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### **About the joys of a short trip to East Asia**

One of my nephews (a buddhist scholar) and his family invited me to visit them in Japan. I decided to go also to Taiwan and Korea.

A few days in Tokyo, a too short visit at Miiko's place in Yokohama, a week in a small town (near Kobe) where Hubert and Michiyo his wife (an artist) live in a traditional house from the countryside. It has been reassembled on a cliff overhanging Japan inner sea. They and their 2 grown-up children have deliberately chosen an ecological way of life : public transports, own vegetable garden, economic heating system, etc., in a country mad over super high techniques and over-development. Miiko is also on the same line. It is good to see that it is possible.

Taiwan is China for me and for all the Chinese living there (poor Taiwanese invaded one day with 2 millions people coming from the continent !). It was a jump back in my early ALM life, when everything turned around China. Accompanied with Lucie Tu and Pierre Mertens (SAM), I had a very pleasant sharing with Therese Palmers. The house run by the Little Sisters of the Poor where she lives, is very airy and peaceful, in quiet surroundings, a beautiful chapel where we could praise the Lord together during the Eucharist. Therese is in good spirit, very cheerful in spite her 2 pacemakers, she remembers everybody, asked so many questions. She has a small nice room, but most of the time pushes her wheel chair to the large living room where she welcomes everybody with a large smile and her nice dimples !

I could stay one day at the Little Theresian Sisters (founded by Fr. Lebbe) and meet Sr Luc (98 years old). 70 years ago, she came from France and joined Fr. Lebbe on the war front to care for the wounded soldiers. She was a disciple of Fr. Monchanin (SAM). She came to visit him in India, when she was expelled from China. At the same time, she came and visit us, students at Louvain (Belgium). Lots of memories ! I saw the old ICA house, now the Secretariate for the Catholic Bishops' Conference !

I could not meet Claire Lin but we had a long conversation by phone. I admired the beauties of the capital city, green mountains, parks, museum, monuments, the broad spaces and roads, in spite of being a "small" island. ô China !

Time to go to the country of the calm morning (?) to go for a rejuvenation. The ICA gives the impression of vitality that gave me a new motivation, a new hope in our group. I was immediately at home on safe grounds. My first visit was for Angela who is so well looked after by all in a first class staffed and equipped institution. Did she recognise me ? She is so far away in her mystery, very joyful on that day, and certainly near the heart of the Lord.

The two main units, Onnuri and Doguerami, have a central place where some members live and the others pass trough very easily. The 3 units have many occasions to celebrate together and to work together. For the moment, they prepare with great care the celebration of the 50 years of ICA presence in Korea.

Myong Dong, the first ICA house, is situated in a central place for public transports. It is the heart of the Onnuri unit. It is a large building with residential rooms for students and ICA members, guest rooms, several halls and rooms for meetings and conferences, rooms for professional counsellors. A small "corner" is reserved for members where they meet and share. They never forget Yvonne's recommendation of 15 minutes laughing time per day ! A quiet chapel is annexed to it.

At nearly one hour by car is the Jeon Jin Sang Medical Centre, located in a site where, in the past, a large slum sheltered many people, including ICA members. As far as possible, many previous

inhabitants have been rehabilitated in high rise buildings with small flats. The medical centre, heart of the Doguerami unit, is a jewel of organisation within its limited space. It consists of a flexible terminal care (hospice) service, of consulting rooms with extra-modern equipment for different specialities. Colleagues, professors and friends come, on a voluntary basis, on specific days, to care for an aged and less privileged population. Different educational activities take place in the cellar. There is also a small part of the house where ICA members live and share together. There are 6 resident members there, they have a beautiful chapel. As I was a bit tired at the end of my trip, I could appreciate very much the loving care and the diverse medical skill which really rejuvenated me. I am really indebted to the teams. May God bless them all and let them continue the service of love.

The Church in Korea is impressive by the large number of committed Christians, by the way Eucharist is celebrated with deep respect and participation, by the existence of its large buildings where all kind of social and educational activities take place. Many ICA members are associated at these activities at Seoul as well as far away places in the country side. In the city, one is struck by the number of church buildings of all denominations.

Japan and Korea population are very different but they share some characteristics.

- dense population. Very strict birth control measures have resulted in problems of an aged population. They encourage reproduction now.
- High rise buildings with small habitations where every square inch is occupied, often with high-tech gadgets.
- intense traffic - both countries manufacture cars - managed with a remarkable discipline.
- their sense of beauty and traditional culture, with flowers, green parks and hills, succeed to keep an human face to the tumultuous cities.
- but at what cost ?

For me, deep in my heart, joy and gratitude for all the hospitality and sharing received during this trip. Alleluia !

Claire.

My bother Henri was called back by the Lord, on June 18th, just one year after his twin brother. A full life, a prolonged illness and a very peaceful death. Praise the Lord.