up on the wrong road and they never made it! As one would have it one of those occasions it was a VIP.

As far as I'm concerned, I am thankful that for many years I have been able spend my youth with the OMI and work alongside them. On my job I have the occasion to go all over the world, and I have been able to stay at Oblate houses in other countries. They have always received me very well just as if I were a brother.

As a final reflection I would like to observe that although many of the Oblates have aged they still work with a lot of pep. There are also very fine young men who are taking on the work. I should be saying "thanks for all the work over the years and live the rest of your lives in a serene manner", but when I see the Oblates still working hard for the Christians, other words come to mind: "Sorry to have to rely on you so much". I pray that your apostolate fructifies.



AKI CHURCH

Former Pastor Aki Mission
John Takaji IWO

On the 8th of November this year (1998), the Church in Aki celebrated 47 years of existence. 47 years ago, in 1951, November 8 fell on a Thursday. The Apostolic delegate at the time was Archbishop de Furstenberg. Mass was celebrated by the new arrival Patrick BRADY.

Three years before, the OMI accepted the pastoral responsibility of Kochi and Tokushima Prefectures. The provincial Fr Robert GILL, resided in the Shinhonmachi parish. The Church in Nakajimacho which had been destroyed in the war had not been rebuilt yet. Fr Yoshio TAKEDA, OP, was Fr Gill's right hand man. Fr Gill as pastor of Shinhonmachi would also come out all the way to the Akaoka Church in order to hold Sunday Services. I have no idea what type of council decided on building in Aki. But it is a fact that going east of Akaoka, Fr Gill decided on building a rectory, a Japanese language facility, a kindergarten and a novitiate in Aki. According to the grapevine, Mrs Suga, who ran a family clinic and was a fervent adherent of the United Church of Christ in Japan, was instrumental with her family in helping us to purchase a 3000 square meter piece of property in the center of town. In late 1950 the rectory and kindergarten construction began but because of the inclement weather which lasted a long time the buildings were completed only after a long period.

On October 15, 1951 the OMI received the new plant from the construction company and Fr Leonard ROBITAILLE became the pastor. Frs Brady and Nicholas NEVILLE started their language studies with Mr Suzuki who had come in from Tokushima.

On November 3 of the same year, I began my novitiate on the second floor of the kindergarten. I wanted to become an Oblate Brother. Ms Tsunefuka

and Ms Hizume arrived to prepare the opening of the kindergarten, which included getting the classrooms ready, advertising for students. I was kept quite busy also.

As I said earlier, the Apostolic Delegate dedicated the facilities with Bishop Taguchi, a number of priests, sisters and the authorities of the town of Aki in attendance. Also there were a huge number of parishioners from Kochi who came to the gala affair. At the time of the dedication, Dr. Suga was sick in bed so that there were no christians from Aki present at the ceremonies. This was the reality of mission.

The kindergarten opened on November 15, with 75 children. Mrs. Kawamura and Mrs. Kawasaki who were mothers of children in the kindergarten studied catechism and received baptism. Postulants to the novitiate program grew to 6 young men. In this way the foundations of the Aki church and kindergarten were laid.

After Fr Robitaille, Frs Brady, Xavier DELPORTE (now TOSA), Gerard STEVENS, Daniel WARD, Henry MATTIMORE, John BARRETT, Thomas MAHER, Jose DE FRUYT, Francis HAHN all ministered here with great fervor before I arrived. This easternmost parish in Kochi Prefecture covers a wide area all the way to Koura to the east, Akano to the west, and Unase to the north. Huge waves which batter Oyama Misaki and the huge cliffs of Muroto by releasing white sprays on them, remind me of this church. Being in an area of non-christians, having but a handful of Christian adherents, this church is constantly battered by huge waves, yet it stands unwavering. Being at the edge of the prefecture and being battered by huge waves, for me that is the picture of this church.



Aki Rectory (rear)



REFLECTIONS

Catechist, Aki Mission
Takayoshi KONDO



In November 1951, the Nishihama Area of the Town of Aki was graced with the building of a western style house with a red roof and foreigners robed in black. That raised the curiosity of the town people. I wanted to hear a little bit of English so the following year on the evening of January 27 I crossed the threshold of the Church for the first time. I

attended Fr. Patrick BRADY's English class. There were about 10 middle school students who had been brought over by their young teacher, some high school students, a few adults, in all about 20 participants. After some time Father said: "More than English class, coming for Sunday services is more important". After that time I started going regularly for Sunday services and eventually took catechism classes from Mr Suzuki.

The following year in November, the new pastor Fr. Leonard ROBITAILLE asked me to teach Japanese to two of the priests. For this reason I began to come to the church every day for three hours to help in the language studies of Frs. Brady and Nicholas NEVILLE. At that time I recorded Japanese words and sentences on the huge old style tape recorders which had been sent from the USA and both of them listened with all their might to the recordings every morning. They even brought the recorder into the English classroom and had everybody record their voices. It was the first time for us to hear our own voices and they sounded quite strange to us. The following year I helped Frs. John BARRETT and Richard HARR in the Japanese language till they went to Tokyo to finish up.

In September 1961, Fr. Daniel WARD became the pastor and literally threw himself into the development of evangelization in the area. He went into the areas of Nahari, Unase, Muroto, Mitsu,

Sakihama, Tosa-Yamada and taught catechism and English, ran children's societies and eventually a good number of people were baptized in the Nahari, Unase and Mitsu districts, after which he would have Mass twice a month in these areas. At one point, Nahari would have more attendance to the masses than Aki itself.

As episodes of things that happened to Fr. Ward, I recall one on the way to Unase. We decided to swim in the currents of Yasuda River. There we received rice balls which included real sour plum pickles. When he ate them his face became as pale as a ghost. That was the talk around town for quite a while. Or again, he had visited a family which really hadn't expected him, and they decided to serve him coffee, but filled it with salt instead of sugar! Fr Ward never said a word and drank the stuff down.

In 1965 Fr. Henry MATTIMORE arrived as the associate pastor. He wanted to start the Boy Scout movement in this small parish, so he went all over the place. The following year he had his first group. Father himself brought the 10 or so youths who had yet to be trained to the National Jamboree in Okayama Prefecture. They all came back tired and their clothes were covered with the black dirt of the area. I heard a good number of parents express their gratefulness for the Scouting activities. Also as a group the Scouts attended the Naruko Dance Festival in mid-summer. They danced in Kochi, Aki, Nahari. The Aki Supermarket gave a lot of liquor for their participation so we sold them and bought the kids lots of candy.

Besides this there are many things I could write about, for example, the fire in the rectory, the church bazaars, the Nagasaki Pilgrimage, outdoor masses, the Christmas activities. All these have impressed me to the point that I can't remove them from my memory.

After having recalled some of the things that happened, I put down my pen as I pray for the success and development of the OMI on the occasion of their 50th anniversary in Japan.





NAKAJIMACHO

Catechist, Nakajimacho Mission
Akihiko KIDO



The year that Fr Robert GILL and the others arrived in Japan, 1948, was also the year of the famous Teigin Affair. We now celebrate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Japan. Congratulations to all!

I came to Nakajimacho Parish in 1960, so 38 years have gone over the hill. During that time there were

many events. Since the original church building was destroyed by bombings on July 4, 1945 we had to rebuild. With help from the USA and the cooperation of the Christians in Kochi we were able to hold 2 bazaars a year in order to save for the construction. Mr Oka, with great devotion, was a great help to Fr Gill in the planning and building stages of the project. In 1958, the present Church was dedicated by Bishop Taguchi.

The parish that eventually became the Nakajimacho Church was the first one built on the island of Shikoku in 1882. It was from here that the

seeds were sown for the whole prefecture. In 1926 the Dominicans built the first church at Nakajimacho. We had a holy year to celebrate the founding of the original church in 1982. Bishop Satoshi Fukahori opened the holy year on December 6, 1981. We had the centennial celebrations on October 11, 1982 and the closing of the holy year on the following December 8. With this opened up a new chapter in the history of the parish. We put out an album to celebrate the events, called "The Path of the Nakajimacho Parish - 1982". With Mr Junro Ishikawa as the central figure the editorial staff put out a wonderful piece of work.

Among other important events I would like to point out, are that Fr Gill was a great Sumo fan, Fr Daniel WARD left us with a beautiful Way of the Cross and marvelous statues which he designed himself, the ordination of the first Japanese Oblate, Fr Michael Soichiro Yamasaki, the celebration of the 25th year of the Oblates in Japan.

The turnover of priests was of dizzying proportions, but as time passed and the changes took effect, we got into a mode where nostalgia is now the leading feeling.



MEMORIES FROM THE RECTORY

Parishioner, Nakamura Mission
Noriko YAMANAKA

I congratulate wholeheartedly the Oblates on their 50th anniversary in Japan. When I think of the long evangelical process that went on since their arrival soon after the war I'm filled with gratitude. 45 years ago I worked for 4 years in the rectory of the Nakajimacho parish in Kochi City. I was only 20 years old and I dreamt that working in the rectory would give me good training in cooking, in English and that I would become a well rounded young lady. On the other hand I had some fear and it became quite an adventure.

At the time the present Sister's Convent was the rectory and the "church" was the Kindergarten Hall. Where the church is now was still a field filled with tall grass and was the place we kept the two dogs

Molotov and Susie. A young boy by the name of Morioka was in charge of walking them every day.



Noriko YAMANAKA (left), Hanako Tsuchiya (right)

In that open bumpy area I practiced riding a bicycle and kept falling off. Finally Fr Jan VAN HOYDONCK would steady the bicycle for me and push me around. It was a funny but happy scene.

At the time Fr Robert GILL was the superior of the mission and also principal of the kindergarten, so he was very busy. Fr Nicholas NEVILLE of the Enokuchi parish, the young Fr Xavier DELPORTE of Akaoka, Fr Leonard ROBITAILLE of Aki would come and visit very often. The present Fr John Takaji IWO was then a Brother, Frs Michael Soichiro YAMASAKI and Leonard Morio INUI were seminarians. Now the 3 of them are missioning in the Fukuoka area and Itami. From a distance I want to thank them and I offer my prayers for them to receive the strength of God.

Being able to almost touch the lives of the priests living in the rectory, I was struck by one thing especially. It was that their life of prayer encompassed so much time. "Pray unceasingly" seemed to be a reality for them. And then there was their humor. Fr William Mc LAUGHLIN had a doctorate and was very fervent in learning Chinese characters. Once because of a high fever he stayed in bed. A little worried I went to see him. "Japanese futons are hard as lead", he told me with an excruciating face. "We use lead in pencils!" was my reply. I went on to explain that lead was for weighty things, then I added. "What do you use in mattresses in your country?" He told me that they used feathers. "Even what my grandmother used, we just changed the cover and it was given to the daughter-in-law," he added. I was touched by these scenes whereby I saw the priests had left a comfortable home and come to a totally different culture. They must have felt lonely like one would feel in a desert and yet they were full of jokes and humor. That really struck me.

Fr Gill also had a problem with asthma which he carried all the time and you could hear him coughing all night. My room was below his in the corner of the house and I would leave my door a little ajar and would pray that he would get better. When morning came I would express my concern and he always answered "Don't worry about me" and give me a wide smile.

I always wondered how people could make the

decision to be buried in this foreign land and give their whole life for evangelization. How had they been brought up? I came to think at that time that the Catholic faith had to be genuine.

As for me I couldn't even make soup, I couldn't cut the bread in nice slices, my left hand was full of scars from the kitchen knife, I didn't understand the recipes written in English, I was beside myself. Whenever I opened the oven and lit up the gas I would burn my eyebrows and eyelashes, or I would use up all the hot water for dishes and then Fr Gill would freeze in the bath. I was scolded for this a number of times! So as you can see I can't begin to count the errors I made.

However once a year we held a bazaar to collect money to build a church and at those times many of the parishioners would pitch in. It usually was a mind-boggling 2 days where we would spend even the night hours baking cupcakes, putting in order all the used clothes sent to us by the faithful in America which were sold out in no time. These were fun times which I now recall with great longing.

The day before I finally got married I told Fr Gill I'd like to show off my wedding gown. He replied: "In the United States we are not allowed to see the wedding dress till the ceremony itself!"

When he left for the US he told me: "You were always there when I needed you, thanks." He could be very strict but he also was a very kind and loving father to me.

As a maid and cook I cannot be satisfied with what I did and I regret many things but as a young woman growing up being able to relate with priests, sisters and the faithful of the parish has been a treasure for me. This will always remain in my heart and every one of their voices still resonate in my mind and are great memories.

I am grateful to all the priests, those who returned to their home country and died there, as well as those who are still laboring among us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

May the following generation of young Oblates and seminarians follow in the footsteps of their precursors and continue to work with us. With a thankful and praying heart.



HIKARIGAOKA CHURCH

Parishioner, Hikarigaoka Mission
Shigeaki HIRATA



I am most happy to congratulate the Oblates of Mary Immaculate on the 50th anniversary of their arrival in Japan. My first encounter with the OMI was 40 years ago in 1958. At that time known as the Nakamachi Church, the present Hikarigaoka Church was very close to my house so I attended services in that parish. At the beginning

that was my only contact, Sunday services. After I was married in 1965, I moved to Nakamachi Parish and from then on I became closer to the priest.

The pastor at the time was Father Richard HARR serving for the second time as the fifth pastor. The Church was a small wooden church which held but 80 people, so when we arrived late for Mass it was impossible to enter, in which case we had to worship from the entrance way. In 1966 the Church of Nakamachi became the Church of Hikarigaoka and in 1968 the new church and ossuary were built. It was the first ossuary in the Diocese. At the time one of the things the pastor put great effort in was family or neighborhood gatherings. The parish was divided into four blocks and assemblies were held in a household of one block at a time. Because of these family masses I was able to get closer to the pastor and the other Christians of my block.

The first time I was able to serve the parish officially was in 1975 as a member of the Finance Committee. Because this parish had a full time catechist, at a time when salaries were escalating at a high pace, from the financial point of view it was a difficult time. At the same time, even the Church had been rebuilt, though there was no center for the Christians, except the old church building, to hold meetings and the rectory was getting very old. For this reason there was a call among the Christians to rebuild the rectory and center. But the pastor did not seem interested. He would say "we can repair the place and give it a good paint job" and then go to it painting the place and mowing the lawn all by himself. However it was clear that in the near future we would need a new rectory and parish center, so we organized bazaars and other activities in order to raise a building fund.

From the time the OMI were there we had slowly accumulated money in the building fund, and after 25 years of various activities the long awaited rectory and parish center were built in July 1975. At



the dedication the bishop, along with Father Richard Harr and a huge number of priests as well as other dignitaries, the parishioners were able to celebrate the event in a grand manner. For various reasons, the Japanese Church's evolution, the situation in society, and in order to live out the OMI spirit in a better manner, the OMI turned the parish over to the diocese on August 31, 1988.

It has been 10 years since the transition from the OMI to the Diocese. Yet, when the Oblates celebrated the Canonization of their Founder in May 1996, I was invited to the Mass of Thanksgiving. At this event I renewed acquaintances with the OMI and many other people and returned home in a thankful mood.

This 50th year celebration is a turning point in the OMI in Japan. I pray that they can continue to mission in Japan and throughout the world in the spirit of their Founder who gave the Congregation the motto "The Lord sent me to announce the gospel to the poor".

RECALLING THE PRIESTS WHO SERVED IN HIKARIGAOKA PARISH

Parishioner, Hikarigaoka Mission
Chidori ICHINOSE

Our family moved to Hikarigaoka Parish in 1956. At that time the pastor was Fr. John BARRETT, third pastor of the parish. On his day off he would take the children of the parishioners, in turn, and give them a ride out in the countryside. The joy of the children was great. The co-pastor was Fr. Edward LOWNEY, a very gentle and kind man. Fr. David BARTON had great popularity with the youth.

In 1963, when Fr. Nicholas NEVILLE was the fourth pastor, I began helping out in the rectory. When Fr. Neville went home Fr. Edward WILLIAMS became the acting pastor. During that period the altar boy society was at its height. Fr. Williams really loved those kids to death. Then when the trees on the grounds were full of bagworms, he gave the kids presents to get rid of the bugs. One day, I threw out Fr. Robert KELLEN's brand new Christmas Cards which I had found in the wastebasket. Those were very important to Father but keeping his calm, he just smiled and said nothing.

Fr. Richard HARR was here 15 years as the fifth pastor. Fr. William MAHER stood with us on the curbs as we made year-end appeals for charitable causes. Fr. David ULLRICH led very good but strict Bible classes. Fr. Leonard Morio INUI always made me laugh with his jokes.

Fr. Jan Van HOYDONCK became the sixth pastor and although he was here only a short time, he left a very deep impression on me. Fr. Wenceslao LAGUIDAO became the seventh and last pastor from the Oblates. During his tenure, he helped the Philippine people who had come to Japan to find work.

Fr. Robert GILL was the oldest of the Oblates

that I met. Fr. Thomas MAHER was here in the parish but for a short time, but he impressed me as a very warm person. Fr. Francis HAHN was about twice as tall as I was so that I looked up to him like I was looking at the sky. Fr. John Takaji IWO always seemed to be very very busy. Fr. Leonard SIMONS always made me think of a magician.

There was another tall and big priest but I can't recall his name (ed: Fr. John DEELY). That priest always did work with the handicapped. Fr. Leo Satoshi KAWAGUCHI came by often when he was a seminarian. Fr. Daniel WARD painted a life size portrait of Christ in the rectory. It became a great souvenir of him. Fr. Raymond BOURGOIN looked like an intellectual, and his gold color rimmed glasses really looked good on him. One year Fr. Bertram SILVER showed up for New Years and ended up with a severe cold. From that time on we never saw nor hide nor hair of him because he found the house too frigid.

I think Fr John MAHONEY is a very unique person. Fr Angelo SIANI came over very often and took part in the "Bon-odori" (Mid-summer Dance at the time of the Festival for the Deceased). There were a number of other priests who came around, I can't recall all their names.

Now that I am 84 years old, I am forever grateful for all the graces I received from the Oblates. And I want to continue to pray for many young men to enter the Oblates.

The photograph of me was taken on the Church grounds. This was the one and only time the cactus plants ever blossomed here and I'm glad I took advantage of it. It was the year I retired from working at the rectory.



In front of Hikarigaoka Church



COCA COLA AND COCOA WERE LIVING WATER (John 4:14)

In Thanksgiving

Parishioner, Koga Mission
Chiyoko HIROWATARI

Congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of the Oblate arrival in Japan.

In 1955, all of a sudden we saw a huge church appear in the forest-like area of Hanami in Koga Town. At that time I was a very susceptible young girl, a rather affected middle school girl. Along with 5 especially close school friends I went to see the new building on the way home from school. I first was taken in by seeing sprinklers for the lawn for the first time. We looked through the large gate. On the inside water was spinning around! We wanted to see them from closer up but we did not have the guts. Again the following day we stopped by and the 5 of us decided to give it a try. We bravely walked up to the stone steps on the side of the church. We sat there with the nice warm sun on our backs and watched the water going round and round.

On the 3rd day we did the same and a person in a long black skirt called to us. My first reaction was, we got caught, we are going to be scolded. We tried to escape but our feet wouldn't budge. "We're sorry we entered without permission", we said, and looking up we saw that the person was an American. "I'm sorry", I repeated tentatively with words I had just learned at school. After which we attempted to leave. We saw this huge wide belt and what looked like a saber of some kind and again we were drawn back. The person asked in a very soft voice, "Where are you from?" "From the middle school in Fukuma Town", we replied. Having heard the soft voice we had become at ease. "Walking all the way over here you must have found it hot!" All of a sudden he produced 5 glasses in which we discovered Coca Cola and ice. Since we were really thirsty the first sip went down so nicely. Till now we had never drunk anything like it. "Thank you", I said and he replied in Japanese "Do itashimashite". Since this was July and the temperature continued to be nice we went every day for a week drawn by the Coca Cola. We eventually realized that this person was a priest but we never learned his name. Between my friends he was known as Father Cola. The saber on his hip was actually a crucifix and so we became at ease. Father Cola explained that on the crucifix was the body of Jesus and it represented love in its deepest meaning. He also spoke of Mary. During that week I really learned a lot of new things. After that often I would bring my friends to listen to Fr. Cola. When we had to absent ourselves for some time because we were studying for High School entrance exams, he gave us words of encouragement. When in March of the following year I got the results of my exams that showed that I had passed, I decided to go announce

this to Fr Cola but when I got there he was no longer there. Coca Cola was my first living water.

After that there was a rather long blank. In 1960 I met Fr Richard HARR. After a while I started studying in order to join the church, for about 2 years. I remember well one evening toward the end of fall in November 1960. I decided I wanted to talk to Jesus so I went inside the church and sat on the end of one of the benches. It was there that Brother Sueho TSUDA usually sat. I talked to Jesus for a very long time. When I decided to leave I found that the church was locked. There was no place for me to get out. The sun had gone down and all I could see was the red sanctuary lamp. This led me to prolong my prayer. However I was getting hungry and it was getting cold inside. "What should I do?," I thought. I started to get scared. I opened a window as wide as I could and hollered in a huge voice "Fr. Harr". But no response. I turned all the church lights on, I started playing on the organ "Do re mi".

"Mi sol la, let me out!" Still no response. It was getting colder and colder so I gathered some of the long padded kneelers and wrapped them around my shoulders for warmth. I had made up my mind that I would spend the night but on the other hand I kept calling for help. With time it was past 10 o'clock. I finally decided I'd spend the night at Jesus' home. After that decision anxiety and fear left me. After a while I heard the motor of a car approaching and then Fr. Harr's voice got closer. I heard the clanging of the lock as he opened the church doors and said, "Oh, my God!" He removed the padded kneelers from my shoulders and we went to the rectory. I said thank you and drank the cup of hot cocoa he prepared for me. As warmth came back to my body I started to feel at ease and less frenzied. Cocoa had become my second "living water". After that in 1961 I received the grace of Baptism and became a member of the church.

So the nice cool Coca Cola and the warm cocoa I had received from the Oblates, had become for me living water, grace.

Receiving people with great generosity and having a lot of patience they have taught me the real meaning of life, they've shown me the good news, they have preached the gospel to me. For this once again I want to thank them.

As they go into the 21st century I pray that rich blessings be bestowed on the Oblates as they continue to evangelize.



WHAT BROTHER TSUDA MEANT TO ME

Parishioner, Naruto Mission
Yukimasa HASHIMOTO

Invited by a friend who loved to talk about life and being human, I visited Mr Omura's house in a second floor large room. Just at that time were 5 people looking at freshly finished paintings of the Way of the Cross. These had been commissioned by Fr. Francis Eikichi Tanaka. It was at this time that I first met Mr. Joseph Suetō TSUDA. After a few days, again invited by my friend, I started visiting Mr Tsuda's place every night at around 10 PM. On my return home I often would bump into a number of people who were on their way to visit Mr Tsuda in order to learn catechism from him. It usually was around midnight. This all was certainly due to Mr Tsuda's patience and faith, I'm sure. Even I learned patience in continuing to go. I still can't believe it.

Later, I started thinking it might be good to receive baptism. So at the celebration of the Assumption, with Mr Takaji Iwo, I received baptism at the hands of Fr Leonard ROBITAILLE who was the parish priest of the Tokushima Church which was under the wing of the Oblates.

After the baptism ceremony, since it was a big feast day and also to welcome Fr

Robitaille, a number of the Christians decided to hold a party on the second floor of Mr Omura's house.

We boiled our own "sake" and Fr Robitaille started saying it tasted just like moonshine. So we decided to give a new "katakana" name to our cheap brand of "sake": Moonshine! Everybody enjoyed that!

Mr. Tsuda had read the autobiography of the Little Flower Theresa of Lisieux in a translation of a Paris Foreign Missionary by the name of Basquer, and with that had converted to Christianity and received baptism in Tokyo. After his baptism, because of ties here in Naruto he came to settle here. In 1943, during the war, Catholics had a bad name and were called YASO. It was a time of bad feelings and discrimination. But because of the faith, I would suppose, mostly Christians were found around him. At that time, because so many people in the Tokushima-Naruto area were embracing the faith, it seemed he had the name of Paul the second.

In 1952 he received the habit at the novitiate in

Aki with the Oblates. After that every year he would come to Naruto at Easter time without fail. Of course all the members of his Art Club would arrange to have an Art Exhibit during his vacation time.

Even after he was changed from Aki to Koga this rhythm didn't change. In 1967, at a gallery in Fukuoka he had his first individual exhibit and at the same time he put out his first collection of art works. Then again in 1980 he put out another one.

When he was coming to Naruto on a weekly basis I asked him to paint a Way of the Cross. By Easter I had the one and only copy in existence. That series is now on the walls of the Naruto Church.

From that time a group of design painting was started for young people, held at night. And then someone brought up the idea that we should also have some talks on faith. In 1971, first in Osaka and then in Tokyo Br Tsuda had Art Exhibits and met people he had not met in 20 years and even 40 years. He was so happy about that. From 1973 he held Art Exhibits every year at Takamiya Gallery in Osaka. At the same time he would put out

new works for the local Art Exhibit of his Art Group.

Painting pictures with young people, every summer he would go to a small cabin deep in the forest and spend 5 days with them really enjoying himself. In his own way, without formality, he would keep instructing in the faith and explain the right ways of thinking. In the 6th year of this activity the first catechumen was born. To be able to teach the Catholic faith without being explicit about it is very difficult. He expressed it this way: "It took 10 years!", in a serious and profound way. I think it must have been very hard on him. During that time he was also appearing on TV and writing essays for various magazines.

When he exhibited some works in one gallery he said: "What I feel mostly these days, is that I'm no more afraid to die. If someone told me: this is it, your time is done, I'd reply: Fine with me. And go peacefully on my way." Of course at these words we were all taken aback. About the same time he said: "I guess I was one of Saint Theresa of Lisieux's roses!"



Mr. Sueho TSUDA, Fr. Leonard ROBITAILLE

I WILL NEVER FORGET

Eucharistic Minister, Naruto Mission
Former Oblate Seminarian
Hiroshi HAYASHI



My first acquaintance with an Oblate was with Brother TSUDA. At the time I had gone to the atelier of the Beniuzu Group in Naruto with a teacher at my High School and later to be my Godfather, Mr Yukietsu Takasago, a painter. Only 17, I found the atmosphere of the atelier as well as the members a little on the old side. But when I looked at the paintings they had produced it was another thing. Lively curves and fresh colors held a special attraction! While painting pictures Brother Tsuda would hold catechism classes. Upon hearing these I felt a peace come over me and this time became my only real

happiness. At the time, my sister was also a member of the group and she experienced the same things I did, our bodies became lighter and we saw things in rose color.

After Brother died I heard many a talk from the clergy or elders, but compared to Brother's catechism classes they were very shallow. Brother's catechism classes were like his paintings. As an example I give his painting of a pomegranate tree. When God spoke to create that tree, the response to the word God spoke was living in the tree and by living that tree found its reason for living. You can see this in Brother's painting. It's not a Picasso nor a Cezanne, it's Brother's! The same with his catechism classes.

I see many priests who when removing their roman collar become a person of the world. I would like to see the Oblates who are 'human' even in their roman collars. What I like about the Oblate temperament is that Oblates call things as they are, they may be on the bashful side but possess extreme kindness and the biggest heart around. Thank you for serving the headstrong Japanese people for 50 years. And also thank you for forming me for 8 years where I learned that Christ is the only Master.

I also want to thank many OMI I met in other places as well. The much regretted Fr. Van Hoof of Bangladesh who looked like John Wayne, Dr. Mercado of the Philippines who saved my life, Fr. Mina and then of course the present Bishop Angelito Lampon.

Once again thank you to all!





THE BIRTH OF ANAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parishioners, Anan Mission
Tsuneo MAKINO and Hisako KOTOJIMA

I remember the beginnings of the Showa Era (1926) when the Tokushima Church was a red brick three-storied building. That now makes me almost 90 years old. In 1930 at the age of 18 I received baptism at the hands of the departed Fr. Alvarez, OP. At the time there was only this church in the whole prefecture, which meant the Catholics came from far and wide in order to attend Sunday mass. Transportation was not at its best so the Catholics assembled mostly on large feasts only. In a way we became closer because every time we met it was like meeting old friends. At the time, in Itano of Komatsushima City there was a very zealous Christian who let his house out as a Mission Station. Besides that a Kindergarten was built and time was devoted to the education of the younger ones.

After that, Ikeda town became a central point for business transportation throughout the island, so a church was built there. But during and after the war years the number of Christians in that area dwindled, so that the center of activity once again became only Tokushima. Of course there were no cars and so little children would walk a long time to reach the railroad station under severe conditions because they were starved. It was especially bad in the severe cold of winter and the burning heat of midsummer.

In the late 1950's in Anan at Mr Yanagawa's house Fr Gerard STEVENS started a study group of young people. At the time, as a basic text, we were using the YBU pamphlet called AYUMI (Journey) and I still have a few copies. I can truly say that the Journey towards eventually having a Mission Station in Anan began at that time.

After that the parishioners grew as the children and grandchildren of these young men and women were born in the areas of Anan City, Hanoura Town and Komatsushima City. By using the homes of the Iuchis in Komatsushima, the Ozakis, Okubos and Ishikawas in Anan, in turn, we were able to attend weekly Mass. We especially used the Ishikawas' home for a full 5 years.

As time went on with the grace of God and the foresight of the Oblates, they were able to buy a piece of land in the Tomioka area of Anan in 1967. At this site was built Anan Church and Kindergarten. Then before the new church was later built, the facilities of the Kindergarten Hall and Gymnasium were used as the Church, with the altar placed on the stage. In this huge gym the Christians would line up the chairs and we were able to have Mass. The altar boys consisted of 6 members, 3 from my family, the Kotojima and the Sawada families. It was an honor to serve taking turns.

From my recollection one of the first baptisms at the new church was my great-grandchild, a boy, on August 19, 1979. As I look at my diary I am filled with fond recollections. As the years went by, more were baptized and then some Catholics moved into the area, so that the parish grew. Then younger families and their children joined so that it became very active. I remember taking part in the Kindergarten Bazaars and field days. And conversely the children of the Kindergarten with their parents were invited to take part in the Christmas activities. Christians and non-Christians alike came to know and respect each other better.

When we consider Anan parish, the first thing that comes to mind is its family atmosphere. At one time we were holding home masses in various families and we were able to relate more on a personal level exchanging ideas, family news, speaking about our difficulties and joys. When the Mass was held in our house the whole family became excited and happy. Then we had a club called "Let's go walking anytime". We would go to the park, to the oceanside in and around Anan "by car!." Each brought his own food and shared it so that we could taste the various family traditional cooking. Of course the barbecue parties held after huge feasts were always a pleasure to attend.

Another thankful thing happened after the rectory was built. At the suggestion of Mr Araki we were



able to have an ossuary built there. Then, of course, 5 years ago the new Church was built! Till then we had been using the Hall of the Kindergarten and some of the classrooms for various activities. Of course we always felt the tightness of the quarters but now we can enjoy a more relaxed atmosphere. We have our own place.

Till I was in my 70's I would go by bicycle the 4 kilometers necessary to get to church but recently I must go by taxi. When I ask for the Catholic Church the taxi driver says "Oh you mean the Seibo Kindergarten!" Then they'll add something like "My friend's child goes there" or again "I saw the priest at the Post Office recently". We can see that the Church in Anan is widely known and has become part of Anan. 5 years ago my wife passed away. We

were able to have the funeral in the new church. I wish she had lived longer but at least I have the consolation that the funeral was held there.

As to the future of the Anan parish, we must leave that into God's hands as we cooperate with his grace. From Anan to Kaifu we can say that the climate, the customs and the people are in a relatively great area. Especially in the Kaifu area life is very simple and there are a lot of fishermen families. I believe that they would listen wholeheartedly to God's word. At present there is a Mission Station in Mugi where the priest goes on a regular basis. As we all know human beings are passionate and short tempered, but if we always reflect on our ways we can work together for God's glory by bearing difficulties together.



THE OBLATES AND NAKAMURA CHURCH

Parishioner, Nakamura Mission
Hisako RIKIMARU

Congratulations on your 50 years of evangelization in Japan. Last year the Nakamura Parish also celebrated its 20th anniversary. The history of the Nakamura Parish is due to the unselfish love and ministry of the Oblates.

I received baptism at Christmas in 1965 while I was living in Osaka. Because of the family situation I then and there decided to move to the area where my deceased mother came from, in 1968. While in Osaka the Church was just down the street but I was still a very fervent neophyte when I moved to Nakamura where there was no church. I had no idea where to go to attend Mass. And this was a big worry for me. Finally, I got in contact with an older Christian and she let me know that a priest from Nakajimacho Parish would come twice a month and say mass in one of the rooms at the hotel. Was I happy when I went to my first mass! After awhile we started having mass at one of the Christians' home. We were able to celebrate Christmas a little early. Fr Daniel WARD, God rest his soul, showed us how to sing a number of hymns which I recall, singing to myself, even today. I have fond memories of this and that.

I believe it was in 1971 when in Nakamura we were able to have a resident priest. His name was Fr William MAHER. According to the Catholic newspaper article of the time "Missionary efforts have begun in the Nakamura area with a young 32 year old Oblate who works out of a regular old borrowed house." That young priest had come from Aki City to Nakamura City, a distance of 150 kilometers on a motor scooter! His head was covered with white

dust when he arrived. And for 17 years, in the area of Shikoku known as Hata County, which is rather vast, about the size of Kagawa Prefecture, he worked heart and soul in all directions. He was so fast that it was hard for us to keep up with him but he led us through.

On a Sunday not too long after he arrived and was living in that old Japanese house looking like a movie star I asked him: "Aren't you lonely living there by yourself?" I still loved my home town Osaka and couldn't get used to Nakamura myself at the time. He answered with a very serious face: "When I'm with God, it matters not where I am." I said to myself: "Only a priest could say that and I remember, as if it were yesterday, how I felt ashamed for having asked such a question."

Nakamura Church was a two tatami (straw mat) room. I remember studying the Bible sitting around the hibachi (charcoal heater) and closing the paper



doors. As we studied some of us started saying that it would be nice to have our own church and this grew so that we started a fund for the purpose with Fr Maher in the lead. Twenty years ago with the help of the Christians in the Hata area, the Christians of the whole diocese, the Oblates, our fervent prayers were answered and the new church was born, thanks be to God.

We received a lot from the 3 priests who served here. At the beginning Fr William Maher for 17 years helped our community which was in infancy as far as the faith was concerned. We've now grown into a faith that is as adult as anywhere. At present from heaven Fr Gerard STEVENS is surely looking down on our group and interceding for us. He used to visit the families on his bicycle or on foot. A lazy person like me felt a little uneasy when we would see how poor he lived. We were impressed with his all

out effort for the Filipina women. Then as the third pastor we now have Fr Thomas MAHER. We feel he is like a father to us. And now young people are joining us and a number of catechumens have joined us.

In order to make the church alive we would like to have a Group Home for about 10 people. That is our great desire. With faith as our home and having Mass as the central part of our lives, this would be a place for God in the midst of society so that we may be open to society, a place that anyone, including non-Christians, could use, that's the type of Nakamura Church we want.

We are a small community, we are far away from the center of activity, we may have to face all kinds of problems in the future, but in all things we are thankful to God.



Statue in front of Nakamura Mission