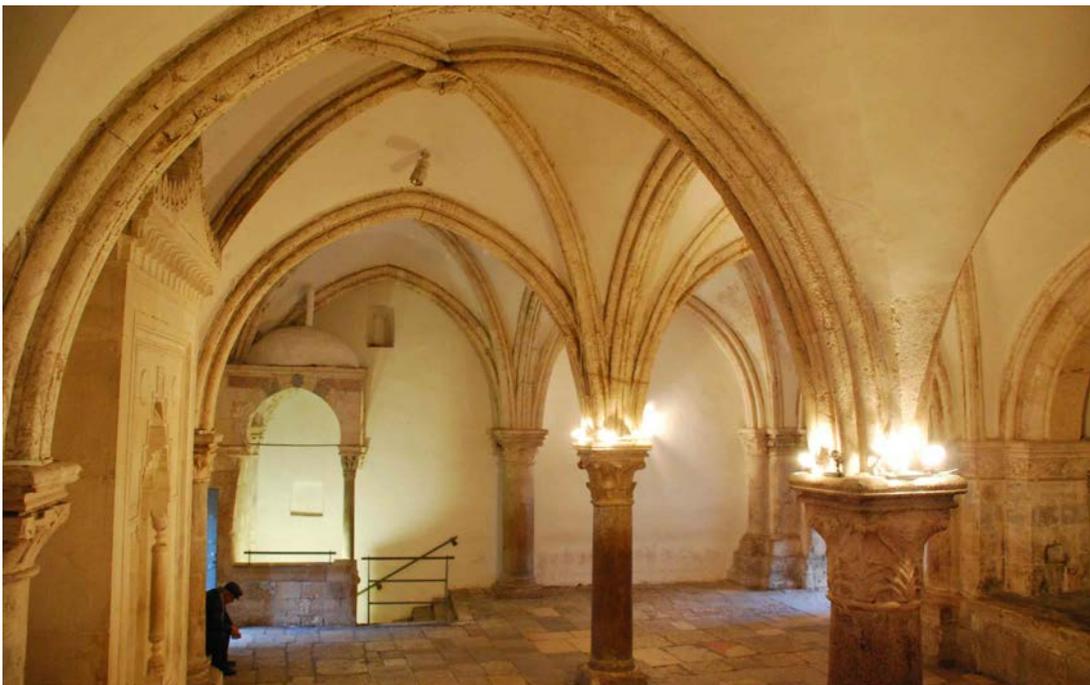

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 324

in the Cenacle, where the Church was born to go forth

The Cenacle or "Upper Room", the first location of the nascent Church and the place in which the priesthood, the Eucharist and the Reconciliation were instituted, was the last stage of the Holy Father's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Francis celebrated Mass there yesterday afternoon, in which the Ordinaries of the Holy Land and the clergy in the Pope's entourage concelebrated. Due to limited space, the ceremony was not open to the public.



Christian tradition regarding the authenticity of the Upper Room is ancient and dates back to the third century. In the fourth century the new church next to the Upper Room, the "Holy Zion", was built. Destroyed by the Persians in 614, it was restored and then destroyed again by Muslims. It was in ruins, with the exception of the chapel two floors from the Upper Room, when the Crusaders arrived in the Holy Land; they built a basilica with three naves. In 1187, Jerusalem came under the rule of Saladin, who permitted access to pilgrims and the celebration of the Eucharist by priests. By the time the Franciscans arrived in the Holy Land in 1335, the Basilica had been almost entirely destroyed, and so the Friars rebuilt it and, in addition, established a convent.

From then on the Superior of the Custodians of the Holy Land assumed the title of “Guardian of Mount Zion”. In 1524, the Muslims appropriated the rooms below the Cenacle, claiming that they were the “Tomb of the prophet David”. Subsequently, an Ottoman decree expelled the Franciscans from the Upper Room; they were also forced to abandon the adjacent monastery, and the Cenacle was converted into a mosque to which Christians were denied access. The building including the Upper Room is currently the property of the Israeli State (since 1948), but remains under the jurisdiction of the Waqf (Custodian of Islamic holy places) of Jordan, exclusively for use for religious purposes. The supreme head of the Waqf is the Jordan monarch, King Abdullah II.



“Dear Brothers

It is a great gift that the Lord has given us by bringing us together here in the Upper Room for the celebration of the Eucharist”, said the Pope in his homily. “I greet you with fraternal joy and I wish to express my affection to the Oriental Catholic Patriarchs who have taken part in my pilgrimage during these days. I want to thank them for their significant presence, particularly dear to me and I assure them of a special place in my heart and in my prayers. Here, where Jesus shared the Last Supper with the apostles; where, after his resurrection, he appeared in their midst; where the Holy Spirit descended with power upon Mary and the disciples, here the Church was born, and she was born to go forth. From here she set out, with the broken bread in her hands, the wounds of Christ before her eyes, and the Spirit of love in her heart. In the Upper Room, the risen Jesus, sent by the Father, bestowed upon the apostles his own Spirit and with his power he sent them forth to renew the face of the earth. To go forth, to set out, does not mean to forget. The Church, in her going forth, preserves the memory of what took place here; the Spirit, the Paraclete, reminds her of every word and every action, and reveals their true meaning”.

He continued, “The Upper Room speaks to us of *service*, of Jesus giving the disciples an example by washing their feet. Washing one another’s feet signifies welcoming, accepting, loving and serving one another. It means serving the poor, the sick and the outcast, those whom I find difficult, those who annoy me. The Upper Room reminds us, through the Eucharist, of *sacrifice*. In every Eucharistic celebration Jesus offers himself for us to the Father, so that we too can be united with him, offering to God our lives, our work, our joys and our sorrows... offering everything as a spiritual sacrifice. The Upper Room also reminds us of *friendship*. 'No longer do I call you servants – Jesus said to the Twelve – but I have called you friends'. The Lord makes us his friends, he reveals God’s will to us and he gives us his very self. This is the most beautiful part of being a Christian and, especially, of being a priest: becoming a friend of the Lord Jesus, and discovering in our hearts that he is our friend. The Upper Room reminds us of the Teacher’s *farewell* and his *promise* to return to his friends: 'When I go... I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also'. Jesus does not leave us,

nor does he ever abandon us; he precedes us to the house of the Father, where he desires to bring us as well”.

“The Upper Room, however, also reminds us of *pettiness*, of *curiosity* – ‘Who is the traitor?’ – and of *betrayal*. We ourselves, and not just others, can reawaken those attitudes whenever we look at our brother or sister with contempt, whenever we judge them, whenever by our sins we betray Jesus. The Upper Room reminds us of *sharing*, *fraternity*, *harmony* and *peace* among ourselves. How much love and goodness has flowed from the Upper Room! How much charity has gone forth from here, like a river from its source, beginning as a stream and then expanding and becoming a great torrent. All the saints drew from this source; and hence the great river of the Church’s holiness continues to flow: from the Heart of Christ, from the Eucharist and from the Holy Spirit”.

“Lastly, the Upper Room reminds us of the birth of the *new family*, the Church, our holy Mother the hierarchical Church established by the risen Jesus; a family that has a Mother, the Virgin Mary. Christian families belong to this great family, and in it they find the light and strength to press on and be renewed, amid the challenges and difficulties of life. All God’s children, of every people and language, are invited and called to be part of this great family, as brothers and sisters and sons and daughters of the one Father in heaven”.

“These horizons are opened up by the Upper Room, the horizons of the Risen Lord and his Church”, concluded the Holy Father. “From here the Church goes forth, impelled by the life-giving breath of the Spirit. Gathered in prayer with the Mother of Jesus, the Church lives in constant expectation of a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Send forth your Spirit, Lord, and renew the face of the earth!”.

Pope Francis
Upper Room – Jerusalem – ISRAEL
26.05.14

item 325

the ‘Mary of Ant Village’



Satoko Elizabeth Maria Kitahara was born August 22, 1929, the youngest daughter of an aristocratic family, descended from the ancient Japanese Samurai and from Shintō priests. The early part of her life was normal and quiet. In 1940, however, with the entry of Japan into World War II, her family life was suddenly disrupted. Like many Japanese people early on, Satoko’s family supported Japan’s military effort, believing in its honour and integrity. Her father and brother-in-law were sent to fight in the army. Her older brother was summoned to work at the Nakajima airplane factory. Satoko herself also willingly worked there.

Since Tokyo was under continuous bombing, the days were marked by frequent warning sirens. Like millions of her fellow citizens, Satoko lived in constant fear and anxiety, and miraculously escaped unharmed, though in deep shock, when a bomb fell on her workplace. It was here that she initially contracted tuberculosis, though she seemed to recover. By this time also, her brother, physically and psychologically debilitated, succumbed to pneumonia. It was in this setting that Satoko spent her early adolescence.

Japan experienced the full trauma of war when the people learned of the atomic bombs which devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, taking countless lives and inflicting unspeakable injuries, as well as by the nation’s inevitable humiliating capitulation and surrender which followed. Tokyo had become a field of ruins. Many

died from hunger, while others suffered the uncertainty and daily struggle to survive. One of the severest problems facing the Japanese people after the war was how to deal with massive numbers of refugees in a society plagued by unemployment, poverty and hunger. Thousands of people flocked to the major urban centres. Satoko's own family welcomed many of their relatives who'd lost all their possessions.

Despite all this, Satoko decided to devote herself again to her studies. She had developed a great admiration for the work of Dr Albert Schweitzer and she, too, dreamed of a noble focus for her life. Like him, she was willing to sacrifice lesser pursuits for something more essential. Pursuing her education in the midst of Tokyo's horrible conditions at that time was a real challenge. Virtually the entire infrastructure around her had been destroyed, and so books were a rare luxury. By this time in the war, also, many young Japanese people her age had begun to realize the extent of Japan's war crimes and became disillusioned, Satoko among them. They felt that their nation had betrayed them in putting aside the ideals of a cultured society, and began to feel that there was little hope for the future. Satoko endured and through her studies regained a sense of serenity in living. After receiving her diploma in 1949, her quest for a meaning to her life became paramount.



In a moment which Carl Jung would term "synchronicity", Satoko happened upon **Sacred Heart Catholic Church** in Yokohama City. Inside it she experienced an inner awakening, uncomfortable in that it began to challenge her cultural beliefs. Satoko began wondering about Christianity. She felt particularly attracted by the peace and quiet she experienced when she visited the church. As she quietly pondered all of this in her heart, she sought out further information from the chaplain, a group of Spanish nuns, and other Catholic lay persons. Eventually, finding herself more and more drawn in wonder to the Eucharist, to Mary the mother of Jesus, and to the great joy and peace which she experienced in prayer, she decided to embrace Catholicism. She was baptized on October 30, 1949, choosing the names of Elizabeth and Mary.

In 1950, Satoko became acquainted with Br Zeno, a Franciscan friar of the Mission of the Immaculate Conception, instituted by St Maximilian Kolbe. He had developed a tireless ministry among the homeless and needy along the Sumida River, particularly in Arinomachi, known as the "**Village of Ants**", because of the unbelievable overcrowding of people and the level of constant activity which reigned there. The village's inhabitants, among them many children and young people, managed to survive by collecting, recycling and selling materials discarded in the trash. The city's leadership was so revolted by the village that they intended to level it and redevelop the area as a park.

Satoko wrote about her initial experience with Br Zeno and the trashpickers of Ant Village:

"I lay down in bed but could not get to sleep. Br Zeno, a man without formal education, unable to read Japanese, had bridged a chasm separating two nations and two cultures. He had discovered a part of Japan I did not know existed, where thousands lived in unbelievable destitution. Many of them lived less than a kilometre from my home! I had lived in the pampered, educated ignorance of an over-sophisticated world while this unlettered foreigner worked without thought of self in the world of painful reality...I lived surrounded by carpets and gas stoves while he went without even an umbrella into the terrible twilight world of destitution."

Satoko Kitahara, in order to get to know the residents better, began visiting Ant Village each day to teach basic grammar to the children, and, among other things, music and hygiene. The local population responded to her efforts and appreciated Satoko's helping them reclaim their human dignity. Nevertheless, the work was difficult and discouraging at times, and on one occasion she was seriously shaken by the criticism of a

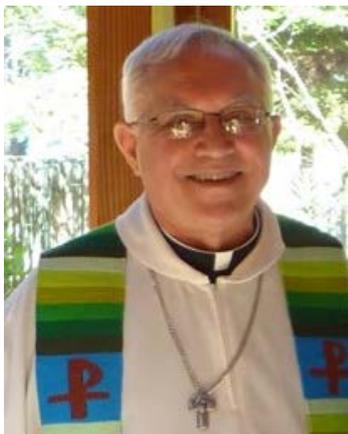


non-believer who saw her as only a “do-gooder”. “I had thought”, she writes, “I was a great Christian because I condescended to dole out some free time, helping Ants children with their homework!...It hit me now. There was only one way to help those ragpicker children: become a ragpicker like them!”

Satoko made the decision to set aside her privileged life and to live as one of the people of the village. She began to help collecting and selling material. She organized a study room and a cafeteria. She assisted in administration and in bringing in income. Her influence with local authorities was great enough that she negotiated with them to build a centre with a classroom, bathroom and meeting hall. Sustained by prayer and her devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she gave of herself with extraordinary selflessness to her vocation.

Sadly, her health began to fail because of recurring tuberculosis and she was forced set her work aside. She spent a long time convalescing, and found, upon her return, that another young woman had stepped into her place to carry on the work. By this time, the efforts among the people of the Village of the Ants had become well-known throughout Japan, and others lent support in eventually making it possible to relocate the village to a new and satisfactory location. In her debilitated state, Satoko continued to labour for the people of the village, though she herself was vulnerable to feelings of uncertainty, uselessness, and doubt. She nevertheless continued her constant ministry of prayer among and for the people of Ant Village, especially praying the Rosary, so much so that her reputation for sanctity spread throughout Japan and touched many other lives.

Br Zeno advised Satoko to remain firm in prayer and in her devotion to Mary the mother Jesus. Reminding her of the Gospel call to leave the comfort of one’s home, he urged her to finally settle in the Village of the Ants, submitting her whole life to God’s will as Mary had done. She became a simple servant of God, offering her life for the people of the village. “I want to share the life of the Ant people, to work and suffer with them, to rejoice with them as one of them...and to die for them.”



Her mission was completed as Satoko Elisabeth Maria Kitahara died on January 23, 1958. Along with Doctor Paul Nagai Takashi, she is one of the most representative figures of 20th century Japanese Catholicism.

In 1981 the Catholics of Japan, supported by the Conventual Franciscans, introduced the cause for the beatification of blessed Satoko Kitahara.

**Rev Harry Allagree – Cotati – USA
Oblate of the Order of Julian of Norwich**

sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #169

Thank you very much for your profound sharing through the Asia Oceania Bulletin. I read it fully this morning. May St Vincent Pallotti help us to be authentic proclaimers of the mercy of God.

NM 27.04.15

Thank you.... In your articles, you have nicely spoken about Adoration to the blessed sacrament and also corporal and spiritual works of mercy of St. Vincent Pallotti. Hope both of you will continue to write more edifying articles for the readers of Asia-Oceania bulletin.

VP 28.04.15