

A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney (Edition 13)
The passing of Father Paul Glynn

25 March

Father Paul Glynn, who dedicated his life to Japan-Australia reconciliation, as introduced in a previous newsletter (Vol. 9), passed away peacefully on the evening of 23 January this year at the age of 97.

His funeral mass was held on 2 February at St Mary's Church in Hunter's Hill, a suburb of Sydney, and I attended.

The funeral began in a solemn atmosphere with hymns playing and an address by District Leader Father Gavin Foster. After relatives and Marist Church officials bid farewell to Fr Paul Glynn's coffin, a Buddhist incense offering was incorporated at his request, and I also offered incense.

Afterward, Fr Paul Glynn's niece, Ms Aileen Grattan-Smith, read a eulogy. She spoke of how Fr Paul loved meeting people, fostered many friendships, had a great sense of humour, and even shared a joke with a terrorist imprisoned in solitary confinement for many years, opening his heart. Above all, she also mentioned his great love for storytelling, having written nine books about the lives of real people. Among the friendships he cultivated was his relationship with the Japanese community in Sydney, and it was moving to hear hymns performed by a Japanese choir.



With Fr Paul Glynn
December 2024



At the end of the funeral, attendees saw off the coffin. We then moved to another room and reminisced about Fr Paul Glynn. I was able to speak more with Ms Grattan-Smith there

and conveyed condolences to the bereaved family from Mr Iwao Horii, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, HE Kazuhiro Suzuki, Japan's Ambassador to Australia, and Mr Taizo Horiuchi, Mayor of Yamato-takada City, for which I received the family's heartfelt thanks.

Fr Paul Glynn was assigned to Takada Catholic Church in Yamato-takada City in 1956 and was active there for a long time. His contributions in Yamato-takada City are well summarised in Mayor Horiuchi's eulogy, so I would like to share a part of it here.

Father Glynn's relationship with our city began in 1956, when he was appointed to Takada Catholic Church. In the years following the war, he worked tirelessly in both Japan and Australia to raise funds and established Takada Catholic Kindergarten. This single act of compassion became the first step in connecting the hearts of our two nations.

On August 7, 1963, under Father Glynn's guidance, Yamato-takada City and Lismore City signed an agreement to form the first sister city partnership between Japan and Australia. The choice of this date-the day after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima-reflected his deep commitment to overcoming the tragedies of the past and building a future founded on peace. The words engraved in that agreement, 'May this friendship contribute to world peace,' continue to guide us and over 100 sister cities between Japan and Australia today.

Through his writings, including Nagasaki Song, which portrays the life of Dr. Takashi Nagai, Fr Paul Glynn shared the spirit and culture of Japan with the world and devoted himself to promoting mutual understanding. In recognition of his remarkable contribution, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun by the Government of Japan and the Order of Australia by the Australian Government.

The sister city relationship between Yamato-takada City and Lismore City has continued uninterrupted to this day, and as introduced in another previous newsletter (Vol. 7), the lantern of "Miku-chan", the mascot of Yamato-takada City, parades in the Lantern Festival held in Lismore City around the winter solstice in June each year.



**With Ms Aileen Grattan-Smith,
Father Paul Glynn's niece**

About a month after this mass, on 11 March, Fr Paul Glynn's ashes were interred at the cemetery of St Mary's Church, and I attended and offered flowers. A memorial mass was also held at Tomigaoka Church in Nara City, and a portion of his ashes was interred next to his brother Fr Tony Glynn's grave in Gose City.



I received Fr Paul Glynn's autobiography from a fellow priest of Fr Paul with whom I became acquainted through this funeral and interment ceremony. I had thought that Fr Paul, while having written about various people including his brother Father Tony Glynn, had never written about himself, so I found this was very helpful. In the autobiography, Fr Paul Glynn's first contact with Japan is interestingly recounted, so I would like to introduce it here. It is a story from when he was 12 years old, boarding at St Joseph's College in Hunter's Hill, a suburb of Sydney, away from his hometown of Lismore. The year was 1941, and a brother at the college told the students that even though the Japanese would be approaching Singapore, the British would send two powerful battleships, so there was no need to worry. Immediately after, news reached Australia that those two ships had been sunk. Fr Paul's father, fearing that he wouldn't be able to rescue his children by car from Lismore if the Japanese bombed Sydney and destroyed the bridge, transferred the Glynn brothers to Woodlawn College, a Catholic school in Lismore, the following year.

One reason I found this story interesting is the presence of Father Marsden, a graduate of Woodlawn College. Father Marsden was a prisoner of war of the Japanese army during World War II and served as a chaplain during the construction of the Burma Railway. While interacting with Australian soldiers who harboured hatred for Japan, he came to believe that reconciliation with Japan was necessary after the war, and he visited the college shortly after the war ended. At this time, the Glynn brothers were impressed by his efforts, and subsequently became priests themselves, visiting Japan in 1953 and 1955, respectively. In a sense, transferring schools can be said to have provided the impetus.

Fr Paul Glynn lived in Japan for a total of over 20 years, dedicating himself to Japan-Australia reconciliation and deeply studying the Japanese language and culture. For these achievements, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, by the Japanese government, and the Order of Australia (OAM) by the Australian government. In addition, in 2010, he received an honorary doctorate from Southern Cross University, where the "Father Tony Glynn Japan-Australia Centre" is located.

On the eve of ANZAC Day this April, at sunset, I was invited to the Sunset Tribute 2026 held in front of the Sydney Opera House. It was a grand ceremony attended by Governor of NSW Margaret Beazley, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, and former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, among others, and I also laid a wreath representing Japan. I strongly felt that the presence of the Japanese Consul General at the ceremony, introduced as a testament to post-war reconciliation, was the result of the long-standing efforts of Fr Paul Glynn and others.



I would like to express my deepest respect and gratitude once again to Father Paul Glynn, who dedicated his life to reconciliation and friendship between Japan and Australia during his 71 years of priestly life, and respectfully offer my condolences.