Learning English Through Japan – Justo Takayama Ukon

Focus: Reading (Comprehension, Pronunciation, Vocabulary)

Read the text aloud and complete the activities.

The famous Christian feudal lord Justo Takayama Ukon (1552-1615) laid the foundation on which the Church solidly built in Japan. Ukon is known as a typical feudal lord active in the middle of the 16th century, during the latter part of Japan's century of civil wars. Ukon met up with Jesuit missionaries and was baptized at the age of 12 along with his father Dario. Ukon was an active and trusted vassal of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), who finally subdued the long drawn out civil wars, as well as of Hideyoshi, Nobunaga's successor.

These two Shoguns made major moves toward concentrating their own personal control over the whole of Japan. However, although Hideyoshi had previously shown understanding toward the Church, in 1587 he suddenly did an about face in his religious policy, ordering the deportation of missionaries, destroying churches in Kyoto and Osaka, and urging the Christian feudal lords to renounce their faith. Ukon, refusing to renounce his faith, was deprived of his rank and his fiefdom was attacked.

After the death of Hideyoshi, the Tokugawa family took control of the whole country and established their shogunate government in Edo (present-day Tokyo). They continued to pursue a policy of prohibiting Christianity. The shogunate feared the influence of Ukon, and in 1614 exiled him to the Philippines along with more than 300 Christians. On reaching Manila, they were given a national welcome, but before long Ukon fell gravely ill and died in Manila during the night of February 3, 1615, some 40 days after his arrival there. He was given a national funeral and was buried in the Philippines.

Immediately after his death his reputation as a martyr spread, and the investigation for his canonization began. At that time, it was difficult to collect data in Japan, so the process could not be continued. Now, however, the Church of Japan, in cooperation with the Church of the Philippines, is actively pursuing the cause of Ukon's canonization.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1) COMPREHENSION: Fill in the blanks with the correct information:

a) Group responsible for Ukon's conversion (2 words) _____

b) Dario is Ukon's (1 word) _____

c) Hideyoshi is Nobunaga's (1 word) _____

d) With Hideyoshi, missionaries were (1 word) _____ and churches were (1 word) _____

e) Manila is a city of (1 word) _____

2) VOCABULARY: Find words/expressions that match the meanings below.

a) forcing / to force (1 word) _____

b) reverse the attitude (2 words) _____

c) official admission process of a person into sainthood (1 word) _____

d) in the near future (2 words) _____

e) make something continue longer than usual (2 words) _____

f) assumed (2 words) _____

3) PRONUNCIATION: Repeat the words.

typical		data	
policy		latter	
martyr		foundation	
deprived		renounce	
although		pursue	

LIVEWORKSHEETS