

Podcast – Called to Action – Season 2, Episode 6 - S. Ruth Mori

K – Thank you for joining us today for another episode of Called to Action a SSND Central Pacific Province podcast. Throughout this season, I have been joined by Sister Anna Marie Reha to explore Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace. S. Anna Marie, thank you for being here today.

AM – You are welcome, Kaitlyn. It is good to be joining you again for the topic of Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace. I am enjoying these wonderful conversations.

K – Me too, and I am learning a lot.

AM – So Kaitlyn, do you have anything specific that you have been thinking of or exploring with Gospel Nonviolence and Just peace?

K – Yes, I recently had the opportunity to meet with two SSND at a retirement home in St. Louis to take photos for their Jubilee this year. Both were a little fragile and I helped to get them where they needed to go for me to take their picture and I even spoke with them about their photos. I then showed them their options so they could decide what they wanted me to use. After I was done, the sister who was taking me around to the sisters said I was so good with the them. A few things came to mind when she said this, first shouldn't everyone be? Secondly, maybe it's a motherly thing, being a mother maybe gave me a special ability to be gentle with people. Then I thought about our theme...Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace, maybe it is the love I have for people that shined through and the sister showing me around could sense it. Either way, it really made me think about our theme and how important it is to always treat people with love and respect, which I try to be an example of even when my kids are not around. Sr. Anna Marie, do you have anything specific that you have been thinking of or exploring with Gospel Nonviolence and Just peace?

AM – As a matter of fact I do. Since I knew that our guest today would be Sr. Ruth Mori from Japan I have been thinking a lot about the devastation caused by the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. I had the privilege of visiting our sisters in Japan five years ago. One of the most impactful experiences was our visit to Hiroshima with Sr. Ruth. Being in one of the cities where we, the United States, dropped the atomic bomb was a powerful experience. I don't think that I had any real knowledge of the harsh reality, horror, and devastation caused by the bombing. Interestingly the Hiroshima museum and memorial are called the Peace memorial. There are lot of memorials in the US and other places in the world and they are usually called War memorials. But the Japanese choose differently. The purpose of the Peace Memorial Park is not only to memorialize the victims and to perpetuate the memory of nuclear horrors and but

just as importantly it is to focus on peace education and advocate for world peace.

K – Wow, sounds like that visit was pretty powerful. I am looking forward to the opportunity to speak with our next guest, Sr. Ruth Mori. Sr. Ruth, welcome and thank you so much for joining us today from across the miles in Japan.

R – Thank you. It is good to be with you today. When invited to reflect on today’s topic I felt the word “Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace” is too big for me, comparing my smallness in many ways. So, I intended to say “No” to the invitation to this Podcast. But something urged me from my heart to join. Then I understood that “Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace” should be a simple thing in a person’s everyday life.

AM – We are so glad that you said yes. Thank you for taking the risk to join us today, it means a lot to us and we are sure it will for our listeners also.

K – I completely agree. Thank you for joining us. So, Sr. Ruth as we begin, can you share a brief background about yourself?

R – Yes. I would be happy to. I am from Kyoto, Japan. I have been a SSND for 54 years. The first 19 years of my religious life, I taught at Notre Dame High School in Kyoto and then was the director of the boarders at Notre Dame Woman’s College in Kyoto for 11 years. I also served as a community leader here in Japan for three terms, totaling nine years. Recently I finished the ministry of the area coordinator for the associate program in Japan.

K – Wow. We have had the opportunity to speak with two of our SSND Associates here in the United States during Season 2 of our podcast. How many Associates are there in Japan?

R – We have 15 associates in Japan including four in Okinawa. Japan is not a Christian society only 5% of the whole population of Japan is Christina the Shinto and Buddhism are deeply rooted in everyday life of Japanese people. If you visit Japan, you will be surprised to find so many Shinto and Buddhism shrines all over Japan.

K- That is fascinating. We are so accustomed to living in a majority Christian society we take it for granted. So, what are you involved in today that keeps you busy?

R – Today I work on two committees in Japanese extended meeting. One is the formation committee and another is the vocation work. And with some priests and sisters of other orders, I do many kinds of work for 6 parishes, such as the preparation for the sacraments of first communion and confirmation, Catechism classes and retreats etc.

K – That must keep you pretty busy! Sr. Ruth, one of the reasons we wanted to invite you and felt that it would be important to have you on this podcast is because of your lived experience. Several years ago, on the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, you wrote a reflection that really touch me. I know that this is a delicate topic for you but would you be willing to share with us a bit of your story and how your were impacted by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima?

R – Yes, it is a hard story to tell but it is important. My family lived in Hiroshima but in April of 1945, my brother and I went to live with our grandparents at a village three hours away from Hiroshima to avoid the influences of the war. So, we were safe on August 6, but my other family members were awfully affected. My parents were injured by the blast and radioactive fallout. My second youngest sister, Atsuko, over half of her body was badly burned. My oldest sister, Masako, was killed by the blast. Masako and her classmates were working on a community project before school started on the morning, when the bomb exploded. We never knew where or how she died.

K – Thank you for sharing. I am so sorry for your loss and the loss of so many lives.

R - Our family suffered in many ways, but no one complained. As the weeks, months and years passed, we just tried to live as well as possible.

AM – Thank you for being willing to share what happened to your family, Sr. Ruth. I think that it is important for our listeners to hear your story. We too need to remember and not forget the horrors that happened on that day and the weeks and months and years afterwards. By the end of 1945, the bombing had killed an estimated 140,000 people in Hiroshima, and a further 74,000 in Nagasaki. In the years that followed, many of the survivors faced leukemia, cancer, or other terrible side effects from the radiation.

K – How very heartbreaking. I do agree it is necessary to hear. It's so hard to believe so many died from one bomb. We usually only think of those killed in the initial bombing and don't take into consideration all of those who died later on from cancers related to radiation exposure.

AM – Sr. Ruth, is there any hope that has come from this horrific disaster?

R. Thinking of Hiroshima, my thought goes to my youngest sister, Kayoko. She was born in December of 1945, four months after the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima. She lost our mother, when she was 4 years-old. As the second generation of Atomic bomb victims, Kayoko has been deeply involved in the movement to ban atomic and hydrogen bombs. In spite of her

health problems, she is still active as a leader in the Chiba prefecture region. I always admired Kayoko and support her spiritually. I am glad to see her daughter and son helping her in her work.

AM – When I visited Hiroshima with you Sr. Ruth, I was touched by the Hibakusha – the survivors of the bombings, and their tireless efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. I found their stories to be stories of hope and determination. My visit to Hiroshima with you continues to touch me deeply. It is one of the reasons that I have been committed to our province corporate stance on Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace.

R – Yes, and you can understand our commitment in Japan to ban nuclear weapons and seek a nuclear-weapon-free future for the world.

K – Unfortunately the modern nuclear arsenals would be even more devastating today if they were used. The threat of a nuclear war is terrifying. As you talked about your family I couldn't help but think of my own four little girls and how I would never want them to experience a nuclear war. It is very scary.

R - I think that many people including me are feeling it is difficult or even scary to live in the present world, where there is so much loss by the corona pandemic, too rapid changing by technology, many kinds of wars and people's suffering. I believe "Gospel Nonviolence and peace" is a longing from a person's soul and its living out should start personally and should spread gradually among people like gentle water.

AM – I like the image of a gentle river that carries the message of peace. I am reminded that on the anniversary each year water lanterns are lit and placed in the river in Hiroshima.

R – Yes, Lanterns with faint lights are floated on the Motaoyasu River as symbols of prayers for the souls of victims of the US atomic bombing and also a prayer for lasting world peace.

K – That is a beautiful image. I would love to see that one day. So, Sr. Ruth how do you find yourself living out Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace today?

R - I reflected on my life and I find that I started to live out "Gospel nonviolence and peace" when I was very young. One way to continue that is through writing. This past spring, I published the book of my essays, titled "*What a person can give a person, THE BEST GIFT Gifts from a loving God.*" With the support of our leaders and sisters of our congregation and so many friends, I could publish this book of a collection of 190 reflections written since 2009 and posted to the Japanese website of our Notre Dame Home Page. My reflections are sharing

of my encounter with Ten chi jin in Japanese, (God, earth, person) in my everyday life.

AM – would you be willing to read one of your reflections?

R – yes of course. This one is called: Eye contact

I was at the lounge of the church and noticed a man holding a baby very comfortably. Admiring him, I said to him “you are very good at holding baby.” He answered to me “ As a pediatrician, I do. But the baby doesn’t eye contact with me, as she doesn’t believe me yet”

I remembered an event. When I was in an elevator, a baby in the carriage came in. Unexpectedly our eyes met and the baby smiled charmingly like a flower blooming. My heart was filled with joy like that I got a surprising gift,

Once I had misunderstanding with an American sister in the community. She came to my room and asked me the reason. After she listened to me, she said that she didn’t mean that but she would accept it and giving a big hug, she said to me “Look at my eyes! Look at my eyes! “. When my still reluctant eyes met her eyes, we could not help laughing and the fog in my heart completely cleared,

I think that any problem must be solved by our look at the merciful Jesus’ eyes.

K – I love that reflection. Thank you for sharing a bit about your book.

R - Thanks to the cooperation of priests, sisters, associates, parishioners and friends, many people, over 500 people, in not only Kyoto and around but in Tokyo, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, already have read the book and everyone told me that reading the book made them tender-hearted. This is my purpose to publish this book and I see God’s work in it, and I realized another purpose was to support a NGO shelter for a women and children in Kyoto prefecture.by sending the donation from the book. Now, in God, with people I am living out “Gospel nonviolence and peace” in this way.

AM – What a wonderful way to live Gospel Nonviolence and Just Peace! I love the invitation to be tender hearted. I do believe that God is very tenderhearted. It feels like you are integrating Gospel Nonviolence daily into your life Sr. Ruth and that is one of the commitments in our SSND corporate stance.

K – Not only that, but it sounds like you are cultivating your own inner peace.

R – Yes, I think that the words of St. Paul speaks this also, “since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist.”(Acts 17.28) It is good to remember we are in Christ and that God is working for nonviolence and peace.

AM – Sr. Ruth, another section of the Peace Memorial Park that touched me deeply was the Children’s Park. In the middle of the park is a monument dedicated to Sadako Sasaki. Standing on the top of a three-legged dome pedestal is the bronze figure of a girl holding up a gold-colored paper crane. The stone underneath the pedestal is inscribed, "This is our cry. This is our prayer. For building peace in this world." Can you share with us the story of Sadako Sasaki?

R – Yes, When Sadako was only two years old, she was exposed to radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, in Japan. As she grew up, she developed leukemia. Suffering from the deadly disease, she learned the ancient tradition about the 1,000 paper cranes. Inspired to follow the legend, Sadako folded paper cranes in her hospital bed, praying for world peace. Sadako died when she was only 12, before she could finish 1,000 cranes. As a tribute to Sadako’s life and selfless wishes, her classmates folded the remaining cranes, and Sadako Sasaki was buried with the full 1,000 cranes. Her story stands as an inspiration to all, and a testament to the continued power of the paper crane as a compelling symbol for hope, love, honor, and peace.

AM – What a powerful symbol and reminder for us today. There is so much need for education, reflection, prayer and other actions to foster a culture of peace. We so need to continue to promote peacebuilding. Thank you for the everyday ways that you do that Sr. Ruth. You are an inspiration for us all.

K – Thank you so much Sr. Ruth for sharing with us today. After listening to you today I definitely want to share with my daughters the story of Sadako and the 1,000 cranes and it explains more why a paper crane is on the prayer card for the Peacemaker’s prayer.

AM – Right. At the end of each of our episodes we have shared the Peacemaker’s prayer. Would you please lead us in that prayer.

R – I would love to. Let us pray:

O Creative Spirit of God,
Come, awaken our spirits
To the call to be ARTISANS OF PEACE!
Let us dream again!
Let us hope again!
Let us discover again
Courage – Nonviolence – Compassion.
Let us discover again
Ways to help the oppressed – the suffering,

Ways to create PEACE nonviolently.
O Creative Spirit of God,
Strengthen our faith,
Fill us with compassionate love,
Make us true Artisans of Peace.
Amen.

AM – Thank you Sr. Ruth for being with us today and sharing your quiet wisdom and deep hope.

R – It has been a pleasure to speak to you Kaitlyn and Sr. Anna Marie.

K – Thank you Sr. Ruth.