

The Founding of Nagasaki Seido School

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Abstract: *This article describes the milestones, challenges and difficulties encountered during the establishment of the Nagasaki Seido Elementary School and Junior High School for Girls, an initiative that started with the encouragement of the Founder of Opus Dei. The promoters continued the task of setting up the school in accordance with the spirit transmitted by Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer even after his death.*

Keywords: *Schools – Nagasaki Seido School – Opus Dei – Japan – Nagasaki – 1975-1988*

L'avvio della Nagasaki Seido School: *Questo articolo descrive le tappe principali, le sfide e le difficoltà incontrate durante la fondazione dell'istituto per ragazze Nagasaki Seido School che comprende una scuola elementare e una secondaria, frutto di un'iniziativa sorta dietro incoraggiamento del fondatore dell'Opus Dei. I promotori hanno portato avanti il compito di promuovere la scuola, all'insegna dello spirito trasmesso da san Josemaría Escrivá, anche dopo la sua scomparsa.*

Keywords: *Scuole – Nagasaki Seido School – Opus Dei – Giappone– Nagasaki – 1975-1988*

“Embraced by the green hills of our town, the echoing chimes of the angelus sound...” runs a line from the Seido Schools anthem.

Nagasaki Seido Elementary School, which opened in April 1978, is on the southern side of Mount Mary from where the church bells can be heard

ringing as a reminder to pray the Angelus three times daily—at six o'clock dawn, twelve noon, and six o'clock in the evening.

Mount Mary is one of the hills among the many mountains and islands in the area where Christians lived during the persecution which lasted 250 years. From the very beginning of the persecution, because of the severe penalties, they could not reveal the fact that they were Christians to anyone, not even to their own relatives, friends or neighbours. Two firm believers were very concerned that, under these circumstances, few would be able to persevere. They urged those that they knew to be Christians to leave their homes and flee to isolated islands off the coast or the lonely mountain area. In this way the faith was transmitted for seven generations without the presence of any priests¹.

When the Japanese Government finally lifted the ban against Christianity in 1873, the Christians even in their situation of extreme poverty, were anxious to construct “The House of God”. In 1880 they purchased a piece of the same land where officials had forced them to step on revered images, bas reliefs, of the Virgin Mary, as a sign of repudiation of their religion².

The Christians proceeded with their priority of building the church, giving their money and labour, in spite of their own precarious living conditions. By this time, missionaries were allowed back into the country and could help the Christians. The result was Urakami Church, a romanesque structure built of stone and bricks on 1,162 square meters of land in 1914 and completed in 1925 with twin campaniles and bells to ring the Angelus³.

Working diligently, these faithful parishioners had been gradually getting back to normal living conditions and they built their homes and villages around their churches. Urakami parish church was the largest, with 12,000 faithful. On the 9th of August 1945 the atomic bomb was dropped at a distance of 500 meters from the church, killing 8,500 of these believers in one day. The church and its villages were completely destroyed⁴. All of the parishioners suffered from the atomic bomb, as well as the men who came back

¹ Cfr. Yakichi KATAOKA, *The Martyrs of Nagasaki*, Tokyo, Kadokawa syoten, 1960, pp. 68-70.

² Cfr. *400 years of God's Family, History of Urakami Parish Church*, Nagasaki, Seibo no kishi sya, 1983, pp. 73-76.

³ Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 79-85.

⁴ Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 107.

from the war front, but once again they gave priority to the zealous reconstruction of “The House of God” more than to their own devastated houses⁵.

To encourage the people, the faithful somehow raised the bells up on a makeshift scaffold of three trees, so that on Christmas Eve of that same year the “Angelus Bells” sounded over the fields of Urakami⁶. The zeal of the faithful show by this act and the building of the church astonished the citizens of Nagasaki because Urakami Church was the first community building reconstructed after the atomic bomb⁷.

Not only for Christians but for all the citizens of Nagasaki the Angelus Bells have since been a symbol of peace and freedom. “The clear resonance of those bells!—ringing out the message of peace and its blessings”⁸.

Looking back at the rapid economic recovery of Japan in the 1970s just thirty years after the bomb, Christians of Nagasaki had risen from the ashes of the devastation that had made people predict that no plant would grow out of that soil for the next seventy years⁹. Yet there were people who had the heart to dream of a future for their descendants.

Precisely in that place and at that time, a little group of persons of Opus Dei were starting to establish schools for the formation of young people. The first steps towards setting up the first school were taken in January 1975, and the plan for the building was nearing completion in June 1975, when Saint Josemaría passed away.

It was in April of 1978, three years after the death of the Founder of Opus Dei, that the first school in Japan inspired by his teachings was opened. Now there are six schools in Nagasaki: Nagasaki Seido Elementary School for Girls, Nagasaki Seido Junior High School for Girls, Seido Mikawadai Elementary School for Boys and Seido Mikawadai Junior High School for Boys, followed in April 2009 by Seido Mikawadai High School for Boys. In April 1983, Mikawa Cooking School, a professional school, was also established.

This article describes the path taken for founding Nagasaki Seido Elementary School and the first decade of its operation. After narrating briefly the beginnings of the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Japan, the first part discusses the birth of the idea of opening a school and the initial projects that

⁵ Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶ Cfr. Takashi NAGAI, *The Bell of Nagasaki*, Tokyo, Koudansya International, 1994, prologue, p. v.

⁷ Cfr. *400 years of God's Family*, p. 115.

⁸ Cfr. NAGAI, *The Bell*, p. 117.

⁹ Cfr. Makoto NAGAI, *The Bell of Nagasaki smells*, Tokyo, Jyoshi Paul, 1974, p. 63.

followed. Choosing Nagasaki, the place where more Catholics live, as the site for starting a school, encouraged some Opus Dei members to move to this city. The second part deals with the different stages of putting up the school: acquisition of land, preparation of the faculty, definition of the mission statement of the academic institution and legal approval of the proprietor. The article concludes with a summary of the first decade of operations of this academic initiative which started with Nagasaki Seido Elementary School. The epilogue talks about the importance and impact of Christian formation imparted from this academic setting.

The main historical source for this study is the documentation about the beginnings of the school that is kept in the General Archive of the Prelature. We have used the correspondence between the General President (through its governing council for women) and the Regional Advisory of Japan¹⁰. The continuous communication between Rome and Japan required by the establishment of the school was due to the situation of the members of Opus Dei in Japan: those who began the apostolic work in this country were not Japanese, but Western, although soon there were Japanese members. None of them had any experience in the functioning of institutions of primary and secondary education. It was a question, also, of starting a school that would give Catholic formation in a country in which most of the inhabitants professed non-Christian beliefs.

For this research work, several materials from the General Archives of the Prelature have been consulted. Among them are: the testimony of Fr. José Ramón Madurga on the virtues of Mons. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer for his process of Canonisation; diaries of Centers of Opus Dei; and letters among members of Opus Dei (from Ashiya or Nagasaki to Rome) which contain some references to the apostolic initiatives. The testimony of Fr. Madurga does not provide information about the Seido project. Neither do the letters give an account of the behind-the-scenes of this undertaking. They, however, reflect the joy with which the faithful of Opus Dei began the project although without leaving any specific details useful for this study.

¹⁰ The Documents are written in a simple, straightforward, sober and sometimes familiar style. They are not directed to any person in particular but rather to an organism. Sometimes the counsellor, as head of the Regional Advisory, wrote to the General President.

THE PROJECT OF SETTING UP A SCHOOL

The Beginnings of Opus Dei in Japan

Since the beginnings of Opus Dei's presence in Japan are dealt with in detail in the article "Koichi Yamamoto and the beginnings of Opus Dei in Japan"¹¹, only a summary need be included here.

In 1957, the Archbishop of Osaka, Msgr. Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi, had occasion to speak to Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani in the Vatican¹². The Archbishop was concerned about students who might be influenced by a wave of Marxism in the universities despite having had a sound Catholic education in highly regarded mission high schools¹³. Cardinal Ottaviani told Msgr. Taguchi about Opus Dei, and suggested that he met the Founder, which he did¹⁴. After their talk Saint Josemaría Escrivá promised that he would send Fr. Joseph Múzquiz, who was living in the United States at that time, to Japan the following April in order to look into the matter further¹⁵. "In April 1958, Fr. Múzquiz arrived in Japan and travelled around the country for one month, visiting Tokyo, Osaka and Nagasaki. Before leaving Japan he travelled to Nagasaki expressly to accomplish something that Saint Josemaría

¹¹ Antonio MÉLICH MAIXÉ, *Koichi Yamamoto and the Beginnings of Opus Dei in Japan*, SetD 1 (2007), pp. 130-138.

¹² Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi was born in Shittsu (Japan) on July 20, 1902; he was ordained priest on December 22, 1928 and appointed Apostolic Administrator of Shikoku on November 30, 1940. On November 25, 1941 he was appointed bishop of Osaka and 24 July 1969, Archbishop of the diocese. He was created cardinal on March 5, 1973. He died on February 23, 1978. Cfr. «Anuario Pontificio» (1943), pp. 202, 521; (1978), p. 73, (1979), p. 985. Alfredo Ottaviani was born on October 29, 1890 in Rome; he was ordained on March 18, 1916. On January 12, 1953 he was appointed Pro-Secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office and promoted to the rank of cardinal. On November 7, 1959 he was appointed secretary of that congregation, a position he held until 1966 when he was appointed Pro-Prefect. He continued working at the Pontifical Council which took the name of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as prefect emeritus from 1968. He died on August 3, 1979. Cfr. «Anuario Pontificio» (1979), p. 59 *, (1980), p. 987.

¹³ Cfr. Andrés VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador del Opus Dei. Vida de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Madrid, Rialp, 1997-2003, vol. I, p. 355.

¹⁴ Cfr. *ibid.*

¹⁵ Cfr. Toshimi NAKAI, *The Life of Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei: God's Ways on Earth*, Ashiya, Seido, 2002, pp. 140-162; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, pp. 355-356.

Escrivá had wished him to do on his behalf: he kissed the soil of Nagasaki where many Christians had been martyred¹⁶.

Subsequently, on the 8th of November 1958 Fr. José Ramón Madurga arrived in Japan from the United States, followed shortly afterwards by several other men¹⁷. Opus Dei in that country began in the Osaka Diocese, first in Toyonaka City and later in Ashiya City¹⁸.

On the 15th of July 1960, eight women members of Opus Dei arrived in Japan, and started their work in Nishinomiya City, which is located several kilometers east of Ashiya City in the Hyogo Prefecture¹⁹.

The faithful of Opus Dei are ordinary people who seek to live their daily lives in all its dimensions, leading them to authentic concern for others and for society. Thus these women dedicated themselves accordingly and while they had not yet mastered the Japanese language, they began their professional work teaching foreign language conversation which was very much in demand in Japanese society at that time. More than 100 students were enrolled for English, Spanish and French; many housewives, university students and other young girls. Friendships also developed with these women, and some of them showed an interest in studying the Catholic teachings; among these, there were some who eventually received Baptism. Little by little classroom space was becoming too small for these activities. The problem was solved with the cooperation of other interested people, so Seido Language Institute was established in October 1962. Later this was incorporated into a newly formed educational organisation named Seido Kyoiku Sokushin Kyokai (Seido Foundation for the Advancement of Education), and was recognised as an institution of public standing by the Government of the Prefecture of Hyogo²⁰. Later on Seido Foundation would support the educational body called Seido Gakuen (Seido Schools Corporation).

In April 1964 a residence for university students was opened in the city of Kyoto where there are numerous universities and colleges. The residence

¹⁶ NAKAI, *The Life*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁷ José Ramón Madurga Lacalle was born in Saragossa (Spain) on November 10, 1924. He was ordained a priest on July 1, 1951. Afterwards he was engaged in Opus Dei's apostolic activities in Ireland and the United States, he moved to Japan as Counsellor. He dedicated himself to the development of Opus Dei in Japan until his death on June 29, 2002. Cfr. «Romana, Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei» 18 (2002), p. 145.

¹⁸ Cfr. NAKAI, *The Life*, pp. 148-153.

¹⁹ Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 153-155; VÁZQUEZ DE PRADA, *El Fundador*, vol. III, p. 359.

²⁰ Cfr. NAKAI, *The Life*, pp. 162-163.

was set up provisionally in an old Japanese style house which could hold only a few students. In December 1969, a building was erected with a detached annex comprising two classrooms and a language laboratory. The residence area could house 20 students. In addition to the work with the residents, the women of Opus Dei further expanded their Japanese contacts by continuing the language classes that they offered mostly for housewives and their children.

They were interested in working with high school girls as well, but because of the heavy study demands on Japanese high school students to prepare for the all-important university entrance exams, there was little opportunity to reach out to teens, who might best benefit from the exposure to Christian values and a Christian environment.

Aware of the strong desire to reach this age-group, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, in April 1972, opened a new horizon for these women giving them the idea of establishing their own high school. They were encouraged to look into the possibility of starting a high school on their own initiative and responsibility which could become a good instrument for imparting Christian formation to girls at a young age, allowing the spirit of Opus Dei to reach many people²¹.

It was a good idea, but it would be difficult to carry out in Japan and at first it seemed close to “impossible” to the faithful of Opus Dei there. For according to Japanese law, in order to establish a school in Japan, there were very strict regulations regarding the grounds and school buildings and the qualifications of teachers, plus complex problems involving relations with the local community and with other existing schools²².

THE PLAN TO START A SCHOOL

A Proposal for Taking Over an International School

In November 1974, the Stella Maris International School in Kobe enquired about the possibility of women of Opus Dei taking over the management of this institution. It was a girls’ mission school that had classes from primary to senior high school and where 320 students from various countries

²¹ Document from the Central Advisory to the Regional Advisory, dated on April 20, 1972, in General Archives of the Prelature (hereafter AGP), Q.1.3.

²² Cfr. *Private School Law*, December 15, 1950 by Ministry of Education; *Rules for Operating a Private School*, revised on 1972 by Ministry of Education.

were educated in English. 25% of the students were from India, others were from China, and others were born in Japan with either one or both parents from abroad, half of whom were living only temporarily in Japan. It had a good reputation and was self-sufficient, but the convent which ran the school had already announced its future closure in 1977. At the request of many parents to remain in operation, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary's nuns asked Opus Dei about the possibility of taking over the school²³.

Instead of starting a new school, the proposal offered the tempting possibility of owning a good, already established school which was popular, well managed, with convenient facilities and location, plus with few restrictions from the Ministry of Education because the school was officially classified among educational institutions in Japan under the category "other".

Since they were earnestly looking for ways and means to realise Saint Josemaría Escrivá's wish that a school be established, this offer served to intensify their efforts even more.

However, despite the many good conditions regarding this opportunity, when the matter was considered from the point of view of the original purpose, one important reservation arose. Since the apostolic works promoted by the faithful of Opus Dei and their friends or colleagues have the lay character proper to an initiative promoted by ordinary citizens, taking over a school that had been managed by nuns under the auspices of the Church could lead to misunderstandings about the nature of Opus Dei. Moreover, to convey this spirit of Opus Dei to Japanese people, the offer was not suitable. In an international school, the spirit would be transmitted almost exclusively to foreign people rather than to Japanese, thereby deviating significantly from the original aim. Furthermore, another condition placed was the formidable task of having to relocate the school within a few years, something which was not practically and financially feasible only with support from families who were largely temporary residents in Japan.

Fr. Madurga, the regional representative of Opus Dei in Japan at that time, informed Rome that after consulting the Regional Advisory of Japan they thought that it would not be a good idea to accept the offer of an international school²⁴.

²³ Cfr. Document from the Regional Counsellor to the General President, dated on December 6, 1974, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

²⁴ Cfr. Document from the Regional Counsellor to the General President, dated on December 6, 1974, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

The Search for a Site for a School in Nagasaki

After turning down the proposal for taking over the international school, a rapid practical step was taken towards implementing the project. Within a month the conclusion was reached that Nagasaki City had some special features which at this point seemed to make it the most appropriate site for the school. The reasoning was as follows :

In considering the project of a school the main obstacles had been on the one hand the astronomical price of land in Kansai area where the women of Opus Dei worked at that time, and on the other, the very low percentage of Catholic students even in Catholic schools. The average percentage of Catholics in Catholic schools was 4.5% (the percentage of Catholics in the whole country was 0.3%)²⁵. Given a school of 500 girls, they could expect to find only about 22 or 23 from Catholic families, which would make it difficult to impart the formation they hoped to give in the school.

Moreover, there was a notable exception in this general scheme of things: the Diocese of Nagasaki, had a Catholic population of 4.5%. In its Catholic schools, the percentage of Catholic girls was 51% in junior high schools and 14% in senior high schools. There were 70,000 Catholics in the diocese out of which approximately half resided in its capital²⁶.

They outlined the project according to the following data²⁷:

- a) Location: Nagasaki City;
- b) Level: Junior High School and Senior High School;
- c) Capacity: no less than 500 girls;
- d) Staff: About 30 would be needed;
- e) Land required: minimum 8,000 m² ²⁸;

²⁵ In 1975 the population of Japan was 111,950,000 (cfr. Institute of Statistics in the Ministry of General Affairs, *Japan Statistics*, Department of the Ministry of Treasury, 2003, p. 8). The total number of Catholics was 388,556 in 1975, and the percentage is 0.3%, cfr. *Christian Almanac of Japan*, Christian Documents, Tokyo 1976, p. 470.

²⁶ The population of Nagasaki Pref. was 1,574,015, and there were 72,104 Catholics (70,878 faithful and 1,226 priests), and the percentage was 4.5%. And 52.2% of them lived in Nagasaki City itself or in its vicinity. Cfr. «Nagasaki Catholic Newspaper» (March issue of 1976).

²⁷ Cfr. Document from the Regional Counsellor to the General President, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

²⁸ The sport field for the school should be a minimum of 4,800 m²; if students number more than 241, the area should be 2,400 m² plus 10 times the number of students minus 240. Cfr. Ministry of Education, *Rules for Setting Up a Elementary School*, 1963.

- f) Building space required: 2,100m² ²⁹;
- g) Investment: more than 300 million yen;
- h) Time frame: Possibly two years, three years at the most.

THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD SETTING UP THE SCHOOL

Until March of 1975 only men of Opus Dei, including Fr. Madurga, had made trips to Nagasaki. In March women of Opus Dei travelled there for the first time in order to look things over. They were Kikuko Yoshizu³⁰, Kazuko Nakajima³¹ and María Teresa Valdés³². They stayed in Nagasaki from the 14th to the 18th of March. Mizuko Araki³³ introduced them to her parents who became warm and generous friends, and they also met some acquaintances of Fr. Madurga. While there, they got a variety of useful information and began to think about the possibility of starting a foreign language school, the type of endeavor that had met with such success in the Kansai area and which could tide them over financially until the school could actually be ready to function³⁴.

In April 1975 the first steps of the project of the school were completed. Fr. Madurga and Koichi Yamamoto³⁵, a representative of Seido Kyouiku Sokushin Kyoukai Foundation, took the decision to travel to Nagasaki where they talked with the Archbishop, and searched for a suitable landsite.

²⁹ The area for the school buildings should be a minimum of 4,140 m²; if students are more than 480, the area for the school buildings should be 2,700 m² plus three times the number of students minus 480. Cfr. *ibid.*

³⁰ Kikuko Yoshizu was born on July 17, 1938, and became the first female numerary member in Japan on May 29, 1961. She studied History [master]. She passed away August 18, 1997. At that time, she formed part of the Regional Advisory.

³¹ Kazuko Nakajima was born on February 11, 1944. She moved to Nagasaki City in September 1975, and engaged in the preparation for setting up the school from April 1978, the opening year of the school. She served for 25 years as principal and vice principal.

³² María Teresa Valdés was born on April 7, 1934, in Spain. She studied in the Faculty of Philosophy. She came to Japan in 1960 from Ireland and was for many years chief of the Regional Advisory Board in Japan. She passed away on December 23, 1999.

³³ Mizuko Araki was a university student (Social Studies) from Nagasaki City, and had just joined Opus Dei while at Shimogamo Academy in Kyoto, a cultural Center and student residence which fosters the spirit of Opus Dei.

³⁴ Cfr. Diary of Ohara Bunka Center, dated on March from 14 to 18, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2., D-8696.

³⁵ Koichi Yamamoto is more precisely identified in the article by MÉLICH MAIXÉ, *Koichi Yamamoto*, pp. 127-157.

Msgr. Satowaki, who assented to the idea of establishing a school in Nagasaki from the beginning, now proposed the setting up of an Elementary School and he had already come up with a concrete and definite site around the beginning of May. Speaking about the bishop, Fr. Madurga remembers:

He has two or three more years to go before retirement, and as a final legacy, would like to help us found a school in a central location of the city. There is a piece of land available situated next to the parish of Urakami, which is the largest in Japan (6,500 faithful), right in the heart of the most Catholic part of Nagasaki³⁶.

He is very keen on the Christian formation of the youth in this area, who presently have to travel quite a distance to reach Catholic schools; he mentioned that it would be easy to reach around 700 students.

He is insistent that we begin with the 6 years of Elementary School (from ages 6 to 11) and offer the three years of Junior High School as well (from ages 12 to 15); and that the Primary grades would have to be for boys and girls; otherwise it would not resolve the problem of that area.

The land in question is his, but he ceded it to the Provincial Government in exchange for another plot and he reckons that it would be possible to switch it back for our purchase (at about US\$100 per square meter, which though high, is only half or a third of the normal cost in that area). It measures 11,300 m²³⁷.

The Advisory Board in Japan studied this, and informed the Central Advisory, that in their opinion, it would be a good idea to accept the offer. The main reason in favor of the offer was as follows: since there was no other place in the city with such a dense population of Catholics, it seemed as ideal a site as could be imagined. Though accepting this offer meant a change in the initial plan to set up a Junior High School for girls only, the reasoning was that the original aim could eventually be achieved once permission was

³⁶ Urakami Catholic Church is now the Cathedral in Nagasaki and the seat of the diocese. At that time the Archbishop's residence and chancery office were adjacent to Oura Church, the first Catholic Church in Nagasaki after the period of persecutions; but they were relocated to the current location because the parish included a seminary, a Catholic Center for the parish offices and a gathering place for the faithful, two Catholic kindergartens, and several Monasteries and Convents. There were 6,720 faithful in 1975. Cfr. «Nagasaki Catholic Newspaper», March issue of 1977.

³⁷ Document from the Regional Counsellor to the General President, dated on May 29, 1975, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725; cfr. Diary of Ohara Bunka Center, dated May 26, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2., D-8697.

granted to the entity to start the first school, although Msgr. Satowaki insisted that the project should begin with a coeducational Elementary School. Those in Nagasaki were convinced that this opportunity must not be missed³⁸.

However, shortly after the proposal arrived in Rome, on the 26th of June, 1975, Saint Josemaría Escrivá suddenly passed away. On the morning of the very day that he passed away, the Founder of Opus Dei referred to the Nagasaki school project when he responded to a question asked by Michiko Yokokura from Japan at a gathering of women studying in Rome. He told her to:

Pray for your country, which has a very large population, so that they may know Jesus Christ, and love Him and serve Him. As you all know, they are preparing to set up a school in Nagasaki. We have to pray that the difficulties will disappear so that they can begin as soon as possible, and then many Catholic girls can come in contact with the Work from their youth. And later, my daughters of Japanese descendants living in [South] America will start returning to Japan with so much joy³⁹.

While Saint Josemaría was always willing to give advice to each country, he cherished the initiative and responsibility of local people. Therefore, it can be supposed that he would have been content to accept this proposal⁴⁰. The Archbishop supported it and was offering an ideal site for a school, which had been thought of as the hardest thing to attain. It was reasoned that the Archbishop's offer may well have been the answer to what Escrivá meant when he had said "we have to pray that the difficulties will disappear". Yet perhaps the main "difficulties" that concerned the Founder at that moment had been the number of members needed to sustain such a school morally and physically while continuing the apostolic work of Opus Dei. For just after mentioning the difficulties of setting up a school, he had added the thought about the Japanese Latin Americans who would "start returning to Japan with so much joy".

That would certainly enable them to make new friends who could help with the work during a few years of preparation. In fact there were only ten

³⁸ Cfr. Document from the Regional Advisory to the General President, dated on May 30, 1975, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

³⁹ Josemaría ESCRIVÁ, Notes from a get-together, June 26, 1975, AGP, Library, P02, «Noticias», VII-1975, p. 45.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Diary of Ohara Bunka Center, dated on June 25, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8697.

Japanese women numeraries⁴¹ at that time. Five of them had teaching certificates for high school, but three of them were students in Rome. No one had an elementary school teaching certificate. There was one university student, but she would only be able to get a teaching certificate for high school, not for elementary school. There were no married members who would be able to teach at primary level, neither in Nagasaki where the apostolic work had not yet begun, nor in Kansai. If in order to set up a school at least five members with elementary school teaching certificates were needed, and these five went to work for the school, there would not be enough members to continue the apostolic work begun or to carry on the minimum work of governing and managing the work of Opus Dei. Saint Josemaría Escrivá seems to have felt the immediate need to send some members to help out in Japan, and thought that Japanese Americans who lived in South America would be a perfect solution⁴².

The Beginnings of Opus Dei in Nagasaki

Three days after Escrivá passed away Fr. Madurga received a telephone call from the secretary of Msgr. Satowaki who informed him that a suitable house for a Center of Opus Dei had been found. Yoshizu and Valdés immediately went to Nagasaki to see if it was suitable for the Center. They decided to rent the house although it was old and long out of use, because it was spacious enough for beginning the work of Opus Dei. It was also conveniently located: close to Urakami Church and at the same time near the site where the school was to be built. The minimum remodelling to make the house habitable was finished around the end of August.

On the 1st of September 1975, Valdés and Nakajima left Kyoto for Nagasaki. Satoko Kojima, who had just asked to be admitted to Opus Dei, and Tokuko Kawata joined the two in Nagasaki from Ashiya. At the same time as the preparatory work of setting up the school proceeded, the women taught foreign language conversation and cooking at their Center, which they named Yamazato Academy.

⁴¹ Numeraries are those members of Opus Dei who have received the gift of apostolic celibacy and they have full availability to occupy specific apostolic tasks. They normally live in Centers of Opus Dei.

⁴² At that time in addition to the people mentioned above, there were five other numeraries who had come to Japan at the beginnings of Opus Dei in that country, four who were Japanese Americans from South America.

On September 1st, the same day that the women members arrived in Nagasaki, Fr. Madurga met Msgr. Satowaki in order to obtain formal permission to establish Centers of Opus Dei in the Diocese of Nagasaki and to submit the necessary documents. At that time Msgr. Satowaki told Fr. Madurga the unexpected news that the mayor of Nagasaki had just come to inform him that unfortunately the land he had expected to provide for the school after negotiating with the Provincial Government could not be returned to his control because of some legal complications⁴³.

THE CHALLENGES AND THE OPENING OF THE SCHOOL

The first part of this article described the path that led to the decision to set up a school in Nagasaki, and, at the same time pointed out the problems which had to be resolved in order to carry out the project. The challenges faced included obtaining a site for the school, preparing the staff, specifying the unique characteristics of the school, and winning the approval of the community. Whether the Council of Private Schools would approve the entity and a new school, and whether the Nagasaki Prefecture would finally give its permission depended on how these problems would be resolved. In this section we would like to describe the way these problems were dealt with, and show the steps taken in order to earn approval from the community, the number of students to be recruited, and so on, as these matters reflect exactly how the school was to be accepted.

Final Acquisition of a Site for the School

After the experience of false leads and negative results, Fr. Madurga and Yamamoto renewed their intensive efforts to find suitable terrain. Nagasaki is geographically constituted of many low mountains that practically overhang the seacoast. The narrow strip of flat shoreline is taken up by the downtown area of the city. Residential areas consist primarily of tightly clustered houses clinging to the slopes on lots of 150 to 300 square meters. Procuring a plot of land for a building of 10,000 square meters was no easy task.

⁴³ Cfr. Diary of Yamazato Academy dated on September 3, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8720; Document from Regional Counsellor to the General President, dated on September 16, 1975, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

Three possible sites for a school were investigated. The first site had 100 landowners, making negotiations practically impossible. The second site looked promising, but the owner refused to sell. The third site was located in a rather new residential district where Nagasaki Seido Elementary and Junior High Schools were eventually built⁴⁴. They made the decision to buy this final option in the middle of December, for the following reasons⁴⁵: it was

- a) conveniently accessible, with a bus-stop in front of the property;
- b) the sole ownership property of a reputable company based in Osaka;
- c) in an area with many Catholics, close to the site previously considered;
- d) large enough for a primary and Junior High School of roughly 400 girls altogether, including sports ground and space for a covered gymnasium and a teachers' residence;
- e) of an accessible price; even with the formidable cost of levelling the uneven terrain, it still worked out to be less than other, 'better' properties;
- f) a good site according to the Archbishop.

On the 24th of December, 1975, the contract to buy the 12,509 m² tract of land was signed⁴⁶. The tree-covered land was located on the east side of Mihara Hill, and connected to the road on that side. However, the uneven terrain had to be levelled, which entailed building a retaining wall 5.5 meters wide and 10 meters high, and then scooping the earth taken from the top into the space left between the slope and the wall, thus creating a large, flat plot for the school grounds and buildings. This tremendous work of levelling began according to the expertly detailed plans drawn up by Fr. Madurga who was a highly qualified civil engineer. It was estimated that more than one year was necessary to complete the earth-moving phase of construction. Since one requirement for getting the final permission to start a school was

⁴⁴ Cfr. Diary of Yamazato Academy dated from September 30 to October 30, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8720.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Diary of Yamazato Academy dated on December 7, 1975, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8720; Document from the Regional Advisory to the General President, dated on December 21, 1975, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

⁴⁶ Cfr. Diary of Yamazato Academy dated on December 20 1975, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8720; note attached to the Document from the Regional Advisory to the General President (December 21, 1975), signed January 15, 1976 which states that the information was received by letter, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

that 80% of the school buildings would be completed, the school was projected to open in April 1978⁴⁷.

As it turned out, this third site had an added advantage that was very convenient: there was a forest of 40,000 m² about ten minutes away by foot from the acquired land, across a small valley to the west, which seemed a perfect spot for an all-boys school in the future. Furthermore, that woodland was owned by only three people. Negotiations were immediately begun with the land owners.

Taking into consideration the time by which “80% of the school building would be finished” and the time by which the Council of Private Schools would hold its meeting, there was hope that by February 1978, two months before the start of the school year, final permission would be granted. Before submitting the documents for final permission, however, “a scheme for establishing a private school” had to be submitted to the Nagasaki Prefecture and to be approved on schedule, so that construction of the school buildings could proceed. This scheme had to include not only the plans for the playground, school buildings and facilities, but also a layout describing the goals of the school, its’ essential characteristics and program of education, a list of the names of the teaching staff, an operating budget and so on. The study of both aspects of this preparation was accelerated and the “scheme for establishing a private school” submitted. On the 31th of August 1976, a letter arrived from the Nagasaki prefectural authorities giving the required permission to proceed with the scheme.

Preparation of the Faculty

In addition to the land and other material aspects, some members of Opus Dei who started this project began to work in order to obtain the elementary school teaching certificates. It would only be a matter of time. Some, who already had junior high school teaching certificates needed to spend one year studying to qualify for a second rank certificate for elementary school and up to two years of study for a first rank certificate. Accordingly, Nakajima and Kojima from Nagasaki cheerfully had enrolled on to a correspondence course in October 1975 to obtain the required qualifications, while Jitsuko Sekiguchi in the same spirit joined a two-year college in Kansai in

⁴⁷ Cfr. Diary of Yamazato Academy dated on April 25 1976, AGP, series U.2.2, D-8720; Document from the Regional Advisory to the General President, dated on December 21, 1975, AGP, R.4.4.2, folder 1725.

April 1976 where it was possible to obtain a teaching license for elementary school in the shortest possible time⁴⁸. Yokokura and Mieko Kimura who had been studying in Rome returned to Japan in October 1977, and since both already held teaching certificates for junior high school, they immediately began correspondence courses to be able to teach in elementary school as well.

Nakajima was named Principal of the school and acquired the first rank certificate required for principals, just three months before submitting the application for the final permission to open the school. As for the other requirement for being a principal, that of five years' teaching experience, Nakajima was able to fulfill it by including a job as a part-time teacher which she had held for a time at Osaka while living in Nagasaki.

Regarding the need to relieve some of the work load of those who became teacher trainees, it should be mentioned that within a few years before and after starting the school, a number of Japanese Americans came from Peru and Brazil to help out with the various works Opus Dei was promoting in Japan, just as Saint Josemaría Escrivá had said in 1975.

Special Features of the School

In order to obtain the approval of the Council of Private Schools and to attract parents and children to the school, it was very important as pointed out above to formulate a clear goal for the students and for the school to have a distinctive character with discernible features. The goal was clear. The aim of this foundation was the development of the individual human person in all dimensions—intellectual and spiritual—as emphasised by Christian anthropology. The focus was to place a high value on the traditionally recognised virtues, and to apply them to everyday life, embodying the conviction that education is not only to transmit an accumulation of facts and ideas, but also to show children how actually to live according to moral principles, upon which such character virtues are based. This had to be explained in a convincing way easy for both Catholic and non-Catholic parents to appreciate, a task requiring the employment of unmistakably clear but delicate wording. The brochure of the school put it this way:

⁴⁸ Schools in Japan usually start in April, but students can enter a correspondence college either in April or October. Accordingly a certificate can be obtained in April or October two years after enrolment.

The dearest wish of every parent is surely for their children's happiness during their early years, on into adulthood and thereafter. It is for this reason that they want to provide the best education possible for their young ones. Indeed their children's happiness, good health, and mental balance; as well as intellectual growth and social development are as a matter of course of inestimable importance. Nevertheless, also of great importance in human education is the need to instruct the young in religious faith and a clear sense of morality; an understanding of where real happiness lies, how to enjoy it and how to be able to transmit something of that joy to others.

Seido School makes this parental wish its own with the firm conviction that religious faith cannot be separated from work and study and all the other ordinary aspects of daily life. It believes that supported by steady and lively religious ideals, the endeavors of everyday life are made worthwhile, motivating and full of joy. Seido School is pledged to provide the best possible education to achieve these ends, based on Catholic values that extend to the development of the whole person⁴⁹.

Following this message, the pamphlet goes on to explain the importance of cooperation among parents, children and teachers, and of the teachers' good example. The characteristics of the school were outlined as follows:

- a) Education of children with and on behalf of the parents⁵⁰;
- b) Reliable teachers;
- c) A mentor for each pupil;
- d) A lively spiritual formation;
- e) A wholesome family atmosphere;
- f) Meals in a cheerful dining room⁵¹;

⁴⁹ Statutes of Seido Gakuen Foundation presented to the Nagasaki Prefectural Government on January 20, 1978, and approved on February 15, 1978, as stated in the Seido Gakuen Foundation archives.

⁵⁰ At that time schools had broad authority over their pupils' lives, and parents were expected to follow school instructions. Therefore it was quite an innovation to be closely attentive to parents' opinions. The importance given to parents and professors of an academic institution form part of the teachings of Saint Josemaría, cfr. Ramón POMAR, *San Josemaría y la promoción del Colegio Gaztelueta*, SetD 4 (2010), pp. 133-134.

⁵¹ It was common for pupils to eat lunch at their classroom desks, necessarily with only the most rudimentary tableware. There was a dining room at Nagasaki Seido Elementary School, where pupils from various grades would have lunch together in a family style, which was quite unusual in schools at the time. While it was common in most schools to have bread even with the Japanese menu, in Nagasaki Seido rice was served several times a week. In that way good table manners using home-like dishes and utensils were the norm in a natural way from the very early grades.

- g) Learning everyday English⁵²;
- h) Club activities starting from the lower grades⁵³.

Parents in the early stages of the school entrusted their children to Nagasaki Seido Elementary School, without really knowing a great deal about it, going only on their belief in its goals and the Catholic spirit it professed, and perhaps also on their impressions of the sincerity of the school staff.

*The Approval as a Legal Entity Seido Gakuen
and Nagasaki Seido Elementary School*

Finally on the 20th of January, 1978 an application was submitted by Seido Kyouiku Sokushin Kyokai (Seido Foundation for the Advancement of Education) to receive permission to establish the Seido Gakuen (Seido Schools Corporation) which would make it possible to set up a school. On the 15th of February, 1978 Nagasaki Seido Elementary School was approved by the Council of Private Schools of Nagasaki Prefecture, and was subsequently given the final go-ahead by the Governor of Nagasaki.

The project approved was as follows:

entire area of the grounds	12,509.00 m ²
site for the school buildings	935.20 m ²
playground	4,840.00 m ²
gymnasium (plan)	858.00 m ²
total area of the buildings	2,725.24 m ²

a four-story building of reinforced concrete
coeducational, from grades 1 to 6, one class for each grade, 45 students to a class⁵⁴.

⁵² In Japan the need to teach English in Elementary School had long been discussed, but the public schools did not teach it, although some private schools did. In Nagasaki Seido, both teachers and pupils could count on the vast experience of Seido Language Institute in Kansai for effective English education of juvenile learners.

⁵³ In Japan, after-school activities, seen as an important part of the educational experience, are organized within the same school, consisting of various activities, such as sports clubs. Children can choose the club each one prefers. However, at that time only fifth and sixth graders were allowed to join school club activities.

⁵⁴ There were two private Schools in Nagasaki then. Both were parish schools, one run by a monastery and the other by a convent. In order to gain approval to set up a private Elementary School in a rurally located city with a population of 500,000, the bare minimum complement required for students was filed. Accordingly it would be one class for each grade, which meant 45 pupils per class at that time.

On the 8th of April, 1978 Nagasaki Seido Elementary School opened its doors for first graders with 25 boys and 20 girls, and 89 parents. The faculty members consisted of Fr. Soichiro Nitta as chairman of the Board of Directors, Kazuko Nakajima as principal, Jitsuko Sekiguchi, Michiko Yokokura, Mieko Kimura and Satoko Kojima as general teachers, María Teresa Valdés as English teacher, Kimiko Nakata as art and physical education teacher, Kiyomitsu Nakajima as school bus driver; Kaoru Saito, Keiko Kawada and Miyoko Nakajima as dining room personnel.

The Beginnings of Nagasaki Seido Elementary School

Usually a private school cannot gain a full quota of students when it opens in a city like Nagasaki, located in mainly rural area. Amazingly, the first grade of Nagasaki Seido reached the exact number of 45 students required by the government for a new school, with 20 Catholics among them. To satisfy local curiosity, broadcasters often programmed interviews about the school on television, and meetings were held explaining the school to the Kindergartens. The new teachers even visited families living in the mountain areas when they knew they had children of school age. The relationship between parents and teachers became very good, and the word spread.

Because of successfully attaining the full quota of students for the first year and good standing among parents and the community, permission to accept 90 students in the following year was granted. In the second year 34 boys and 29 girls entered the school, and in the third year 43 boys and 40 girls entered. As the number of pupils increased, additional teachers living in Nagasaki plus new graduates in education from Nagasaki University were employed. The good reputation of the school attracted a number of students whose non-Catholic parents were well known people in Nagasaki City. The teachings of Josemaría Escrivá to try to make one's everyday life something worthy of offering to God was easy to understand and accept, not only for Catholics but for all these industrious Japanese people who appreciated Seido's goals.

Meanwhile, there were only six classrooms at first, so by the fourth year classroom space was no longer sufficient. The nearby site mentioned above as tentatively eyed for a boys' school was finally acquired following difficult negotiations. Construction of the new school buildings was started, with government permission, in 1979. Unfortunately it was not in time for the beginning of the fourth school year in April 1981.

A crucial Parent-Teacher meeting was held on the first Sunday of July 1981. It was announced that the boys would be moved to the new buildings at Mikawa Hill, so that the boys and girls could be educated separately in different buildings of the same school.

Most parents agreed with this school policy, but some parents, especially those who had only daughters, were surprised about the new arrangements in the school. In July and August, detailed conversations with those parents were held, and at the last minute, one boy and six girls transferred to coeducational schools.

Afterwards in order to prepare for the installation of the Junior High School, Seido Elementary School acquired two new Catholic faculty members, Eiji Fukafuhi and Michiko Yamada, who had been competent public junior high school teachers, and were at the same time among the schools parents. While teaching the students of the upper elementary grades, they started to make plans for the curriculum, instruction manuals, and specifications of the Junior High School.

In 1983, the school was functioning with all six grades, and the whole student body had reached 191 boys and 203 girls. The first pupils who had come to Seido were now in the sixth grade, so in order for them to go on to Nagasaki Seido Junior High School, the legal procedure to set up a Junior High School was already underway. At that time, there were eight private junior high schools in Nagasaki City, four of which were all-girls and three of which were all-boys, each with its own high school. All of the boys' schools were Catholic, and out of the girls' schools one was Catholic, while another was Protestant. One of the Catholic boys' schools and the Catholic girls' school were located not far from Seido. Another Catholic school was a coeducational parish school that ran from kindergarten through to Junior High School. It was no surprise that it was difficult to win approval from the Council of Private Schools under such circumstances. The application for approval of a Junior High School was submitted consisting in two classes for each grade, one for 35 boys and another for 35 girls. In the midst of this tense situation, Yamamoto, who had made such great efforts in setting up Seido Gakuen, died on the 1st of September⁵⁵. One month later, on the 1st of October, 1983, permission to found Nagasaki Seido Junior High School was finally granted. The Junior High School for girls opened with 23 students and the school for boys with 25 students, in April of 1984. Thus the idea

⁵⁵ Cfr. MÉLICH MAIXÉ, *Koichi Yamamoto*, pp. 152-155.

proposed by Saint Josemaría was fulfilled, although the two schools were still legally recognised as one coeducational institution with two divisions.

The first students who joined Nagasaki Seido Elementary School in 1978 graduated from the Junior High School in March 1987. Almost all of them enrolled in excellent high schools. As a result of the efforts and accomplishments of nine years, an application for permission to set up completely independent, separate schools for boys and girls under different names, was submitted. Official approval was given by the Nagasaki Prefecture in March of 1988. The following month, just a decade after Nagasaki Seido Elementary School was established, and six years after separate education began for the boys and girls in different buildings, the four legally independent schools were launched: Nagasaki Seido Elementary School for girls, Nagasaki Seido Junior High School for girls, Seido Mikawadai Elementary School for boys and Seido Mikawadai Junior High School for boys. In April 2009, Seido Mikawadai Senior High School for boys was opened and at present the project of opening a similar school for girls is being studied.

In order to set up a school and ensure its continuation in the future, it is necessary to obtain excellent results in the areas both of human and intellectual formation. With regard to intellectual formation, we should remember that the educational standards in Japanese schools are very high and the requirements for teachers are also high. The society is very competitive, so a great deal of effort is demanded to fulfill all expectations.

EPILOGUE

Despite Japan being a country with a small minority of Catholics, it is easy to understand Saint Josemaría's insistence on the importance of human virtues⁵⁶; for example, sincerity, cheerfulness, generosity, courage, the spirit of hard work, to name only a few of the qualities necessary to live a good life anywhere. He emphasised the daily struggle needed to value the little things in life, using them not only as a way of making things easier and more pleasant for others and for society in general, but as a fundamental way of turning ordinary life and work into something that can be offered to God.

⁵⁶ Cfr. Kazuko NAKAJIMA, *Universalidad en la tarea educativa*, in *La grandezza della vita quotidiana*, Roma, Edusc, 2002-2004, vol. VI, pp. 73-78.

This approach to education was very innovative for the Christians of Nagasaki, who had a long history of keeping themselves apart from non-Catholic society. After three or four years passed by, the mother of one Seido pupil said with emotion, “I am so happy to know that we can live our ordinary life in open coherence with our faith... My father worked up to a high position in the Nagasaki Police Department, but to do so he felt he had to hide his Christianity; we had all grown used to hiding our Christian life for so long!”.

The teachers, almost all non-Catholic, who study what Saint Josemaría did and taught, can be seen making efforts to apply those teachings themselves to their daily work. They put into practice the important emphasis of Escrivá on the dignity of each student. This allows them to develop as persons in all areas of their lives.

The students are stimulated by the example of their teachers and seek to imitate them. The school foment an atmosphere of friendship and confidence among all who participate in its activities—the teachers, the parents and the students. From the very beginning an effort was made to attend first of all to the parents, next to the teachers, and then to the students, who benefit greatly from this wise hierarchy promoted by Saint Josemaría.

Because of the professional prestige of the teachers and the high standard in imparting intellectual and moral formation to the students, the school gained the confidence of parents, which was the main aim of the educational program and the key to the official recognition of the school in this society.

The ratio of Catholics was 60% in the first year, but dwindled as years went by to 25% in the fourth year, because the number of non-Catholic families had increased. We could also say this means that parents who are not Catholic recognise the value of the school and therefore send their children there.

One day, a parish priest made this comment to the principal of the school “I’ve come to express my gratitude to your school. At last the intelligentsia of Nagasaki can understand what the Catholic Church is all about through the formation received by their sons at this school”⁵⁷.

The laws concerning education in Japan prohibit religious education in public schools, but private schools are free from this restriction. Therefore parents who choose Seido do so knowing that their children will receive

⁵⁷ There were two other Catholic elementary schools in Nagasaki City; all their students were Catholic at that time.

an education based on Catholic teachings.

The school offers religion classes to non-catholic students also, and along with the Catholic students they learn certain devotional practices, such as praying the Rosary and the Angelus, attending Mass in the school chapel, going together on occasional little pilgrimages to local shrines and churches. In their everyday school and family life, including work and play, they are encouraged to live the different virtues that they are learning, with their classmates and anyone who forms part of their lives.

Through the monitoring system that is very much appreciated, which gives them personal human formation, it is possible to discern whether the student would personally like to know more about God and prayer; in other words, whether they would like to study the Catholic catechism. In this way a good number of non-Catholic students have received the grace of Baptism⁵⁸.

For parents, not only classes on religion, but also family education talks, charity work, the chorus club and foreign language classes are offered, and cordial relationships with them continue even after their children have graduated. In such an atmosphere, more than 100 people have been baptised including entire families, teachers, Junior High School students, mothers and children, alumnae, their families and relatives, as well as those children whose parents were Catholic, but for one reason or another, the children had not been baptised. There was one case in which the mother and children in a protestant family were received into the Catholic Church, with the father's blessing, although he was a protestant pastor.

It has been 37 years since Nagasaki Seido Elementary School opened. During that period of time we have met many and varied people who have been influenced by Saint Josemaría's spirit including more than 1,000 former students of the girls' school, teachers, families, prefectural and city officials, people connected with the construction and material care of the school, and many, many others... in total more than 6,000 people.

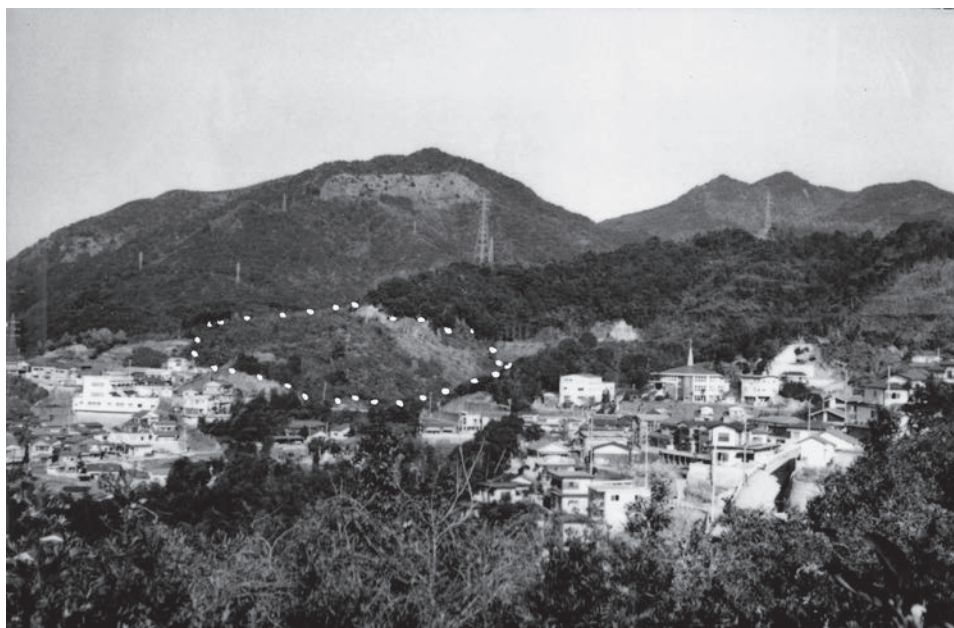
With the spirit they have learned at our school, imbued with Catholic values and ways of thinking, the human virtues, the custom of prayer, and—for the baptised—frequent reception of the Sacraments, they are people who can sow the seeds of joy and peace wherever they are now and in the future, if

⁵⁸ If a student wants to be baptized or desires to learn more about Catholicism, the mother is invited to attend classes. Often this leads to the Baptism of the mother and daughter (or daughters), sometimes the father as well, or a whole family including grandparents.

they wish, and can keep on seeking real and everlasting happiness for themselves, for their families, and for the people around them.

Kazuko Nakajima. B.A. in Social Studies from Osaka Women's University, Ph.D. in Education from the University of Navarra, M.S. in Social Welfare from the Osaka City University. From 1978 to 2003 she has been Principal of Nagasaki Seido Elementary School; from 1983 to 2003 also she has been Principal of Nagasaki Seido Junior High School. In 2003 she was named Chairperson of the Board of Directors at the Seido School Corporation. And from 2009 she was named Sub-chairperson of the same.

Ryoko Makiyama. B.A. in Industrial Chemistry from Nagasaki University; from 1992 to 1999 she was a teacher at Nagasaki Seido Elementary School and since 2003 she has been Principal of Nagasaki Seido Primary and Junior High Schools



*Area where the school was to be constructed. The perimeter is marked with a discontinuous line.
A sight of the school already built is offered below.*





*The first promotion of students of the
Nagasaki Seido School.*