



## Sendai Shirayuri Gakuen High School Blog post – the Homefront WWII Religion and Women in WWII

By Maki and Sai and Nao

We have been studying about war and peace since last May. Today we will report on our school's activities during World War II.

### 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.

### THE SAYURI ASSOCIATION AND THE BATTLEFRONT

Messages of consolidation were sent in colorful envelopes and replies came from the battlefield. "Thank you for paying for our fortunes of war." "My mother has the same belief as you." Their words of appreciation were expressed in vague terms because of the strict censorship.

However, communication was cut off after the Pacific War broke out. In 1943, there was very little communication between the sisters and the soldiers since foreign clergy members were forcibly repatriated. The sisters stopped wearing their habits. They wore loose black work trousers or suits.

### 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. She had sent a letter to Sendai Girl's High School before she got on the ship. A lot of things were written in the letter. "I may not arrive safely. I have already prepared for the worst. I always keep praying. So, I want you to do the things that I couldn't do."

## LIFE IN THAT TIME

Drought in 1939 was the cause of the rationing of some goods. For example, rice, potatoes wheat and soybeans were the main items. The kinds of rationed items increased with the naval blockades . Citizens bartered or traded on the black market in Sendai. People suffered from starvation by the Allied Forces, which prevented delivery of goods from Japan's colonization. In 1943, schools organized women's volunteer corps from students who would graduate from girl's high schools. Sendai Girl's High School students were dispatched to various factories, too.

## SENDAI AIR RAID

The US military bombed Sendai in 1945 on March 10, July 3 and July 10. In US military records, it is written that the air raids happened on July 13 and August 14. 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. The main cause of death was burning by incendiary bombs and suffocation in their own house or air raid shelter.

## IMPRESSION

### Maki

I could feel lots of things by participating this project. World War II had occurred before we were born. But, we should understand it well and pass down, what happened to generation to generation. Especially, Japan has experienced a unique attack, which is atomic bomb. This incident shouldn't occur in the future. If the world moves towards the war, everyone has to have a sense of what's right and wrong. This project made us acquire those sense. I'd like to continue this project for a long time.

### Sai

I didn't feel war was close to me until starting this program. In fact in the past there were a lot of victims during the war. Now there are countries have wars. Even Japan has possibilities of having a war in the future. In addition, many countries have deadly weapons. So I really don't think we should fight each other. I studied World War II from viewpoints of woman and religions. Christianity was persecuted. And girls who were the same age as me worked at arsenals. Sadness made by war spread like this. Having no unreasonable sadness is the requirement of peace, I think.

Nao

Conflicts or wars break out here and there. As a result, many people are killed in those. Each of us should think about our own peace and share each other's opinions or wars will never end, I think. So I have continued to study war and peace. This project gave me an opportunity to consider what peace really is. I want many people to know about this project and think by themselves. What's war? Who are they fighting for? To think about these questions while we are living ordinary lives may be a little difficult, but it is essential to put an end to any wars.