

Essay from the bald Pastor

#72 - Fire in *Inamura* -

2 years since Tohoku Earthquake #2

A devastating tsunami caused by the Sanriku Earthquake in 1896 killed 22,000 people. Shocked by the catastrophe, Lafcadio Hern, also known as Yakumo Koizumi, wrote an English book based on a true event that happened when Wakayama prefecture got hit by an earthquake long ago. The book was titled "A Living God," "Inamura-no Hi" in Japanese.

The story is about a headman of a village in Wakayama by the name of Gohei Hamaguchi who saved many lives when the village was swallowed in a huge tsunami followed by the Ansei Nankai Earthquake in 1854. He saw the tsunami coming sooner than anyone else and alarmed the fellow villagers who were caught up in the preparation for a festival by setting fresh cut *inamura* (stacked rice stocks) in his field on fire. Thanks to his quick reaction, many evacuated to the higher ground and survived. The story appeared in the government-designated textbooks for a long time before the WW II and served as a cautionary tale for earthquakes. The news about Gohei's great deed has been passed on, and his name is recognized even overseas.

In the summer after the Tohoku Earthquake of 2011, Rio Sasaki, a second grader at Unosumai elementary school in Kamaishi city, Iwate prefecture, read the story. The tsunami reached as high as the third floor of her school building. The school children moved from the first evacuation site to an even higher ground for safety. Though she got away from the disaster, it wasn't until days later that she learned of her family's safety. She also learned that many were not so lucky. In the essay she wrote after reading the book, she promised to Gohei that she will one day become someone who can save people's lives like he did. The essay won an award in the national book report competition.

Psalms 78-14 states:

He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night.

This verse illustrates ancient people from Israel being guided by God through the darkness. Since then, God has descended to earth in the form of Jesus Christ and guided us humans, who are standing still in the darkness, at the cost of his own body. That's no comparison to sacrificing *inamura*. We shall let "A Living God" shine a light on the dark side of our lives and stay away from disasters.

3-17-2013

