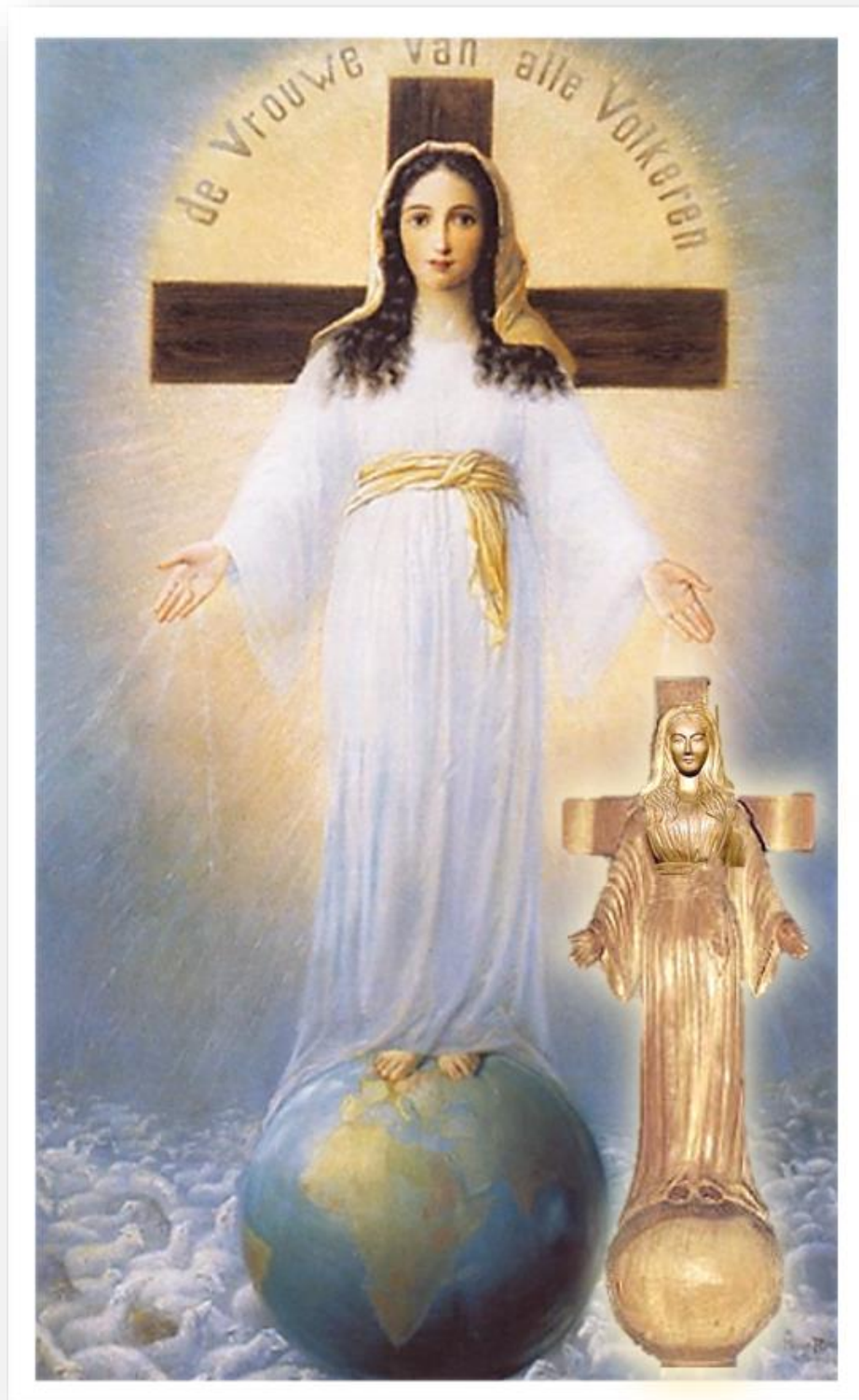


Da AMSTERDAM ad AKITA

Maria

la Signora di tutti i Popoli



Appearance of the
LADY of ALL NATIONS
of AKITA

Pastoral Letter

of Bishop John Shojiro Ito

- April 22, 1984 -

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APRIL, 1984

-- Most. Rev. John Shojiro Ito, Bishop of Niigata, Japan, after years of extensive investigation, declares the events of Akita, Japan to be of supernatural origin, and authorizes throughout the entire diocese the veneration of the Holy Mother of Akita.

On April 22, 1984, after eight years of investigations, after consultation with the Holy See, the messages of Our Lady of Akita were approved by the Bishop of the diocese. In the Japanese village of Akita, a statue of the Madonna, according to the testimony of more than 500 Christians and non-Christians, including the Buddhist mayor of the town, has shed blood, sweat and tears. A nun, Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa has received the stigmata and has received messages from Our Lady.-

Pastoral Letter of Bishop John Shojiro Ito April 22, 1984

TO all members of the diocese, my blessing and very best wishes for this Feast of Easter. Twenty-two years have elapsed since His Holiness John XXIII appointed me bishop of the diocese of Niigata, in 1962. In conformity with the legislation of the Church I have reached the age of retirement and now I must retire as the local ordinary of the diocese. My thanksgiving goes to each one of you for prayer and cooperation which have permitted me, despite many difficulties, to fill my task up to the present day.

Before leaving you, I must confide to you a preoccupation. It has to do with the series of mysterious events concerning a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary in the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. (The request for ecclesial recognition of this secular institute has been introduced in Rome.) This institute is found in Yuzawadai, Soegawa, Akita, in this diocese of Niigata (Japan). You are without doubt aware of these events through magazines, books, television, and so on.

When the first commission of inquiry was named in 1976, I publicly announced that it was necessary to abstain from all official pilgrimage and all particular veneration of this statue while the inquiry was underway. From that day I have made no declaration on this subject. Indeed, being a question of important events concerning the Church, one cannot treat them lightly. However, to keep silence at the time of leaving my function as bishop, since I have been at the heart of the events, would be a negligence with regard to my episcopal duties. For that reason I have decided to make a new declaration in the form of this pastoral letter.

Since 1973, when the events began, eleven years have passed. As that was the first time I was a witness of the rather extraordinary events, I went to Rome to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1975 where I consulted Archbishop Hamer, deputy secretary of this Congregation, and whom I already knew. He explained to me that judgment regarding such a matter falls under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary (bishop) of the diocese in question.

In 1976, I asked the archbishop of Tokyo for the creation of a commission of inquiry. This first commission declared that it was not in a position to prove the supernatural events of Akita. In 1979, I presented to the Congregation a request for the formation of a second commission of inquiry. This second commission permitted us to examine the facts still more in detail.

In 1981, a letter of the Congregation, unfavorable to the events, was sent to the nunciature in Tokyo. But this letter contained some misunderstandings. Esteeming it my duty to restore the exactitude of the facts, I re-examined all the facts in 1982 at the time that the mysterious events, seemingly, came to an end. Through the intermediary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Tokyo, I sent the complete dossier, augmented with the new facts, to Rome.

At the time of my trip to Rome in the month of October last year (1983) I was able to meet with three officials charged with the matter in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. At the end of this meeting we had decided that the dossier should remain under examination.--

II

The series of events relative to the statue of the Virgin Mary include the flowing of blood from the right hand of the statue, also a perspiration spreading a sweet perfume, perspiration so abundant that it was necessary to wipe it away from the statue. However, the most remarkable fact, in our opinion, and the most evident, is the overflowing of an aqueous liquid, similar to human tears, from the eyes of the statue of Our Holy Mother.

This began on the 4th of January, 1975 (*Holy Year*) and some tears flowed 101 times, until the 15th of September, 1981, Feast of Our Lady of the Seven Dolors. I was able myself to witness four lacrimations. About 500 persons have also been eyewitnesses. I twice tasted this liquid. It was salty and seemed to me truly human tears. The scientific examination of Professor Sagisaka, specialist in legal medicine in the faculty of medicine at the University of Akita, has proved that this liquid is indeed identical to human tears.

It is beyond human powers to produce water where there is none, and I believe that to do this the Intervention of a non-human force is necessary. Moreover, it is not the question of pure water, but of a liquid identical to liquid secreted by a human body. It flowed only from the eyes of the statue, as tears flow, and that more than 100 times over a period of several years and before many numerous witnesses. It has been established that it could not have been by trickery or human maneuvers.

If these events are not natural one can envisage three causes. They would be due to:

1. Ectoplasmic power of a human being;
2. Machinations of the devil;
3. A supernatural intervention.

I do not know well what could be ectoplasmic power. However, certain individuals say that Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa, member of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and who was the one linked most especially to the events of Akita, might possess such powers permitting her to transfer her own tears to the statue. For that however, it would be necessary, according to Professor Itaya of the Tokyo Institute of Technology (specialist in this field) that the interested person use his or her will power in order to cause such powers to exert any influence. Now the tears have flowed from the statue when Agnes Sasagawa was sleeping and even when she was not aware of weepings of the statue of the Holy Mother, because she was at home with her family 400 kilometers from Akita. I think therefore that the hypothesis of ectoplasmic power must be rejected.

There are also persons who suppose that it is a question of a machination of the devil. If that is the case it should lead to evil effects relating to the faith of the people. Not only have there not been such effects, but quite to the contrary there have been favorable effects. For example, Mr. Yoichi Imatani, whose Catholic wife had for a long time recommended conversion, decided to receive baptism after witnessing the tears flow from the statue.

In another case, a former believer, separated from the Church for several decades, returned to the regular practice of our religion after seeing the tears. And again, following a visit to the place, yet another believer resolved to work in evangelization. Alone she created two circuit churches by offering up her financial resources and has continued this work to the present day.

Furthermore, there are numerous reports of miraculous cures of diseases such as cancer, thanks to the mediation of the Virgin of Akita. I am going to mention two, the most proving.

One is the sudden cure of a South Korean woman, Mrs. Teresa Chun Sun Ho. Following cancer of the brain, she was reduced to a vegetative existence from July, 1981. The Virgin of Akita appeared to her and told her to get up. Almost at once she was able to get up, having entirely recovered her health. This healing took place while priests and Korean women prayed to the Virgin of Akita for her cure and asked for a miracle in view of the canonization of the Korean martyrs. There are X-ray photographs of this person taken during the sickness and after the complete cure. The X-ray photographs show her cure even to the eyes of nonprofessionals. The authenticity of the X-rays is attested to by Dr. M.D. Tong-Woo-Kim, of the Hospital of Saint Paul in Seoul who took these X-rays, and also by Father Roman Theisen, STD, president of the ecclesiastical tribunal of the archdiocese of Seoul.

All of the records have been sent to Rome. I went myself to Seoul (South Korea) last year and was able to interview the cured woman involved; I could thus assure myself of the truth of the facts of her miraculous cure. For her part the person came to Akita to thank Our Holy Mother.

The second case is the complete cure of the total deafness of Sr. Agnes Sasagawa. I will speak in detail of this later.

Such facts propitious to the faith and to physical health exclude that the events of Akita could be of diabolical origin. There remains therefore only the possibility of a supernatural intervention. It is in any event difficult to hold that this is not a question of supernatural phenomena.

III

But why have such phenomena taken place? I ask if they are not with regard to the messages coming from the statue of the Virgin and perceived by the deaf ears of Agnes Sasagawa.

The first message was given to her on the morning of July 6th, 1973, first Friday of the month. A voice coming from the statue of Mary always splendid, saying:

“My daughter, my novice, you have obeyed me well, abandoning all to follow me. Do you suffer much because of the handicap which deafness causes you? You will be assuredly healed. Be patient, it is the last trial. Does the wound in your hand give you pain? Pray in reparation for the sins of humanity.

Each person in this community is my irreplaceable daughter.

Do you say well the prayer of the Handmaids of the Eucharist?

Then, let us pray it together.

*"Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,
truly present in the Holy Eucharist,
I consecrate my body and soul to be entirely one
with Your Heart being sacrificed at every instant
on all the altars of the world and giving praise to the Father,
pleading for the coming of His Kingdom.*

Please receive My humble offering of myself.

Use me as You will for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls.

Most Holy Mother of God, never let me be separated from your Divine Son.

Please defend and protect me as Your special child.

Amen."

Pray very much for the pope, bishops, and priests. Since your baptism you have always prayed faithfully for them. Continue to pray very much... very much. Tell your superior all that passed today and obey him in everything that he will tell you.

Your superior is wholeheartedly seeking prayers now.

Agnes Sasagawa lost her hearing when she was working as a catechist in the church of Myoko-kogen. Because of this deafness she was for a time in the hospital of Rosai in the city of Joetsu. Dr. Sawada diagnosed her total deafness as incurable and issued the documents permitting, for this reason, state subsidy. No longer being able to work as a catechist, she came to the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist at Akita, where she began to live a life of prayer.

The second message, like the first time, was given by the voice coming from the statue of the Holy Virgin:

-“My daughter, my novice, do you love the Lord? If you love the Lord, listen to what I have to say to you. It is very important. Convey it to your superior.

Many men in this world grieve the Lord. I seek souls to console Him.

In order to appease the anger of the Heavenly Father, I wish, with my Son, for souls who will make reparation for sinners and the ungrateful by offering up their sufferings and poverty to God on their behalf: In order that the world might know the wrath of the Heavenly Father toward today's world, He is preparing to inflict a great chastisement on all mankind. With my son, many times I have tried to appease the wrath of the Heavenly Father. I have prevented the coming of the chastisement by offering Him the sufferings of His Son on the Cross, His Precious Blood, and the compassionate souls who console the Heavenly Father...

a cohort of victim souls overflowing with love.

Prayer, penance, honest poverty, and courageous acts of sacrifices can soften the anger of the Heavenly Father. I desire this also from your community: ase make much of poverty, deepen repentance, and pray amid your poverty in reparation for the ingratitude and insults toward the Lord by so many men. Recite the prayer of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist with awareness of its meaning; put it into practice; offer your life to God in reparation for sins. Let each one endeavor, by making much of one's ability and position, to offer oneself entirely to the Lord. Even in a secular community, prayer is necessary. Already souls who wish to pray are on the way to being gathered in this community. Without attaching too much attention to the form, pray fervently and steadfastly to console the Lord.”-

After a moment of silence She continued:

-“Is what you think in your heart true? Are you truly prepared to become the rejected stone: My novice, you who wish to become the pure bride of the Lord. In order that you, the bride, become the spouse worthy of the Holy Bridegroom, make your vows with the hearty readiness to be fastened to the Cross with three nails.

These three nails are honest poverty, chastity and obedience.

Of the three obedience is the foundation. With total obedience follow your superior.

Your superior will understand you well and guide you.”-

The third and last message was given also by the voice coming from the statue of the Holy Virgin on the 13th of October in the same year:

-“My dear daughter, listen well to what I have to say to you.

And relay my messages to your superior.”-

After a moment's silence:

-“As I told you, if men do not repent and better themselves, the Heavenly Father will inflict a great punishment on all humanity. It will definitely be a punishment greater than the Deluge, such as has never been seen before. Fire will plunge from the sky and a large part of humanity will perish... The good as well as the bad will perish, sparing neither priests nor the faithful. The survivors will find themselves plunged into such terrible hardships that they will envy the dead. The only arms which will remain for you will be the Rosary and the sign left by My Son (Eucharist). Each day recite the prayers of the Rosary. With the Rosary pray for the bishops and priests. The work of the devil will infiltrate even into the Church. One will see cardinals opposing other cardinals... and bishops confronting other bishops. The priests who venerate me will be scorned and condemned by their confreres; churches and altars will be sacked; the Church will be full of those who accept compromises and the demon will tempt many priests and religious to leave the service of the Lord. The demon is trying hard to influence souls consecrated to God. The thought of the perdition of so many souls is the cause of My sadness. If sins continue to be committed further, there will no longer be pardon for them. With courage, convey these messages to your superior. He will tell each one of you to continue prayers and acts of reparations for sins steadfastly, while ordering all of you to pray fervently. Pray very much the prayers of the Rosary. I alone am able still to help you from the calamities which approach. Those who place their total confidence in Me will be given necessary help.”-

This message is based on the condition if men do not repent and better themselves ...I think that it is a serious warning, although one feels here the maternal love of Our Heavenly Mother in the words: "The thought of the perdition of so many souls is the cause of My sadness." If the promise contained in the first message of 1973 was not realized Do you suffer much because of the handicap which deafness causes you? You will be assuredly healed, one would be able to doubt the veracity of these messages. But this promise was kept nine years after the beginning of the sickness.

Before this happened, an angel announced to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa
(*the 25th of March, and the 1st of May, 1982*):

- "Your deafness causes you to suffer doesn't it? The moment of the promised cure approaches. By the intercession of the Holy and Immaculate Virgin, exactly as the last time, before Him Who is truly present in the Eucharist, your ears will be definitely cured in order that the work of the Most High may be accomplished. There will still be many sufferings and obstacles coming from outside. You have nothing to fear. "-

Effectively on the last Sunday of the month of Mary, the 30th of May, 1982, Feast of Pentecost, at the moment of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament her ears were cured completely and instantly.

That same evening she telephoned me and we conversed normally. On the following 14 of June, I visited Doctor Arai of the Eye and Ear Division of the Hospital of the Red Cross of Akita who had verified the complete deafness of Sr. Agnes Sasagawa at the moment she arrived in Akita nine years before. I asked his impression. He expressed his amazement at this complete cure. Doctor Sawada of the Rosai Hospital of Joetsu who had been the first to examine her when she became deaf, has now issued a medical certificate dated June 3rd, 1982, attesting that following minute examinations of her auditive capacities, he certifies that there is no further anomaly in the two ears of Sr. Agnes Sasagawa.

I have known Sr. Agnes Sasagawa for more than ten years. She is a woman sound in spirit, frank and without problems; she has always impressed me as a balanced person. Consequently the messages she says that she has received did not appear to me to be in any way the result of imagination or hallucination.

As for the content of the messages received, there is nothing contrary to Catholic doctrine or morals, and when one thinks of the actual state of the world, the warning seems to correspond to it in many points.

Having set down here my experiences and my reflections with regard to the events relative to the statue of the Holy Virgin of Akita, I esteem it my duty, as Ordinary of the diocese, to respond to the requests of the faithful to give pastoral directives on this subject. It is only the bishop of the diocese in question who has the power of recognizing a fact of this kind. The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith has given me directives in this regard. I have been in close and constant communication with the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist since its foundation.

I know precisely the situation concerning this Institute and its members. In studying the history of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary up to this day, I am aware that it is always the local ordinary of the diocese who has authorized the veneration of the Virgin Mary when She has manifested Herself in their dioceses. After long prayer and mature reflection, I hand down the following conclusions in my position as Bishop of Niigata:

1. After the investigation conducted up to the present day, I recognize the supernatural character of a series of mysterious events concerning the statue of the Holy Mother Mary which is found in the convent of the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist at Yuzawadai, Soegawa, Akita.

I do not find in these events any elements which are contrary to Catholic faith and morals.

2. Consequently, I authorize, throughout the entire diocese, the veneration of the Holy Mother of Akita, while awaiting that the Holy See publishes definitive judgment on this matter.

And I ask that it be remembered that even if the Holy See later publishes a favorable judgment with regard to the events of Akita, it is a question only of a private Divine revelation. Christians are bound to believe only content of public Divine revelation (closed after the death of the last Apostle) which contains all that is necessary for salvation. Nevertheless, the Church, until now, has equally made much of private Divine revelations as they fortify the faith. For reference, I cite the following texts of the document on Catholic Doctrine:

"The saints and the angels, having been conformed to the Will of God receive from Him grace and glory in abundance and it is right to venerate them because this amounts to offering praise and thanksgiving to God Himself. Among the saints the Virgin Mary deserves a special veneration. Indeed, She is not only the Mother of Our Savior who is God, but also the Mother of us all, and it is as Mother that She intercedes for us, full of Divine grace greater than those received by all the saints and angels." (*Article 72*)

"One venerates the statues and images of Christ and of the saints to sustain the faith, to adore Christ, to venerate the saints. This act thus becomes praise to God." (*Article 170*)

Finally, I beg God that He accord to you all abundant graces, and I send my Apostolic blessings.

Niigata, Feast of Easter

April 22, 1984

John Shojiro Ito, Bishop

