

## Presentation of the book 'NENRIN'

The Mission of evangelization carried out by the FMA in Japan, according to the spirit of the founder, St. John Bosco and Co-foundress St. Maria Mazzarello, thanks be to God, is 84 years. The book I am presenting today is titled 'NENRIN'. 'NENRIN', in Japanese means tree rings. Every year, a circle, and therefore expresses the length of the shaft, and life for us in the history of the FMA presence in Japan. The history of our Province has grown gradually as the rings of a tree.

This book includes three volumes. It was compiled by Sr. Maria Hirate Shige FMA on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first FMAs in Japan. It is a precious and important document in which were collected many testimonies of lives that were lived in various periods. Each sister writes their own experiences and memories and testifies to the history of that period. This book aims to document the journey of 70 years of our Province and was created with the collaboration of many FMAs. Readers can learn more about the wonderful journey of the Province both in suffering and in joy, especially the early years led by the Lord and Mary Help of Christians. We can also know the context of the period: the social and cultural situation of the Church; the daily community life, Youth Ministry and vocations; the various educational and social activities, etc.

By means of these three volumes, we can see the path of our Province for over a period of 70 years. The first volume introduces the first 20 years, from the arrival of the first missionaries in Japan until 1949. In 1925, the Salesian missions' 50th year, sends the first Salesian missionaries in Japan led by Don Cimatti. As a foundation stone for the FMA Foundation in Japan, Sr. Letizia Begliatti was assigned for 44 years. In this country, the first missionaries encountered in their work of evangelization, many difficulties, in language and in many other ways. Nevertheless, the sisters worked with a missionary spirit and tirelessly to save souls among the Japanese people, trusting only in God and in Mary.

Our work began in 1933 when in Beppu in Kyushu, an infant was entrusted to our sisters. So begun the task of kindergarten in 1935 with the social work 'Sayuri Aijien'. In 1939, the house was founded 'Maria Ausiliatrice-Mikawashima' station in Tokyo, and the following year saw the inauguration of 'Seibi Gakuen' with daycare, oratorio, several lessons, sewing school, etc. In 1941, the Pacific war broke out, during which the sisters had to try various places to evacuate with children: Nikko, Shizuoka, Yamanaka. Meanwhile, due to heavy bombings, the 'Seibi Gakuen' Tokyo Mikawashima station is burned completely. During the war, the sisters and the children lived in extreme poverty. Many nuns testified in the first volume of the book that during this period they were concerned everyday for the food to give to the children entrusted to them. We have always been guided by God's providence which never failed. After the war, the sisters had to search for land to build the house for children. A nun said, 'When the money was missing, we prayed intensely to the Madonna.' They repeatedly said the prayer: 'Divine Providence of the heart of Jesus, think of us'. In this way they would really obtain the amount of money needed.

From a small group of missionaries who have lived in faithfulness with the charism of Don Bosco, under the protection of Mary Help of Christians, the tiny seed had taken root. The plant was reinforced and brought to the lush flowering that we see today. The second volume, from 1950 until 1979, was during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the FMA's arrival in Japan. It is the period of expansion, during which, in our Province there was a great flowering of vocations and works. The Mission in Japan was originally from the Eastern Province with Banwell SR. as Inspector. From 1938 until 1945 the Japan became Brasil Sino-Japanese based in Shanghai, and by 1945 it became a Province. The Japanese Province was erected in 1952 under the name of 'Alma Mater' based in Tokyo-Akabane. The first Inspector appointed the missionary, Mother Teresa Merlo, from India, who became head of the Province for 6 years.

In this year of the Foundation of the province, the Mission in Japan included Akabane, the House was named 'Maria Ausiliatrice' comprising of the Provincial House, a crèche, a work of care for children and a school complex. In Beppu, the 'Mother Mazzarello' House with the Welfare Work 'Sayuri', and yet Aijien in the same city of Beppu, the 'Sacro Cuore' with welfare and school complex; in Shizuoka, House 'Sacro Cuore', school complex, in Osaka, home to 'Mary Immaculate', school complex. In 1957, our work extended to Korea. Five sisters accompanied Mother by pioneer, Merlo and SR. Carmela, arrived in Seoul. For nearly 20 years, Japan and Korea worked together until the division of the Province in 1976.

At that time, were founded several schools and social works. In both Japan and Korea, our schools were authentic places of evangelization. Thanks also to the generous collaboration of many missionaries together with the Salesian Sisters who taught catechism to students. Each year, many students received baptism and also many vocations flourished. After World War II, the Japanese entered into the reconstruction phase economically, socially, and in the field of education, etc. At that time, the Catholic Church celebrated the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965. This event brought in all the churches of the world, a renewal of the Church: the way of life of every Christian, the renewal of the religious life of the liturgy, of the constitutions and regulations and religious outfits, etc.

Also our Province began to walk according to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, renewing itself in various aspects. A nun who has lived in this period as a novice, tells us about her experience. 'We had lessons according to the teaching of the Vatican following the teaching of the various documents of the Church: 'Gaudium et Spes', 'Gentium', 'Lumen Ecclesiae', etc, that led us to change our mentality fully on consecrated life.'

The third volume covers the period 1980 until 1999, the year in which we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the FMA in Japan. It is the time of consolidation. Throughout history, in living out our charism and in evangelizing many young people, we have reviewed our artworks, various activities and our consecrated life. And we tried new ways for evangelization. The Japanese Province had started to walk towards the 21st century and was always trying new avenues for evangelization and for better ways to live out the charism of Don Bosco.

Many sisters tell their experience in the field in various places: 'After school', 'La casa dei bambini' House 'Laura Vicuna' private Japanese Language School 'teaching of Japanese calligraphy', etc. By 1960, with the rise of the works and of vocations, our Province began to concentrate our energies on the formation of the sisters, offering various training opportunities. Participation in the General Chapter of our province, visits of superiors, the consolidation of the houses of formation, spiritual exercises, the annual pilgrimage to the Holy places of the founders, places of our vocation, various training courses for age, etc ... we had all chances to progress spiritually, too.

The novitiate, which for many years was in Beppu, was transported to Tokyo-Akabane in 1948. And in 1957, the novitiate was transferred to the House 'Sacro Cuore' of Chofu near Salesian House. In 1963, during the time when there was an increase in vocations, the junior novitiate was founded—'Maria Mazzarello' Akabane. The candidates came from various houses and parts of Japan. In 1965, the House was built in the territory of the exercises House of 'Madonna della neve' of Yamanaka so all sisters can make their annual spiritual exercises.

Meanwhile, our Province opened to Asian nations. In 1978, the Yamanaka triennial verification took place in post-Chapterhouse of the Provinces. The meeting, lasting ten days was animated by the presence of 7 Mothers from the Center.

With regard to missions, until now, the FMA in Japan has received so many missionaries. The Province, is now mature enough to send out missionaries. In 1989, Sr. Mary Fanny Aguilar was sent to Bolivia. Then followed by Sr. Yamaguchi Takako Therese in 1990, Sr. Kanna Kazuko Maddalena in 1991, and Sr. Kohama Shizuko Maria in 1996 and Sr. Takeyama Toshie Catherine in 2007. In the meantime, sisters are sent to the Philippines, Thailand, China and Mongolia.

In 1999, the Province celebrated the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the FMA in Japan. Reading the three volumes, we can see in the history the marvelous work of God's hand and Mary Help of Christians.