

Remembering Mr. Makoto Mizuno

Colleagues,

Background –

In the run up to Seminex's 25th anniversary gathering (St. Louis, June 1999) we learned of the death of Makoto Mizuno, director of another seminary in exile, this one in Japan.

These folks called themselves "Aoyama Seminex" to signal their linkage with us after they were deposed from Aoyama Gakuin, a university of the Methodist Church, in Tokyo. We St. Louisians first heard about them in the 1980s, and shortly thereafter a contingent of St. Louis Seminexers, ten in all, made a pilgrimage to their Seminex in Tokyo. We were hosted by Makoto, his wife and the Aoyama exilic community of teachers and students. None of us will ever forget those encounters. As you read what follows, you'll see why.

Makoto died in the last days of 1997, but that news didn't get to St. Louis until early in 1999. In our worship at Seminex XXV we remembered Makoto along with others from our own Seminex community who are now R.I.P. For that remembering Makoto's wife, Mrs. Kiyoko Mizuno, and his life-long co-confessor, Hiroo Sekita, sent us the two items appended below.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

"Blessed Last Days, Indeed."

Recorded by Kiyoko Mizuno.

Since my husband Makoto's fatal disease had been found, two and a half months have passed already. As his disease made an unbelievably rapid progress and time seemed to pass so fast, our family could not come up with the things that occurred one after another. Now, let me tell you the whole process of his disease tracing back in memory.

On October 6th, Makoto complained of a slight stomach pain. He went to a hospital to take a stomach-checkup. The doctor prescribed stomach pills for five days for him. He took them as prescribed, but still the pain didn't settle down. So again he went to the hospital and this time he had his stomach examined in CAT scanner. And the focus was found out. The result of the CAT examination showed that it was too tough to treat. Cancer had grown on his stomach and had already spread to the liver and the lungs as well. Makoto told me that he had asked his doctor to tell him the truth. He said, "My brother died of a progressive cancer ten years ago. And I am not afraid to know the truth. So please inform me of every fact as it is." The doctor's answer was that if his cancer had been only in the stomach, they could have extracted it on operation. But since it had spread to the other parts, he had better go to the cancer specialists.

On October 30th we went to our hospital to see his latest X-ray photograph. We had undergone an annual medical checkup for nearly ten years. And the latest X-ray photo that had been taken six months ago showed nothing wrong with his stomach. This fact proved that during these six months Makoto's cancer had grown and spread at an exceptional speed.

On October 31st Makoto visited National Cancer Center Hospital with a letter of introduction. Judging from his past data, the hospital diagnosed his disease as progressive stomach cancer,

the metastasis of multiple liver cancer and the spread of lung cancer. And Makoto was informed that even if he could live longer, his remaining days would be not more than three months long. Also his doctor told him that surgery operation was worse than impossible, radiotherapy was also impossible and the only therapy left for him was chemotherapy.

Thinking of the volume of his work, he concluded that three months were too short for him to put an end to his work. So he made a plan to undergo chemotherapy and decided to enter the hospital and to submit to anti-cancer drug therapy. He had a talk with his doctor about chemotherapy. And he frankly informed Makoto of the impossibility of complete cure even by means of it. Yet the doctor explained that if it worked well, he could live together with his cancer and possibly could live longer than expected. Today's chemotherapy didn't produce such strong aftereffects that he could not spend a normal daily life. For ten days before he went into the hospital, Makoto was very busy to fulfill his promises and to finish his last lectures at Seiwa University, and also he was engaged in these and those miscellaneous things.

He was hospitalized on Nov. 11th. The close medical examinations waited for him and they continued for seven days. Then anti-cancer drug intravenous drip infusion started. After a course of the treatment he didn't make a complete recovery from the side effects of the drug for more than three weeks. Nevertheless, on Dec. 1, as was scheduled, he came back from the hospital to recuperate at home.

For two weeks from Dec. 1 to 15, Makoto seemed very happy and relaxed freed from hospital life. Having visitors almost every day and receiving get-well cards and letters from friends and acquaintances he must have been so greatly encouraged. Being alone, he tried to make the best effort to keep his condition

better by listening to music. He called it "image therapy." On the other hand, he complained that he couldn't control his dreams. He looked so healthy outwardly but in internals, cancer was keeping on spreading rapidly wider and deeper. Dec. 16th Makoto was rehospitalized to go through the second round treatment (so he used to call it). The first round treatment hadn't effectively worked, against their expectation.

On this round, he was scheduled to return home on December 26th due to the hospital's year-end and New Year vacation. But after having a talk with his doctor about his condition, he canceled his schedule. Until about Dec. 24th he only just could walk around by himself with his portable instillator. But from the 25th he became a bedridden patient.

On Christmas day, Rev. Hiroshi Oomiya of our church came and visited us at our hospital for giving bedside Holy Communion. At that time our second daughter hadn't confessed her faith yet. Rev. Oomiya offered her this opportunity to confess her faith and she consented to it. So it was the first but the last opportunity for us to receive the Holy Communion with our whole family.

All Makoto could do was just lying still in his bed but his face was shining so bright with joy. And I used to feel the depth of the thought of our God afresh. Now we were able to have the most beautiful time we ever had in our whole lives.

On Dec. 26th my husband's condition suddenly became worse and worse as if a stone was tumbling down the cliff. His consciousness began growing dim a little. He was transferred to a private room. From that night, our daughters and I began to stay with him at his sickroom. After our last visitors left, Makoto lifted the upper part of his body out of bed, all by himself. Then he turned his face toward us and said with very

clear voice, “Blessed last days, indeed (Tot emo yoiowar dattane).” And after a short pause, he said, “Goodbye (Sayou nara).” This was his last word uttered by him here on earth. About 24 hours later his spirit returned to Heaven.

With many thanks, Kiyoko Mizuno
1998. Jan. 20

Memorial Address for the late Makoto Mizuno by Ex-Professor of Aoyama Gakuin University, Hiroo Sekita

As David lamented Saul and Jonathan with a “Song of Bow,” I can’t but sing the same song: “Fallen, fallen are the men of war, and their armour left on the field.” (2 Samuel 1:27)

Being born the same year in 1928, our friendship began when he entered The Aoyama Gakuin University Theology Department in 1952 and it continued until the day of our retirement in 1997. It lasted for 45 years. Our closer tie practically started when we entered the newly-built Aoyama University YMCA Students Dorm in the same year. We began to live under the same roof. At the dorm we had an annual thanksgiving party for our dorm mother, Mrs. Hinohara, who devotedly looked after us – we used to call her “dear Mom” – in Christmas season. Mizuno Kei (brother Mizuno in Christ) had never missed the party. But last year he was not there. The dorm was a small one that only had a capacity of less than ten. (Though so small it was, so far as I know, out of fifty-two graduates from the dorm, sixteen of them took holy orders, eight took professorships.) It was Mizuno Kei who invited Rev. Oomura and the teachers of his mother church for having worship service at the dorm. And also, he wished our dorm to be a house to witness to the Gospel. And he took the

initiative in having a meeting for the local children. It was about that time when we were told of his engagement to Miss Kiyoko Hiraiwa, now Mrs. Mizuno. How envious we were of him.

In 1963, when the Christian Education Major Course was set up in the Department of Theology, the then head professor, Dr. Jun'ichi Asano, entreated Mizuno to take its position. Understanding the situation, he resigned his position as director of Christian education at Toyo Eiwa Girls' School. He came back to Aoyama Gakuin as one of our colleagues.

It was when he had returned from his two-year study in the States and had been expected to start his real activities for the Course that our University got involved in the campus dispute. And it caused a crack between the Board of Trustees and the Theological Department.

In 1977, the Department with the Doctoral Course was driven to the corner and finally, it was forced into abolishment against our will. It was the most regrettable result for the Faculty. As a matter of course, it must have given an unspeakable shock to Mizuno Kei who assumed full responsibility for the Christian Education Major Course. It was primarily expected to bear the role of Christian education directors' training school in The United Christian Church in Japan. However, even amid the vortex of the campus dispute, he stood firm and was never disturbed. Pursuing the whole process of the struggle from a Christian educational point of view, he threw himself into the teach-ins between the Faculty and the students. It is still well remembered by a lot of us that he thoroughly filled the truly worthy but thankless role: he was sympathetic to those students who were in anxiety by losing their ways and wandering around; meanwhile, he was groping for the new aims of a university founded on Christian faith. He painstakingly collected a heap of data and materials concerned with the dispute at the time. They

are now kept in Mizuno's residence. He used to tell me that it must have been his life work to arrange and compile the data on the history of the abolition of the Theological Department and the discussion materials on the problems around the present state of Christian university and what its education should be. But it was left unrealized.

Mizuno's idea for Christian education had a crystal clear standpoint to view things from the weak's situation. It seemed to me that this viewpoint had become remarkable from 1967 when he participated in the World Christian Education Convention held at Nairobi. Since then, taking the third world into his view, his theory on education was beginning to get deeper. Since that year, he opened his relationships with the Christian Council of Asia, the Northeast and the Southeast Asian Theological Education Federations and other organizations and continued to keep them. He also took care of the Nepal study tour four times, visited Korea then under the dictatorial regime and Taiwan again and again. There he deepened his association with a number of workers concerned with Christian education who had been laboring for justice and peace. He also started the fellowship with the theologians and their coworkers of Saint Louis Lutheran Church whose organization was called "Seminary in Exile." They exiled from their Seminary on account of the differences of the ideals on their theological education. Mizuno Kei named his theological education activities after the abolishment of the Department as "Aoyama Seminex" after the suggestion of his colleague, Prof. Theodor Kitchin, who used to be a missionary. They continued to have mutual interchange programs, and it was he who every time played the leading role on Japanese side.

It seemed to me that his theological education that struggled in search for the ecumenical truths and the close collaboration with his coworkers on Christian education formed the body of his theology of education.

If I dare to summarize his educational theory, it would be “the education of communion / sharing and liberation.” When we bring communion and sharing into our nations, races, schools and families, man can be liberated as the whole man. It seems this viewpoint made the keynote of his theory. And his was never a lip theory or an empty thought but it was the one that was thoroughly put into practice in his way of living, namely, it was his life-style itself. The open Christian education seminar held in his house and lasting for 13 years well illustrated this fact. And also it was reflected all through in his serial articles produced from the seminar. Moreover, those who communicated with him best testified to it. His passion for education had budded out far back in the day when he had set up a weekly church school in Asagaya Church and it had been more and more growing up in him through the experiences in the campus dispute, in his fellowship with the churches in the third world and the poor, oppressed people in that world.

As his given name Makoto (means sincerity) signifies, he used to make sincerest efforts toward any person, accepting them and keeping on holding communion with them. Through this interrelational human process, people could come to full growth with each other. This was the way he was strongly confident in. He had a nickname as “Dai-butu san,” The Buddha. Someone named it after the similar image of them. About him there always was a warm atmosphere and he grew up his communion without rushing but surely. His personality itself was the education of communion and liberation.

After the abolishment, only Mizuno and I remained in Aoyama. Both of us “lived through the wintertime together” – so one of our graduates at the time properly wrote it – warming our friendship and encouraging each other. But now he is no longer here with me.

When he almost came to his latter end and was transferred to a private room, he raised his upper-half of his body up. And then he left his last word to Mrs. Mizuno, "Blessed last days, indeed, had we?" How deep was his thought to his family and his own life; it was far beyond our imagination. He was a man of a thoroughly warm and gentle heart, and he was a thoroughgoing educator.

In the Alumni Association of Aoyama Gakuin University bulletin, he wrote an article on the last days of Moses, entitled "Just About to Cross Over the Jordan River." He wrote: "Clearing the servile spirit which was ingrained in Israelites under a long period of slavery and to establish a new ideal Israel initiated by a new generation with faith and responsibility, it would have needed a sufficient length of years to interchange the generations. For that reason, Moses himself wasn't permitted to enter into the promised land. So he entrusted all affairs after his death to Joshua. Then Moses went up from the lowlands of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah. Viewing the land of the ancestors, he died in the land of Moab."

Though our Mizuno's fervent aspiration to restore the tradition of the theological education in Aoyama Gakuin University and its assignments had been left unfinished, the successors have been promised. His life, though ended unfinished, was the life that was dedicated to God the Lord and was being used by Him to the last moment. His life was to the glory of God as Moses' was.

The "Prayer for Peace" of Saint Francis of Assisi is the most appropriate example which describes his whole life:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
When there is hatred, let me sow love;
When there is injury, pardon;
When there is doubt, faith;*

*When there is despair, hope;
When there is darkness, light;
And when there is sadness, joy.
Oh, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

May our Lord's abundant consolation be on each one of the bereaved. Professor and our dear brother Makoto Mizuno, thank you very much for all.

[Texts translated by Prof. Hiroo Sekita's assistant, Toshiaki Okazaki.]