

“Christianity and Disaster—The 106th Tohoku Volunteer Report”

March 15, 2020.

Kobe International Sustaining Organization Director Iwamura Yoshio

<Introduction>

Beautiful mountains, blooming of seasonal flowers at Satoyama (community-based forest), and butterflies dancing on the clear streams of small rivers. Those natural sceneries that have been healing heart of Japanese people for generations, are forcing to at the absolute edge. When I was a child, I was walking through a large herd of chironomids at the small pass of a rice field, those bugs came into my nose while I was taking a breath. But in these days, we don't experience those things anymore. Pursuing of benefit by increasing amount of rice production, rather than for eating rice, because of spraying of agricultural chemicals, such as neonicotinoid pesticides, larval population is reaching ecological extinction. No sludge worm can be seen in the narrow spring stream flowing beside the river. The ecosystem is gradually getting damaged. Not only Japan, but the earth itself is dying because of human's economic priorities, technological progress and efficiency calculations, so the body is falling down from the stage. Then, thunder is lightning as if the god of the sky is angry. As it is called “*Kaminari* (神鳴り: God's roaring)”, the thunderstorm that brings the natural fertilizer changed into “the anger”. (Job 38:25)¹ On March 11, 2011, a tsunami of more than 40 meters, which was thought to be the Great Flood, attacked Miyagi Prefecture.

On March 21, the first sight of the devastated Ishinomaki City for me was truly a “dead city”. The proud city of fisheries was shattered into small pieces. The fishing ports, port towns and fishery processing factories that had the largest number of victims in the six Tohoku prefectures were drowned by the back-tsunami dragons, and their lives had vanished.



Landscape of Ishinomaki City

Hiyori Oohashi Bridge photo by Yoshio Iwamura
March 21, 2011

At Saito Hospital where we first step in to bring in medical supplies and it was like a field hospital, there were only patients who were shaking in the cold. I took my step back from the evacuation centers because of its severe environment, and these were full of bad smell, no warmth equipment, and unclean situation, so people were just waiting for death².

¹ By the energy of lightening, nitrogen N₂, oxygen O₂ and water H₂O in the air produce ⇒ nitrogen oxides NHO₃. Nitrate ion NO₃ – natural nitrogen fertilizer. Those are essential for plant growth. Even though nitrogen (N₂) is contained in the air at about 80%, most plants cannot utilize N₂ as it is. With combination of nitrate bacteria, nitrifying bacteria, clostridium and azotobacter, N₂ in the air can be used for plants on the land for the first time. The among of nitrogen compound that is produced by lightening in the world is annually 30 million tones.

² 2012. *The Asahi Shimbun*. March 17.

Associate professor Tsuji Yoshinobu at Earthquake Research Institute, University of Tokyo measured that a maximum runup height at Kasagaijima, Ishinomaki City Miyagi Prefecture was 43.3 meters.

Approximately 6,000 people died in the Ishinomaki region, including related deaths and missing. And about 28,000 houses were completely destroyed. The media has continued to broadcast that moving from “evacuation center” to “temporary housing”, and at last to “restoration housing” as if they were the absolute goal. Therefore, the article that we have come to an end of reconstruction of housing as “creative restoration” and has climbed up the stairs, covers the headlines³.

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(1) The 106th Tohoku Volunteer

a. The largest disaster affected area, Ishinomaki

On March 9, 2020, we headed to Ishinomaki City Miyagi Prefecture from Kobe by two cars. There were twelve participants. Reporter Takemoto Yakuya from Kobe Shimbun accompanied with us, and thirteen of us visited Ishinomaki District JForest and Chairperson Ouchi Nobuyuki welcomed us. He was the one who accompanied to President Suzuki Kenichi to participate in the establishment of Ishinomaki Revitalization Unit in 2011. Chairman Tanno Kazuo of Japan Fisheries Cooperative, Miyagi Prefecture and Chairman Abe Masaru of Regional Agricultural Cooperatives have started to discuss each other regularly including me who experienced the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, after the event of the great earthquake and tsunami, even though those industry groups had never seen each other for hundreds of years at the area.

9 years ago, we were initially working on removing mud, clearing debris, moving out household goods and tools, and distributing supporting goods. As “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”, we had worked with students from early morning to late night to fill the desire of disaster affected people. (Matthew 7:12) We don’t provide anything from us nor do a program according to the manual. We just went to the place where needed help. Approximately nearly 2,000 people of students, part-time jobbers, businessmen have covered own cost for transportation fees, foods, and accommodations, and traveled every month about 15 hours’ drive and 1,100km for one-way to meet with the disaster affected people who are waiting for our organization to come. There was no time for us to enjoy eating “sea squirts”, which is called as a sea pineapple that I had never been eaten, local sweet “*zundamochi* (rice cake of grained edamame: immature soybean)”, and the Japan’s best oysters. However, the participants were fascinated by the deep humanity of Tohoku people, and some hoped to come and live there. Inside our car, on the way back from the hard work, those who have tears in their eyes because of sadness to separation from the local people, they never reluctant to continue participating in our activities.

2013. Iwamura, Y. *Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay*. Japan Association of Religion and Ethics. Kansai University.

³ 2020. *Ishinomaki Hibi Shinbun*. March 9, 10.

b. “Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay”

The “Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay” that our organization is working on is a way to restore the relationship with nature. Looking back at the scars of the disaster, it seems as if nature is revenging on humans. In recent years, it is also the size of a pandemic (Worldwide outbreak. Greek word “pan-: all” + “demos: people”). The volcanic explosion of “the Ring of Fire” is no longer a problem for someone else. As it is written “yet the sea is never full” in “All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again”, the circulation system such as the surface of the sea evaporates and turns into clouds, and eventually becomes rain and snow in the mountains, is described. (Ecclesiastes 1:7) All rivers pour into the sea. But the sea never fills. Every river goes where it needs to go and flows constantly. The world of nature is also circulating.

At Kesenuma, there is Director Hatakeyama Shigeatsu of “*Mori wa Umi no Koibito* (The forest is a lover of the sea)”. Forests, rivers and the sea were connected, and if the iron was supplied, the beautiful hometown will be revived, so they plant trees with the local people. I went to listen their talk on December 28, 2012⁴. Three members, the first leader Yamamoto Tomoya, the current representative Murakami Hiroataka, and myself. Director Mizugaki Wataru said. “Looking beneath the fringe of an old Japanese house, you could see thick pillars that firmly support the house. We shall be one of those pillars and support the connections of the people from the bottom forever. This is the meaning of Kobe International Sustaining Organization.”⁵ “When we did a volunteer visiting in Minamibouso Mera, Chiba Prefecture, I met with Director Aizawa Nobuo of “Awa Bunkaisan Forum”. In the materials I received, there was a discussion about that Pastor Fukazu Fumio [1909-2000] established “Kanita Fujin no Mura” and set up shelters for women those who were difficult to return to society due to intellectual and mental disabilities and also suffered from sexual abuse. “*Tei-ten-shi-kou* (底点志向: Bottom-point-will-toward)” that Pastor Fukazu prescribes, connects at a fundamental level of work of “support from beneath”⁶. Instead of looking from the top, we always stay beside the vulnerable people, who are oppressed, discriminated and bullied, from the beneath. It is exactly to “understand (‘under’ + ‘stand’)”.

c. Japan also starts from the wrong button “Disaster prevention” ⇒ “disaster” ⇒ “restoration”.

While working on visiting evacuation centers, volunteering in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and visiting individual victims at home, we came to aware something at the site. Volunteers do not expect any rewards. It is not a publicity stunt neither. Far from becoming a rich, we are always economically poor back to back. There is something we are able to see by using own time, physical strength, and money for “restoration”. This is because that we communicate with the victims with “charge-free”, “independent” and “dialogue” as pillars⁷. On the other hand, such disaster prevention ○○ meeting, Social Welfare Council (volunteer center), industry (business operator), public administration (prefecture, prefectural police, prefectural board of education), academic (scholar, medical people), people (youth group), and media (newspapers, television), etc. are working from the top and more, they make full use of computers on the desk. Through the press, they propose all too many ideas of the authority side like a profusion of flowers. Probably they have too much funding to use from government, civil service, and educational institution, they expand network and organizations nationwide. “However” is. Considering “disaster prevention”, it may be difficult for those people who have never sweated at his own expenses at the disaster site, to empathize with the victim’s sufferings. To consider “disaster prevention”, I wonder how many realistic suggestions on

⁴ 2013. Iwamura, Y. *Quarterly report “Shien”*. No.4. August 10. 4.

⁵ 2012. Mizugaki, W. *Quarterly report “Shien”*. No.1. November 3. 1.

⁶ 1998. NHK Kyoiku “*Kokorono Jidai (Time of heart)*”. April 26.

⁷ 2017. *Ishinomaki Kahoku*. November 21; 2016. Iwamura, Y. *Christianity and Volunteer-Dō (=The Principle Way of volunteer)*. Tokyo University. 5-10.

“dam”, “management of forest” and “food security” they have been raised⁸.

For example, it is a destiny for a dam that sediment accumulates in a few years and the riverbed goes up. It interferes salmon and other fish to swim up upstream for spawning. Its damaging the natural ecology system. To consider “disaster prevention”, is it possible to say that is fine against disasters if we reinforce the land where is dangerous?

Let’s think from an example of “disaster”.

(2) From “disaster” to “restoration”

a. Dam

On July 23, 2018, the auxiliary dam of the hydroelectricity dam “Xepian-Xe Nam Noy Dam” at Attapeu Province, the southern part of Laos, collapsed and it was reported that 40 dead, 66 missing and more than 6,000 people were affected⁹.

The dam is “destroying the ecosystems of the Mekong River system, such as giant catfish and giant basa fish” and “stopping the supplies of fertile sediment to the rice-producing Mekong Delta area, so the amount of sediment is reduced to two-thirds”. The Ainu people are also moaning that salmon cannot go up to upstream to spawn¹⁰.

Laos has a dam image on their national emblem. The infrastructure is rapidly expanding, and we cannot ignore the overexploitation of nature. We should not leave serious problems in the future for future generations, so we better think about how to protect the safety and nature environment of the earth. Speaking of the dam image on the emblem, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also uses it. In 1941, the best facility in the largest in the East Asia, the Shuifeng Dam was completed just before the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States. It utilizes the Amrok River that flows along the border with the former State of Manchuria. If this dam collapses, how will Japan compensate for it? Unlike South Korea, Japan has not compensated for any pre-war and wartime colonial policy to North Korea.

Around the world, by the promotion of infrastructure, Sabo dams (Sediment control dam), and tunnels and bridges for roads in mountains are expanding largely, and those threaten the natural ecology¹¹. It is becoming increasingly obvious that it is not possible to protect people’s livelihood, lives, and properties simply by hard managements such as, seawalls, breakwaters, and river maintenances. That is proved by 3.11. What had happened to the seawalls and breakwaters in Tarō-chō, Miyako City Iwate Prefecture, where was used to be proud of themselves as the world safest “disaster prevention town”? Tarō-chō was drown by the tsunami and 179 people were dead and 6 are missing. It was a tragedy brought by their bloated mind¹². Despite the fact that the seawalls were useless, the local people’s opposition to reconstruction that relates to the grant concessions, was demolished by a draft by the research team of The University of Tokyo and Tohoku University¹³.

⁸ The “*Chisan dam* (Erosion-control dam)”, which is organized by the Forestry Agency, has a function to prevent the flow of sediment to the lower stream by making gradual slope of the river, and preserve forests by preventing erosion of the riverbank. The “*Sabo dam* (Sediment control dam)” by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is often built down area of the Chisan dam. 2019. Iwamura, Y. *Christianity and Disaster Prevention*. Kansei Gakuin University. 9-10.

⁹ 2018. *British Broadcasting Corporation*. July 27.

¹⁰ 2018. Iwamura, Y. *Technocentrism causes natural disasters – The 1st Hokkaido Earthquake Volunteer*. September 9-12. <http://kicc.sub.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/6fd475dd9fe0e47f708cfde21a50a5d6.pdf>

¹¹ 2020. Iwamura, Y. Nagahama Kindergarten. January 21. <https://youtu.be/zEw6pUy6JjQ>
2019. Moore, Stephen. A. *Constructing East Asia - Technology, Ideology, and Empire in Japan's Wartime Era, 1931-1945*. Translated by Tsukahara Togo. Jimbun shoin. 205-207.

¹² 2015. Iwamura, Y. *Quarterly report “Shien”*. No.10. February p.4.

¹³ 2014. *NHK Special. A tide embankment 400km. Is it possible to protect human lives and livelihood?* May 30. 10pm.

How do media reports perceive dams?

In 2019, due to a sudden upsurge of the water storage capacity in the dam, the water level at downstream was increased by the emergency water discharge from six facilities at five prefectures, such as the Shiroyama Dam at upstream of the Sagami River. There is a position to defend dam that it was an inevitable decision, “The risk of overflowing was increasing. It must have been an unavoidable measure to protect the dams”¹⁴.

Even after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, the dam at Lake Fujinuma in Sukagawa City Fukushima Prefecture, collapsed. All of the storage water flowed out and washed away downstream village, so seven people were dead and one is missing.

b. The collapse of the safety myth

Ms. Muto Ruiko [1953-] says. “Human is just one of the living creatures on the earth. Are there any other creatures that will steal the future of its own species¹⁵?” “For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.” (Romans 8:19)

Tarō-chō, which was used to be called as the world safest town by solidified with modern concrete, was drowned by the tsunami. The champion of disaster prevention was knocked down by the 3.11 tsunami. Even the Fukushima Daiichi and Daini Nuclear Power Plant, which had been said to be safe facilities, turned to be just a concrete landscape on seacoast after its nuclear meltdowns. Since April, 2011, Professor Akasaka Norio [1953-] of Gakushuin University has been told¹⁶. He suggests that instead of reconstructing solidified area by concrete that reached to the depth of nature when the population of the Japanese archipelago became maximum, while we stepping back to the line where we can secure our safety, we should reorganize the coastline kindly to the nature once again.

Fishery people do not welcome concrete seawalls because its produce “bubbles”. “Bubbles” are cause of changing the water quality of the sea. Delicious oysters, seaweed and sea squirts do not grow¹⁷.

German theologian Jürgen Moltmann [1926-] explains about Genesis chapter 1 verse 28 as follow.

“Human being is not ‘the crown of creation’. Humans are a dependent on all other creatures as ‘the last creature’.

Without other creatures, humans cannot exist. Therefore, as they are the preparation for humans, humans rely on them. It is because animals are also called as ‘the spirit with life’. (Genesis 1:30) The God’s trust, ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ distinguishes humans from the earth. It does not mean to let ‘the world’, ‘heaven’ and ‘sea’ obey to humans. The reason to distinguish humans from animals that humans should give a name to each living creature by words and the name that humans give should be its name. (Genesis 2:19) It is not just an act of domination. That is, by doing so, animals enter the communion of human language. The note of creation does not mention the hostility between humans and animals nor the right to kill animals. Humans have been appointed as mediators.¹⁸“

After the Typhoon No.19 in 2019, there were areas where disrupted water supply has been continuing and they haven’t got back their ordinal life even their houses didn’t get large damages. Some people felt unwell due to shocks from seeing a large-scale disaster¹⁹.

¹⁴ 2019. *Yomiuri Shimbun*. October 14.

¹⁵ 2012. Mutou, R. *From Fukushima to you*. Otsuki shoten. 27.

¹⁶ 2012. Akasaka, N (collective writing). *Beginning from the remote region – Tokyo / Tohoku Theory*. Akashi shoten. 332.

¹⁷ 2015. Iwamura, Y. *Quarterly report “Shien”*. No.10. February p.4

The dike deteriorates the water quality. It blocks various minerals carried from the beach and changes the ecology system of sea creatures. Ria coast, the Sanriku Coast is a habitat for the Seawrack. More than 50 species of fry, such as the Kuroiso, the Japanese halibut, the Pacific cod and The Okhotsk atka mackerel, grow in muddy sand of the Seawrack colony. The Seawrack releases a lot of oxygen in the water.

¹⁸ 1991. Moltmann, J. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Translated by Okino Masahiro. Shinkyō Publishing. 278-280.

¹⁹ 2019. *Fukushima Minyu*. October 16.

How shall we capture “restoration”?

c. ”Restoration” of Typhoon No.19.

Typhoon No.15 on September 9 and No.19 on October 12-13, 2019 passed through the eastern Japan. The scale of the water flood was beyond our imagination. Since the disaster affected areas cover large range area, we have been visiting the disaster affected people at a municipal elementary and junior high school, Bounan Gakuen, in Tateyama City where the people of Mera Tateyama City Chiba Prefecture have been evacuated when No. 19 landed, because we have continuous relationship with them from No.15 came. Blue tarps flew off every time the strong wind blew, so repaired roofs, walls, and windows were damaged again because of tiles flying from neighboring houses. There were not enough volunteers, so the victims were feeling exhausted.

I was worrying about racks for drying rice that we harvested through our agricultural volunteers at Watanoha Ishinomaki City Miyagi Prefecture, so we loaded plastic handy tanks, blue tarps, and sand bags into a car on October 15, and we were driving on National Route 113 toward Marumori-machi Miyagi Prefecture, and delivered support goods at Iwaki City Fukushima Prefecture on the way. There was a landslide at the site of the “clear-cutting” where the entire forest was completely cut down, so it brought death to ten people, and one missing. Numerous disasters were occurring in areas where the government ordered clearing of forests for efficiency purpose. On the other hand, there was no trace of landslide in the surrounding untouched forests.

An editorialist of “the Age (The Melbourne Newspaper)” wrote, “A person who cuts trees unnecessarily is a guilty person”. Like Japan that was used to be, we can easily find examples of love of land by going to local areas of the United of Kingdom, France, Italy and other regions²⁰.

Around the road of Iwaki City Fukushima Prefecture and Marumori-machi Miyagi Prefecture, there were a pile of disaster wastes.

On October 16, Typhoon No.19 hit Kanto, Tohoku and Shinshyu region, not Kanto region.

Typhoon No.19 brutally left scars at Ishinomaki region Miyagi Prefecture where 3.11 great earthquake and tsunami bereaved houses, families, and jobs in 9 years ago. In Ishinomaki City, three people died, and about 10,000 houses were flooded. Approximately 40 houses at Utagawa-chō, 100 houses at Shiotomi- chō Ichichome, 300 houses at Shiotomi- chō Nichome were damaged by water flood where we have been visiting immediately after the occurrence of disaster and continuing “Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay” of agriculture, forestry and fishery, roadside maintenance and listening volunteers. The car that we located at Watanoha Sanhome where the Kobe International Sustaining Organization’s Ishinomaki branch was damaged by water flood, so we had no choice but to discard it.

Inside of Ishinomaki City, crustal movement occurred due to the 2011 earthquake. It is a ground subsidence of 45-120 cm, and former Watanoha area where we have been visiting is about 80 cm. If you try to do land elevation for 1m, you need about 4.5 million yen, therefore those who became unemployed, living with pension and living alone forced to live without making their land up. Though, at the time of Typhoon No.19, an unemployed woman (83 years old) at Nagaruru area answered to an interview, “My house was not affected by the Great Chilean earthquake. Water come into even I made my land level up. I always worry when its rain.”²¹ Actually, she is claiming the negative effect of “land elevation”. In addition to the difficulty of natural drainage in urban areas due to the ground subsidence caused by the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, this situation is caused by making nearby areas to be lower due to land elevation of roads.

The Takashiba Dam in Fukushima Prefecture we visited on October 16 had not conducted a water level adjustment in advance. Since the emergency water discharge was operated, it caused casualties at lower area of six dams (Miwa Dam in Nagano Prefecture, Mizunuma Dam and Ryujin Dam in Ibaraki Prefecture,

²⁰ 1998. Passmore, J. *Man's Responsibility for Nature*. Iwanami Shoten. 326; 2019. *Mainichi Shimbun*. December 16.

²¹ 2019. *Kahoku Shinpo*. October 25.

Shiohara Dam in Tochigi Prefecture, Shiroyama Dam in Kanagawa Prefecture)²². On July 7, 2018, when we did food distribution at Hakimasue Asakura City Fukuoka Prefecture, we witnessed the collapse of Sabo Dam, so I sent message through my report about dam break, water discharge and overtopping²³.

Just one year after the Masue water flood, on July 8, 2018, we did food distribution at Daini Fukuda Elementary School. At Yata Mabi-chō Kurashiki City Okayama Prefecture, more than six meters of water flood attacked and 59 people died and 8 are missing. It was an inland flood at more than 10 km away from the coast. The river bank break is a mystery.

On August 7, when our organization visited Nariwagawa Dam from the upstream of Takahashi River for the 4th Western Japan Heavy Rain Volunteer, on the way, we saw towns that were drown by water discharge from dam, so we did a listening volunteer. There was a corroborating evidence for the cause of flood damage in Mabi-chō. Even though I sent out the 4th Western Japan Heavy Rain Volunteer Report through SNS and website about that the damage in Mabi-chō was caused by water discharge from Nariwagawa Dam at Takahashi River, nobody give attention to it. However, according to Mainichi Shimbun (December 16, 2019) reported that six months later, the locals of Mabi-chō who had been kept silent, decided to file a suit in Okayama District Court for their damages against the country, prefecture, city and the Chugoku Electric Power Company²⁴.

(3) Outward of Restoration

a. Resume operations at the Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant

Initially, Naraha-chō Fukushima Prefecture, had a plan to be a starting point of the torch relay that go through inside of prefecture three days from March 26, 2020. It was an information manipulation that can only be thought of as performance of highlighting a “restoration”. Why? It is because that the Declaration of a Nuclear Emergency Situation of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster still has not been dissolved. The deconstruction of exhaust stack of the Fukushima Daiichi and Daini Nuclear Power Plant, which has a danger of breaking down, haven’t progressed smoothly. It is because that local fisheries oppose the ocean release from sewage tanks.

Even the way of resolving the nuclear disaster is as if it covered by fog, and nobody knows where to go. Nevertheless, it is probably a form of fraud to host the Olympics as if everything has been restored. It is apparent that Namie-machi, Futaba-machi, Ōkuma-machi, and Tomioka-machi are used to appeal “restoration” to the world for the Tokyo Olympics. The town that used to be a “difficult-to-return zone” was suddenly transformed to “release of evacuation”. Voluntary evacuees do not want to return to where they were used to live. There are no shops, hospitals, schools, etc. and it is a desolate and uninhabited area that ignores livelihood. People are frightened by low dose exposure. The deception that provokes the people is always everywhere. For example, considering the radioactive contamination of nuclear accident, the government shows numbers as if housing reconstruction, road maintenance and industrial infrastructure are recovering. However, except of voluntary evacuees, more than 50,000 Fukushima residents still far away from their original place. Though nine years has passed since the incident, the path to restoration of livelihood has not been indicated²⁵.

On March 26, the ruling party alone passed a resolution without holding a local referendum since many

²² 2019. *The Ibaraki Shimbun*. October 14.

²³ 2019. Iwamura, Y. *Form the time of crisis to the time of renewal – Abandoned Masuki*. March 31.
<http://kisokobe.sub.jp/article/10343/>

²⁴ Iwamura, Y. *Natural disaster or Human disaster*.
<https://www.christiantoday.co.jp/articles/26880/20190529/kiki-no-jidai-sasshin-no-jidai-3.htm>

²⁵ 2018. Aoki, M. *A town deleted from the map. “The truth that must not be said” after 3.11*. Kodansha's new library of knowledge. 187-188.

residents oppose it. Tohoku Electric Power Company insists that safety measurement construction for resuming operations of Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant has been completed. They strongly appeal safety by constructing a seawall about 29 m above sea level. We should remember that 43.3m tsunami hit Kasagaijima at Ishinomaki City during 3.11.

Is it fine to leave nuclear wastes to our descendants?

b. Kirishitan = Volunteer

At Watanoha Nichome where our organization is visiting more than 100 times, there was a temple called “*Muryojuan (無量寿庵)*” until 3.11. It was washed away by the tsunami. A samurai retainer Goto Jyuan (後藤寿庵), who was trusted by Date Masamune [1567-1636], could avoid committing hara-kiri by a compassionate release of Masamune. “*Jyuan (寿庵)*” means John the Baptist. The former Buddhist chief priest at that temple is the current Vice priest at Saikouji Temple at Kadowaki area, Mr. Higuchi Shinsho. This time, Vice priest Higuchi Shinsho, Bishop Tabata Ryuhei at Orthodox Church, Muslim Missionary Anees Ahmad Nadeem, and myself joined together and had an opportunity to pray memorial prayers by the Ecumenical way at the Prayer Forest²⁶.

President Hirakawa Shin from Miyagi Gakuin Women's University talks that the motive of Kirishitan (Roman Catholics before the Meiji Restoration [1868]) persecution was that Toyotoki Hideyoshi [1537-1598] was skeptical about the exclusive nature of Christianity and the ability of missionaries to mobilize Kirishitan daimyo (Christian local Lord), so it became the trigger of the Bateria Tsuihorei (an edict expelling the Jesuit missionaries), and also the reason why Japan did not become the colony of Spanish, which was the strongest country at that time²⁷.

Although traces of Francisco Xavier [1506-1552] who was attempting to gain power, have been recorded, I am more interested in why he captured the heart of Japanese in a short time of period. Then, the image of “Kirishitan = Volunteer” came up.

Xavier landed on Kagoshima Prefecture on August 15, 1549. He started to do rescue activities for orphans, the elderly people, the very sick and “lepers (patients of Hansen's disease)”. A social charitable work, which had been absent during the Azuchi-Momoyama period, had started in a new principle that had not been done by Buddhism²⁸. Xavier's world view (Weltanschauung) of the mission was a religious manifestation. I imagine that it was based on, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” (Isaiah 61:1)

At that time, Kirishitan practiced love in the society that there was no social welfare provided by the state community but there were many suffering sufferers from poverty and disease within the social norm of that the stronger was the winner²⁹. From 1591 to today, through persecution and hiding, there is the fourteen Kirishitan Oath in *Orashyo* (prayer texts) that has been chanted and remembered³⁰.

Even under Kirishitan persecution, the Tokugawa Shogunate initially gave silent consent to “*Jihi no Kumi (慈悲の組: the group of mercy)*”, which practiced love. Especially “Kumi” actively took care of orphans, single women who lost their husbands due to wars and disasters, the single living elderly people, the weak

²⁶ 2020. *Chugai Nippoh*. March 18.

²⁷ 2018. Hirakawa, S. *The Sengoku Japan and the Age of Exploration*. Chuokoron-Shinsha. 48, 70.

²⁸ 2016. Okiura, K. *Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier and ostracized community people*. Chikuma Shobo. 138.

“There were also people from the samurai lords, but mostly, people became a believer from the lowest community.” (ibid. 190)

²⁹ 1979. Kataoka, Y. *Japan Kirishitan Martyrdom History*. Jiji Press. 164-169.

³⁰ Firstly, feed the hungry. Secondly, give the thirsty person a drink. Thirdly, give person cloth to hide their skin. Fourthly, care and visit the sick people. Fifthly, provide accommodation for travelers. Sixthly, help the captives. Seventhly, give the dead a decent burial. That is all. (ibid. 154-155)

and the sick³¹.

Even under persecution, “*Misericórdia no Kumi* (Meaning of mercy in Portuguese)” also served just as same as the 1st century C.E. Jesus sent out 72 missionaries, “Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (Luke 10:9) It was not to increase followers through evangelism. And also, it was not to receive God’s forgiveness by doing “righteous act”³². There is a common recognition in Kobe International Sustaining Organization that there are “ignorance (indifference)” (Matthew 25:41-43), “self-justification” (Matthew 25:45), and “lies” (John 8:44).

The activity is recorded in the section 16 that was practiced by the followers of “*Santa Maria no Kumi*”. “Those who visits prisoners, give mercy and save...conduct burial or give necessary things for burial, or who give heart to stop swords to cut dead body...”³³

“Menshyofu (免償符)”. “Mensho (免償: indulgence)” is not “Menzai (免罪: Exoneration)”. It is an exemption from the finite “punishment” imposed on “sin”. The explanation is wrong in Japan.³⁴

c . Missionary work is not evangelism but practice of love

Volunteers are people who communicate “τόπος (*topos*. Greek word. Meaning ‘place’)” with people on the real site. Dialogue with people, sustained relationships (our organization calls it “*En* (縁)”, “Life together (coexistence)”) will fill the sense of loss in the disaster. We become the existence like people’s family, childhood friend and best friend, and we receive trust. Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has been trying to encourage people’s cooperative behavior to increase the efficiency of society by utilizing the social capital theory of American political scientist Robert Putnam [1940-] to various fields³⁵. Putnam defined it as “The social efficiency can be improved by accelerating coordinated activities, and that is the characteristic of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks.” He criticized the concept of “*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Community and Society)” of a classic German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies [1855-1936]³⁶. Along with modernization, the community will not be demolished, but “solidarity, active civil participation, cooperation and cleanliness” will be seen in civil common society³⁷. Putnam’s “efficiency”, which Japanese government refers to, cannot stay close to the disaster affected people, the poor and vulnerable people.

This is because that it not pursuits efficiency and productivity but try to completely fit into the situation and purpose of the other party. That means, we do not follow the manual created on the desk. “Love of our neighbor” is the fundamental. Since “fulfilled (Greek word, πληρόω *plero*)” come from “whoever loves others has fulfilled the law (Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:14)”, so Paul talks of the essence that beyond the religion’s “religion, faith, devout”. Mother Teresa [1910-1997] did not conduct any welfare inside of the church. She went outside and touched the dying people. Kalighat Home for the Dying Destitutes and “Furusato no Ie” at Kamagasaki are same and it devoted to diākonīā (Caritas), so Bishop Honda Tetsuro from

³¹ 2004. Iwamura, Y. *Christian Churches in Japan. Time of Kirishitan*. Series of Christian world. KBH. November 9; 2016. Okiura, K. *Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier and ostracized community people*. Chikuma Shobo. 144.

³² They retain a faith of the seven teachings and repeat it. Above all, seven credos were kept in their hearts. Firstly, feed the hungry. Secondly, give the thirsty person a drink. Thirdly, give person cloth to hide their skin. Fourthly, care and visit the sick people. Fifthly, provide accommodation for travelers. Sixthly, help the captives. Seventhly, give the dead a decent burial.

³³ That is all. (ibid. 154-155) Under the Bateren Tsuihorei, “*Misericórdia* community” had continued for 50 years since their establishment. (*Japan Kirishitan Martyrdom History*. 169.)

³⁴ “Menshyofu (免償符)”. “Mensho (免償: indulgence)” is not “Menzai (免罪: Exoneration)”. It is an exemption from the finite “punishment” imposed on “sin”. The explanation is wrong in Japan.

³⁵ 2017. Murata, J. *Between Christianity and Sociology*. Koyo Shobo. 182-183. *Community Regeneration and Social Capital*. (Economic and Social Research Institute.); 2001. Putnam, Robert D. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Translated by Kawata Jyunichi. NTT Publishing. 206-207.

³⁶ 2013. Putnam, Robert D. Goss, Kristin A. *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. Translated by Inoguchi Takashi. Minervashobo. 12.

³⁷ *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. 138.

“Furusato no Ie” also serves doing haircuts, cook, medical treatment without conducting evangelism. For Mother Teresa and Bishop Honda, the church is only for prayer assignments, donation cooperation and information gathering. On April 16, 2016, when we receive a request from Kumamoto Prefectural Government to do food distribution for 700 ~ 800 people at Aijien (Director Mishima Mitsuhiro) in Mashiki-chō Kamimashiki-gun Kumamoto Prefecture, there were ten participants from Kobe, and there were two nurses in our group³⁸. At the evacuation center, they served to examine those who had worsened chronic illness and give medicinal prescriptions if it was necessary. Their act was not for healing, but watching to heal. Christ was, “But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed (Greek word **ἰάομαι** *iaomai* <<cure, healing by doctor>>) those who needed healing (Greek word, **θεραπεία** *therapeia* <<care, attendance, treatment>>. The noun form of **θεραπεύω** *therapeuo*.” (Luke 9:11) As a result of the treatment, some may have been healed. But Christ’s main work was “healing”³⁹. Mr. Oshima Kenjiro, who participated in the 106th Tohoku Volunteer moved to Kumamoto Prefecture and watched “restoration”. What was his driving force behind being able to be with the people at disaster affected area alone? He accepted “Kyoku (共苦: Share sufferings)” as a Christian.

It means that suffering on the cross, “suffer together (**συμπάσχω** (**σύν** *sun* <<together>>, **πάσχω** *pasuko* <<receive suffering, experience difficulty>>)”. “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” (Romans 8:17)

Our organization also possible to continue going to disaster affected site because of prayers at Kobe International Christ Church, cooperation of donation and sharing information. Especially the Tarumi Morning Prayer Meeting has been continuously deeply praying for “restoration” of Ishinomaki City since 3.11, by overcoming different sects and religious group for prayer tasks.

<Conclusion>

Instead of “disaster prevention” ⇒ “disaster” ⇒ “restoration”, we always challenge to do the Volunteer-dō (The principle way of volunteer) that “restoration” site ⇒ working on “disaster” ⇒ prepare for disaster prevention”. We are fighting. Generally, speaking of the restoration of the disaster affected area, even after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, it relies on the provided services from experts, LSA (Life Support Adviser), and network of NPO, etc. However, an impression is inevitable that it seems like a spinning out because of individual victim’s information management by the administration, construction of public buildings, intervention in civil construction such as roads, one-side services, and shortage of human resources. Sadly, there is tendency to pick it up as a “creative restoration”, if you do visible forms of restoration faster than other disaster affected areas. Even re-housing development has started at the “red zone” near the seaside where was covered by the tsunami, City Planning Division never take any action if there is no petition for troubles from local people. Japanese society is a dead body.

Religious ministry does not come from meetings, discussions, or budget confirmation, but it brings out from “topos” of the poor. Coronavirus would be an awaken stimulation for volunteers. It is because that orphans, widows who have lost their husbands in wars and disasters, and the single living elderly people are shedding tears of cry a lot.

A person who loves others is fulfilling the law. Practicing neighboring love is not an emotional; but it is about knowing the diversity of those who are different from yourself and understanding its pain. Coexistence requires to understand the other side has own history that go around “story” and have tolerance of acceptance.

³⁸ 2018. *Hiroyasu Aijien Kumamoto Earthquake Report. From that time, and from now.* Hiroyasu Aijien. 15.

³⁹ 2010. Iwamura, Y. *Healing of the Bible.* Kobe International Christ Church. February 28.

The street living people have been changed as volunteers to stand by the disaster affected people. Mr. Hori Koichi and Mr. Tamura Shinsaku needed the work of the Holy Spirit to go to the water flood disaster areas in Okayama and Hiroshima, and Mera Minamiboso from their will. Mr. Hori also engaged in the work at Ishinomaki Fisheries Cooperative, as a leader of fishery volunteer of the 106th Tohoku Volunteer. It was the special grace that comes vertically from God. Executive director Honda Toshihisa of our organization encouraged those two of them, and by doing “Kyoshin (共振: Sympathetic vibration)” “Kyoku (共苦: Share sufferings)”, and “Kyosei (共生: Life together)”, solidarity is rising.

Representative of our organization, Mr. Murakami Hirotaka was featured in the evening edition of Kobe Shimbun on March 11th by Mr. Takemoto Yakuya reporter who accompanied to our activities. I sincerely thank for God’s unseen hand for bringing the change that equivalent to Paul’s conversion.



From the left of front row: Takahashi Kazumasa, Yamashita Toshikaz, Executive Director Yamanouchi Nobuyuki, Iwamura Yoshio (author), Takemoto Yakuya.

2nd row: Sasaki Miwa, Anees Ahmad Nadeem, Tokudome Yumi, Hori Kouichi, Kitamura Yasuo
Last row: Tamura Shinzauku, Honda Yasuhisa, Oshima Kenjiro. Photo by Murakami Hirotaka.

At Ishinomaki District JForest Office.
March 11, 2020.