



NY United Nations Study Tour

We, the 10th graders of the Sapporo Sacred Heart High School, had the most challenging week in February 2018, led by Sr. Gwen Hoeffel, Sr. Taguchi, and Ms. Urushizaki, Challenging, because we realized that we are being educated to be transformed into making a difference in the world like Philippine Duchesne, as peacemakers and care takers of the environment.

Each lecturer and those who gave workshops, were all proud of their mission and talked to us zealously. We realized that they love their mission to make a difference in the world and make people happy. We felt that they had the same goal, though different ways to make a better world. We were so happy to have met them and experience their passion. Sr. Sheila Smith and Sr. Chihiro Yamamoto at the UN-NGO office of the Society of the Sacred Heart made us aware that both the UN and Sacred Heart education aim to build the world where each life is treasured and so promote education for the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). As we had studied about refugees, especially Rohingya people, a talk and video by Ms. Sleyman from UNHCR touched our hearts. We realized we should never forget their presence, and the fact that the neighboring countries which receive 7/10 of the total refugees, are also suffering. Mr. Felipe Queipo from the DPI (Department of Public Information) made us aware of the importance of education and he encouraged us to take part in the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights campaign. Sr. Sheila Smith helped us to take an action, so 4 of us made videos when we came home and sent them to the UN. We also appealed to students in our sister schools, asking them to participate. Also Mr. Queipo told us that one of the important way of education was through what we read and see on the media. We will take over the tweeter account “high school girls who support the world” begun by our seniors to contribute to solving world problems such as the refugees crisis, immigrant issues, victims of earthquakes or other natural disasters.

Mr. Hajime Kishimori, Councilor at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN told us, “The true solution for the refugee problem is to work so that a baker can bake bread again.”(words of Ms. Sadako Ogata) This means we have to make effort so that refugees can both return to their hometown or new home and also live as they really would like to live, according to who they are. He also stressed the importance of involving everyone in concrete action when communicating about issues.

A Sacred Heart Alumna , Ms. Naoko Kuramochi at the UN Secretariat, who is working for Preventive diplomacy, told us to connect our own lives to what is happening in the world. A Sapporo Sacred Heart alumna, Ms. Kumiko Shimme from the Permanent Mission of Japan, told us how she had come to study at Columbia University and then

started working for Japan.

Then we had a truly unforgettable experience during the great day we spent at the Convent of the Sacred Heart 91st St. We are very grateful to everyone especially, Dr. Ciancaglini, Mr. Chung, Ms. Codena and our host sisters. We enjoyed attending classes, having a homestay, and taking part in the voluntary service program at the ABC foundation.

Talks by Ms. Nagasawa and Ms. Noyes at the Education and Family Programs in the Japan Society also taught us how important education for co-living and exchange programs are to respect each others' culture and way of life.

On a tour of the UN, we were devastated with the fact that the budget for the UN is only 0.16 % of the world military expenditures.

On the last day, we went to visit Ellis Island to learn about the history of immigration to the US. We were so lucky, as Sister Kathleen Conan, the former Mother General, whom we welcomed to our school in 2014, joined us. After the visit, she told us that Sr. Barbara Dawson, the present Mother General phoned her while on Ellis Island and when Sr. Conan said she had been with the Sapporo Sacred Heart students, Sr. Dawson who had visited us last year said, "The Sapporo students are really great in keeping a high standard of the goals and criteria." We were very grateful to hear this.

During our final evening together, each one of us shared how we had been transformed through this tour. In gratitude we sang "Homeland" in Japanese, praying for all the refugees and immigrants. We celebrated with gratitude the Golden Jubilee of Sr. Gwen Hoeffel who was a missionary in Japan for a long time in gratitude. Finally, we are deeply grateful to all the Sisters, teachers and everyone who helped and supported us to be transformed. May St. Philippine Duchesne bless them! Thank you very much !

2018 UN Study Tour Students at Sapporo Sacred Heart School

