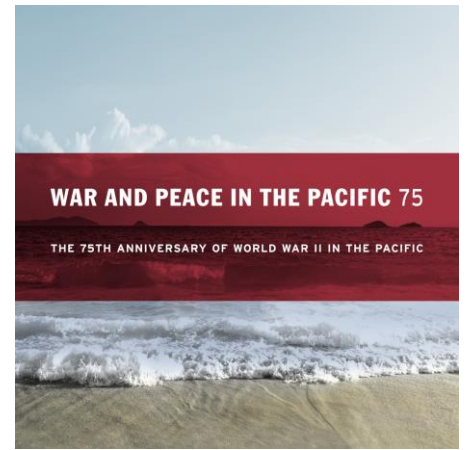


## FEATURE STORY



## Religion and Women in WWII

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### 1. INTERVIEW

We interviewed Sr. Chieko Aoki and Sr. Kyoko Watanabe, Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, about the life in Sendai Girls School during World War II. They went through World War II when they were elementary school students. They were bombed by the U.S. Air Force on August 10, 1945. We call it the Sendai Air Raids. They ran away from many incendiary bombs covering themselves with wet comforters. Innocent citizens were shot at close range by B29 bombers. We asked to them, "Could you keep pray during World War II?" They answered, "We couldn't do it openly but we kept doing silently.'



Sisters Watanabe and Aoki

## 2. THE SAYURI ASSOCIATION

There were no religion classes in the then high school around 1937. Catholic catechism classes were held for those who wanted them after school. The government requested that citizens send pens or needles to the battlefields as part of the war effort. Catholic catechism classes wrote messages of condolence to soldiers for salvation. At that time, the name was changed to the Sayuri Association. Messages of condolence were sent in colourful envelopes and replies came from the battlefield. However, communication was cut off after the Pacific War broke out. In 1943, there was very little communication between the sisters and the soldiers and foreign clergy members were forcibly repatriated.

## 3. SISTER REIKO OGISHIMA

Sister Reiko Ogishima led the Sayuri Association during World War II. She continued to send letters of condolence including pictures and dolls. She played an active part this way, but she was asked to return to the convent headquarters in 1942 to train as a Japanese teacher. At that time, the war was intense. She died in the line of duty on November 23, 1943. Her ship hit a mine when she was on her way to Hong Kong. She was only twenty-seven. "Sr.Ogishima was young. She was a well-educated person, honest and religious. I respected her," Sr.Koto Saito wrote in a special issue in the school newspaper. Sr. Ogishima was loved by many people.

## 4. SENDAI AIR RAID

The US military bombed Sendai in 1945 on March 10, July 3 and July 10. The center of Sendai city was destroyed on July 10. Generally, this is called the "Sendai Air Raid." The US military destroyed six main Japanese cities and then they aimed at Sendai. There were munitions factories and railways in Sendai. The attack started at 12:03 a.m. on July 10. There were 123 B29 bombers and they dropped 10,961 bombs. An area of about five million square meters was damaged in those attacks. 50,321 people were victims of the disaster. This figure shows that 26% of the people who lived in Sendai were affected by it. The dead numbered 1281.



Sendai burns during an air raid



B29 bomber