



1. His visit to Sophia was his dream and our dream

The Roman Pontiff Pope John Paul II visited our main campus on the morning of February 25 1981 from 0720. In his words of greeting, the Pontiff said that there were



The visit of the Pope to Sophia University had not been included in his original schedule. The picture shows him speaking in the special meeting room on the 14th floor of Building 7.

two dreams that he wanted to fulfill if he ever had a chance to visit Japan. The first dream was to visit the places where Father Maximilian Kolbe had worked; the other was to visit Sophia University. When the Pope said this, the four hundred of us who had been cramped into the same meeting room went into an uproar. For the Pope to say that he expected

something special of Sophia University made all our hearts jump for joy.

The English name of our university is the Greek word Sophia, which the Pope explained as

meaning an expectation. The Pope continued: I am depending on all of you at Sophia to continue to contribute for the nations of Asia. He appealed to us to continue to show concern for the poor and for those who suffer from hunger. His visit lasted only about twenty minutes, but all the four hundred students and faculty members, fervent local Christians, and representatives from the university and from governmental educational agencies could welcome the Pope with great affection.

During his four-day stay in Japan, the Pope was faced with a very heavy schedule that included visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the areas that had suffered greatly from atomic bombing. In the initial schedule, no visit to Sophia University was included. According to a book in Japanese that was published a year after the visit, then President Pittau had the following conversation with the Pope when they met at Haneda Airport on February 23rd: “Your Holiness, everyone at Sophia University is longing for your visit. But since it is not on your schedule, I suppose such a visit is not going to be possible.” The Pope replied with a laugh: “On the contrary, I am



To the Pope's left, on the right of the picture that we see, is the overjoyed Father President Pittau.

in charge of my own schedule for this visit.” “Really? If so, please by all means visit our university!” President Pittau requested. Father Pittau then immediately set up a committee to plan the details of the visit of the Pope and to make suitable arrangements for security with the Metropolitan Police Department. During the visit, President Pittau accompanied the Pope for three days on the visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, acting on behalf of the Jesuit Province of Japan.

In the book mentioned above, Father Pittau recorded some of his impressions of the personality of the Pope. “The Pope showed great personal attention to all the people he met: the babies and the aged, the healthy and the sick. Even when he was in front of a large group of people, the Pope gave the impression that he was speaking to each one of them as an individual.” If one looks at the photographs taken during the visit of the Pope, one can see the truth of Father Pittau’s observations.



The Pope is shown blessing Ms. Nakahara Atsuko. She was at this time a junior in the Department of Social Welfare in the Humanities Faculty of Sophia University.



This is a picture of the Pope with the MC Agnes Chan at the *Young and Pope* gathering held on the evening of February 24th, 1982. We reprint this picture thanks to the cooperation of the Shufunotomo Co., Ltd.

2. The Encounter Between the Pope and the Youth of Japan

On the evening of February 24th, a program called *Young and Pope* was held at the Budokan in Tokyo. Here the Pope and many Japanese young people had a chance to interact. With the triple themes of Hope, Love, and Peace, there was a series of conversational discussions with the Pope. During this program a Sophia student named Okumura Misa (Professor at Chukyo University) asked the Pope: What can the spirit of love mean in the midst of exploitation and oppression? Agnes Chan, who had attended the International Division of Sophia University, acted as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Most of the activities were shown on Japanese television.

At that time, the Pope was able to deliver a warm message to the seven thousand young people about the purposes and the future of human living. This message has not lost any of its value over the thirty years since it was first delivered. There follows an English translation of a summary in Japanese of

the message that was originally delivered in English. The editorial committee for the celebration of the Centennial of Sophia University prepared the summary.

“Thanks to technological achievements, modern society has become quite comfortable, but at the same time it has become quite self-centered. More and more, I think that it is

most valuable for young people to keep searching for real ethical and spiritual values. I want you to create a well-rooted vision of the world and of the human beings in it. How to protect the beauties of nature is also a challenge for you young people. You must learn how to open your hearts to other people, especially to people who are poor, to people who are hungry, to people who are physically or mentally challenged, to people who are sick, and to people who are suffering. You must strengthen your human relations with all such people, as well as with those people who have been effectively expelled from society. This openheartedness is the true goal of your growth as human beings. The gifts you have been given will become the sources of the true joy of your living and from this joy, you can derive your hope. Christ has shown especially to you Catholics that respect for other persons is the purpose of human living. You can put into practice the words written in the Gospel of Matthew (7:12): whatever you wish that people would do to you, that is what you should do to other people. Treat others the way that you want to be treated. Finally, I call out to you youth: Please open your hearts widely to embrace our world; please join your hands and your efforts with the hands and efforts of young people throughout the world; and please construct the world of tomorrow.”

3. Pope John Paul II, Brother Zeno and Hiroshima

The visit of the Holy Father to Japan attracted a great deal of interest. It was covered by all the major mass media organizations in newspapers, in magazines, on television, and in other ways. Both the Asahi Newspaper and the Yomiuri Newspaper published special editions. Among the events covered, perhaps the one that made the deepest impression on the media was the Pope’s visit with his fellow Polish countryman Brother Zeno during the Pope’s time with the victims of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Brother Zeno had come to Japan in 1930. He was active after the end of the war in a program called the Town of Ants, which was located in a corner of Sumida Park in Asakusa. There Brother cared for a group of war orphans and very poor collectors of discarded items. The newspaper representatives present for the meeting reported that the two men shed tears of mutual gratitude, without having the need for any words.

Another important event was the Pope’s Hiroshima Appeal for World Peace. Standing in the powdery snow of Hiroshima Peace Park, the Pope declared, “Our responsibility for the future includes looking back over the tragedies of the past.” Repeating this same idea, the Pope continued to challenge his audience: “When we think about Hiroshima, we must reject any thoughts of atomic warfare. When we think about Hiroshima, we must assume responsibility for promoting peace. When we recall the sufferings of the people in this region, we can renew our faith in human beings.” During his short time with the people of Hiroshima, knowing how much they longed for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the Pope delivered his Hiroshima Appeal to the whole world.