

❶ [The Founding of the Church in Philippi]

It is said that this letter was written around A.D. 61–63 while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Philippi was a Greek city with no synagogue; the Jews had established a place of prayer on the banks of the Angitis River, where they worshiped. In A.D. 52, Paul preached on the banks of this river, and Lydia, a woman who sold purple cloth, and her family became believers. (Acts 16:13–15) Furthermore, after Paul healed a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination, a conflict arose with the townspeople, and Paul was imprisoned; however, as a result, the jailer’s family was baptized and became believers. (Acts 16:31–34) It appears that Lydia’s family and the jailer’s family were the first members of the church, and with a few others joining them, this church was established. They often supported Paul’s ministry with gifts. A distinctive feature of this letter is that, despite being written from prison, the word “joy” is used 16 times, leading it to be called the “Epistle of Joy.” Paul wrote letters to the churches to encourage their faith and to provide guidance regarding specific issues within the church. The problem facing the church in Ephesus was internal discord. Verses 3–4 state, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others.” The Franciscan Translation renders this as: “Do not be competitive or seek to show off; instead, be humble and consider one another better than yourselves.” That’s easy to understand. For this reason, he wrote a hymn urging them to follow Christ’s example.

❷ [Hymn to Christ]

The “Hymn to Christ” in verses 6 through 11 is said not to have been written by Paul, but to be a hymn (troparion) already in use in the Church’s liturgy. Although the doctrine of the Trinity had not yet been formulated, we can see that as early as the 60s, the Church was already praising Christ as God.

Verses 6–8: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped; rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming like human beings. Appearing in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” The Orthodox translation reads: “He was in the image of God, and did not seek to exceed (or violate) his equality with God. Nevertheless, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming like human beings, and in outward appearance becoming like a human being; he humbled himself, being obedient even to the point of death—even death on a cross.” The Barbaro translation reads: “Christ was

God by nature, but He did not insist on being equal with God; rather, He took the form of a slave, became like a human being, and emptied Himself. His outward appearance was that of a human being,..." The general gist comes across clearly. Christ was God by nature, but He did not cling to His divine status; instead, He became a slave, became like a human being, and emptied Himself. It is said that His form was truly that of a human being. Why did Christ "empty" Himself in this way? To be "empty" means to have no sense of self—to give everything away to others. In a word, this is "love," because love is giving of oneself. Jesus gave kind words, food to the hungry, healing to the sick, forgiveness of sins, His own time, His teachings, and finally, His very life. I believe we can see just how much Jesus humbled Himself—to the point of becoming like a slave—by looking at how He washed His disciples' feet. He bowed down before them, took their dirty feet, and washed them with His own hands. I believe He did this to teach, through His own example, what it means to be a true human being who lives for God and what it means to love one's neighbor.

③ **【Christ was given the name "Lord."】**

"For this reason, God exalted Christ and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (verses 9–11) The "name that is above every name" refers to the title "Lord." In Greek, this is "Kyrios." In the Old Testament, the Hebrew name "Yahweh" was used exclusively for God, but when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, "Yahweh" was rendered as "Kyrios." This is a confession that Christ is Yahweh God. The phrase "Jesus Christ is Lord," sung at the end of this hymn, was the creed of the early church.

• "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."
(Acts 2:36)

• "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

We casually call Jesus "Lord, Lord," but this is a profound confession. To call Christ "Lord" means not to regard anyone else as "Lord." Of course, it also means not to regard even ourselves as "Lord." It means believing that Christ—not ourselves—is the master of our lives. It means not complaining no matter what Christ does in our lives or what He takes away from us. It means obeying even when He asks us to do something unexpected or when His plans suddenly come into our lives. That is what it means to acknowledge Christ as "Lord."

In this world, people do not acknowledge God as "Lord"; instead, humans have become "lords." Humans rule over this world and seek to make everything in it—nature, minerals, plants, animals, and marine resources—their own. They do not acknowledge God, nor do they seek to obey Him. Instead of God's will, they desire

that their own thoughts and wishes be fulfilled, treating God as if He were a slave to serve those purposes. Let me introduce you to a certain Christian.

●Maki Iwanaga (1848–1920)

From the Meiji era to the early Taisho era. A woman from Urakami lived a life of 72 years, remaining unknown and living in poverty, devoting herself entirely to serving others until her death. Her name was Maki Iwanaga. Maki's suffering began in Meiji 2, when, at the age of 22, she was forced into exile as part of the "Fourth Urakami Persecution," a campaign of oppression against Christians. In Meiji 6, upon returning to the devastated Urakami, Maki used a shard of a rice bowl to dig into the soil and sow vegetable seeds, beginning a self-sufficient life. The following year, epidemics (dysentery and smallpox) and natural disasters struck Urakami, prompting Maki and her companions to launch self-sacrificing relief efforts. With the guidance of Father de Ro, who was at Oura Cathedral, and later Father Boarié, who succeeded him, a quasi-monastic order called the "Cross Society" was established in Meiji 10. The service activities that began with relief from epidemics evolved into a new mission: caring for orphans. They accepted all children, regardless of background or circumstances—including those abandoned due to extreme poverty, illegitimate children, and children with disabilities. They adopted the children and registered them in their own family registers; for abandoned children, they created family registers under the Iwanaga surname, bringing the total number to between 1,800 and 1,900. For children abandoned without even a name, they gave names to these tiny lives as they passed away, created family registers for them, and had them baptized, thereby leaving a testament to their lives. These facilities spread throughout the prefecture. Maki's work laid the foundation for future social welfare. Maki passed away on January 27, Taisho 9 (1920). At her bedside lay only a single, tattered kimono. It was a cotton kimono she had woven herself, and it was her only personal possession left behind. It is said that the 2-kilometer path from Urakami Cathedral to her grave was filled with the children she had raised and mourners.

I often think that there really were some remarkable Christians in the past. I believe Maki's life was one in which she truly emptied herself and gave everything she had. I believe it was a life that resembled that of Christ.

Gérard Chandri once said, "What remains after we have lived our lives is not what we have gathered, but what we have given." Ayako Miura also quotes these words in her novel **Sequel to Freezing Point**. The Bible also says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Have we been giving to those around us? Have we offered forgiveness? Have we offered help? Have we given of ourselves? Only what we have given will remain in the end. I want to strive for a life of self-emptying and giving, just as Christ did.