

The Christian Year in Review

Significant Events of 1995

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JANUARY

- 2 The Salvation Army marked their Centennial Opening Campaign with a gathering in Ueno Park, Tokyo. With their usual mixture of music and song they sought to share the Gospel message with passers-by. The results of the Salvation Army's annual end of the year Community Chest collection were not given in the 1996 edition of the *Kiristokyō Nenkan*.
- 10 Cardinal Kim Su Han, Archbishop of Seoul, sent a letter to Prime Minister Murayama Tomoichi of Japan, calling for a full and formal investigation of the "Comfort Women" issue, to be followed by a formal apology and appropriate reparations made to the victims. At the end of last year Cardinal Shirayanagi Seiichi, Archbishop of Tokyo, sent a letter to the prime minister expressing his opposition to plans to establish a private fund to cover the cost of reparations to former Comfort Women, rather than the government assuming responsibility and footing the cost.
- 12-14 The Ninth National Conference of the Federation of Christian Conferences Concerned with Problems Related to the Registration of Foreigners, was held at the Japan Christian Center, West Waseda, Tokyo. Some 150 Korean nationals resident in Japan were present at a gathering for worship and a session where reports were made on the theme "When History is Open" which was held on the final day.
- 17 *Hanshin-Awaji Daishinsai*. For years to come in the Osaka-Kobe-Awajishima area the morning of this day (5:46 a.m.) will be remembered for the earthquake (magnitude 7.2) and fire that tore apart this bustling center of trade and industry leaving over 6,000 dead and some 35,000 injured. Days were to pass before the full extent of the devastation became known. (A full report is not possible due to space limitations, but further comments are offered in the "Notes and Comments" section of accompanying article on denominational statistics.)
- 22 A Thanksgiving Eucharist was held at Urakami Catholic Cathedral, Nagasaki, at which Archbishop Shimamoto of Nagasaki was the main celebrant, to mark the *sato gaeri* (Return Home) after some 380 years of the remains of martyrs who had lost their lives in the Christian persecutions that occurred between 1587-1614. The remains had been kept in St Francis Xavier Church, Macau.
- 25 Professor Eguchi Keiichi of Aichi University reported that a senior high school history text he had authored, *Japanese History B* (Jikkyo Publishers) had no claims made against it following censorship (inspection?) by the Ministry of Education.

Along with references to the Teigan Church Incident, the book also made explicit reference to the almost taboo topic of the Rape of Nanking and the Comfort Women. Eguchi felt this was due to the debate brought on by the Ienaga Textbook Case and political pressure and criticism from China, Korea and the wider international community.

- 27 The Supreme Court accepted the claim of the right to Japanese citizenship made on behalf of Andrew Reith (four years old) by his adopted father William Reith and his wife. The Reiths, American missionaries in Nagano, had taken in young Andrew, who had been abandoned with no means of identifying his mother. He was probably born of a Filipina mother and a Japanese father.

FEBRUARY

- 8 Rev. Choe Chan Hoa, pastor of Kokura Church for Korean Nationals (Fukuoka) and long time campaigner for the human and civil rights of Korean residents in Japan, died of lung cancer at a hospital in Kita Kyushu-Shi; he was 62 years old.
- 11 This day saw numerous events held to mark "Day to Defend Freedom of Belief." The focus of many events was the wartime responsibility of Christians and their churches, rather than that of Japan and the emperor. At a gathering under the sponsorship of the NCCJ Committee on the Yasukuni Problem, the focus was on "The Call for Reparations from the Asian Countries, Our Responsibilities." In Nagoya Inoue Katsunori noted in his address the marked contrast in the level of respect shown by the media on the occasion of the death of Emperor Shōwa and that shown to the some 6,000 who died following the Great Hanshin Earthquake
- 14 It was announced at the 1995 Annual General Meeting of JEMA, (an association of evangelical American missionaries in Japan), held at the Ochanomizu Christian Center, that the missionaries in Japan of the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.A.) were to be formally affiliated with the group.
- 14-15 At a meeting of the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), held at its Minami Osaka Church, plans to establish a committee to supervise and coordinate its "Disaster Relief Center" in the Hanshin area were announced. The UCCJ also launched a drive to raise some \$1.5 million to cover the cost of relief work.
- 18 The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Osaka announced its "Rebirth Plan" for the Hanshin area. The total cost of all the work necessary to repair or rebuild damaged property in the archdiocese has been estimated at over \$30 million. As a first step towards raising this amount the Archdiocese announced it was selling the Diocesan Center which is located in Osaka's central business district, and moving into smaller property near the cathedral. Three parishes in the center of the city are to be amalgamated into one. Some \$3 million in donations from various Catholic churches and communities around the country had already reached the diocese.
- 25 At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Catholic Bishops of Japan the Bishops formally adopted a joint pastoral letter to mark fifty years since the end of World War II; the letter is entitled "On the Occasion of Fiftieth Anniversary of End of War—A Commitment to Peace." Bishop Hamao Fumio of Yokohama was elected as the

new President of the Bishops' Conference; he is the first bishop from a diocese as distinct from an archdiocese to hold the post.

Feb 27– Mar 1 The third meeting of the Asian Solidarity Conference on the Japanese Army "Comfort Women" Problem was held in Seoul, Korea. Some fifty-three representative from various groups in Japan attended, including delegates from the NCCJ and the Japanese Christian Women's Temperance Union. The latter group also adopted a document calling for the formal passing of a "Declaration of Non-Belligerence" by the Japanese Diet. Copies of the document were sent to the appropriate party leaders and others concerned.

MARCH

- 9 Following the previous defeat of a court case questioning the constitutionality of using public funds to cover the costs incurred for the *sokui no rei* (Accession/ Enthronement Ceremony) and the accompanying *Daijōsai* (Great Thanksgiving Festival) on the occasion of the accession to the Imperial Throne of the present Emperor, an appeal by a citizens' group was rejected by the High Court in Osaka. However, in his judgment High Court Judge Yamanaka stated that the *Daijōsai* was clearly a Shinto religious ceremony, and on the question of applying public funds for the ceremony there were grounds for questioning whether the separation between state and religion had been breached.
- 15 Among four people arrested following a demonstration protesting the inadequacy of the Tokyo Metropolitan government policy on the care of homeless living in the Sanya and Shinjuku areas, was Pastor Sasaki Toshiya of the UCCJ Tsutsumi mission station. A statement was issued by the Social Affairs Committee of the UCCJ declaring the arrest illegal.
- 16 The Feast of the Resurrection saw a voice of hope beamed towards those still trying to rebuild lives shattered by the January 17 earthquake. On the grounds of Takatori Catholic Church, Nagata-ku, Kobe a mini-FM radio station went on the air as a source of local news and information. The area has a heavy concentration of Vietnamese refugees who came seeking a new start in Japan, only to see their fragile achievements swallowed up by the quake. The broadcasts are aired in both Vietnamese and Japanese.
- 20 A new page was written in the annals of urban terrorism following an indiscriminate attack using sarin gas on some five trains of the Tokyo subway system just after 8 a.m. at the height of the rush hour. Casualties included ten fatalities and some 5,000 injured. Among the victims was Sakai Tsuna of Shiomi Catholic Church, Tokyo. The New New Religion Aum Shinrikyō later emerged as the perpetrators of the attack. Founded by the visually handicapped masseur Matsumoto Chizuo, who is known to his followers as Asahara Shoko, the sect has since the late 1980s engaged in a series of actions including kidnap and murder resulting in criminal proceedings being brought against Matsumoto (Asahara) and other members of the group. (Further comment on the group and its activities are found in the "Notes and Comments" section of the accompanying article on denominational statistics)
- 24 The *Yomiuri Shinbun*-sponsored prize for "Meritorious Services in Medical Care" was awarded to Dr. Miyazaki Toru who for many years has worked in Bangladesh

and other countries in Asia. Dr. Miyazaki is sponsored in his work by the Japanese Society for Overseas Medical Care (JOCs).

- 30 The eleventh encyclical of Pope John Paul II, entitled *Evangelium Vitae* was formally released. In some ways it is a companion piece to his encyclical *Veritas Splendor* (August 1993) which also covers ethical topics. (The latter was criticized for a noticeable inconsistency in the coherence of argument between chapters 1 and 3 on the one hand and chapter 2 which bears the marks of totally different authorship on the other.) The new encyclical promotes a gospel of the sanctity of life while taking up in meditative form such topics as abortion, euthanasia, artificial contraception and insemination and fetal experimentation. (Note that the Japanese translation of *Veritas Splendor* finally appeared the day following the release of *Evangelium Vitae*).

This day also saw the dedication of only the fifth Catholic church to be erected in Fukui Prefecture. Built in Obama-shi, the church is the realization of a forty-year dream. The congregation numbers just forty, including parishioners from neighboring towns and villages. Records, however, show that Fr. Louis Frois, sj celebrated the Eucharist in the area some four hundred years ago. In more recent times Fr. John Graham MSC from Tsuruga Catholic Church has been making a two-hour round trip twice a month to celebrate the Eucharist in the house of one of the parishioners. Nearly twenty priests joined Bishop Nomura of Nagoya at the Dedication and Thanksgiving Eucharist.

APRIL

- 1 A meeting is held at the Laborers Welfare Center, Nakano, Tokyo to protest the ongoing plan to build a *Kokuritsu Senbotsusha Suito Heiwa Kinen Kaikan* in Kudan, Tokyo near Yasukuni Jinja, a focal point for right-wing nationalist sentiment. As its very title indicates the hall, while ostensibly dedicated to peace, is also to serve as a further memorial to those who died in World War II. Furthermore, since members of the right-wing nationalist *Nippon Izoku Kai* (War-Bereaved Association) are heavily involved in the planning their view of the war will strongly influence the tenor of the display. (See item for June 27, "Christian Year in Review" in last year's issue of the *Japan Christian Review*)
- 8-9 At a meeting of diocesan representatives of the Catholic Committee on International Cooperation, held in Atami, Shizuoka concern was expressed that some of the minority groups among the victims of the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake are being subject to various forms of "legal" racial discrimination. A call was made to increase efforts to help them and to educate all involved in volunteer work to alleviate the problem.
- 10 The Japan Scripture Publication Society, which is supported by the more conservative evangelical Protestant churches, announced at its annual executive and general meeting that its publications' total topped the ten million mark in the middle of May. This year also marked the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the society, and a commemorative open lecture was delivered by the Rev. Izumida Akira of the Baptist Federation in which he emphasized the importance of a strong faith rooted in scripture.

- 13 The NCCJ at its executive meeting formally adopted the "NCCJ Statement on Japan's Responsibility During and After the War."
- 15 Twenty-two years after he was abducted from a Tokyo hotel by members of the KCIA, the democracy activist and opposition politician Kim Dae Jung returned to Japan. He gave a public lecture at the Asahi Shinbun Hall entitled "Unification of the North-South: The Role of Japan."
- 16 The Justice and Peace Commission of the Roman Catholic Church (Bishop Okada Takeo) issued a peace declaration entitled "For a New Start." The document deepens and broadens the earlier declaration by all the bishops, and make a strong and emphatic call for Japan to admit its failures, accept responsibility for the last war, and make full and adequate reparations to all who suffered as a result of Japanese military actions.
- 16-20 The annual general meeting of the Superiors General/Provincials of nearly 100 Catholic women's religious congregations and societies working in Japan was held in Naha, Okinawa. Not unnaturally the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II was a central focus of talks, discussions and field trips. Among the keynote speakers, Ohno Norihisa of the Okinawa Peace Network said that the source of the forward looking response of Okinawans following the war was a strong sense of community bonding and a commitment to nurturing life.
- 18 Following from the revelations of the various illegal activities of Aum Shinrikyō, a call has been made by some politicians, mostly Liberal Democrats, for a study of the Religious Corporations Law. Aware that the consequent revision of the same law could lead to restrictions in the civil rights of religious groups, the Yasukuni Jinja Problem Committee of the NCCJ held a special study day on the question. Some commentators see the Liberal Democrat call for a revision of the Religious Corporations Law as an attempt to restrict the activities of Sōkka Gakkai which has close links with former Komeito politicians who now belong to the Shinshinto.

The Seventh Christian Audio-Visual Media Education Prize was awarded to Fr. Jose M. de Vera, formerly professor of Journalism at Sophia University, Tokyo. Since 1965 Fr. de Vera has worked consistently to train young people to work in the media with vision and judgment inspired by Christian gospel values. He is presently head of the Jesuit Communications Center in Rome.
- 26 Tanaka Tadao (Emeritus Professor of Musashino University of the Fine Arts), a leading painter in the Japanese style, and lifelong promoter of Christian art, including an annual exhibition of art works on Christian themes, died of old age at his home in Higashi Kurume-shi, Tokyo. He was 91 years old.

MAY

- 2 The YWCA Japan held its thirty-second Constitution Study Day at the Toyama Sanraizu building, Waseda, Tokyo. The theme of the study day was "Paragraph 9, A Word for the World, In the Heart of the World." Paragraph 9 is the constitutional declaration that Japan will not take up arms to solve international disputes, or maintain a standing army.

- 5 "Mental Care and the Hanshin-Awaji Dashinsai" was the theme of the thirty-second "Theology and Psychiatry Forum" held at the UCCJ Fujimi-machi Church, Tokyo. The need for closer cooperation between pastoral care workers and mental health care workers has emerged as an urgent need following the Hanshin Earthquake. Responding to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on such a wide scale is a newly recognized problem in Japan.
- 6 Representatives of some nine Christian groups, including the NCCJ, the Japanese Evangelical Association, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference signed a joint declaration titled "Approaching the Fiftieth Anniversary of End of World War II, Reflections and Topics." It is the first joint declaration of its kind on the war, and it is worthy of note for the strong language used and the willingness to make an explicit confession of failure to give true Christian witness during the war.
- 8 A group has been formed to support Rev. Prof. Asami Sadao of Tōhoku Gakuin University. Among the leading members of the group is Prof. Arai Sasagu, Emeritus Professor of Tokyo University, and doyen of New Testament scholars in Japan. Professor Asami has been served a writ alleging defamation of character by the New New Religion Kofuku no Kagaku (Ogawa Ryuho). Kofuku no Kagaku which has engaged in a long-standing battle with Aum Shinrikyō is looked upon with more than a strong degree of apprehension for the aggressive tactics used to gain members and to silence critics.
- 12 Nagashima Masaaki, chair of the NCCJ, in a follow-up to the same body's April statement regarding World War II, submitted a document entitled "Letter of Request from the Christian Community in Japan" to Doi Takako, Speaker of the Lower House of the Diet. The letter calls for specific action to be taken in response to the various topics raised in the NCCJ's earlier document.
- 16 At the twenty-ninth forum held at the Tokyo Mission Research Center, a public lecture was given by Kuribayashi Teruo, author of *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns*, entitled "Paradigm Change in Theology—Seeking Faith Wisdom from Pastoral Work at the Margins." [For an outline of Kuribayashi's thesis see his article in the *Japan Christian Review*, vol. 58, (1992), and Thomas Dean, "Enlightenment or Liberation" in *Japan Christian Review*, vol. 61, (1995).]
- 19 Gyōsei Junior High School held its Shōwa 20 (1945) graduation ceremony some fifty years late at a special ceremony conducted at the Kudan Kaikan, Chiyoda, Tokyo. In the confusion that reigned as Japan went down to defeat at the end of World War II, it had not proved possible to bestow graduation diplomas on that year's class. Among those who received diplomas at the ceremony was Cardinal Shirayanagi Seiichi, Archbishop of Tokyo. Following the ceremony a reception was held to mark the bestowal of the Red Hat on Cardinal Shirayanagi. The Red Hat is the traditional symbol of elevation to the cardinalate. (See the October 30 item in "The Christian Year in Review" in last year's issue of the *Japan Christian Review*)
- 21 The Cathedral Church of Urakami, Nagasaki was selected for a commemorative lecture by Nobel Prize winning author Ōe Kenzaburō and a concert of music by his son Ōe Hikaru. The event was jointly sponsored by Urakami Cathedral, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and the opening of Nagasaki

Junshin University. Urakami Cathedral was totally destroyed by the bombing and Junshin Girls School also suffered extensive damage on that fateful day.

Rupert Enderle, founder and head of Enderle Shoten, Tokyo, probably the oldest and longest established bookstore dealing in imported Catholic theological works, died of heart failure at the age of 82. Arriving in Japan in 1935, along with setting up the book store with its publishing arm and a German language school, Enderle was also instrumental in the editing and publishing of the first *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Catholicism* (seven volumes) in Japanese. It was to be many years before its successor was to appear. (Kenkyūsha has finally announced the publication of the *Shin Katorikku Jiten*, beginning with volume 1 in June of 1996.)

JUNE

- 1 This day saw the launch of a magazine called *Kyōkai to konpyuta* by the Seishū Kenkyū Dōkōkai, a group of Protestant pastors committed to exploring the use of the computer in the study of the Word of God. Ultimately the group wants to produce a *J Bible for Windows*, and as a first step have produced software that offers parallel texts of the Bible in the major Japanese translations, along with English and Latin translations and the text in the original languages. They also want to explore the possibility of creating an Ecumenical Electronic Library for Scripture Study. Nanzan Gakuen (Nagoya) and Nagoya Seirei Gakuen (Seto-shi, Aichi) formally amalgamate to create the largest Catholic educational enterprise in central Japan. Nanzan Gakuen is administered by the Society of the Divine Word, and Nagoya Seirei Gakuen by the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit, with both communities having Blessed Arnold Janssen, a German priest, as their founder. Following the union Nanzan Gakuen now comprises one university, two junior colleges, and three high schools, spread over campuses located in Nagoya, Seto-shi and Toyota-shi, and with a total student body of some 13,000. The union is seen as the first step in creating a complex of mission schools that can respond more adequately to the needs of the local community, and open to the possibilities of the new millennium.
- 5-6 The Tokyo Divinity School (UCCJ), in Mitaka-shi, Tokyo was the site for the sixth annual meeting of the Japan Missionary Society, with the main theme of "Towards the Rebirth of a Missionary Church." The presence of some fifty-odd young church leaders was taken as a sign of hope. The group was formed by more evangelical members of the UCCJ in 1990 in response to a perceived lack of fervor for mission in the church.
- 9 Though the *Kyōdōyaku* (Ecumenical Common Translation) was warmly welcomed on publication in 1987, there were always some in the scholarly community who had reservations. Prof. Arai Sasagu, emeritus professor of Tokyo University and doyen of New Testament scholars in Japan, was one of the most vocal critics. Along with his disciples he has now begun to produce a new, more literal and critical translation. Published by one of Japan's more liberal publishers, Iwanami Shoten, the translation will run to five volumes. The first volume, the gospels of Matthew and Mark, is in the main the work of Satō Migaku, associate professor at Rikkyō University. It has extensive footnotes and numerous other helpful editorial features.

- 10–14 The Tenth General Meeting of Christian Churches in Asia (CCA) was convened in Colombo, Singapore. Held every five years the main theme was “Hope of God in a Changing Asia.” The assembly also issued a declaration calling on Japan to engage in an honest review of its history and formally accept its responsibilities regarding World War II, and also to make appropriate reparations.
- 11 A Thanksgiving Eucharist was celebrated in St. Peter’s, Rome, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Among the concelebrants who joined Pope John Paul II were priests who had survived the Nazi concentration camps, along with Bishop Mitsue (Hiroshima) and Archbishop Shimamoto (Nagasaki) from the only two cities to know the nuclear holocaust. In his homily the Pope asked those present to remember in their prayers the victims from those two cities, including those who still carry the scars of those fateful days.
- 19–23 At their annual general meeting, the country’s Roman Catholic bishops discussed the best ways to prepare for the Holy Year 2000 that Pope John Paul II has decreed. Into the preparations will be integrated the celebration in 1997 of the 400th anniversary of the death of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan, and the 450th anniversary of the arrival in Japan of St. Francis Xavier. Both events, to say the least, find a more responsive echo in the hearts of Japanese Catholics than the putative anniversary of the birth of Jesus. Cardinal Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo, will become busier following his appointment to the preparatory commission for a Synod of Asian Bishops that the Pope is determined to hold before the year 2000.
- 23 One church in Okinawa began to mark the end of World War II back in April. From April 1 at Kyatan Shokon (Northern Valley, All Souls) Church (Anglican), people have gathered daily, except for Easter Sunday, in the morning or the evening to hear volunteers read out the names of all the war dead of Okinawa—some 234,183 men, women and children from both sides of the conflict. Reading slowly and prayerfully for up to an hour and a half, the volunteers, including representatives of U.S. armed forces stationed on the island, finally read the last names on this day.
- At Mabuni, Itoman-shi, on the southern tip of the main island of the Ryūkyū Islands, Okinawa’s own unique war memorial was dedicated. Set in the Peace Park is the the *Heiwa no Ishiji*, rank upon serried rank of memorial stones on which are carved the names of all those known to have died there. Efforts will continue to name those remaining victims who are still unknown.
- 30 Citing Aum Shinrikyō as constituting a danger to public order and welfare, the Public Prosecutors Office and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government submitted a petition to the Tokyo District Court asking that the group be disbanded. Moves are also going ahead with a highly select committee who will advise on necessary revisions to the Religious Corporations Law. Some Christian and other religious groups see the committee decisions as being no more than a pretext for changes lawmakers have already decided are necessary. Aum Shinrikyō was legally disbanded under Article 81 of the Religious Corporations Law by the Tokyo District Court on October 30, a decision upheld by the Tokyo High Court on December 19, and finally upheld by the Supreme Court on January 31, 1996. The Public Security Investigation also instigated moves against Aum on the basis of the almost forgotten Anti-Subversive Activities Law that are still in progress. (For further on this topic see Robert Kisala’s article in the *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture*, no.20, 1996.)

JULY

- 2-4 The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) held an international seminar at the Shibuya headquarters of the United Nations University. The topic was "Slavery in Wartime Japan—Comfort Women and Forced Labor." Japan's actions in both areas during World War II was described as a national crime. Among some 300 present at the seminar were Cardinal Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo and Nakashima Masaaki of the NCCJ.
- 8 The Lutheran Churches announce the setting up of a network to help rehabilitate former members of Aum Shinrikyō. The Aum Shinrikyō Kyūsai Network under the leadership of Hiraoka Masayuki, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Yokosuka, Kanagawa, has established centers in Obihiro and Asahikawa (Hokkaido), Akita, Nagano, Gifu, Akashi-shi, and Kumamoto.
- 21 Fr. Heinrich Dumoulin, SJ, doyen of Western Zen Buddhist scholars, and emeritus professor of Sophia University, Tokyo died at the age of 90 after a battle with cancer of the liver. Fr. Dumoulin had lived and worked in Japan for sixty years and was one of the first Westerners to study the history of Japanese Religions at Tokyo University. His *Zen Buddhism: A History*, his life's work in more ways than one, was originally published in 1963, and revised and expanded to become a two-volume work in the 1980s, with further additions made or planned right up to the time he died. He served as the director of the Institute for the Study of Oriental Religions, Sophia University from 1965-75, and was the first director of the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture.

AUGUST

- 6 Some 80,000 people were present at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing. A quieter but equally significant ceremony was held just after dawn when religious leaders both from Christian groups and other religions gathered to pray for the repose of the souls of those who had died as a result of the bombing. Flowers were also laid in tribute. Eucharists and other liturgies for peace were held in numerous centers of worship across the city during the course of the day.
- On the previous evening a Eucharist was celebrated for the repose of all who had died at Hiroshima followed by a symposium titled "Peace Message—From the Bishops of Asia." Among the concelebrants at the Eucharist and the participants were bishops from other Asian and Pacific countries including Bishop Labayan, Infanta, Philippines and Bishop Lee, Pusan, Korea. Bishop Lee's war experience took in time as a forced laborer with a tank unit stationed at Narashino, Chiba, Japan.
- 12 In public opinion poll done on behalf of the *Kirisuto Shinbun* to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, some 1300 church workers were surveyed on such topics as welfare, education, human rights, and peace. Over fifty percent of those surveyed were over fifty. A substantial majority wants more effort put into mission and worship, and a deepening commitment to ecumenism. Topics that are seen to stay on the agenda for at least the near future were children and their education, bullying at school, peace, human rights, discrimination and dialogue with

other faiths. (Full details of the survey can be found in the 1996 edition of the *Kirisutokyō Nenkan*.)

- 15 The fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II saw more activity than usual in and around Yasukuni Jinja, Kudan, Tokyo. Christian and left wing groups made their own statements of intent in various ways, with the former observing how many of the present government came to pay their respects to those, including convicted war criminals, whose spirits are said to rest at the shrine.

Among other events held this day was a joint meet of the “Society of Bereaved Victims of the Pacific War,” who represent many Korean war dead, and the “Bereaved for Peace.” The meeting held at the Zensuidō Hall, Suidōbashi, Tokyo took up among other topics the unutterable word in Liberal Democrat circles, *shazai* (apology), and the question of proper and adequate war reparations. Needless to say that on this day few politicians of the right were seen in or near Japan’s official memorial to her “Unknown Soldiers” at Chidorigafuchi. And sadly on this day a French NGO revealed that some of the plutonium used in an ongoing series of recent French nuclear tests, held in the course of the year, probably came from Japan.

A rather unique parallel Eucharist was held in Washington and Tokyo to mark fiftieth anniversary. As Cardinal Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo, began a morning Eucharist at 9:00 a.m. in St Mary’s Cathedral, Tokyo, it was 5:30 p.m. on the evening of August 14 in Washington D.C., and Cardinal James Hickey, Archbishop of Washington, began a concelebrated Eucharist at St. Matthew’s Cathedral. In his homily in Tokyo for this Mass of Reconciliation Archbishop Shirayanagi recalled events such as the Nanking Massacre, and other aspects of the pain-filled history of Japan and Asia from the era of Japanese military expansion and the war—a history that needs to be faced with honesty and responsibility if true conversion and reconciliation is to be achieved.

- 14–17 Under the leadership of Aoki Yoshiaki, head of the Nazarene Church in Japan, five of that community visited Korea to present a formal message of apology for World War II along with a request for true reconciliation between the two countries, to their opposite numbers there. It was the first public and formal visit by member of the Nazarene Church to Korea.
- 30 In an interim report on rebuilding progress in the Kobe area following the quake, Fr. Kanda Hiroshi of Takatori Church listed the following as urgent needs that demand attention: 1) Building a place of assembly for the community; 2) building “Log Houses” for the homeless survivors; 3) work with homeless Vietnamese victims; 4) work on the local mini-FM radio station, as a source of news and information; and 5) making a film record of the disaster. The “place of assembly” and the “log houses” are catching the attention of workers in disaster relief around the world since they are made of recycled cardboard, and in recent weeks have proved more than up to the task.

SEPTEMBER

- 4 The rape of a young grade school girl by U.S. servicemen serving in Okinawa set off a wave of protest at the continuing presence of U.S. bases on the islands. Fifty years after World War II ended, the largest concentration of U.S. troops in Japan are

on the islands, and their facilities occupy some twenty-five percent of arable land on the islands, obstructing the further development of Okinawa. For Okinawans it is almost as if the occupation never ended, and all the Christian communities on the island have been vital in helping the people to find and express their voice.

- 4-6 French Catholic priests including the long time social rights campaigner Fr. Edward Bujostofski from Kawasaki, near Yokohama, went on a hunger strike outside the French Embassy in Azabu, Tokyo to protest French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. France actually exploded another nuclear device on the last day of the hunger strike.
- 17 The fourth in a series of symposia on the topic "Scripture and Discrimination" was held under the joint sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Buraku Problem and the Justice and Peace Commission of the Kyoto diocese. There are still numerous examples of individual and institutional discrimination at all levels of the Christian community. As more than one speaker noted, however, even more regrettable is the unwillingness to acknowledge the dark side of the Church's historical involvement in colonialism that saw the destruction of native or aboriginal communities across the world particularly in Latin America.
- 22 With some 50,000 Japanese living and working in the United Kingdom where they find themselves faced with all sorts of opportunities to encounter Christianity some churches see this as an opportunity for mission. An evangelical mission group, the BJOM has assigned its first missionaries to work among Japanese in the U.K. Yokoyama Motoki and his wife Yoshie, both of whom have previously spent time there including studies at the London Bible College, are already in contact with fellow evangelicals from Low Church parishes in the Anglican Church.

The Deliberative Council on Religious Corporations happily accepted the report of a subcommittee set up to investigate possible revisions in the Religious Corporations Law. Among recommendations made, and one viewed with more than a degree of apprehension, was a proposal that local authorities be given limited investigatory and search powers of religious bodies within their jurisdiction. Along with questions on the very necessity of revision some saw the proposals as infringing on constitutional rights to freedom of religion, and breaking down the democratic tradition of separation of religion and state.

- 22-24 The national meeting of Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions was held in Hiroshima with some 450 in attendance. The gathering focused on the theme of "War Responsibility" and the need to take a long hard look at the lessons to be learned from Japan's experience of war, and how essential it was to use this experience as the foundation on which true peace could be built. The words of Pope John Paul II spoken at Hiroshima in 1981 were recalled, "To recall the past is to take responsibility for the future."
- 23 A believe-it-or-not item from the *Kirisuto Shinbun*, dated September 23, reports that a right-wing Christian group in the U.S., called "American Life League" and which is normally involved in prolife issues, has demanded that Disney recall videos of its hit movie *The Lion King*. A mother had reported that her child had seen a sequence in the movie where as the hero Simba lies resting on a cliff edge the clouds passing overhead spell out the word "sex."

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the launching of the Catholic family-oriented magazine *Akebono*. A special symposium was held at Sophia University, with some 700 in attendance, to mark the occasion under the theme of "A Christian Response to a Shaken Japanese Society." Speakers at the symposium, chaired by Bishop Mori Kazuhiro, auxiliary bishop of Tokyo, were Kisasi Satoko (author), Yamane Motoyo (NHK announcer) and Umewaka Naohiku (classical Noh musician). The common theme of remarks made was the felt need for a place that offers a center of stability and a light of hope amid times of such rapid change and uncertainty.

- 28 With the Japanese Diet scheduled to open its regular session the day following the summer break, all knew that near the top of the agenda was the proposed amendments to the Religious Corporations Law. In response to this the Liaison Conference Concerning the Religious Corporations Law called an emergency meeting of concerned parties to express their opposition to the proposed changes. The Liaison Conference is both an ecumenical and interfaith group reaching right across the religious spectrum; some 250 attended the meeting held in Kanda, Tokyo.

OCTOBER

- 10 The YWCA marked ninety years since its arrival in Japan with commemorative ceremonies held in the auditorium of Aoyama Gakuin University. The theme of the celebrations was "Ninety Years: Choosing for Life. There was a slide show reviewing the history of the YWCA in Japan, and among the overseas delegates was Joyce Sloki of the YWCA from South Africa. She spoke of the role of the organization both in the fight against apartheid and in the reconciliation that will be the foundation of the country's future.
- 11-13 "Solidarity with Foreign Residents in Japan," particularly with women, was the topic of a study seminar held in Karuizawa under the sponsorship of the Roman Catholic International Cooperation Committee. The inherent ambiguity that surrounds the status and role of Japanese women in society only serves to make the position of foreign women resident in Japan even more fraught with problems.
- 14-15 One hundred years have passed since the Salvation Army arrived in Japan. Numerous events were held to mark the centennial. Among events held in the auditorium of Aoyama Gakuin University was a musical festival and a seminar on medical care and welfare. The international head of the Salvation Army, Major General Paul Raeder, and his wife also came to Japan for the celebrations.
- 24 It was announced that Endō Shūsaku, the "Catholic" novelist, was to be among the five recipients of the government Award for Cultural Merit, presented every year on Culture Day, November 3. His wife expressed the hope that he would be well enough to attend the ceremony since he has been hospitalized for some time with liver problems. His most recent novel *Fukai kawa* (Deep River), partly set in India which touches on the spiritual quest of present-day Japanese, was well received critically and soon translated into English and made into a film.
- 26 Some twenty years have passed since the arrival of the first boat people in Japan from Vietnam. Volunteer groups and other Christian welfare organizations have played a significant role in responding to their needs, and this was recognized at a special reception sponsored by the government, to mark those twenty years of work.

Among organizations to receive awards from the Prime Minister were Caritas Japan (Roman Catholic) and a group that works especially with children.

- 30-31 The annual meeting of representatives of Roman Catholic diocesan ecumenical committees had an even more "ecumenical" touch this year. Among the speakers were Archbishop Yashiro Takashi from the Anglican Church in Japan and Professor Kumazawa Yoshinobu from the Tokyo Divinity School (UCCJ). The representatives were also addressed by Fr. Tōmon Yōjirō from Kyoto and Professor Oda Kenji of the Kunitachi University of Music.

NOVEMBER

- 4 The World Council on Religion and Peace, Japanese Committee sponsored a conference held at the United Nations University headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo. The main theme of the conference was "Towards an Image of Japan in the Twenty-first Century." On the panel of speakers were Nakasone Yasuhiro (of Ron and Yasu fame), former Prime Minister of Japan, Higuchi Kotaro, Chairman of Asahi Beer, one of Japan's leading beer and soft drink makers, Arima Ryoto, former President of Tokyo University, Shima Kenji, outspoken former head of NHK, and Cardinal Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo. The Cardinal in his presentation called for greater attention to be paid to the role of women and their contribution to society.
- 11-12 At the Fifth National Seminar on the Family, sponsored by the Catholic Committee on the Family and held at the Futaba Alumni Center, Chiyoda, Tokyo the focus was on the role of the husband and father. Under the theme title of "Husbands-Fathers; Working at their Peak," men were challenged to answer the question of what really matters to them, and to undertake a radical rethinking of the role of work in their lives and how this affects their relations to the rest of the family.
- 10-13 After just six days of debate at the committee stage, a debate during which no expert witnesses were called to give testimony, the proposed amendments to the Religious Corporations were passed for debate in the House of Representatives of the Diet where they were approved on November 13. Cardinal Shirayanagi and Bishop Hamao of Yokohama expressed their profound anger and regret at the passing of the amendments. The problems raised by the actions of Aum Shinrikyō were no more than a pretext, and no real examination had been attempted of the fundamental problems that need to be addressed.
- 11 Kokugakuin University's Center for the Study of Japanese Religion, in a survey of the religious attitudes of youth in Japan that covered twenty-five universities and some 3,700 students, revealed that 58.3% had no interest in religion. Of the 6.7% who declared an interest in religion 25% claimed affiliation to Christianity compared to 34.7% who were said to belong to New Religions. Sōkka Gakkai members constituted the overwhelming majority of the latter group. The figures for those who declared affiliation to a religious body were down from previous surveys including those regularly carried out by NHK. What link if any there is between the lower figures and the emergence of groups like Aum Shinrikyō or Kofuku no Kagaku is still an open and unresolved question.
- 18-19 The ninth Catholic Education Symposium also focused on the role of religion in Japan. Keynote addresses were made by Inoue Nobutaka of Kokugakuin University and

Nishiyama Shigeru of Toyo University. Inoue was the leader of the team that conducted the survey mentioned above. Young people in our information-centered society with its ethos of rationalism and pragmatism are left with a deep psychospiritual emptiness. As one speaker from the floor said for many young people the world of fantasy as encountered in comics, animated movies and computer games seems to be more real than the actual world they live in. Animated fantasy movies and comic books are an integral part of the publicity put out by groups like Aum Shinrikyō.

- 24–25 Celebrations were held to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions. Otsu Kenichi and Oshima Koichi of the NCCJ were among the guests and speakers. Also present were fraternal delegates from the Justice and Peace Commissions of Korea and the Philippines. Bishop Sōma, formerly ordinary of the Nagoya diocese, and one of Japan's most well-known social rights campaigner, who had a formative influence on the Justice and Peace Commissions birth and growth also addressed those present.

DECEMBER

- 12–15 At the Roman Catholic Bishops' extraordinary annual general meeting held at the Catholic Center, Shiomi, Tokyo, in commemoration of the end of World War II, a whole day was devoted to the study of the "Comfort Women" problem, including a keynote address by Yoshimi Yoshiaki of Chūo University. A first formal response to the amendments made to the Religious Corporations Law was also considered.
- 14 The closing hearing was held in the Fukuoka District Court in the Aoyanagi Yukinobu case. Aoyanagi had been charged with aiding and abetting foreign residents illegally staying in Japan to obtain work. He spent Christmas and the New Year held on remand while the case made slow progress through Japan's torturous legal system. Now another holiday season away from his family was assured. The judge announced that he would give his verdict at a hearing scheduled for March 13, 1996. Speaking at the Jesuit Social Studies Center in Kawata-machi, Tokyo, Fr. Kanda Hiroshi of Takatori Church in Kobe reported on the ongoing relief work in the area. He remarked that as the community has worked with the victims of the January quake they had at last come alive as a real Church.
- 21 Fr. Ikenaga Jun, SJ is nominated by the Vatican as Coadjutor Archbishop for Osaka. A coadjutor is an auxiliary bishop with the right of succession. Most theologians and commentators thought that the idea of appointing a coadjutor was part of the pre-Vatican II era. Fr. Ikenaga, a graduate of the Jesuit-run Rokko Junior and Senior High School, Nada, Kobe, formerly served as Novice Master and Provincial for his community in Japan.
- 24 Bishop Mitsue of Hiroshima issued a pastoral letter on peace. In the letter he called upon all in the diocese to dedicate themselves to being peacemakers. Then he went on to ask that every year till 2000 be a year for peace. Issued as the letter was on the eve of the birth of the one we call the Prince of Peace, his call for peace, if it is marked by genuine efforts on the part of one and all to live out their vocations as peacemakers is the most appropriate living memorial we can build in this year when we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II.