

Caritas Sisters of Jesus Suore della Carità di Gesù  
Immaculate Mary Japan Province

The experience of establishment of the Historical exhibition in Miyazaki

Santa Rosa community in the Philippines  
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My talk has two parts. First, I will talk about the course of the historical exhibition for Caritas Sisters of Jesus. Most of the members of our congregation are the second generations already, who have no longer witnessed the beginnings of our congregation. Now we are faced with the task of keeping all our historical memories so we could hand it down to the next generations. The historical exhibition is our first and the most valuable symbol of our congregation.

The second part of my talk is about the importance of safekeeping our historical memorabilia as I share with you the significant challenges I encountered and what we still have to carry out in completing this symbolic representation of the Caritas Sisters of Jesus.

I Caritas Sisters of Jesus Historical Exhibition Hall

#### 1. The process to set up the exhibition

Caritas Sisters of Jesus was founded in 1937, and as a footnote, we recently celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at our birth place, Miyazaki, Japan during the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 10, 2012. In advance, the historical exhibition hall was opened in Dec. 23, 2011. It was intended to be the edifice of the congregation where people who visit can reflect on our journey from the founding until our present apostolic services.

As a matter of fact, the building of the exhibition has long been dreamed of since the establishment of the Japan province in 1999 but I would like to believe it was just perfectly realized in God's plan as we celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the congregation.

##### 1.1 "The house of spirituality" project

The Caritas congregation was founded in Japan and was approved by the Holy See as a congregation with Pontifical right in 1998. After that, the General house and Japan province were separated which subsequently established the Japan province in March 25, 1999. Formerly the general house in Tokyo was the center of all Caritas houses, so, the overseas missionaries like us were sent from there.

Though the general house was moved to Rome in 2008, there were frequently held joint sessions with the general council and Japan provincial council meeting, particularly from the time of the establishment of the Japan province until the 12<sup>th</sup> General chapter in 2004. The issue often discussed in the meeting was the “Caritas no sono” (Caritas Garden) “master plan”.

It was the grand plan for an overall reconstruction of five institutions namely, the nursing home for the aged, the children’s house, Kindergarten, Nursery and Baby’s home to make “Caritas no sono” meaningful as the birth place of the congregation. The center of construction plan was to build the “the lifelong formation house” (1999) or “the house of spirituality” (2001). The idea came from the desire of our sisters to have a lifelong formation which was the theme of the origin of our congregation.

Then the discussion during the 12<sup>th</sup> General chapter in 2004 progressed which aimed at building the “house of spirituality” as a place where sisters from different provinces in different countries gather and study the spirituality of the congregation through spiritual exercises and seminars. However, the decision on the building of the house of spirituality was put on pend until the next general council meeting. Subsequently, the general council decided on the building of the historical exhibition hall and not the house of spirituality and the implementation of the project was then delegated to the Japan province.

## 2.1 “Exhibition hall”- as a project of the province

As a result of the discussion of the general council meeting, the project of “the house of Spirituality” changed into “the exhibition” and from the congregation level, it was assigned to the province. In response to this development, the Japan province made the plan for the temporary exhibition located in the ground and second floors of the Caritas House (which was the former Kindergarten). In addition, the Japan Province organized the “History committee” on April 2007 in order to promote this project. The committee started out the plan for the collection of the information of “Caritas no sono” and the temporary area so as to prepare the testimony collection and historical calendar. Furthermore, the committee made a handbook which was the brief explanation of the home ground of the congregation and improved the temporary historical exhibition in Caritas house.

After the celebration of our 70<sup>th</sup> foundation of the congregation, the Japan provincial council meeting made a plan for an exhibition in Tokyo and Miyazaki under the three member councilor. The purpose of the exhibition in Miyazaki was to introduce the history of the congregation with a collection of exhibited artifacts that define our humble beginnings and the one in Tokyo was to show the historical transition of the congregation.

## 2.2 Historical exhibition and “the house of Lourdes”

Ahead of the Miyazaki exhibit hall was historical exhibition near the Tokyo archive of the general house was opened in May 24, 2010. It contains some collected files and documents since the committee has started its work in 2007, summary of the foundation history which was based on testimonies and some copies of the important documents together with many pictures. There were some related exhibitions of the first Mother General, Sr.Maria Osafune and some books published by the congregation, commemorative publications and albums.

The committee also took care of “the house of Lourdes” where Fr. Cavoli lived in his last 10 years in Japan, located in the premises of the provincial house. It was also properly restructured by the committee as his memorial hall.

## 2.3 Preparation of the exhibition hall in Miyazaki

We could not help but be more careful in setting up the exhibit in Miyazaki since it is about the beginnings of the congregation. Besides the exhibit hall, three convents in “Caritas no sono” were combined into one, which had the concept of the mother house where any member who wished to visit our roots can be welcomed. For this purpose, this convent has a seminar hall, accommodation and an exhibition hall.

Finally, the Miyazaki convent was inaugurated last Dec.2010. It was also about this time when the preparations for the exhibit hall were in full swing but there was a change of the Mother provincial, the provincial councilors and the members of the historical committee. The second mother provincial, Sr.Aloysia Hashiguchi resigned from office by the end of March 2011, she was succeeded by the third; Mother Provincial Sr.Monica Kawabata who was a former Vice-provincial. Openly Sr.Monica assigned Sr.Metodia, the current vice provincial to prepare and continue this work with some members in time for the 75<sup>th</sup> foundation the year after.

## 3. Open the historical exhibition hall in Miyazaki

The new members of the committee used the materials which was arranged by the former members and proceeded to prepare for the interior finishing and display with the assistance of some cooperators. The details of the interior were designed by our cooperators while the contents of course were managed by the committee members. The interior was finished on December 23, 2011 and it was blessed. But at this point, it was only the display of the items that were finished. The final completion was last June 2012 and this is now open to welcome visitors from Japan and even overseas to view our congregation’s history.

## Part2. The important of fling the historical materials

### 1. Congregation level

Now allow me to proceed to the second part of my sharing.

As I previously mentioned our congregation became a congregation with a Pontificate right after our 60<sup>th</sup> foundation and was separated from General house to Japan provincial house. It was this time when we had to shift from the local management to the global management. This event made us recognize our Charisma and its spirituality as it lived in more than 10 countries and common understanding was given emphasis. This issue came up for discussion during the 11<sup>th</sup> General chapter in 1998. After which, some members were directly assigned in the archive of the general house in order to work for cataloging, filing and data documentation of important references. At that time of Sr. Agrippina as the Mother General and now of Sr. Apollinaris Shimura as the current Mother General, young sisters were sent to Rome to study “Spirituality” “Missiology” and “Consecrated life” considering too that many historical materials were written in Italian and Latin. As a result of this effort, some seminars were participated in by the delegates from provinces and vice-provinces, like “Sacred Heart of Jesus Korea and Japan joint seminar” in Korea, 2002 and “Charisma study” in Japan by the guidance of the Salesian Fr. Mario Midali in 2006.

With the revising of the constitution and the regulations together with the study for Charism and spirituality since the 12<sup>th</sup> General chapter, we realized the needs for more objective and critical study and so we asked for the assistance of historians who were not members. (Fr. Nesty Imperido, Fr. Mario Midali, 2008) Particularly, the study of Fr. Cavoli done by Fr. Nesty gave us a big contribution to our historical study of our congregation with the study of our foundation and our early constitution.

Moreover, the current Mother General set up “Historical study team” which is proposed to study and work on the history of the congregation, particularly before and after its foundation under the supervision of a historian in 2010. This team has a regular meeting with a historian several times a year. This is the team that supervised the writing of records, like a historical summary and calendar for the exhibition in Miyazaki.

In this way, a collection and a file for the historical materials started. Through the Congregation and also from the time of Kyugoin (Relief house) which is its predecessor institution, we have kept the record and we started to collect and file them, we were able to offer a historical material to study history and spirituality. It made clear connections of the parts of abstract history and made the congregation’s history founded on historical evidences. This gave meaning to our painstaking efforts of gathering and collecting files as we put together the pieces of our past.

The task of the province from now

### 3-1 Validation of credibility of a historical materials and documents

All the documents which were started by “history committee” collected and filed are large in scale, especially the early pictures that were given from the old sisters with the attached name and time. The other pictures in the provincial house were also added as details on the picture.

But no one can certify its authenticity. We need to continue the filing of the materials because we found some pictures have no information or others with wrong information on it. So, when we chose the materials for the exhibition, we needed to check on its genuineness.

### 3.2 Testimonies

The committee had a record of the foundation story from senior sisters for the testimony until 2010. Its contents are not open to everyone yet. However, as the members who share the story are getting old; sometimes we could see a time gap and exaggerate explanation added in their story. Now, in order to accurately identify the testimonies and places, we started to video record the actual testimonies.

### 3.3 Archive

At last, I would like to mention about our archive in the provincial house.

We need to have data documentation for videos and tapes. I know the general house archive is doing the conversion little by little, but the provincial’s data is almost untouched. We need to convert the preserved events record of VHS, tapes. The reason why they are still untouched is because though the visual records are too many, we still need to sort them according to their importance. Pictures as well of the primary congregation are almost completely filed, but there are just too many pictures left behind without any record. We also need to convert film pictures to digital forms.

The task for the archive committee is to make all submitted documents from the every community slim in data. Around 40 communities and 450 members’ data can’t be handled single-handedly.

Another issue of the province is the preservation of the “house of Lourdes” which is made of the typical Japanese wooden house built more than 50 years ago. Once it was damaged by termites. Though it was able to withstand the magnitude 5 earthquake from East Japan, it has no guarantee to withstand another shake from now. What’s more, since the exhibition in Tokyo also needs to be improved as a historical exhibition, we are thinking of another good way of preserving the historical building together with the house of Lourdes and the archive in the future.

## Conclusion

I transferred community from the Philippines to the provincial house in Japan right at that time when people were affected by the impact of the East Japan earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear plant in April 2011. At that period, Mother provincial, the council members, and the office members had changed and I was assigned in the office. It was a big difference from 10 years ago when I left Japan. I had been surrounded with vigorous voices of the students in the Philippines, but then I stayed in the quiet office. I had a little culture shock from a different atmosphere, took me a while to adjust from my own country.

Though I took my major in history at a university, I had no idea how to handle and organize a historical exhibition. Without knowledge and lack of time for study, I started to prepare for the exhibition. With the support by the General Secretary who is also in charge of the archive and “historical study team”, it made this preparation of the historical exhibition hall in Miyazaki a successful one for the Japan province..

To open the historical exhibition is to show our historical background to the public. We must have a sense of oneness with the society through this exhibit, not a selfish religious way of looking at our history as we see objectively from specific persons or events. Because founding our congregation was not only from and for the Salesians and our sister’s work, but it was also by the support of the Miyazaki people. At the beginning, “Kyugoin” which was the previous name of “Caritas no sono” was the works of the Miyazaki Parish. Fr. Cavoli was a parish priest of Miyazaki Parish and when they built “Kyugoin”, parishioners helped to build the house. When “Kyugoin” had no fund to feed people, they received donations from anonymous benefactors. I think that it is important for us during the preparation of the exhibition that we keep in my mind the fact that our congregation was born by several mixed elements, like the church, the congregation and a local society.

I was involved in this preparation of the historical exhibition for two years and realized the importance of this work. As far as the roots of our congregation in Japan, we have an obligation to study and tell our history. Not leaving everything up to care of the general house, we should have more sisters to study our history. Moreover, I hope every member feels responsible to keep every kind of records, not only a chronicle of community, but also personal record to leave our footsteps to the next generation.