

NSKK NEWSLETTER

日本聖公会管区事務所だより

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The Rt. Rev. John Masanao Watanabe, ex-Bishop of Hokkaido Diocese, NSKK, passed away on 10th July 2002. He had exercised the Episcopal Ministry of Hokkaido Diocese from 1969 to 1986. From 1983, he held the post of Primate of NSKK. Bishop Watanabe ended his life at the age of 76 years and 9 months.

In the August issue of “The Light of the North Sea”, the bulletin of Hokkaido Diocese, one of his posthumous manuscripts was published. It was entitled “The Road to Peace that I followed”, with a subtitle, “My personal experience of the Pacific War led me to the Lord Jesus”.

The editor of the bulletin told me that this article was left with him by the Bishop, saying, “this is the depiction of my youth.” It is a heartfelt article, in which he described how he had got over all the difficulties of life to become a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus.

Bishop Watanabe was born in 1925 in Karafuto (currently part of the Russian territory of Sakhalin), located in the north end of Japan. In his childhood, he used to help his father in a grocery. During the Pacific War, he entered the Naval Academy of Japan, but in the last year of the Academy in 1945, Japan lost the war. The ending of the war caused him to lose his dream of becoming a naval officer. The Naval Academy was located in a place close to Hiroshima, which was completely demolished by the single blast of that atomic bomb. On his way home to where his mother was waiting, he looked fixedly at the infernal scene of devastated Hiroshima. While supporting his sickly mother, he had to stand a life of hardship

At that time, he began to be inclined toward Christianity. Soon after his mother died, his father returned home from Russia where he had been held as a prisoner of war, as if his mother gave place to his father.

When his father was informed of the death of his wife, he closed his eyes without saying a single word. “My father must have repressed his sorrow and anger against the fact that had trampled upon his hope of meeting his wife. I decided to go to church on that day”. Bishop Watanabe described in the article what happened in him on that day; one of the most moving parts in the manuscript.

In 1947, he was confirmed and two years later he was admitted to Nippon Sei Ko Kai Theological College. After graduation from the Theological College, he served in many churches in various places in Hokkaido, and he also went to England for further theological study. After retiring from the Episcopate, he worked for a seafaring mission in Tanzania for 7 years.

This article left by the late Bishop Watanabe has clearly shown us the essence of the life of him who served as our spiritual leader, and who had faithfully replied to his calling, after having survived the days of hardship brought by the Pacific War.

Hajime Suzuki
Editor-in-Chief

Fifteenth Anniversary of the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei Prayer for World Peace

DIALOGUE BETWEEN WORLD RELIGIONS AND ISLAM

In Oct.1986, Pope John Paul II invited world religious representatives to “ Religious People’s Prayer Meeting for Peace “ in Assisi. From Japan, The Most Venerable Etai Yamada of the Buddhist Tendai sect and some others participated in the meeting. The next year, in August 1987, on the occasion of 1200th anniversary of foundation of Hiei-Zan by Saicho, “The Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei, Prayer Meeting for World Peace “ was held on a large scale inviting various religious representatives from all over the world. The Primate, Rt. Rev. Kikawada and some others participated in the meeting representing NSKK. Thereafter, Religious People’s Prayer Meeting for World Peace had been held every year in August on Mt. Hiei, and this year was the fifteen anniversary of the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei.

This year, the meeting was not merely for “Prayer for World Peace “, but a “ Dialogue Between World Religions and Islam “ was added. Needless to say, it was meant to consolidate our desire that the prejudice and hatred against Islam which had spread over the world since the Sept.11 incident in the USA would be swept away from all people’s hearts. Accordingly, six representatives and leaders of Islam were invited from overseas. Moreover, Rev. Dr. Michael Ipgrave was added as the representative of Church of England for the first time. He is the Inter-Faith Religion Advisor of the Archbishop’s Council.

I would like to report a few points out of the schedule of 3rd and 4th August. After the opening ceremony at Kyoto International Conference Hall, a memorial lecture and a symposium were presented. There were around 1200 people in attendance. The memorial lecture was given by Dr. Muhammad Saad Al-Salem, Chancellor of Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, entitled “ Islam and Peace”. In the lecture, he appealed that God’s dogma was infringed by the confusion between individual conduct and the teaching of Islam. “We need mutual understanding and dialogue. Islam is a religion that seeks for Peace,” he said. The symposium was entitled “Dialogue and Understanding of Islam”. Three speakers were Dr. Muhammad Abdulfadel Abdulaziz, (Vice Dean of the Faculty of Creed and Theology, Al-Azhar Univ., Egypt), Dr. Mir Nawaz Khan Marwat (Moderator pf ACRP, Pakistan), and Dr. Musa Zeid Keilani (Member of the Executive Committee of the Islamic Congress for Jerusalem). They are all Muslim. Dr. Abdulaziz emphasized: “ Islam respects every single living thing.” Dr. Marwat argued saying, “the word Sacred War (Jihad) means to fight against social injustice. Islam does not allow terrorism that kills innocent people.” Dr. Keilani expressed his expectation for Japanese religious people to build a bridge between Islam and other religions of the world.

In the morning of the 4th Aug., a forum was held under the theme of Reconciliation and Religion in which five people spoke. Rev. Dr. Ipgrave was one of them. Unfortunately I could not hear them speak since it was Sunday. Later on I was told that the vivid reality of the conflicts had been reported, and also misunderstandings of Islam had been pointed out as well. I hear that Rev.

Dr. Ipgrave had said that the dialogue between the Church of England and Islam was very important as there were two million Muslims living in UK. In the afternoon of the same day, the Ceremony of Inter-religious Prayer for World Peace was dedicated in the open space of Enryakuji Temple, with five hundred people gathering. Each representative of the religious groups ascended one after another, and offered Prayers for Peace according to their religion while synthesizer music was being played.

Before closing, a “Message from Mt. Hiei”, which emphasized respect for dialogue between religions, mutual understanding, and a sincere desire for Peace, was released and resolved by all the participants.

Rt. Rev. Barnabas Mutsuji Mutoh

INTER-RELIGIOUS SUMMIT AT MT HIEI

From 3rd to 4th August 2002, an ‘Inter-Religious Summit’ meeting was held at Mt Hiei, Kyoto. This summit is an annual event in Japan, hosted by the Tendai school of Buddhism, but this year held a special significance, as it marked the 15th anniversary of the first such gathering on Mt Hiei in 1987 – which was itself a Japanese sequel to Pope John Paul II’s invitation to representatives of the world’s religions to come together in prayer at Assisi. This year at Mt Hiei, Anglican representatives included The Rt Revd Barnabas Muto, Bishop of Kyoto, with colleagues from his diocese, and staff from the Provincial Offices of Nippon Sei Ko Kai, together with myself from the Church of England. Over a thousand people, from all branches of Japanese religions, attended the event, together with a number of invited guests from overseas. The full title of the meeting, ‘Inter-Religious Gathering of Prayer for World Peace: Dialogue between World Religions and Islam’, encompasses the three intertwined themes which provided a focus for the three successive sessions: engagement with the Islamic world; the role of religions in conflict causation, resolution and prevention; and coming together to pray for peace.

On the first afternoon, Islamic scholars from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan and Bosnia-Herzegovina presented key aspects of their faith and practice to a large Japanese audience in a public symposium. The decision to focus on Islam had been taken by the organising committee in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, and having in mind the widespread suspicion and misunderstanding of Islam in both the Western world and Japan. The Muslim speakers at the symposium naturally presented their faith as a religion of peace and unity, and it was interesting to see the amount of interest generated in the audience by even quite basic issues of Islamic belief and behaviour – though there was evident a certain disquiet over a forcibly expressed emphasis on the God-given prohibition of alcohol!

The morning of the second day consisted of a forum for religious leaders, in which Muslim, Christian and Jewish representatives discussed the role of religions in relation to conflict. In contrast to the expository mood of the previous day, this was cast more in the form of a dialogue, with participants sharing a good deal of common ground in this area. The consensus at the summit seemed to be that, while religions as such were not usually directly responsible for causing conflicts, they did often have a negative record of contributing to a climate of hostility which enabled or perpetuated conflict. Conversely, religious organisations could play a major role in conflict resolution and prevention through engaging in honest dialogue, sharing in practically oriented movements for justice and peace, and educating their members about the authentic reality of other faiths. These general principles were illustrated by the speakers with reference to such concrete situations as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel-Palestine, and Northern

Ireland.

The meeting culminated in a gathering to pray for peace on Mt Hiei, the ancient Buddhist sanctuary high above the sprawling city of Kyoto. Representatives of seven different religious groups in turn offered prayers for world peace, each within the integrity of their own traditions, yet most moving of all was to stand as people of faith together for a time of silence, punctuated only by the resonant booming of temple bells – ‘shoulder to shoulder’, as someone once said, in a time of global turmoil.

It goes without saying that this inter-religious gathering was superbly organised, from beginning to end, with a distinctively Japanese blend of careful efficiency, generous hospitality, and subtle spirituality. I am very grateful to the organisers for making it possible for me to attend and make a presentation at the summit. I am also very thankful to Bishop Muto and his diocese for hosting me in Kyoto for a week before the event – a time when I was able to make contact with several old and new religious groups in the area. I hope and pray that the Mt Hiei meeting will stimulate further interest in Japan in encounter with Islam in particular, and in inter-religious dialogue in general – and I believe that the Nippon Sei Ko Kai could play an important role in helping to advance that dialogue.

The Revd Canon Dr Michael Iprgrave

Thinking of the Day of the Dropping of the Atom Bomb

at the Memorial Service for the Victims of the Atomic Bombing held at
Nagasaki Holy Trinity Church August 9, 2002

On August 9th in 1945, at 11:02 a.m., an atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki which took the lives of more than 74,000 people in a moment, and more than 76,000 people received severe wounds.

57 years have passed since the tragic event occurred. 29 members of Nagasaki Holy Trinity Church of Nippon Sei Ko Kai became victims of the A-Bomb. The church has been holding a memorial service for the victims of the atomic bombing every year on August 9th. But due to the fact that the Memorial Day has mostly fallen on weekdays, they were obliged to hold the service under the leadership of the women’s group of the church for a long time.

From 3 years ago, Bishop Shoji Igarashi of Kyushu Diocese has been eagerly involved in the memorial service under the joint auspices of the Mission Department of the Diocese. In the circumstances that most of the people in the world have been searching for peace, we planned to develop and deepen the meaning of ‘Peace’ this year, remembering the tragic incident that occurred 57 years ago. We asked Bishop Toru Uno, the Presiding Bishop of Nippon Sei Ko Kai, to give us a sermon at the Memorial Service. It was indeed a historical memorial service, for it was the first time after the war that the Presiding Bishop had knelt down and participated in the prayer of peace before God in this very place where an atomic bomb was dropped.

Archbishop Uno emphasized the following three points in his preaching. The first one was that the most important thing was to share together the agony and pains of the people who received severe injuries from the A-bomb by standing among them, and that retaliation against enemies did not give any solutions.

The second one was that in order to abolish nuclear weapons and to create a peaceful world, we should not leave politics to politicians only, but we have to get the grasp of them as our own problems and to have responsibility to be concerned with them positively. The third one he emphasized was that there is the law of the jungle prevailing in the deep root of the idea to start wars between nations. But true peace only exists in the world where the weak and the small are respected, and we have to build up a world where we could respect and support each other.

After the Memorial Service was over, we listened to the testimonies of two A-bomb victims, Ms. Yoneko Takahashi and Mr. Nobuo Nishimoto. Ms. Takahashi was working at Fuchi Junior High School in those days and she was crushed under a felled tree when the bomb dropped, but she was rescued. Mr. Nishimoto was working at a precision machinery factory as one of the student workers. He was just home after a night shift and survived. Their testimonies were quite vivid ones. While we were having lunch together, it was very impressive to hear them saying, "it was more horrible and pitiable in reality but we could not tell them the rest of the story any more."

It was a really valuable day to think over "Peace". The 70 participants at the service would have been impressed even more than I was. We sincerely hope the 'Assembly of Longing for Peace' in Nagasaki will be developed also in Hiroshima as a co-operative activity in the future.

The Rev. Masanao Hamao