

OUR LADY OF AKITA

Mary, Silence, Conversion, and Tears for the World

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This writing is a personal reflection based on sources already available in the public domain.

BACKGROUND

This writing was born from an opportunity I experienced as a grace: the opportunity to spend 84 hours in solitude, from Sunday, 20 September 2026 at 22:00 until Thursday, 24 September 2026 at 09:00, at the chapel of 聖光堂 (Seitai Hoshikai).

The four days within this period became a profound experience of silence. Silence became a space in which to pause from the bustle of life, listen to the inner voice, meditate on the Word of God, pray, and look back on the journey of life in His presence.

The reflection also took place in the prayer garden and through participation in daily Mass with the Sisters. Their simple, hidden, and prayerful lives bear witness to fidelity to their vocation.

From this space of silence, reflection on Our Lady of Akita emerged once again. Akita is not viewed only as a spiritual event that took place in Japan in the past, but also as an invitation to reread human life today and to nurture hope for the future.

The past reminds us of an event to be remembered with respect and prudence. The present invites us to reflect on prayer, conversion, reparation, the Rosary, the Eucharist, and silence. The future opens hope for a change of the human heart.

The hope born of this reflection is not primarily hope that something extraordinary will happen, but hope for human beings who once again become capable of listening, converting, loving, forgiving, and serving.

This inner journey can be summarized:

From silence to reflection,
from reflection to prayer,
from prayer to conversion,
from conversion to new life,
and from new life to Christ.

Per Mariam ad Iesum.
Through Mary to Jesus.

2026年9月20日 22:00 - 2026年9月24日 09:00

ABSTRACT

Our Lady of Akita is one of the spiritual events known in the life of the Catholic Church in Japan in the twentieth century. The event is connected with the experiences of Sr. Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa in Yuzawadai, Akita, and the community of the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist.

The events, which began to receive attention in 1973, include experiences of hearing messages and phenomena associated with a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, including the shedding of tears.

These events subsequently underwent ecclesiastical investigation and discernment. In 1984, Bishop John Shojiro Ito of the Diocese of Niigata gave pastoral recognition to the supernatural character of the events and permitted related veneration within his diocese.

Akita should not be understood primarily as a story about extraordinary phenomena or disasters. As an event associated with private revelation, Akita adds nothing new to the deposit of faith already given in Christ.

Themes for reflection include conversion, prayer, reparation, the Rosary, the Eucharist, suffering, silence, listening to the Word of God, and returning to Christ.

Keywords: Our Lady of Akita, Mary, silence, conversion, prayer, Rosary, Eucharist, reparation, contemplation, Christ.

1. INTRODUCTION

Akita is a place in Japan known in connection with a spiritual event in the second half of the twentieth century. The event is associated with the community of the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist and the experience of Sr. Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa.

In the life of the Church, a distinction is made between public revelation and private revelation. Public revelation reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ. Private revelation does not replace Scripture, Tradition, the sacraments, or the teachings of the faith.

Therefore, the important question is not only whether something extraordinary happened, but what it seeks to say to the human heart.

Akita directs attention to conversion, prayer, reparation, the Eucharist, the Rosary, suffering, silence, and above all, returning to Christ.

2. AKITA: AN EVENT IN JAPAN

In 1973, Sr. Agnes was living in a religious community in Yuzawadai, Akita. On 6 July 1973, she reported an experience of hearing a message associated with a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the following period, phenomena associated with the statue were also reported, including the shedding of tears.

These events became the subject of ecclesiastical attention and investigation. Extraordinary phenomena do not by themselves determine their spiritual meaning. Discernment and careful judgment are necessary.

Akita should not be understood merely as a story about a statue. Deeper attention is directed to the call to convert, pray, make reparation, and return to Christ.

3. SR. AGNES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LISTENING

One important aspect of the story of Akita is the experience of listening.

Scripture reminds us:

“Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear!”¹

Listening is not merely a physical activity. In the spiritual life, listening means opening oneself to the Word.

Modern people encounter so many voices: media, technology, news, conversations, work demands, and various opinions. Yet more voices do not always mean more wisdom.

At times, human beings need silence in order to hear again what matters most.

4. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF AKITA

4.1 Conversion

Conversion is one of the important themes in the messages of Akita.

Jesus Himself began His preaching with the call:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!”²

Conversion is not merely a feeling of guilt. Conversion means changing the direction of one’s life: ceasing to walk away from God and turning one’s life toward Him again.

Conversion is a change of heart, way of life, way of treating others, and way of seeing God.

4.2 Prayer and Reparation

Another theme is prayer and reparation.

Reparation does not mean buying God’s forgiveness. God’s grace cannot be bought. Reparation is an expression of human love and responsibility before God.

To pray for the Church, families, those who suffer, and the world means bringing human life into the presence of God.

Prayer is not an escape from the world. Prayer can instead become a way of returning to the world with a heart more filled with love.

5. MARY’S TEARS

In the story of Akita, one of the reported phenomena is the shedding of tears from a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The deeper question is not only why the statue shed tears, but why human beings need to learn to look again at suffering and sin.

Tears are a human language. People weep when they lose, are wounded, love, suffer, or see the suffering of others.

Mary’s tears can be contemplated as an image of a motherly love that does not become insensitive to human suffering.

Tears need not lead people to fear. Tears can lead people to compassion.

If tears lead people to prayer, conversion, love, and concern for the suffering of others, they become a path of contemplation.

6. A WARNING ABOUT SIN AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

The message reported on 13 October 1973 speaks about sin, suffering, and the consequences if human beings do not convert.

Such a message must be read carefully. Akita should not be turned into a calendar for predicting future disasters.

A spiritual warning is not an invitation to live in fear. Its primary call is conversion.

Conversion does not need to wait for a disaster. Conversion is a call for today.

Human beings need to examine how they use freedom, power, knowledge, technology, wealth, and their relationships with others.

7. THE ROSARY: A PRAYER CENTERED ON CHRIST

The Rosary has an important place in the spiritual life associated with Akita.

Yet the Rosary does not replace Christ with Mary. In the Rosary, the faithful contemplate the mysteries of Christ's life together with Mary.

At Cana, Mary said:

"Do whatever he tells you."³

Mary is not the final destination. She points to Jesus. True Marian prayer is always Christ-centered.

8. AKITA AND FATIMA

Akita is often compared with Fatima because several spiritual themes are similar, especially conversion, prayer, reparation, the Rosary, and concern for the condition of the world.

However, Akita and Fatima are not the same event. Fatima took place in Portugal in the early twentieth century, while Akita took place in Japan in the second half of the twentieth century.

The two have different historical, cultural, and pastoral contexts. Comparisons must be made carefully.

9. THE RECOGNITION OF THE BISHOP OF NIIGATA

After a process of investigation and discernment, Bishop John Shojiro Ito of the Diocese of Niigata issued a pastoral letter on 22 April 1984.

In that letter, pastoral recognition was given to the supernatural character of the events associated with Akita, and permission was granted for related veneration within the diocese.

This recognition does not make Akita a new public revelation. The Catholic faith does not depend on

whether a person accepts Akita.

Christ remains the center. Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the sacraments, and the teachings of the Church remain the foundation of the life of faith.

10. MARY AS MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Mary has a unique place in the life of the Church because of her relationship with Christ. She is the mother of Jesus according to His humanity and a model of faith for believers.

Mary is not the final destination of the journey of faith. Mary directs human beings to Christ.

At Cana, Mary said:

“Do whatever he tells you.”⁴

Mary shows the way toward obedience to the Word. Christ is the center.

11. AKITA AND THE EUCHARIST

The community associated with the events of Akita has a close relationship with the Eucharist.

This reminds us that spiritual life cannot be separated from Christ. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church.

Extraordinary experiences must not replace what is most fundamental. What matters most is not the phenomenon, but Christ.

In the Eucharist, Christ is present and gives Himself. He invites human beings into a life of love and self-giving.

12. AKITA AS A PATH OF SILENCE

Silence is one of the important doors through which to read Akita.

Modern people are often afraid of silence. When all voices stop, people begin to hear themselves.

The Psalm says:

“Be still, and know that I am God!”⁵

Silence is not emptiness. Silence is a space of presence.

In silence, people learn to listen. In listening, they learn to recognize. In recognizing, they can convert.

Noise → Silence → Prayer → Conversion → Love → Christ

13. AKITA IS NOT PRIMARILY ABOUT FEAR

Akita is sometimes discussed in frightening language. Yet in the light of the Gospel, fear is not its center.

Warnings about sin are intended to lead people to conversion.

Do not wait for disaster to convert. Convert now.

Conversion today is far more important than trying to know what might happen tomorrow.

14. AKITA FOR THE WORLD TODAY

Akita can be contemplated again in the context of the world today.

Human beings live in an increasingly fast-paced world. Technology develops, information grows, and communication becomes easier. Yet these advances do not automatically produce inner depth.

People can communicate with many others at once and still feel lonely. They can know many things and yet lose wisdom.

Therefore, the questions of Akita remain relevant:

Do we still pray? Do families still have time to pray together? Are we still able to be silent and listen? Do we still dare to convert? Are we still sensitive to the suffering of others?

And above all, is our life still directed toward Christ?

15. THE DEEPEST MEANING OF OUR LADY OF AKITA

If this entire reflection is summarized, Akita can be read as a simple invitation:

LISTEN.

CONVERT.

PRAY.

MAKE SACRIFICES IN LOVE.

RETURN TO CHRIST.

Tears remind us of suffering. The message invites people to listen. The Rosary teaches prayer. Reparation recalls responsibility. The Eucharist brings people to Christ. Silence opens space for the Word.

Tears → Prayer → Silence → Word → Conversion → Life → Christ

16. THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION IN MARY'S LIFE

16.1 Mary: A Woman Who Listens

Contemplation begins with the ability to listen.

Mary received the Word of God with openness:

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."⁶

Mary did not begin her journey knowing all the answers. She listened, received, and surrendered herself.

16.2 Mary: Keeping the Mystery

The Gospel portrays Mary as someone who did not hasten to explain every experience.

“Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”⁷

Some experiences need to be kept in the heart. Some mysteries need to be contemplated. Not every question must receive an immediate answer.

16.3 Mary and Silence

Nazareth is a space of silence. There Mary received the Word, and the Word became flesh.

Mary teaches that silence does not mean doing nothing. Silence means making room for God to work.

16.4 Mary at the Foot of the Cross

One of the deepest images of Mary is her presence beneath the cross.

“Standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother...”⁸

Mary could not remove her Son’s suffering. Yet she remained, stood there, and did not abandon Him.

There is suffering we cannot change. There are questions that do not yet have answers. There are crosses that we can only accompany.

Mary teaches that love sometimes means remaining present.

16.5 From Silence to the Word

Mary’s life can be contemplated as a movement:

LISTEN → KEEP → CONTEMPLATE → RECEIVE → BECOME → GIVE

True contemplation does not end with an inner experience. Contemplation gives birth to life.

16.6 Mary and Akita

Akita can be read in the light of Mary’s inner attitude. Mary listens, keeps the mystery, contemplates, obeys, prays, and remains in love.

The tears in the story of Akita can be contemplated as a call to see suffering. Silence invites people to listen. Obedience invites people to respond. The cross teaches people to remain in love.

16.7 Mary as Teacher of Contemplation

Mary teaches people to:

be silent without becoming empty,

listen without haste,
receive without possessing,
contemplate without forcing an answer,
and love without abandoning the cross.

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”⁹

Contemplation is not merely a technique of prayer. Contemplation is a way of living before God.

17. CONCLUSION

Our Lady of Akita need not be seen primarily as a story about something strange, frightening, or spectacular.

Akita can be read as an invitation to return to the most fundamental things in the life of faith:

STOP.

BE STILL.

LISTEN.

CONVERT.

PRAY.

RETURN TO CHRIST.

Akita does not primarily invite people to fear the future. It invites people to look at their own hearts today.

Tears can lead people to compassion. Compassion leads people to prayer. Prayer leads people to silence. Silence opens space for the Word. The Word invites conversion. Conversion gives birth to new life. And new life brings people back to Christ.

Mary stands with people who suffer. Mary teaches people to listen, keep the mystery in their hearts, stand beneath the cross, and point to her Son.

Christ is the center.

Stop. Be still. Listen. Return to Christ.

Per Mariam ad Iesum.

Through Mary to Jesus.

PHOTOGRAPH OF OUR LADY OF AKITA

Personal documentary photograph of MARU 810.

FOOTNOTES

1. Mark 4:9. Jesus' call to those who have ears to hear.
2. Mark 1:15. Jesus' call to repent and believe in the Gospel.

3. John 2:5. Mary's words at Cana, directing people to Jesus.
4. John 2:5. Mary points to obedience to the words of Jesus.
5. Psalm 46:10. In some numbering traditions, this appears as Psalm 46:11.
6. Luke 1:38. Mary's response to the angel.
7. Luke 2:19. Mary keeps and reflects on the events surrounding Jesus' birth.
8. John 19:25. Mary stands near the cross of Jesus.
9. Luke 1:38. Mary's surrender to the will of God.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

The Bible, especially Mark, Luke, John, and Psalms.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, especially sections on divine revelation, faith, Mary, prayer, and the sacraments.

Public documentation concerning Our Lady of Akita, Sr. Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa, the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist, and the Diocese of Niigata.

Pastoral Letter of Bishop John Shojiro Ito, Diocese of Niigata, 22 April 1984.

Literature and documentation concerning Catholic spirituality in Japan and Marian devotion in Akita.