

Introducing Watanabe Kazuko

By Miriam Davis

I am privileged to sit under the ministry of a Japanese pastor whose sermons are enriched by the many books he reads. One author I have come to know in this way is Watanabe Kazuko (渡辺 和子), who heads up the governing board of Notre Dame Seishin Gakuen, Okayama. Watanabe Kazuko was born in 1927 in Hokkaido, graduated from Notre Dame Women's University, joined the Notre Dame Sisterhood and did a doctorate at Boston College University.

In 1936 at the age of nine Kazuko witnessed the murder of her father, General Jotaro Watanabe, in the failed coup d'etat by ultranationalist army officers known as the February 26 Incident (二・二六事件 *Ni-niroku jiken*). This event was to greatly impact her thinking on the importance of human life. During her early days as a pupil at a mission school she hated Christianity but started to read the Bible on the advice of a respected sister. She later became well known as an educationalist with a deep faith expressed as much in deeds as in words.

She is the author of a number of books such as ^{あい}愛をこめて生きる(1995); ^{あい}愛することは許されること(1993); ^{あい}目に見えないけれど大切なもの(2003); ^{あい}愛と励ましの言葉366日(2006). The latter is a collection of short quotes for each day of the year. The books above are all published by PHP Kenkyujo(PHP研究所).

Here are some quotes from Kazuko's writings that have left an impact on me.

- ^{せいきゅうしょ}請求書の^{しんこう}信仰 as opposed to ^{りょうしゅうしょ}領収書の^{しんこう}信仰. In other words, do I give God more bills than receipts? Is my faith more one of demanding than of thanking?
- There is a difference between ^い生きている and 生きていく. The latter is purposeful living with an end goal to life as opposed to the passivity of the former.
- 「^{だれ}誰かに、^{すがた}その姿のままで^{あい}愛されることによって、^{みず}傷があることを^は恥ずかしいことと^{おも}思わなくなり……^{あい}愛されている者は、^{もの}かくて(=こうして)、^{こころ}心を開いて^{ひら}すなおになり、

どうじ きず おそ
同時に、傷つくことを恐れなくなる」。

When you are unconditionally loved and accepted by someone, you are no longer are ashamed of your wounds but able to open up your heart without fear of being wounded further.

- 時間じかんの使い方つかは、そのまかたまいのちの使い方つかですから、ぞんざいな時間じかんを使うとぞんざ

いな人生じんせいが残のこります。私じかんの時間じかんを私じかんにしか使あえない時間じかんにすること、愛あいをこめて生いき
ることが大事だいじなのです。

Our use of time is use of life itself. If you are slipshod in your use of time, your whole life will end up the same way. It is important to use time as ‘the time that only I possess’ and to live in love.

- 平和へいわとは、『他人たにん』と闘たたかうことよりもまず、『自分じぶん』—とかく世間的平和せけんてきへいわの安あん逸いつをむさ

ぼろうとし、自分じぶんの利益りえきを優先ゆうせんさせたいと願ねがって、守まもるべき秩序ちつじよを乱みだしがちな「自分じぶん」

—と闘たたかって得えられるものなのです。それは、その人にとって、『十字架じゅうじか』となります。

Peace is what comes from struggling with the self that wants to live in the cotton wool that the world thinks of as peace; that puts its own interests first; the self that tends to destroy the order or harmony it should protect. This is “the cross” we bear.