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JAPAN: KYOTO CATHOLICS PRODUCE DRAMA ABOUT NAGASAKI MARTYR

Catholics in Kyoto presented a drama about one of Japan's 26 Nagasaki martyrs on Feb 5, feast day of the martyrs, at Nishijin Church. The drama titled "St. Thomas Kozaki - a Letter to His Mother" was sponsored by the Franciscan Third Order in Shimogyoku with the help of the Suwaraji Dramatic Society. It was staged to mark this year's beatification of 188 more Japanese martyrs who perished between 1603 and 1639. St. Thomas was crucified along with 25 others including his father, St. Miguel Kozaki, in Nagasaki in 1597. He was a boy of 15. The Franciscans hope to stage another drama on the life of Thecla Hashimoto, one of the 188 Japanese martyrs who will be beatified on Nov 24, 2008 in Nagasaki. Kyoto, formerly the imperial capital of Japan, is in the central part of Honshu island. (JCN/FLICKR)

SINGAPORE: ART THERAPY MINISTRY EXHIBIT

The "HeARTspace Open Studio" at the St. Mary of the Angels Church in Singapore's West District displayed 20 art works by more than 20 artists in a March 27-April 6 exhibit titled "Journey Into Life." The participants aimed to show how their creative self-expression through visual art has contributed to their faith journey, and vice-versa. "HeARTspace @ St. Mary's" is an art therapy ministry for people seeking to enhance their emotional, mental and physical well-being. The individual and group sessions are facilitated by art therapist Joanna Tan. (CN)

JAPAN: CATHOLIC BRAILLE LIBRARIES NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS

Eleven representatives of five Catholic braille libraries met at Kakogawa Church in Hyogo Feb 2-3, and affirmed the need for more volunteers to help produce audio materials for the visually handicapped. The participants, who are at the same time members of *Kajoren*, the Catholic information service for the blind, said the production of braille books is now facilitated by computer programs allowing automatic input and proofreading of texts, maps and illustrations. But since 70% of the some 301,000 visually handicapped people in Japan have lost their sight by sickness or accident, demand for materials on CD or tape is increasing. These people find it difficult to master braille and therefore, rely on audio materials for information. The problems of braille libraries include the aging of volunteers and difficulties in recruiting new ones, the participants said. (JCN)



RADIO VERITAS ASIA LAUNCHES YEAR-LONG 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Some 100 guests and staff of Radio Veritas Asia (RVA) joined a Mass presided by San Fernando, Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto on April 11, 2008 to launch the year-long 40th anniversary celebration of the station. "RVA is the response of the Asian Bishops to the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ," the archbishop said in his homily. Amid the "continuous promotion of the 'culture of death' in Asia thru wars, abortion, anomalies as well as graft and corruption in governments," RVA is "challenged to promote the counter culture of peace, unity, solidarity and life," the prelate added. He urged RVA to continue becoming a "center-point of dialogue, constantly inviting all peoples to realize their dignity as brothers and sisters in Christ and to work together in building up a civilization of life and solidarity." Archbishop Aniceto is member of the Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center (PREIC), RVA's legal body in the Philippines. Manila Auxiliary Bishop Bernardino Cortez and priests of RVA concelebrated the Mass. The year-long Ruby anniversary celebration culminates on April 11, 2009. Several projects are lined up for the year including the publication of a 40th anniversary commemorative magazine. RVA, a project of the FABC, was dubbed "missionary of Asia" by Pope John Paul II. It broadcasts in 15 languages throughout Asia and parts of Russia.

HONG KONG: EXHIBIT COMMEMORATES 120TH ANNIVERSARY OF CATHEDRAL

A commemorative exhibit was opened on April 5 for the 120th anniversary of the Cathedral of the Diocese of Hong Kong which is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The exhibit titled "The Lord's Grace is Everlasting; Let us Walk Forward Towards the Future" has sections on the History and Architecture of the Cathedral, Liturgy, Charity Services, Vocations and Evangelization. The purpose is to help Catholics focus on their mission and enrich their faith, organizers say. On Dec 8, 1883 the Church of Hong Kong laid the first stone of the Cathedral. Five years later, it was consecrated and inaugurated as a Cathedral. In 2003, it won the UNESCO award for the protection of cultural patrimony. (FIDES)

THAILAND: CHILDREN EXPRESS YEARNING FOR PEACE THROUGH ART

German Catholic Steffen Paul Ruholl, 40, staged an exhibit April 4-11 in Bangkok of 100 paintings of children in the southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala, near Thailand's border with Malaysia. The images depict the current interreligious conflict in those provinces, and the children's yearning for peace. Ruholl's goal is to help the children find a way to express their sentiments towards the violent conflict, and for viewers of the exhibit to be aware of the situation through the children's drawings. "There are real and true stories behind these paintings," Ruholl said. (UCANEWS)

KOREA: CHURCH LAUNCHES NEW TV CHANNEL AND WEBSITE

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) has launched a new television channel, a new Internet publication and a revamped website. The bishops' new website at <<http://www.cbck.or.kr>> includes documents and downloadable electronic books. The bishops have also launched a news service at <<http://hwahai.cbck.or.kr>> which will publish news about the local church each month. The new TV channel, UTV, launched by the bishops is currently broadcasting over the Internet. Seoul archdiocese has also formed a Commission for Social Communications under the leadership of Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Yeom Soo-jung. The aim of the commission is to help Catholic broadcasters and journalists in their work for the Church. (CBCP MONITOR)

PAKISTAN: FIRST CATHOLIC PERIODICAL GOES ONLINE

The first Urdu Catholic weekly in Pakistan, launched two years ago in Karachi archdiocese, now has an online edition. The website of "Agahi" news <www.agahinews.com> was inaugurated by Karachi Archbishop Evarist Pinto on March 20 after Holy Thursday Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Karachi. The online edition offers the full content of the tabloid-size archdiocesan weekly, to be posted on the Internet every Monday. It includes access to back issues and a search mechanism for individual news items, features and reviews. "It is my wish that (Agahi's) online edition be a tool for education, formation, interfaith harmony and an instrument of peace, love and understanding -- above all a channel for spreading the Word of God," the prelate said in his address. *Agahi* (which means "insight," "knowledge" or "information" in Urdu) became the first Catholic Urdu weekly when it was launched in 2006. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: "MINDANAO CROSS" NEWSPAPER TURNS 60

Considered the longest running Catholic newspaper in the Philippines, the "Mindanao Cross," turns 60 years this year. Archbishop Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato and FABC secretary general recalls in the newspaper's 60th anniversary editorial how he sold the newspaper back in his early school days. The newspaper has "received richly deserved awards, the most recent being the provincial paper with the best editorial-writing," wrote the archbishop. Established on Feb 6, 1948 by Oblate Missionaries Gerad Mongeau and Cuthert Billman, "Mindanao Cross" was dubbed "a little paper with a big cause" for promoting harmony and social transformation in the war-torn region of Mindanao. "At 60, Mindanao Cross begins a new life of service to the community," the prelate added. (CBCP NEWS)

INDIA: PRIEST RUNS WEBSITE TO HELP CATHOLICS FIND LIFE PARTNERS

Father Anil Puthuparambil, 31, helps young people find their life partners through the English and Malayalam website <amalamatrimony.com> which he began a year ago. His "Carmelite of Mary Immaculate" (CMI) congregation manages Chavara Cultural Centres, named after its founder, Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, in several cities in southern India's Kerala state. The site is linked to the marriage bureau of the centre's Family Welfare Center in Kozhikode, south of New Delhi. The aim is to promote "healthy and peaceful families in Christian community based on the vision" of Blessed Kuriakose. Within four months after the site opened, more than 500 persons registered seeking partners. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: PRIEST-COMMUNICATOR APPOINTED BISHOP OF BELLARY

The Holy Father Benedict XVI, on March 15, has appointed Fr Henry D'Souza, 58, from Mangalore diocese, and executive secretary of the communications committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) as Bishop of Bellary, India. Fr Henry's ministry includes: Director of the Canara Communication Center, 1989-93; Secretary of the Committee for Proclamation, Ecumenism, Dialogue and Social Communications of the Karnataka Region Catholic Bishops' Council, 1989-2000; Founder and Director of the Sandeha Regional Center; President of Unda-India, 1986-92; Member of Signis-Asia Projects Screening Committee since 2000; and, Secretary of the CBCI communications committee since 2000. The Diocese of Bellary, established in 1949, is a suffragate diocese of the Archdiocese of Bangalore. Of its 4.59 million population, 26,328 are Catholics (0.57%). In Bellary, there are 79 priests, 141 religious men, 176 religious women and 25 major seminarians. (FIDES)

CHINA: PARISHES IN TIAN JIN DIOCESE USE INTERNET TO PROMOTE HOLY WEEK ACTIVITIES

Several parishes in the Diocese of Tian Jin used websites and traditional means of communication to spread word about their Holy Week activities. The parishes of Shao Lin, Da Gang and Bei Zha Kou even celebrated the Paschal Triduum in the spirit of the Lenten Message of the Pope. In the announcements of activities, they also included quotes from the Pope's Message. Tian Jin's urban area is the third largest in China after Shanghai and Beijing. Its municipality borders Hebei province to the north, south and west; the municipality of Beijing on the northwest, and Bohai Gulf on the east. (FIDES)

SRI LANKA: CHURCH CENTER STAGES PASSION PLAY IN WAR-TORN JAFFNA

Amid war in Jaffna, the Church-run "Centre for Performing Arts" (CPA) staged the passion play *Kaviya Nayakan* (Lord of history) at an open-air theater March 13-17. Jesuit Father N. M. Saveri, the center's director, developed the script aiming to help Catholics reflect and find inspiration to change their life. In those five days, more than 10,000 adults and children came to watch the two-hour performances handled by a team of some 200 artists and technicians. Since 1983, the Tamil Jaffna peninsula at the northern tip of Sri Lanka is torn by civil war. (UCANEWS)

INDONESIA: MUSIC AND DRAMA FEATURED IN YOUTH CELEBRATION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE

About 800 youth and 200 adult Catholics gathered on April 5 in Makassar city, northeast of Jakarta, for their Easter celebration that included musical performances and a drama with an environmental message. "Youth! Rise Up For a Better World" was the theme of the celebration which was intended to "encourage young Catholics to rise together with Jesus to build the nation, the Church and their neighbor." The participants were mainly from 10 parishes of Makkasar episcopal vicariate of Makkasar archdiocese. (UCANEWS)

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to raise up courageous communicators and authentic witnesses to the truth, faithful to Christ's mandate and enthusiastic for the message of the faith...

*Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the
42nd World Communication Day*
