

Oblates in Japan

50
Years
Since 1948



O.M.I.

50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Time : Monday, November 23, 1998, 11AM

Place: Kochi Nakajimacho Catholic Church

Kochi Seibo Kindergarten



Superior Generalis
Missionariorum Oblatorum B.M.V. Immaculatae

TO THE OBLATES OF THE JAPAN VICE-PROVINCE

Dear Oblates of Japan.

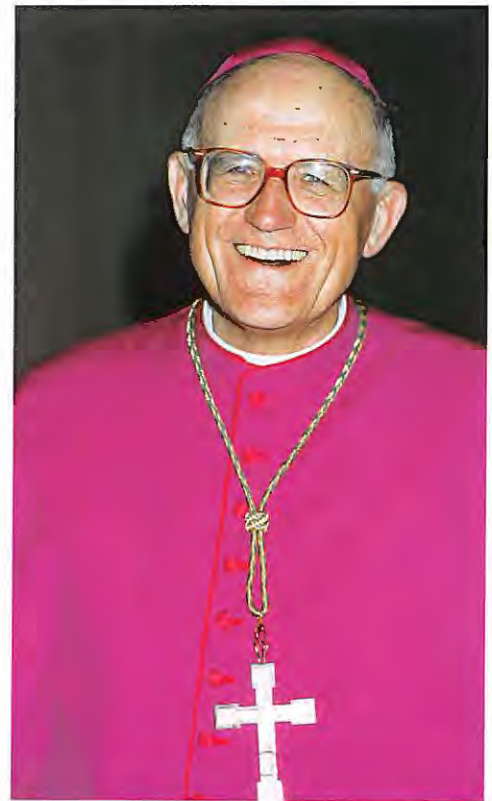
As you celebrate fifty years of Oblate presence in your country, I wish to join your many friends in congratulating you and assuring you of my prayers and my admiration for what God's grace has worked through you during that half-century.

Those first beginnings in 1948 were not easy. Fathers Gill, Robitaille and McBennett had many obstacles to overcome, not least of which was learning the Japanese language. They persevered however, and both they and their successors have shown a remarkable zeal and inventiveness in a very wide variety of apostolates: making Christ known in an ancient and highly developed culture.

Founding parishes and missions, teaching in schools and universities, building churches and kindergartens: the little team of Oblates has accomplished much in those fifty years. The waves of conversions to Christianity expected at the beginning may never have materialized but the foundations have been laid. By their presence the Oblates have promoted a better understanding of the Catholic Church and by intercultural and interreligious dialogue they have spread Christian values in Japanese society. Our hope is that a new generation of Japanese Oblates will take over and continue the work begun. That new generation will entail an even more intensive vocations promotion in the future. We must of course, pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his vineyard.

Now that the Oblate Province of Japan has taken the new Korean mission under its wing we must also hope that both will develop together and be of mutual benefit.

Personally, I would have liked to be with you for your Jubilee celebrations but my new responsibilities make it impossible. Be assured, however, of my prayers that God may continue to bless your work. Bringing Christ's Good News to those whose need for it is greatest was the motto which inspired St. Eugene and which continues to inspire the Oblates of today. The need to make Christ known is very great in most parts of Asia and the Oblates in Japan have taken their task seriously and no doubt will continue to do so under the banner of our Immaculate Mother Mary.



Consecrated Archbishop April 25, 1998

† Marcello Zago omi

† Marcello Zago, OMI, Superior General
Tit. Archbishop of Roselle
Secretary of the Cong. for Evangelization

May 14, 1998

INTRODUCTION



In the Catholic tradition anniversaries are meant to help us

- 1) recapture the thrust of events of the past and the spirit that animated them;
- 2) rekindle the same enthusiasm in us now;
- 3) assist us in projecting those same insights into the future.

We hope that this album will be an aid to doing this.

We do want to make apologies at the beginning. In translating the Japanese into English we tried to keep the color of the original and therefore sometimes the English suffers in translation.

We want to thank those who contributed articles, information, pictures. We are especially thankful to Wenceslao Laguidao who corrected the English manuscript and Mumie Nagasaki who did the same for the Japanese along with editing the material that came in. Without their help we would never have been able to complete our task.

We also wanted to include more articles. A number of men who labored in this mission, though mentioned here and there, deserved a longer excerpt. The time frame we had to follow to get this in the hands of the printer did not permit us to do more research. This album however should be a catalyst for completing the research needed to make a more complete history of our mission. In light of this we would accept any recommendation or criticism.

As fillers you will recognize Xavier Yoshikazu Tosa and Daniel Ward's works. Xave's linograph work is slowly getting recognition and Dan's Way of the Cross at Nakajimacho Church has long been appreciated.

Album Preparatory Committee Members
William Maher, Chairman
Jan van Hoydonck
Raymond Bourgoin



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WHEN I FIRST MET THE OMI



Bishop of Takamatsu Diocese
Joseph Satoshi FUKAHORI

I want to congratulate the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as they celebrate 50 years in Japan. I first met the OMI in 1954. In September of that year I was in the Fukuoka Bishop's Residence just beginning my career as secretary to Bishop Senuemon Fukahori. At the time I also had free time so I made it a point to visit various parishes in the area. Among those in the southern tip of Fukuoka City in the new development area of the Kasugahara Vicinity arose the new parish of Hikarigaoka. I went there often as well as to the Convent next door, Hikari no Sono. The priest I met there was Richard HARR. Father Harr was a young missionary priest just arrived in this location. He spoke of his joys and fears as a missionary in very hesitant Japanese.

About the same time, to the east of Fukuoka City the OMI were building the Church of Kogamachi in Kasuya County. The seashore of Genkainada was but a few hundred meters from the parish. In between there were huge pine trees which formed a wall protecting the church compound from the strong winds. The whole parish plant seemed to be in the middle of a huge desert, because there was so much sand all around. During the construction of the Church I visited the site with Bishop Fukahori and also went with the president of the Takayama Company which was building the place.

Father Timothy MULVEY, of happy memory, along with the chaplain of the American Air Base at Kasugahara, was the construction overseer. When the church had been built, a tennis court was placed in the rear area. I often played tennis there with the Novice Master of the young novices Father Leonard ROBITAILLE, of happy memory. It is a fond recollection of my younger days.

In closing, during the 25 years I spent in the Fukuoka Diocese, I met over 10 OMI's. I am also grateful I have been able to do missionary activity with the OMI in the Takamatsu Diocese.



A Word from the Provincial



Feast of St. John the Baptist
June 24, 1998

It is a happy coincidence that I am writing this greeting on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. Today, the words of John the Baptist reverberates: "There is someone coming after me and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap (Jn 1:27)."

As the Vice Province celebrates its 50th year of mission in Japan, we find our role as something similar to the one of John the Baptist, that of a precursor, someone whose role is to pave the way for the one who is to come. As messengers of God's Word in this part of the world our worth is nothing more than that of an instrument, earthen vessels who, in our fragility, are entrusted with the proclamation of the Gospel. The Oblates came to Japan to bring the Word of God in places which otherwise would not have heard of it. Apart from our role as instruments of God's word, we are nothing.

To mark 50 years of existence is to celebrate not our efforts but to trace the hands of God in our history in the Vice Province. As we look back, we will recognize the fingerprints of God in the events that make up our 50 year history. We will also see the face of God in the many Oblates who have come and gone. We celebrate our 50 years with a firm conviction that, yes, God was truly with us!

We also proclaim that God has always been with us through the countless people, here and abroad, who have been supporting us all through the way. Their sacrifices for the mission are just as significant as the efforts of the Oblates. Their support was God's way of telling us that He is and will be with us.

We celebrate our 50 years in the spirit of Thanksgiving but at the same time we feel humbled by the fact of how little we are in the face of God's grace. What is 50 years in God's plan after all? The words of Psalm 90 express the futility of our efforts:

Lord, you have been our refuge from age to age, before the mountains were born, Before the earth or the world came to birth, you were God from all eternity and for ever.

You can turn man back into dust by saying, "Back to what you were, you sons of men!" To you, a thousand years are a single day, a yesterday now over, an hour of the night.

You brush men away like waking dreams, they are like grass sprouting and flowering in the morning, withered and dry before dusk...

Our days dwindle under your wrath, our lives are over like a breath. Our life lasts for seventy years, eighty with good health....

Teach us to count how few days we have and so gain wisdom of heart.

Please join us in prayer that God may give the Oblates in Japan another 50 years in his service.

In the Spirit of St. Eugene De Mazenod,

Fr. Wency Laguidao, OMI
Vice-Provincial

REMINISCING



Ronald LA FRAMBOISE, OMI

It is an honor and a joy to be able to join with my brother Oblates in giving thanks to the Lord for the many wonders he has worked through his missionaries during these 50 years. While recognizing well my own inadequacy and failings, I am nevertheless proud to have been a part of this history.

I remember with gratitude and respect the founding fathers and elders, many of whom have already been called to the Father's house: Frs. Gill, Robitaille, Meyer, Ward, Stevens and Bro. Tsuda. I remember with admiration and gratitude the faithful and dedicated Catechists who encouraged, supported and helped all of us, and myself in particular in my various assignments: Kido, Kondo, Narui, Kanzaki and Tsunoda.

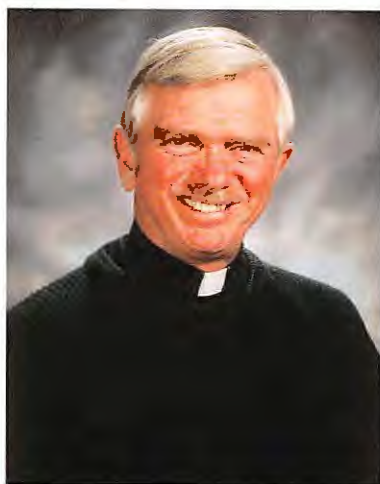
I recall with gratitude those many people both inside and outside the church, who were so welcoming and understanding, especially when we "massacred" their language, and stumbled over hurdles of culture and tradition.

I look with no little bit of paternal pride and much hope at the new (younger) generation in whose formation I was privileged to be a part. They are already assuming leadership roles and forming the generation that will follow them. May they learn from our mistakes, be blessed with the same support and give themselves courageously to bring the Good News and the love of God to all who cross their path.

Though separated by half a world, I very often cross the thousands of kilometers and am present with you in spirit, sharing your joys and your sorrows, your hopes and your dreams, and asking God's blessings on all of you.



CONGRATULATIONS



Western Province USA Provincial
David ULLRICH, OMI

The 50th anniversary of the Oblate missionary presence in Japan is an occasion for rejoicing, reflexion and remembering. I was very pleased to receive an invitation to write some of my memories of my time in Japan. But which ones to choose? The album of my mind is overflowing with memories of Tokyo and Nerima-Ku, Waseda university, the Suginoki-kai in Shinhonmachi in Kochi, Hikarigaoka in Fukuoka and the wonderful people and Oblates who were part of those times and places. I pray, as I am sure you do, that God has managed to work through all the chaos of our insufficiencies.

Certainly my time there has made me reflect deeply on the meaning of mission and the importance of community as a prerequisite for serious missionary endeavor. It was an indelible experience for which I am forever grateful.

More recently, I have to say, that the time that I felt very close to Japan was January 17, 1995. That was, of course, the day of the disastrous Kobe earthquake. Precisely one year earlier, most of us in the San Fernando Valley had been jolted out of bed and terrified by explosions all around us in our Northridge earthquake. Santa Rosa parish immediately became a relief-center without any public assistance. We were able to give out food for 6000 people over the next two weeks and put up hundreds on our parish property. The experience profoundly impacted us and made us feel especially sympathetic to our Japanese brothers and sisters when they were hit even harder with their own disaster. In fact, our three parishes, poor as they are, in a single day collected and sent nearly \$10,000 to the Oblates in Itami for the relief effort in Kobe. There was a bond that I keenly felt as Mike Yamasaki and I spoke on the phone, separated by thousands of miles but united in faith and in Oblate brotherhood. I hope those kinds of bonds continue to grow without earthquakes!

All the best to everyone!





Painting of Brother Tsuda
(Koga Church among the pines)



Annual Retreat 1996



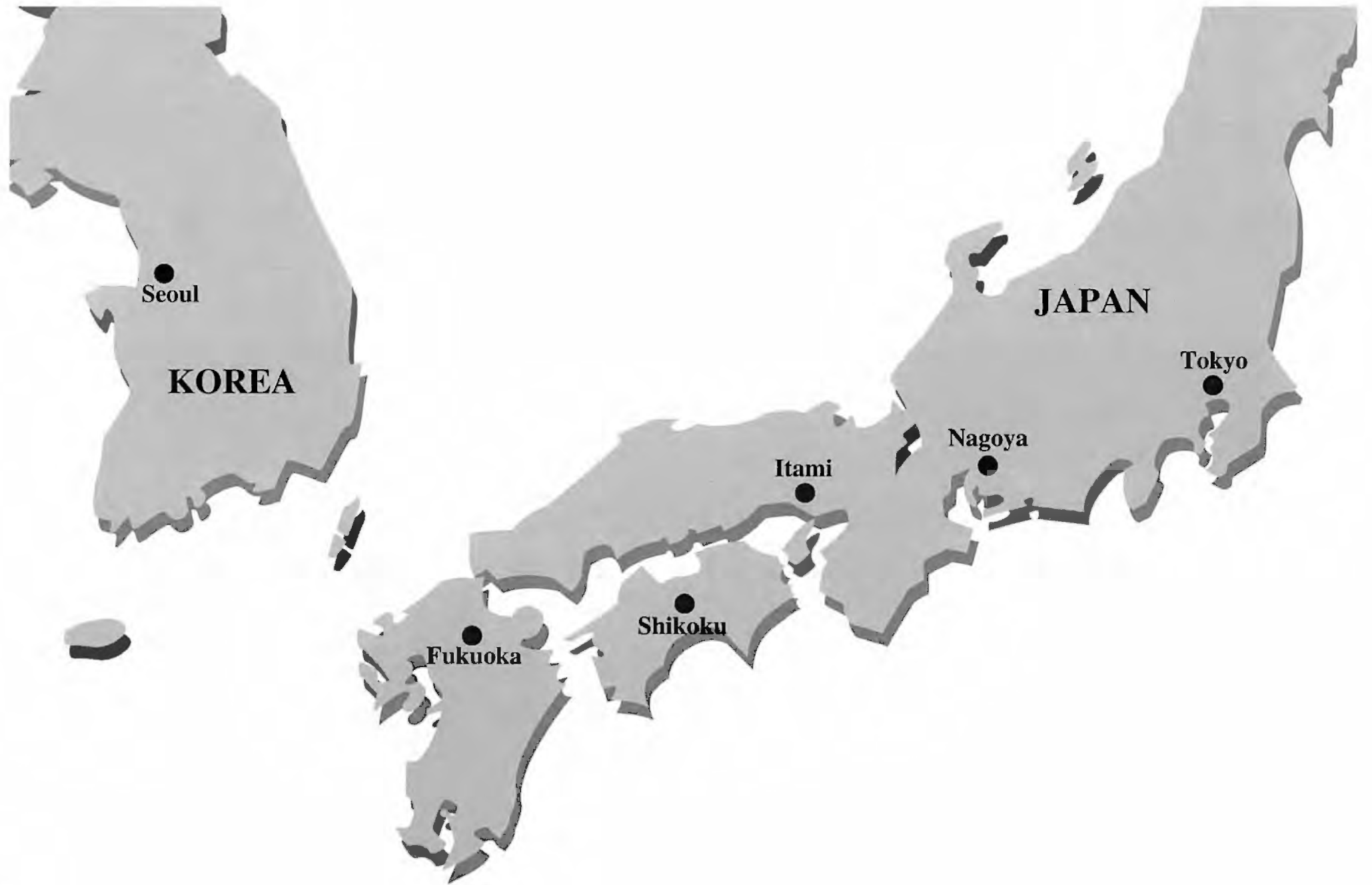
Fr. Gill welcomes the Emperor in Kochi
(October, 1953)



PART I

HISTORY OF
THE OBLATES
IN JAPAN / KOREA





THE OBLATES IN JAPAN

With the end of World War II, first in Europe and three months later in the Pacific by the surrender of Japan on August 15, 1945, there came a flurry of activity on the political as well as on the religious scene.

Politically, the focus of attention was the 'democratization' of Japan. The lead was taken by the U.S.A. Initially the U.S. military, who occupied the country from the day of its surrender, restricted all access to Japan to themselves.

Gradually, the country returned to a normal way of life, politically and economically, and the American military authorities granted permission from December 25, 1946 on, for missionaries to enter Japan. As related in a Dutch Catholic News Bulletin, *Katholiek Archief*, of March 28, 1947: "From then on all catholic missionaries, even those who have not yet lived there, are allowed to go to Japan, provided they sufficiently know Japanese. There is no distinction between sex or nationality. Requests for admission have to be addressed to the 'Rehabilitation Committee of the Catholic Church in Japan.' All information can be obtained from Father Bitter, S.J., Sophia University, Tokyo. (Fides)"

Meanwhile, all over the world newspapers, magazines, books were published on Japan's 'spirit,' 'social structure,' 'economy,' 'religion.' Christians of all denominations were getting ready to jump in as soon as the green light would be given. Protestant groups of all kinds were the first to come over and join the ones that had been there from before the war. The Catholic hierarchy did not lag far behind. Requests went out to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, who contacted the major superiors of the Mission Institutes, Orders and Congregations.

The feeling of euphoria was sky high, and the glowing reports of mass conversions in various missionary magazines made it appear as if the country would be Christian in a minimum of time.

In the same high spirits the news of the Oblates having been assigned a mission in Japan, appeared in the A.R.O.M.I., first in French, in February 1948, and in English in March 1948, with a letter of Fr. General Leo Deschatelets:



General House
Rome, January 25th 1948

(132nd Anniversary of the Foundation of the
Congregation)

*To the Religious Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Reverend Fathers and Very Dear Brothers,
Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate.*

At the repeated request of the Holy See, after having called upon our founder in prayer, and having sought graces from on High during a solemn Mass at our International Scholasticate; after having prayed to our blessed Mother at the Church of Santa Maria in Campitelli where we like to picture to ourselves Father de Mazenod lost in prayer, we have taken the following decision: sometime this year, 1948, the Congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate will send missionaries to Japan.

This means a new and arduous task for our Institute. We would not want to deprive any of our other missions of subjects; and we do have so many requests to answer! We place our trust in Providence and the Protection of our Mother and Patroness. We have wanted to answer the desires of the Holy See. We are persuaded that Bishop de Mazenod would not have acted otherwise. We are sure that the Mission of Japan will draw to us all the missionary vocations needed to sustain it.

On this solemn occasion, dear Fathers and Brothers, we feel that you are all very near to us. Your own needs will not allow you to forget those of the Church as a whole; we feel sure that you approve of this very important decision that we have taken.

Let active propaganda everywhere be set in motion and organized that we may find vocations for our new mission field. Let fervent prayers be offered to God and to Bishop de Mazenod for this intention! The task will not be easy but "summo pereferet, urget tot errantes oves ad ovile reducere..."

At present we can furnish no further details, but we shall do so as soon as possible. One thing is sure: we will have to find missionaries within the next few months. Who will they be? How many? The answer will come from our Immaculate Mother and from her Oblates.

Reverend Fathers and dear Brothers, I renew the appeal of our venerated Founder for true holiness: in the name of God, let us be saints!

*Blessing you with all my heart, I remain, very religiously yours in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate,
Leo Deschatelets, O.M.I.
Superior General*



Leo DESCHATELETS (left)
with Robert GILL (right)
and Edward LOWNEY (center)

Although Father General is said to have resisted for a good length of time, it is the persistence of Bishop Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi, ordinary of Osaka and at that time also Apostolic Administrator of Shikoku, who won his approval by complaining that no other missionary institute was willing to enter into this poor area. Until then the whole island was under the care of the Dominican Fathers, who had 'inherited' it from the French Foreign Missionaries in 1904. Father Deschatelets is reported to have said: "If no one else will go then we must".

The following month (March 1948), the A.R.O.M.I. published, both in French and in English, an extract from a letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda (Fidei) to Father General about our Japanese Mission: "*The S. C. of Propaganda very gladly entrusts to your Congregation one of the 4 civil districts of the Shikoku Island, where only Dominican Fathers have been working till now. His Excellency Paul Yoshigoro Taguchi, Bishop of Osaka, Apostolic Administrator of Shikoku and the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Marella are anxious to see your valiant missionaries.*"

It did not take long for the Oblates to know more about their new mission. In the volume of Etudes Oblates of 1948 Fr. Eugene Marcotte, O.M.I. writes in his Chronicle of Actualities, entitled *In the Land of the Rising Sun*: "The latest statistics from 1944 give an idea of the apostolic labor awaiting us there. Of four million inhabitants there were only 771 Catholics and 35 catechumens, that is about one Catholic or catechumen for about 5,000 non-Catholics, while the proportion for the whole of Japan is one of about 700-800. The Protestants have already about 2,000 followers.

"Several signs seem to point to a 'second Spring' of the Church in Japan... From 1941 until 1947 the number of catechumens went from 497 to 2,500 in the diocese of Tokyo; from 346 to 1,023 in

the diocese of Osaka; and from 99 to 2,564 in the diocese of Nagasaki, where 8,000 of the 10,000 Catholics died under the atom bomb. Of 250,000 Christians before the war the total number has grown to 600,000, of whom 109,000 are Catholics; and the Japanese newspaper that reports these statistics foresees a number of 2,000,000 in a not too remote future."

In the A.R.O.M.I. of June 1948 we read: "H. E. Bp. (Paul Yoshigoro) Taguchi, Adm. Ap. of Shikoku, offered to the M. Rev. Fr. General his heartfelt gratitude and thanks for the kind acceptance of the Missionary Apostolate of Shikoku." He writes (April 5th, 1948): "The Prefecture

of Shikoku has been very poorly cultivated up to now, from the Catholic point of view. Only about ten Spanish Dominican Fathers have been working in that large and extensive island. At present there are only about 800 Catholics out of a total population of over four million. The trial of God was severe during the war. Only one Church escaped damage either by bombs or earthquake. Now we have seven churches under consideration for construction. Four of those which had been destroyed are being rebuilt.

Three are new buildings. As in other parts of Japan since the end of the war, there are many catechumens awaiting instruction in the true Faith in Shikoku ... Your Congregation has a great name for Missionary Work. Your Fathers are certainly well prepared for the Japanese Mission.

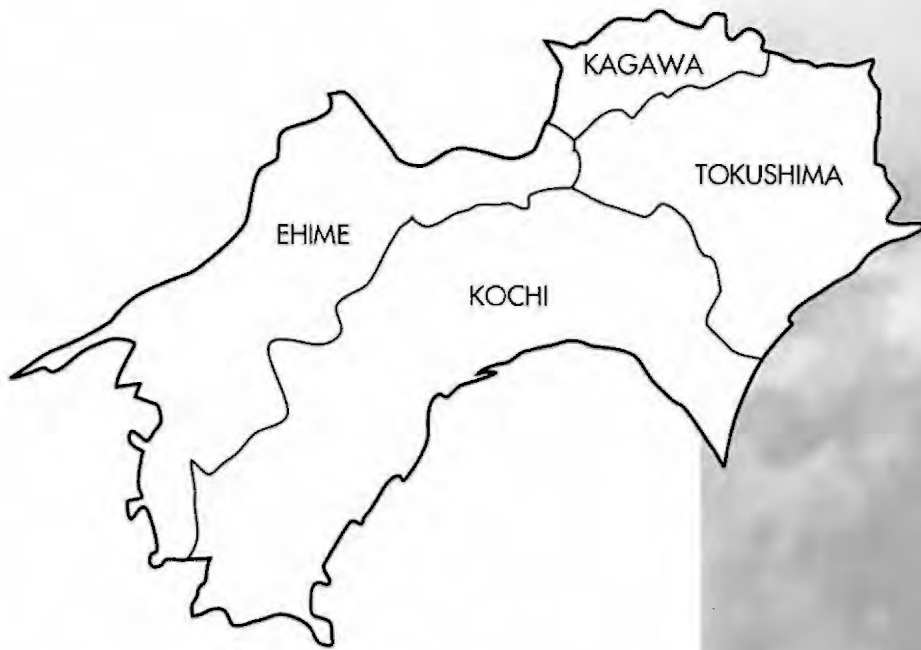
As you know, the Japanese people on the whole are well educated and have a passion for reading. They have their own Oriental Culture. The younger generation have more or less adopted the Western ways of life.

The Japanese language is not easy. It takes time and requires great patience. Though the new generation is learning to speak English, it is absolutely essential for priests to have a good knowledge of Japanese in order to preach and instruct. Therefore all missionaries for Japan must be patient, ready for all difficulties, and have a good intellectual formation. Before starting their apostolate it will be necessary for your Fathers to spend at least a year and a half learning that language...

"There are four civil Prefectures on the Island of



Bishop Paul
Yoshigoro TAGUCHI



Shikoku: Kochi, Tokushima, Ehime and Kagawa. I would like to entrust to your Congregation the civil Prefecture of Kochi. It is the largest Prefecture on the island, having a population of about 800,000 people. Its main cities are Kochi (150,000), Akaoka, Gomen, Susaki, Ino, Yamada and Kubokawa.

"The inhabitants are of a quiet and docile disposition and like Culture, Science and Politics. The Prefecture was the birthplace of such great men as Sakamoto Ryoma, ex-premier Hamaguchi and ex-premier Yoshida. The soil is rather fertile and the climate temperate.

"In that Prefecture there is the largest and most flourishing parish on the Island. It contains about 300 Catholics. In Akaoka there is another parish of 20 Catholics. Before the war the Spanish Dominican Fathers had a religious parish in Kochi, where their central house was situated. This was destroyed by the air raids. In Kochi city there is a convent of Japanese nuns - the Sisters of Aishikai (Congregation of Mission Sisters of the Sacred Heart, a Japanese foundation). They are in charge of some charitable works."

On the 4th of June, 1948, this new mission was entrusted to the First (later called the Eastern) American Province, which elicited the following exhortation from Father Robbins, its Provincial: "I would direct your attention especially to paragraph 4 of the Decree concerning the administrative union of the Japanese Mission Field with the First American Province. It brings all of us face to face with the stern realities of our obligations to this new mission and to the Oblates who are to devote their lives to it. Our joy in acquiring a mission field which will undoubtedly test the bodies and try the souls of the six pioneers must endure. The first flush of our pride in the calibre of their characters and the quality of their priestliness must continue... Not one of us can allow

himself the luxury of forgetting a single one of these six missionaries because they are so absolutely dependent for every necessity upon the home Province and every member of the Province. If ever an apostolate was begun with little more than script and staff and the willingness to sacrifice everything for souls dear to Christ, this is it. In the days to come and in ever increasing degree we at home will have the grave obligation of financing a project which with God's help will grow as does a mustard seed... More volunteers will be needed. Future apostles must be sought... We are our brothers' keepers!"

The first missionaries, Frs. Robert GILL, Leonard ROBITAILLE and Charles McBENNETT, boarded the *ALMERIA LYKES* at Galveston, Texas, on All Saints Day, November 1, 1948. The ship cast off the next evening, sailing into the sunset towards the Land of the Rising Sun. It docked in Kobe, Japan, at noon on November 29, 1948. After a strenuous afternoon clearing customs with the help of their interpreter, Fr. Raymond Froidevaux, M.E.P., they set off in the evening for the Bishop's residence at Nishinomiya City. There they were put up in one room on army cots. Fr. Robitaille writes in his diary: "It was bitterly cold. No heat in the house whatsoever except a tiny fireplace flame in our room... Many things struck us funny, so that we went to sleep worn out from laughter as well as fatigue. Next morning, arising about 7:00, we nearly froze to death, so it seemed, dressing and washing. Celebrating Mass in the chapel left us with hands numb and spirits considerably less hilarious than the night before."

From there they soon moved to Toyonaka, a suburb of Osaka, into the house which had served as the Bishop's war-time residence. Within the week they set out to visit the Kochi and Tokushima area that was to be confided to them. Father Robitaille

sent a detailed report of the voyage to Missions: "On December 3, the feast of St. Francis Xavier, at the stroke of twelve noon the Akitsu-maru shoved off, saluted Kobe with a blast of her whistle, and we were on our way to Shikoku. This was to be a reconnaissance trip on which the first contingent of Oblate missionaries to Japan, Father Gill, Father McBennett and myself would look over the territory which we were soon to serve. We were accompanied by Father Francis Eikichi Tanaka, Vicar Delegate of Shikoku and pastor of the church of St. Paul Miki in



Francis
Eikichi TANAKA

Tokushima.

Five hours later we arrived at Tokushima and put up at a hotel for want of accommodation in the tiny rectory that Father Tanaka calls home. This was an experience the novelty of which one would hardly imagine.

First a word about Tokushima, where the Oblate Fathers have been invited by the Ordinary to take over the city's lone Catholic parish. ..."

Note: In the A.R.O.M.I. of June 1, 1949 we read: Our Oblate Fathers of the Japanese mission of Shikoku who are already in charge of the Kochi district also received as theirs the new district of Tokushima (Shikoku).

This seems to be another instance of what Father General is reported to have said: "If no one else will go then we must." This is confirmed by an item in the A.R.O.M.I. of Aug-Sept. 1949: SPECIALISTS IN THE MOST DIFFICULT MISSIONS. - Father Robert Gill, Superior of the Japanese mission, heard about another American community which had accepted a Prefecture on Shikoku, but after looking over the prospects withdrew to the mainland and accepted a place in the Diocese of Yokohama. He writes: "The Bishop was afraid that we might have similar ideas. We soon set his mind at rest, assuring him that we knew when we came that Shikoku was difficult, but that instead of being a deterrent it was only an added challenge for us American Oblates, members of a Congregation which glories in the title of 'specialists in the most difficult missions'. So the sooner we can actually begin to live and work among the people of Shikoku the happier we will be..."

Fr. Robitaille continues: "One of the four larger cities on the island, Tokushima has a population in the neighborhood of 100,000 inhabitants. At least 90% destroyed in the last war, it is now almost entirely rebuilt. The number of Catholics is as yet small, but here too one encounters the firm conviction that henceforth the harvest will be great. On Sunday morning (5 December) Father Gill addressed the congregation, telling them how happy we were to be in their midst and of the hopes that are being entertained for the future.

"From Tokushima our itinerary took us by train to Takamatsu and thence to Kochi. Although it required more than two and a half hours to cover the forty-six miles to Takamatsu, the journey was most enjoyable. A winding route through mountains tinged with autumn color, a panorama of beautifully terraced gardens, orange trees laden with fruit -- these are some of the views that furnished a very interesting trip. During the four hours between trains in Takamatsu we met and were entertained by Father Sergio Santamaria, O.P., pastor of the local parish. There was only time to visit the premises and to note the reconstruction of church property.

"The remainder of the journey to Kochi was made for the most part after dark. The train pulled into the station shortly after ten o'clock and what a



surprise to discover a welcome committee comprising two Fathers (Frs. Orenzio Perez, O.P. and Stephen Yoshio Takeda, O.P., who were stationed there) and a number of parishioners (the Aishikai Sisters and the children of the orphanage, located next to the church). These good people received us very cordially and proceeded to conduct us to the Fathers' residence.

"The next three days were a continual round of greetings and exchange of visits. A visit was made to Akaoka, where Fr. Domingo Ledesma, O.P. was resident pastor. Formal calls were made on the mayor, Mr. Susumu Yamamoto, the vice-mayor, Mr. T. Suzuki, who later returned the visit on behalf of the mayor; on the President of the Prefectural Council, Mr. S. Nakayama and also on the Principal of one

High School, a Mr. S. Yoshii. By all without exception we were graciously, even warmly received and promised their full cooperation in the endeavors that lie ahead.

"But it was left to our own, the Catholic people of Kochi, some three hundred in a population of approximately 120,000, to demonstrate in their own fashion, in various ways, the gladness and appreciation they felt over the arrival of the Oblate Fathers.

"Following Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament the evening of the first day, a parochial reception was held in the church. An official welcome in behalf of the parishioners was tendered by Mr. Kiyoshi Yoshimatsu, the only Catholic on the Council of the Prefectural government. Father Tanaka and Father Takeda, O.P., also spoke. Father Gill replied.



First three Oblates in Japan
Robert GILL (right), Leonard ROBITAILLE (left),
Charles McBENNETT (insert)

Earlier in the day we had been entertained by the children of the school and orphanage. Having presented us with three gifts of flowers, fruit and a doll, they excelled themselves in an interesting concert of Japanese folklore. The Sisters, who are in charge of these institutions, are Japanese and members of the Aishikai Community. One cannot be too lavish in the praise of these good Sisters, who are waging such a courageous fight against great odds. Four of them look after a school of some two hundred children as well as an orphanage of sixty-five or more. And they are so poor. If only our people in America realized to what advantage such items as old or used clothing could be utilized over here they would save and send all they have.

"The Patronal feast day of the Oblate Fathers, December 8th, was marked by a High Mass. Father Gill officiated. It was a fitting climax to a visit that culminated in the afternoon when we were given a royal sendoff at the pier. Before describing in brief our departure, let it be said that we felt and owed a debt of gratitude to Father Stephen Takeda, O.P., Father Orenzio Perez, O.P., to the Sisters and in particular to Major and Mrs. C.H.Irskine for the kindness and hospitality they so readily extended to us.

"At four-thirty Wednesday afternoon we took leave of Kochi. A large group of well-wishers, some of whom walked a long distance, were at the pier to see us off. Holding the multi-colored streamers thrown to and from the deck, these friendly and good people waved until we were almost out of sight. It was a touching scene and one ever to be remembered. Our ship, the Toroshiomaru, took us to Osaka overnight."

The main cities of Shikoku, Takamatsu, Tokushima, Kochi and Matsuyama had been 90% destroyed by bombings during the war. The church fa-

cilities were either leveled or in a state of bad disrepair. The ones mentioned above in Shinhonmachi and in Akaoka had escaped, but the main church in Kochi was nothing but a large heap of rubble, and in Tokushima and Takamatsu a temporary construction had been set up.



William McLAUGHLIN



Timothy MULVEY



Leonard SCANNELL

On January 14, 1949, the second group of missionaries arrived: Frs. William McLAUGHLIN, Timothy MULVEY and Leonard SCANNELL. The first Oblate community in Japan was now ready to start.



FOUNDING YEARS

GETTING STARTED

On January 17 the new group of missionaries began Japanese language studies under the tutorship of Mr. Imabara. Instruction continued until October 25, 1949. Classes were often interrupted or put off as the services of Mr. Imabara, as interpreter, were needed by the mission superior, who was already busy seeing to the reparation of the damaged churches in Tokushima and Kochi, as well as preparing a new foundation in Itami, a city bordering on Toyonaka.

A.R.O.M.I. of October 1949 reports: "A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Sunday, July 31, at Shin Itami, Hyogo Prefecture, Honshu (Japan) for the buildings being erected there by our Oblate Fathers of the Japanese Mission. In this quasi-parish of Shin Itami, now entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a kindergarten will accommodate some 100 children. Attached to this kindergarten is a large playroom that will serve as a temporary chapel until our Fathers are able to build a suitable church. Within the limits of the new parish here are more than 65,000 people; of this number less than 50 are Catholic. At present they are having Mass each Sunday in the home of Mr. Rihei Okada, a recent convert and former Mayor of Itami. The usual attendance is around 35. On August 15 seven members of the parish were baptized...."

On January 25, 1950, the buildings in Itami were dedicated by Bp. Taguchi. Fr. McBennett took charge as pastor, with Fr. Mulvey as assistant, while Fr. Scannell returned to the U.S.A.

The end of formal studies of Japanese in Toyonaka had come in November 1949, and so the missionaries had set out with Bible and dictionary in hand for their new assignments: Fr. Robitaille to Tokushima as pastor, Frs. Gill and McLaughlin to Kochi (Shinhonmachi) as pastor and assistant respectively, the other three staying on in Toyonaka until the completion of the facilities in Itami.

RECONSTRUCTION

The formal handing over of the area to be evangelized by the Oblates in Shikoku, i.e. the civil prefectures of Kochi and Tokushima, was effected on December 4, 1949 by Bishop Taguchi in an impressive ceremony. The Dominican Fathers were represented by Fr. Vincente Gonzalez, O.P., Dominican Vicar for Shikoku, and the Oblate Fathers by Fr. Robert J. Gill, O.M.I., Vicar Provincial of the Oblates. Bishop Taguchi thanked the Dominican Fathers for their apostolic labors in the Kochi area since 1904, and welcomed the Oblate Fathers. The Congregation thereby assumed responsibility for the southern half (Kochi Pref. 7,103.87 square kilometers, Tokushima Pref. 4,143.18 square kilometers) of the Prefecture Apostolic of Shikoku

(total area 18,794.29 square kilometers), which is close to two thirds of Belgium (30,513 square kilometers). The population of the island in 1949 was about 4 million, most of whom were attached in some way to Buddhism. The Christians were a small minority of less than 1,000.

The Dominicans continued their apostolic work in the civil prefecture of Ehime (5,672.59 square kilometers), while the fourth of the civil prefectures, Kagawa (1,874.65 square kilometers) was to be evangelized by the diocesan clergy (since 1953 assisted by the Burgos Fathers from Spain).

The areas accepted by the Oblates, though basically rural, and physiographically extremely mountainous, centered in the prefectural capital cities of Kochi and Tokushima. These cities had been almost completely leveled by Allied bombing in July 1945. The existing parishes in Kochi Prefecture were Nakajimacho, in the center of Kochi city (totally destroyed), Shinhonmachi, also in Kochi city (had escaped destruction), and Akaoka, 25 kilometers east of Kochi City.

In Tokushima Prefecture there was the church property in Tokushima Honcho (in the center of the city), also destroyed but partly reconstructed, and Awa-Ikeda, 76 kilometers west of Tokushima City, unattended since 1940.

SHINHONMACHI



Enokuchi Church (facade rebuilt after Easter 1968 earthquake)

The church at Shinhonmachi in the city of Kochi, and the mission of Akaoka were the only two churches in Kochi Prefecture in 1949. The church at Shinhonmachi is just behind (north of) the railroad station of Kochi City. It miraculously escaped the fire bombs of 1945. An earthquake in December 1946 caused severe damage to the front of the church.

This parish encompassed all of Kochi City, as



Enokuchi Church today



well as the territories north, 30 kilometers to the Tokushima and Ehime prefectural borders, and west, 110 kilometers to the Ehime prefectural border. This comprised about one half of the whole prefecture. This parish was divided in two when the new rectory in Nakajimacho was finished. Its territory became then the northern half of Kochi city and Awa-gun (=county), and the mountain area up to the Tokushima prefectural border, 30 kilometers to the north.

In 1949 there were about 200 Christians in the city. The diocesan statistics give 209 Christians for this parish (Shinhonmachi) on January 1, 1997.

In March 1972, while remaining part of the mission territory entrusted to the Oblates, Fr. John Yoji Matsunaga, a diocesan priest, became pastor, with an Oblate serving as assistant. In August 1996 this priest was transferred and in his place came two new diocesan priests.



NAKAJIMACHO

This parish is in the center of Kochi, a couple of minutes walk from the municipal and prefectural offices. It is the oldest parish on Shikoku Island. Missionaries of the Paris Foreign Mission Society first came to Kochi in February 1882. They acquired land at the present site in 1888. In 1904 the whole island was entrusted to the Dominican Fathers and established as a Prefecture Apostolic. They built a large red brick church and granite rectory on the property at Nakajimacho in 1915. On July 4, 1945 the center of Kochi was razed by Allied Forces fire bombs and the church and rectory perished in the blaze.



Nakajimacho property after the war

The Oblates reopened this parish in 1953 after a rectory and kindergarten were built.

On August 21 the new rectory was finished and Father Gill, who had until then resided in Shinhonmachi moved in that day.

On that same day Fr. Jan VAN HOYDONCK, O.M.I., arrived in Kobe, from Belgium. It may set someone to wonder why all of a sudden some member from another Oblate Province than the Eastern

American shows up in the Japanese Oblate Mission. 'All of a sudden' is certainly not applicable here. Even before there was ever a thought of accepting a mission in Japan Father Van Hoydonck had expressed his desire to Father General of being sent to Japan if the opportunity would arise. And from the day he knew that Father Gill had been appointed to be the first superior of the Oblates in Japan he wrote to him, asking whether he would be given some consideration. Father Gill gave a very kind and favorable reply, and that gave rise to the same desire among some of the young Oblates in the Flemish Scholasticate in Belgium. Through several circumstances, one of which was a severe traffic accident, Father Van Hoydonck's departure was delayed, but on July 3rd 1953 he left Rotterdam by ship, and arrived in Kobe on August 21. After a few days in and around Itami he was put on the ferry to Kochi the evening of the 25th, and arrived in Kochi the next morning where he was welcomed by Father Gill. After a few days in and around Kochi he had to leave again for Tokyo to take up the study of the Japanese language, from where he was appointed to be an assistant pastor in Nakajimacho, in July 1955.

The kindergarten auditorium in Nakajimacho served as a church until the end of 1958. A fine concrete church was built and solemnly consecrated under the title of the Immaculate Conception by Bishop Paul Taguchi on December 20, 1958. The Bishop celebrated a Pontifical High Mass in it the following day, December 21.



Nakajimacho Church today

The parish extended throughout the south side of the city, and 15 kilometers to the east, to Noichi. To the west it extended all the way to the Ehime Prefecture border, some 150 kilometers away. Part of this area in the west was detached in 1977, when a parish was formed in Nakamura. On January 1, 1997, Nakajimacho Parish reported 365 parishioners.

AKAOKA

This small parish is in the eastern part of Kochi Prefecture, about 20 kilometers from Kochi city. It was established by the Dominican Fathers in 1933 with 35 Christians. In 1935 they built a kindergarten, which in 1948, at the request of the town authorities was turned into a day nursery. This was closed in 1978. Under the Oblates, Akaoka church was a mission station of Aki until 1963 when the church, dedicated to Saint Joseph, was renewed and a new rectory was built. The diocesan statistics give a total of 48 Christians at the end of 1996.



Akaoka (original church)



Akaoka Church today

TOKUSHIMA

The Tokushima church, dedicated to St. Paul Miki, is located at Honcho in the prefectural capital of Tokushima City. The original church erected by the Dominicans had been destroyed at the end of the war. A small temporary chapel and a quonset hut rec-



Tokushima (original church)

tory had been built by Fr. Francis Eikichi Tanaka. This parish was entrusted to the Oblates in 1949 and was then the only Catholic church in function in the whole of Tokushima Prefecture, a territory of 4,144 square kilometers. The other existing church, in Awa-Ikeda, at the west end of the Prefecture, had been closed in 1940, due to travel restrictions and the house arrest of the foreign (Spanish) missionaries during the Pacific War. Father Leonard Robitaille, O.M.I., became the first Oblate pastor in Tokushima on November 29, 1949, replacing Fr. Tanaka, who went to Takamatsu and later became bishop of Takamatsu when the Prefecture Apostolic was raised to the status of a diocese in 1963.

At the end of 1996 the parish listed 388 catholics. The parishes of Naruto and Anan had in the meantime been founded from this parish.



Tokushima Church today

AWA-IKEDA

This parish is in the mountains of central Shikoku, on the western edge of Tokushima Prefecture. The Oblates assumed responsibility for this mission in 1949 when accepting the mission district of Tokushima.

The Dominican Fathers had bought a piece of property in the town of Ikeda in 1928, and in 1929 opened a kindergarten. In 1933 they built a church with rectory and a house for a catechist. Because of



Awa-Ikeda (original church)

some difficulties they had to close the kindergarten and in 1938 they also dismantled the kindergarten building and the rectory and moved them south to Kochi and Akaoka, and the residing priest moved to Matsuyama. During the war years there was no religious activity, and



Awa-Ikeda Rectory and Church today

the buildings that were still left on the property were occupied by squatters. In 1949 these buildings (the church and the little adjoining house) were in terrible disrepair already, but remained occupied by the squatters until 1962. Until then the area was a mission of Tokushima parish.

The territory of the Ikeda parish covers about a quarter of the rural mountain area of Tokushima Prefecture and stretches from Ehime Prefecture in the west to Kagawa Prefecture in the north, to the parishes of Naruto and Tokushima in the east, and to Kochi Prefecture in the south. In 1962 Ikeda was elevated to the status of a parish with a resident priest. The buildings had reached a point where repairs were no longer possible and further use had become dangerous. The whole compound was rebuilt in 1973, and the old buildings were torn down. The parish is dedicated to Christ the King.

On January 1, 1997 the parish register listed 30 Christians.

DEVELOPMENT

NEW FOUNDATIONS

The new missionaries had been in Japan only a few months yet, trying to learn a new and difficult language, making tedious and time consuming trips to Shikoku to oversee the repairs of the churches to be confided to them, when new demands already required their attention. From several directions they had received requests to open new missions to broaden the network of bases for evangelization.

ITAMI



Itami Rectory

While they were still in language training in Toyonaka the Oblates started saying Mass at the home of Mr. Rihei Okada, the former mayor of Itami, a city just south of Toyonaka, roughly halfway between Osaka and Kobe. There were a few Christians in that city. Very soon Bishop Taguchi asked the Oblates to start a parish in Itami. In April 1949 land was bought for this new mission, less than five months after the arrival of the missionaries in Japan. The ground breaking took place on the last Sunday of July 1949. A kindergarten and rectory were blessed by Bishop Taguchi on January 24, 1950, and dedicated to Christ the King. Fr. Charles McBennett became the first pastor. The kindergarten hall served as a chapel until a church was built in 1966. This parish grew rapidly into one of the bigger ones in the diocese, partly by new conversions and baptisms at the church, partly by the rapid growth of the city by migration from remote areas of Japan, mainly from the southern part of Kyushu, which brought many Christians from the Nagasaki area towards the Kansai (Osaka) area. On January 1, 1996 the parish had 773 parishioners.

Itami church garden



Itami Church today

AKI

“Star of the Sea” parish was established by the Oblates in Aki city, Kochi Prefecture, in 1951. It was to serve as a base for evangelizing the eastern part of Kochi Prefecture. A kindergarten and a big rectory were built with the hope of eventually hous-



Aki Kindergarten and Church Hall

ing the novitiate there.

In the summer of 1951 the building in Aki was ready for occupancy. Father Leonard Robitaille was appointed its director. He was succeeded as pastor of Tokushima by Fr. McLaughlin. Frs. Patrick BRADY and Nicholas NEVILLE, who had arrived in Japan on June 1, were sent to Aki for their study of the Japanese language. On October 15 Fr. Robitaille was

installed as pastor.

On November 1, 1951, the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Maximilian de Furstenberg arrived in Takamatsu, accompanied by Bishop Taguchi, making his first visit to Shikoku. They were met by Fr. Gill, who took them by car to the Dominican parishes in Ehime Prefecture, and on to Kochi, where the Archbishop presided at several functions.

From Kochi the visitors went to Akaoka and Aki. In Aki the Internuncio, as he was commonly referred to, presided at the blessing of the new buildings on November 8. The next day the visitors with Fr. Gill went on to Tokushima.

Akaoka, which up to that time had been a station of the Shinhonmachi church in Kochi, became attached to Aki.

The following year, on May 31, 1952, Fr. Gill made the formal promulgation of the decree of erec-



Aki Rectory

tion of a canonical novitiate in Aki.

Father John BARRETT and Father Richard HARR, who had arrived in Japan on October 13, 1952, started their Japanese language studies in Aki, but when the Franciscan Fathers opened a language school for missionaries in Tokyo in the Spring of 1953 they were sent there and subsequent arrivals also took their courses there.

At the time when the proceedings in Aki were started there was only one Catholic family living there. The parish territory covers several hundred square kilometers, extending all along the coast for about 110 kilometers, and reaching north into the mountains up to the Tokushima Prefecture border. In 1996 there were 43 Catholics registered in that territory. More than triple that number have been baptized there over the years, but they have migrated to the big city centers on Honshu, seeking work. This parish has mission stations at Yanase and at Mitsuhamu in Muroto city, both located east of Aki.

HIKARIGAOKA

In the Spring of 1953 Bishop Dominic Senuemon Fukahori of the diocese of Fukuoka invited the Oblates to start a parish in Nakamachi, in the south of Fukuoka City. The bishop provided the land, and the building of a rectory and a hall was started. This was the first mission the Oblates opened outside of the diocese of Osaka and its suffragan Prefecture Apostolic of Shikoku.



Hikarigaoka (first buildings)

The compound was blessed by Bishop Fukahori on September 23, 1953, and dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady. Fr. William McLaughlin was the first pastor. The name of the area was later changed to Hikarigaoka. In 1953 there were 50 Catholics living in the area. With the expansion of Fukuoka City this soon became a densely populated area with about 80,000 people living in the confines of the parish. In 1968 a new modern church was built to meet the needs of the growing Catholic community. On September 4, 1988 the parish, which then counted 940 members, was returned to the diocese. Wency LAGUIDAO was the last Oblate Pastor.



Hikarigaoka Church today



Koga Church, Rectory and Kindergarten

KOGA

“Our Lady Queen of Peace” parish was built in Koga (diocese of Fukuoka) in 1955. Koga is a town about 20 kilometers east of the center of Fukuoka. Bishop Fukahori, happy with the success of the Fathers in Nakamachi, asked them to open another mission to the east of the city to bridge the area between Fukuoka City and Kita-Kyushu City. Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York provided the funds to build the entire compound: a church, a rectory and a kindergarten. The church spire, rising some 20 meters out of the pine trees was an inspiration and attraction for anyone travelling on National Highway Route 3. Fr. Timothy Mulvey was the first pastor. In the early years much of the work of evangelization was among the sick in the TB-sanitariums in the area. The Catholic population increased from 20 in 1955 to 470 in 1987. By 1998 there were 881 people in the parish.

NARUTO

“St. Joseph” parish at Naruto was founded in 1959. Naruto is about 20 kilometers northeast of Tokushima City. The parish territory extends from the Yoshino River northward to the Kagawa Prefecture border, some 60 kilometers away, and westward up the north bank of the Yoshino River as far as Wakimachi, some 30 kilometers away.

Naruto was for many years a mission station of Tokushima. Already in 1949, when the Oblates took over the mission district, there were 20 Christians, thanks to the zealous work of a lay catechist, Mr. Jo-

seph Sueho TSUDA.

On December 8, 1952 Mr. Tsuda started his novitiate as an Oblate Brother, and on the same day in 1959 he pronounced his perpetual vows. After a very meritorious life he went to his eternal reward on July 23, 1981.

On February 2, 1959 Fr. Bertram SILVER took occupancy of the new rectory, and on February 16 was formally installed as pastor. On February 27 the new buildings were blessed by the Superior General of the Oblates, Very Reverend Father Leo Deschatelets. The kindergarten hall served as a chapel until 1978.



Naruto (Original Church Compound)

In 1978 the entire mission complex was moved to a new place. What once had been in the middle of a peanut field had become the busiest corner of the city center. Also, poor foundations and termites had necessitated reconstruction. The entire mission compound was therefore moved to a developing residential area north of the railway station. For many years that area had been covered with shallow ponds for salt extraction. On the acquired piece of land a separate church was built, besides a rectory and a kindergarten.



Naruto Church today

There were 182 Catholics in 1996. This parish has until now given four priestly vocations, one diocesan, three religious of whom two are Oblate and one Franciscan.

ANAN

A mission station was established at Tomiokacho in Anan, in 1962. Anan is a city 20 kilometers south of Tokushima city. The area covered by this parish extends all along the east coast of Shikoku as far south as the Kochi Prefecture border, some 65 kilometers away, and west deep into the mountains, altogether an area of about half of Tokushima Prefecture. There were 45 Catholics in the Anan area in 1962. A kindergarten was built there in 1966, the hall of it serving as a chapel. A priest's residence was completed the same year. Fr. John Kenney MAHONEY took up residence as the first pastor.

On May 5, 1993 the Ordinary of the Takamatsu Diocese, Bishop Joseph Satoshi Fukahori, blessed the new church in Anan, dedicated to Our Lady of Hope. The initiative for it came from Fr. Richard HARR, the pastor at that time. It holds about 100 people. The entire area has a population of about 280,000, of whom 87 were Catholics at the end of 1996. There is a mission station at Mugi, 45 kilometers south, with 6 Catholics.



Anan Kindergarten, Rectory and Church



NAKAMURA

"Christ the Redeemer" church in Nakamura is in charge of the entire southwest sector of Kochi Prefecture, an area of several hundred square kilometers. In the early 60's Fathers from Nakajimacho in Kochi City started making monthly visits to the few Christians scattered throughout this vast area extending some 130 kilometers along the coast of Tosa Bay. It was a nerve-racking bus ride along the winding, unpaved mountain roads.

Fr. William MAHER rented a small house in the center of Nakamura City in 1970 and took up residence. In 1977 a rectory with a chapel was built on a site behind the railway station, next to the Ushiro River, a tributary of the Shimanto River. In an area larger than all of Kagawa Prefecture, with a population of 112,000, there were 69 Catholics at the end of 1996.



Nakamura Church



VOCATIONS AND HOUSES OF FORMATION

FIRST NATIVE VOCATIONS

Within three years of their arrival in Japan the Oblates were blessed with their first native vocations. The novitiate was canonically erected at the Aki mission on May 31, 1952, welcoming a group of Oblate



First vocations, left to right:
novices John Takaji IWO, Joseph Sueho TSUDA, Mr. Motoki, Mr. Ariura
Novice Master Leonard ROBITAILLE (rear)



Brother novices. Of those who subsequently entered two took vows on December 8, 1953. One was Joseph Sueho TSUDA. He became the first Japanese Oblate. He was 54 years of age when he took his first vows. (Ed: Cf the article on Br. Tsuda for the description of the extraordinary course of his life) The other one was John Takaji IWO, who some four years later, in 1957, joined two other young men who wished to study for the priesthood in the Oblate Congregation: Michael Soichiro YAMASAKI, and Leonard Morio INUI. They made their novitiate in the Eastern American Province and after pronouncing vows pursued their scholastic studies at the Oblate scholasticate in Washington, D.C. On June 24, 1962 the first Japanese Oblate priest, Fr. Michael Soichiro Yamasaki, was ordained at Nakajimacho, Kochi, by Bishop Paul Y. Taguchi.

The next ordination of Japanese Oblates was that of Fathers Leonard Inui and of John Iwo. They were ordained in Tokushima by Bishop Francis Eikichi Tanaka, the ordinary of Takamatsu Diocese, on June 14, 1964.



Soichiro YAMASAKI the day after ordination

HOUSES OF STUDIES

TOKYO / SEKIMACHI

From the beginning of the mission, missionaries arriving from abroad spent one or two years in language school before taking up their apostolic tasks. The difficulty of the Japanese language, especially its writing in Chinese characters, convinced most that a longer period of preparation for the ministry was advisable.

Learning from the Jesuits and the Salesians who were successful in bringing new missionaries to Japan before ordination, the Vicar Provincial in 1954 proposed to the General Administration that Scholastic Brothers be allowed to come to Japan after their perpetual vows. A program of two years of language school and three or four years at the newly opened Pontifical Faculty of Theology at Sophia University would hopefully provide them with the chance to acquire deeper skills in the language and further their knowledge of local customs, history and culture. Fr. General agreed in principle to the proposal and the home province gave preliminary approval to implement the program in 1957.

An impressive, ferro-concrete residence was put up in Sekimachi, Nerima Ward, Tokyo, on a site close to the Theological Faculty of Sophia University. It was dedicated by Very Reverend Father



Tokyo Sekimachi Seminary
Patrick HEALY (left) and Robert GILL (right)

Deschatelets on January 17, 1961. At its zenith, it housed 16 scholastics and young Fathers in language school. The vocation crisis brought on the "lean years", and the number of the community went down to three. It became impossible to maintain this building, so in 1972 the property was sold, and the community moved to a smaller residence in the adjoining Hoya City.

The first Superior was Patrick HEALY, subsequently followed by Josef HOFMANS and Raymond BOURGOIN.



Golden years of many seminarians From left to right:
Sc. Daniel DUFFY, Sc. John IWO, Fr. Jan van HOYDONCK,
Sc. Raymond BOURGOIN, Sc. Ronald LaFRAMBOISE,
Eastern USA Provincial Fr. William RYAN, Sc. William MAHER,
Sc. Richard BONANG, Post. Masayuki HAYASHI.



TOKYO / HOYA

The move to Hoya took place in April 1972.

At the time it was home to the scholastics who were going to the Theology Department of Sophia University in Shakuji, Tokyo. Part of their formation included involvement in the local parish, as well as running a little juku (private teaching) for English, Science and Mathematics. This was a carry over from the Sekimachi days.

One Oblate was in charge of the formation of those scholastics. Three scholastics went through in



Tokyo Hoya Mission House (formerly House of Studies)

this way.

The house also served as a base community to return to on weekends and holidays for those Oblates who studied the Japanese language in the Tokyo area (Roppongi/Kamakura) at that time, with daily lodging at their language school.

Besides the formation of the younger Oblates (which naturally included monthly meetings with formators of other religious societies) the men stationed there through the years have been involved in various ministries. These took the form of teaching regular courses at schools, as well as in extracurricular groups. The teaching included secular and religious subjects. Personal guidance in social and religious matters also occupied an important part of those involvements.

Although several candidates entered the novitiate and pronounced their first vows, it took from 1964 until 1993 before the next Japanese Oblate would be ordained a priest. On March 29, 1993 Leo Satoshi KAWAGUCHI received the holy priesthood in the church of Koga, from Bishop Joseph Hisajiro Matsunaga, the ordinary of the Fukuoka Diocese.

During that same period with hardly any growth in native Oblate members one Oblate Brother, Dominic Nobuhiko YAGI, pronounced his first vows in 1988, and his perpetual vows on August 4, 1991.

Both of them are products of our House of Studies in Nagoya which we will now consider.

NAGOYA

With the closing of the Oblate House of Studies in Tokyo there was no longer a place for future candidates. Initially this caused no difficulties, but when the "lean years" appeared to have come to an end, and new candidates presented themselves, and gradually from overseas also new Oblate missionaries were appointed to Japan, there was again a need for a center. Different possibilities were considered out of which the decision was made to start a foundation in the city of Nagoya.

The basis for this decision was that the Nanzan University of the S.V.D. Fathers provided the necessary facilities for the training of future priests, while for the new foreign missionaries there were language schools available for the study of Japanese.

Fr. Ronald LAFRAMBOISE was assigned as the Superior of the new Scholasticate and was installed by then Provincial Fr. Angelo SIANI, in the presence of the two first Scholastics-to-be, and the Superior of the Provincial House in Kochi, Fr. John Kenney MAHONEY. The ceremony was held in the chapel of the Provincial House in Kochi at 3 P.M., on September 8, 1985. At 4 P.M. of the same day the two future scholastics pronounced their first vows as Oblates in the parish church of Nakajimacho in Kochi, in the presence of many Fathers of the Vice-Province, of Fr. Desmond O'DONNELL, the Regional Superior of the Asia-Oceania Region and of the Provincials and Superiors of Delegations of the Asia-Oceania Region. The parents and relatives of the two Brothers, as well as many friends and parishioners from the two Kochi City parishes and the Akaoka parish attended the ceremony.

Although the decision was already made to have the seminarians take their courses at Nanzan University in Nagoya there was yet no place for them to stay in that city. The family of one of the parishioners of the church in Itami, Maria Kime Kubo, who had died in the Spring of 1985, generously offered the use of her house to the Oblates, free of rent. It was an old house but very comfortable. Fr. LaFramboise and the two Brothers moved into it on the evening of September 17, 1985.

The scholasticate community intended to live in that house until the following March. The Brothers would prepare for the entrance exam for Nanzan University. Meanwhile the search for a house in Nagoya continued. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had a small house on their property in Nagoya, which they had used to house their seminarians. Since they had no seminarians at the time they agreed to rent the house to the Oblates for a year or two.

On March 25, 1986 the two seminarians-to-be, together with an Oblate Brother, took the belongings of the scholasticate community from Itami to the new place in Nagoya. The next day they were joined by the Superior, Fr. LaFramboise, and at 5 P.M. they celebrated Mass in the chapel of the main house of the Sacred Heart Fathers. It was the first Mass of the



Oblate Scholasticate community in Nagoya.

Because the agreement with the Sacred Heart Fathers was only for two years the search for a house had to be continued. Shortly before Christmas 1986 a suitable and affordable place was found. After obtaining the necessary permissions from the Oblate Superiors in Rome and the local Superiors, Oblate and diocesan, a deal was concluded and the house became Oblate property on February 10, 1987.



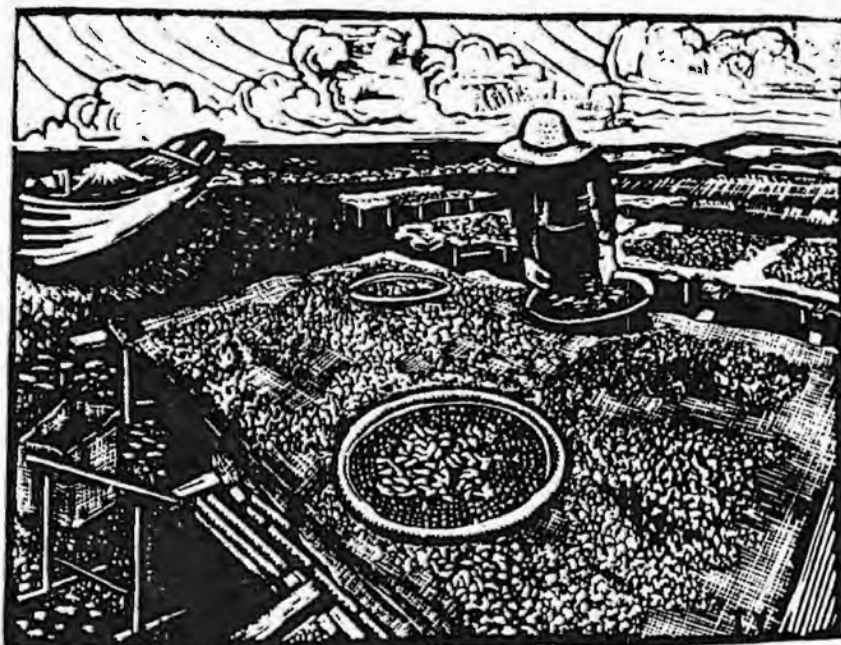
Nagoya House of Studies

The house located in a nice section of the city, has three stories. It is near the subway, only four stops from the Major Seminary.

For the time being the space of the house was sufficient for the number of inhabitants, but gradually there was an increase of personnel. Ray BOURGOIN followed Ron as superior of the seminary. Young Oblate priests from abroad who had been assigned to Japan, came to Nagoya to study the Japanese language. They and a growing number of Japanese candidates filled the house to capacity. Again thoughts turned to expansion. At the present location the whole property is taken up by the existing house. So far the search for a larger facility has not yet led to a satisfactory solution; so, the search goes on. ... The first product of the seminary in Nagoya Leo Satoshi KAWAGUCHI is its present Superior.



Presently 2 seminarians live in Nagoya
Ken-ichi FURUKAWA (left) and Akio HORIUCHI (right)



A NEW MISSION

KOREA

In the newsletter from Rome, Communications, that reports on the activities of the General Council of the Oblates, the first time the name 'Korea' was mentioned was in the issue of November 1988, where it was said that "for the time being it has been decided to limit our research to Korea". In the next issue of March 1989 it was announced that in January "Fr. Desmond O'Donnell has gone to Korea and has given a report of his findings, which has been well received by the General Council members. A decision will be made at the plenary session of the Council in May". And so we read in the June issue, of the same year of Communications: " 'The Oblate Cross Covers the World.' To keep this saying to be true we have accepted the invitation of His Excellency Angelo Nam Sou KIM, bishop of Suwon, to send Oblates into South-Korea. At least two Oblates will devote two years to the study of the language and the culture of the country before engaging in any pastoral ministry."



Mauro Concardi who took the plane for Seoul the same day. In a highly symbolic gesture, the parents of the two missionaries led the offertory procession."

The same newsletter, in its October issue of 1990, presents some excerpts of an article by Father Bordo, explaining why the Oblates sent missionaries to Korea. In further reports on the development of the mission we read in OMI Information of March 1992: "Three Oblates originally from Italy are now in Korea, a mission dependent on the Vice Province of Japan" The article went on describing the study and living situation of the missionaries, their search for more permanent living quarters, and their contacts with the clergy



Oblate House in Korea

Then, in the issue of July 1990 we find: "On the occasion of a liturgy during the Intercapitular Meeting (3-22 May) we celebrated the send-off to the missions of Fathers Vincenzo BORDO and Mauro CONCARDI. They made their departure the following day towards Korea." In the more general newsletter OMI Information of the same month, July 1990, the event is related somewhat more explicitly: "Father General and the members of the General Council have joined the communities of formation of the Italian Province, at Vermicino, on May 12, to celebrate the departure of Fathers Vincenzo Bordo and

and the population of Korea.

The personnel of the Oblate mission of Korea has grown to five priests, four from Italy and one from Sri Lanka (Jaffna Province). From an entry in Information we learn that "each one of us is engaged in a special apostolate: a restaurant for poor people, work with the immigrants, and with the handicapped The best is yet to come; we are dreaming of North Korea and of China. This can only come about if we deepen our roots in this society; the fruits will follow"

WHY KOREA?

The Oblates have the following rationale and goals in opening the mission of Korea.

A. Rationale

1. Such a mission will place Oblates in a strategic position in a region where the Church is growing and where society is still in transition from its traditional Confucian roots to a modern technological society.

2. In the Asian context, Korea was a bridge between the Buddhist cultures of China and Japan. The present experience of the Church in Korea can be a bridge for the possible Christian growth in other cultures of East Asia.

3. While the Korean Church is committed to social justice and is recognized as a religious community in the present Korean society, there is still a place for evangelization of the poor. The Oblate charism of our preference for the poor can be an added dimension for that local Church.

4. An Oblate experience in such a developing process of a culture moving from its traditional roots into a modern technological society will also benefit our experience in other parts of Asia as it faces similar shifts. Moreover, it would be expected that our experience in western cultures that have already experienced modernity will help enrich the dialogue into which the Korean Church must enter.

B. Goals

1. Every local Church is enriched to the extent that it shares in the variety of the religious charisms in the universal Church. Faithful to our traditions as verbalized in the Oblate Constitutions and Rules, i.e. Constitution 5 which says: "We are a missionary Congregation. Our principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light. ..." And Constitution 7 continues: "... We will spare no effort to awaken or to reawaken the faith in the people to whom we are sent, and we will help them discover 'who Christ is'. Our mission puts us on constant call to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church through various forms of witness and ministry, but especially through proclaiming the Word of God which finds its fulfillment in the celebration of the sacraments and in service to others. We have as our goal to establish Christian communities and Churches deeply rooted in the local culture and fully responsible for their own development and growth."

We will share this charism with the Korean Church as we focus on the evangelization of the poor as well as the call to evangelization in other parts of the world.

2. As a way of sharing that charism, we shall be open to receiving and even fostering vocations from among the local Church.

3. We will seek to participate in dialogue with the emerging culture as well as the cultures it can and will affect.



OTHER WORKS WITHIN AND WITHOUT MISSION PARISHES

These were part and parcel of the life of the Oblates in Japan over the last 50 years.

As you were able to surmise when you read the first part of this album, a number of our mission parishes had a kindergarten attached to them. In fact, many times, the kindergarten hall served as the place for gathering the Christians for Sunday services, till needed finances were available to construct a church building. There were a number of reasons for doing this kindergarten apostolate. During the war most educational institutions in Japan had been destroyed and needed to be rebuilt.

One way the Church in Japan could contribute to society was by having kindergartens attached to the mission parishes. The main criteria for this apostolate were that there was a felt need within society, that it was a means of contact with the Japanese people through their children, that it was helping in the formation of young minds and that it helped to finance the mission since the principal was often also the pastor. Some have made this their life's work.

Though this network of kindergartens began with the founding fathers, many have been involved in this apostolate, especially those who have been stationed at one time or other in the mission parishes of Koga, Itami, Naruto, Anan, Nakajimacho and Aki. A number of methods have been used throughout the years but Fr. Len INUI has introduced the Montessori Educational Method with great success. Some of our smaller places harbor second thoughts, however.

Eventually, because of the necessity of keeping the kindergartens repaired and the costs were prohibitive, the network of kindergartens was made into one School Corporation (as opposed to being part of the OMI Religious Corporation). This way we were able to get subsidies from the government which by now had come to grips with the economy.

Very early on also, we were involved in English teaching. Japan needed this in order to help them with international relationships. Many taught in local Universities or Colleges. Some were involved in High School or Middle Schools. As it was true for the kindergartens there was a felt need, it was a means to be in contact with the teachers as well as the students and it was a source of support for the mission. Some of us considered this a pastoral involvement even if it were not strictly sacramental.

Among various programs we had in this domain, were the Suginoki Kai (Cedar Tree Society) and the Wakaki Kai (Sapling Society). Fr. Dave BARTON, in order to reach out to the youth, had come up with a plan to teach pronunciation (phonetics), western thought in order to understand western literature, and just plain having fun with the students by playing basketball, volleyball, badminton, ping pong together and participating in folk dancing. Although he started it in Fukuoka City, it reached its peak



David BARTON
(founder of Suginokikai)

when he was stationed at Enokuchi (formerly called Shinhonmachi) Parish in Kochi.

The Suginoki Kai, on Sunday, was for high school students and Wakaki Kai, on Saturday, for middle school students. The High School students came from 12 different High Schools in the city. At the beginning of a school year upwards of 400 high school students would be present at these courses. The greater majority who continued came especially for the third part, as they could mix with students of other schools. Christmas parties, hiking, camping were all part of the program and they loved it.

We also put out a very successful English newspaper 7 times a year, called "The New Generation" written by the students themselves and used by many teachers as side reading or even as a basic text to teach English.

Among those who took part in this program were Lei SIMONS, John BARRETT, Tom REILLY, Ray BOURGOIN, David ULLRICH and Xave TOSA.

In 1968, in Kochi, the prefectural authorities decided to have one of its High Schools offer English as a major. The students would carry double the classes of English than their peers. Ray BOURGOIN was asked to be the first foreign teacher in this program. At the end of three months he was transferred to the Seminary in Tokyo, so John BARRETT took over for 2 years after which Tom MAHER took over and carried on till a few years ago.

In 1967, Fr. Tom REILLY conceived the idea of starting a school for working adults by using the kindergarten facilities in Kochi City. He had the prefectural authorities accept the school (Seibo Gakuen) as an accredited institution so that those who studied there could carry over the credits to other institutions.

The Oblates discussed the project with him and decided that it should be a Kochi Prefecture-wide project whereby all OMI in the Prefecture would contribute at least 1 hour a week to the school.

It was launched in April (the beginning of the school year in Japan) 1968. We offered a variety of courses: Languages (English, French, Spanish and Chinese), Art (oil painting, sculpture), Music, Social Dancing, Psychology and Cooking among others. Of course, not only OMI were on the staff, but we hired other teachers also including the Xaverian sisters who used their cooking facilities in the nearby convent. Some of the OMI involved with the project at its beginnings, besides Tom REILLY, were Dave BARTON, John BARRETT, Ed WILLIAMS, Xave TOSA, Ray BOURGOIN, Tom MAHER, Lei

SIMONS, Gerard STEVENS. Not long after, Ron LaFRAMBOISE joined the band.

Again, we were fulfilling a need in society for this type of facility. As time went by, because schools that offered similar courses sprouted up in the city, the need dwindled and because of lack of manpower we had to close its doors in the year 1980.

Looking back it was a common project which gave us contacts which last till this day and was a service to society at large.

Other involvements through the years led some members to join Rotary or Lions clubs which are on a different dimension, but were sources of contact and places where they could cooperate with society for the benefit of a goodly number of people.

This brings us up to other Social Involvements. As you can read in other articles in this album, Lei SIMONS began a Volunteer Bureau, a Dial a Heart phone service where people with problems can call in for help. He also established a halfway house for battered women in the old nursery at the Akaoka Mission called Aonami no Ie (Blue Wave Home - it is close to the sea).

Jerry NOVOTNY, besides teaching at the University of Kochi, has launched a Pro Life Movement as you can read elsewhere in this album. One of his joys is that he has some of the Bishops writing an occasional article for his Newsletter which he puts out monthly.



Thomas REILLY (left)
(founder of Seiho Gakuen)
Eugene PRENDIVILLE (right)

Jack DEELY has been involved in the Deaf Apostolate for a number of years now. He was the first nationwide to have Masses in sign language, hold retreats for the deaf and attend to their pastoral care. Teaching at the Catholic University in Tokyo, called Sophia University, he devotes the rest of his time with the deaf who are especially abandoned in this society. We have included an article he wrote on the topic in another part of this album.

One of his great joys came about when Junshin Women's College, where he also teaches, decided to be the first school in Japan to have Sign Language as an accredited course. Also, Sophia University has decided to incorporate American Sign Language on its curriculum.

Tom MAHER is involved with AA and drug dependent people. He also does wonderful prison work for which he received a special award from the prime minister.

A good number of years ago, because things were booming economically in this part of Asia, many migrant workers came here, either with or without visas, in order to make a living at higher wages. Many are from the Philippines, but you also encounter Irani, Thai, Korean, Chinese, Peruvians, Brazilians and a goodly number from African nations. There is a great number of workers, but society treats most of them like they owned them. They are happy to see them work on projects they find too difficult or dirty to do themselves, but when the project is finished they look down on them.

For this reason, some OMI have been involved with migrant workers at different levels of involvement. Wency LAGUIDAO was asked by the Philippine and Japanese Hierarchies to be the Chaplain of especially the Filipinos. This is a full-time work as you can read in his contribution to the album. Giovanni ZEVOLA is similarly involved in the Korean Mission. Gerard STEVENS was very helpful to the Filipina brides of Japanese farmers. Most of our larger missions offer English Mass for these workers and other foreigners in Japan and Korea.

Through the years a number of OMI have been involved with Orphanages and Reform Schools. This goes back to the early days of Hakuaien with Lei SIMONS especially, but a number of OMI contributed in some way. Br. Nobuhiko YAGI still spends 3 evenings a week there. Ray BOURGOIN also assisted at an orphanage in Tokyo for 6 years. Most of the children in these orphanages are not really orphaned. They are placed there because of family problems, divorce, parents on drugs or even in prison for criminal offenses. Only 10% or so are parent-less. Xave TOSA for many years now has been on the staff of Kibogaoka (Hill of Hope) reform school for so-called delinquents.



Pro Life Newsletter

MEMORIES OF SUGINOKIKAI

At the occasion of the 1964 Olympics there was a big English Conversation boom in Japan. At that time I was in High School. Every Saturday, at the Shinhonmachi (Enokuchi) Parish there was a program for English pronunciation and conversation, known as Suginokikai (Cedar Tree Association), which I attended faithfully. It was a basic course in conversation with stress on pronunciation and intonation and though very tough it was taught to us in a very detailed fashion. Not only was there English but also a course called The Mind of the West which was taught by a professor at Kochi University. He had a lot of humor and we got to understand English better because of the underlying thought patterns being explained. These things are not taught in our regular high school courses so they were very beneficial.

After the classes the boys would play basketball with the priests and we girls would chew the rag. Saturdays were always interesting because we got to know students from other High Schools in the city. Periodically we would also put out an English Newspaper, practice English through songs and we also used the Otemae High School Hall in Kochi for speech contests.

Just a few days ago, my friend who had brought me to the Suginokikai, came to visit me from far away. We had been good rivals during school days, as well as giving each other important advice. We have kept in contact these 30 some odd years. That day we talked

Parishioner, Nakajimacho Mission Teruyo SHARMA

and talked till sundown about our adolescent years and the memories of the Suginokikai days.

Right now I am earning a living teaching English. I've got 4 children to feed and clothe and I am always grateful to the Suginokikai. Then of course, beyond that for my life as a whole I am even more thankful because this contact led me to the Christian faith and I was baptised by an Oblate.

For me all this seems like yesterday, but I'm reminded of the truth when I see Fr Tosa's white hair



THE NEW GENERATION

Youth, the Hope of the World

Vol. 4, Number 5 JUNE, JULY 1967 Price 15 yen

KOCHI GIRL SCORES IN ALL = JAPAN SPEECH CONTEST =

SUMMER VACATION IN KOCHI

It won't be long before we put away the books and begin the summer vacation. Even now the faces of students all over Kochi are bright with the thought of it. Summer vacation, which is usually one or a half month here in Japan, provides us students with time to do many things that we ordinarily can't do during the school term. That's why every student is making up a plan for those precious weeks ahead.

Some students plan to go on a trip to Tokyo. I know one student who is going to Hawaii. All last friends are joining. Other students want to study for college entrance exams. Those who live near me are going to go in a temple in Tosa Yemada for about three weeks and study eight hours straight each day. Members of the Sun no Ki Kai are planning a few days of camping. Like Monsters they are going to Otagakubo. A friend of mine is thinking of going far up into the mountains to the home of one of her relatives. "There is a nice river there," she said, "and I want to learn how to swim. It is embarrassing not to be able to swim. My uncle promises me that in one week I will learn how. I think it is really important to learn." She is right. What if she were on a boat and it started to sink. The ability to swim would certainly come in handy.

Kochi is getting popular as a vacation spot. With the road from Takamatsu almost completed, there will be many cars in Kochi with number plates from other prefectures. "This year," said a boy in my class, "I can't go anywhere. There are about fifteen of my relatives coming to Kochi, and I will have to entertain them."

On Sunday, June 25, at the All Japan High School English Speech Contest held at Matsuyama Joshi-Tsuki Daigaku in Mie Prefecture, a girl from Kochi won second prize. Perhaps this is the first time that a student from Kochi has won a prize in a national speech contest. The girl's name is Tomoko Takano, a second-year student at Kochi High School.

The contest was run by the Mainichi Newspaper and lasted from ten in the morning till three in the afternoon. The competition was keen. There were twenty-one contestants from all over Japan, even from Okinawa. Students from the Kansai area were especially good. Each speech was well written and well delivered. The judges had a difficult time deciding the winners.

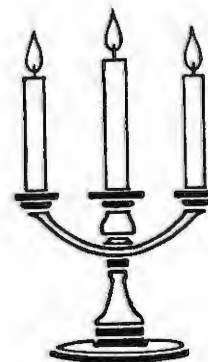
However, according to the judges, there were two students whose pronunciation and



Suginokikai Newspaper

and Fr Bourgoin's baldness.

Congratulations on your 50th. I was born the same year the OMI came to Japan.



DEAF APOSTOLATE

John Kevin DEELY



As many of you probably know, Sign Language is a well structured language. It is a language that grew up naturally in the concrete day to day life of the deaf. Human joy and sadness is communicated to the other person in a frank way with no frills. Sign language is a sine qua non way of communication if we are to live a cheerful life in a secure manner.

Since I am a priest I want to speak to you about what I feel in my relationship with the Christian deaf. Even in the Church, hearing people have little understanding of what it means to be deaf. For example, when you sit next to a deaf person in church there is no way that you will know from the exterior that that person is deaf. For this reason we are apt to think that deafness is really nothing. Our whole society is built with hearing people in mind. TV, radio and even telephones. For this reason communication with others is very difficult for the deaf. For getting around deaf people have less difficulty than the blind. For the blind there is a wall between people and objects, however for the deaf there is a wall between people. From the point of view of personality formation this wall between persons is a greater handicap.

As to church faith life, this is no exception. Even if deaf people attend Mass, there is no way for them to understand the bible readings, the sermons, the content of Mass, the prayers, the chants. For that reason the feeling of being alone and disregarded is strong and it is impossible to feed and maintain one's faith and is the occasion of falling away from the Church. The only hope for the deaf Christians is to have Masses in sign language or at least in translation into sign language all over the country.

From my experience I would have to say that because of the misunderstanding of the deaf person's situation, the hearing people of "good will" have done more to harm the deaf for a long time. The deaf

had no representative to act on their behalf for their own education, at their workplace or in the political arena and therefore were not in leadership positions. Such a situation grew both from the hearing persons having power to impose their will which was based on ignorance and the deaf themselves feeling powerless. Many deaf reject the Church. That's because church representatives discriminated against the deaf in the same way as did teachers and those from the healing profession. Religion also became a sphere where the deaf weren't allowed to be deaf but had to act like hearing persons. In a church, where the liturgy demanded music, countless words and put weight on archaic expressions, the deaf had to adapt to the hearing people in their kind of worship. And even when these are translated to the deaf many things remain foreign to them. Till

now it is impossible to say that these have helped the deaf community to know God and Jesus in a better way. Of course there are exceptions, but these exceptions are few and far between. The Church sees the deaf as it does physically handicapped people, and because they lack verbal expression it sees them as weak intellectually and morally, and since they can't study properly it sees them as spiritually handicapped as well. Because of this fixed idea the Church has never accepted the deaf as equal members of the body of Christ. The Church did not see the deaf as being able to contribute to the life of the Church worldwide in its theological and cultural dimensions.

We believe that the message of Jesus is a message of liberation. We also believe that this is not necessarily a liberation from deafness, but a liberation from all forms of discrimination that cut us off from free communication, healthy relationships between human beings, a spirit of self-respect, permanent understanding towards cultures and languages, a meaningful education and all other basic human necessities.

We believe that the Gospel cannot be only for the hearing person, with a hearing person's own way of understanding the scriptures, a hearing person's interpretation, a hearing person's own way of communicating them. The deaf have the right to have the gospel in their own language, to know the gospel in a proper way which is theirs. We believe that Sign Language is a real language. We believe that Sign Language is a powerful instrument for communicating the gospel. We believe that God gave the deaf a unique insight and grace. As long as they are discriminated against their special grace is not sufficiently known to other Christians and the body of Christ will not reach its perfection. We believe that God calls us to perfection.

JUSTICE AND PEACE

For a number of years now, ever since the winds in the church and the congregation emphasized the fact that Justice and Peace were part and parcel of evangelization, we have had one man especially designated to keep us abreast of justice and peace issues.

Xave TOSA has given a lot of time to this apostolate. How much has rubbed off onto the rest of us history will tell.

After attending a congress on the theme: Oblate Formation toward a Theology and Spirituality of Justice, Peace and Human Development Xave offered the following reflections.

There were many things reported at the congress. For my part I spoke about the minorities in Japan: the rights of North and South Korean residents, daily workers etc.

Afterwards in our Communique we stated: "Though we were from various realities in Asia we were able to detect a common vision. We felt the need for walking arm in arm within the Asian Region. In Asia, more and more we are finding new pockets of poverty, more military regimes, more racial conflicts, a fast paced modernization, religious conflicts and secularization.

These all appear in some form or other in the various countries represented and in some way we must respond to them. We are very interested in Justice, Peace and Human Development issues.

Jesus Christ showed us the way with his words and actions, his whole life style. Jesus worked for and with people especially the poor. He showed us where our societies accepted inhuman conditions as a matter of course. How will we respond to the poverty in the Asian Region. We can only learn from Jesus Christ himself.

For an Oblate to live the vow of poverty should mean

1. to be conscious of our solidarity with the poor
2. to take part in the reality of the difficult lives the people must live
3. to accept the wisdom and strength that each one in the community offers

As Oblates we should cooperate with other people, do as Jesus did and face the unjust situations in society where people are still under oppression. In

order to create this revolution we must analyze society in all its dimensions. Some may even be brought to using political measures in order to bring this about. It is a very difficult task with many risks involved but we stand in solidarity with those who are called to do so.

For God's kingdom to come it is necessary to have 'metanoia', a conversion which could bring about a 180 degree turn in our lives. Metanoia is not just an internal thing. It will bring about a whole new lifestyle, a revolution in our way of living. It will be a lifestyle in solidarity with the poor.

We came to these conclusions. There will be difficulties and it will be painful. But we have a model and therefore hope and that is in Jesus Christ himself."

I have been thinking. Can I come up with a concrete proposal for solidarity of action with our Asian brethren?

Rather than action of individuals or of Oblates interested in the Asian reality, could it be possible that the Japanese Province as one community helped Asia in their justice and peace evangelization? Japan is rich. The OMI in Japan are only poor in personnel. We live on a different scale from that of the other Oblates in Asia. Since we are a part of this economical superpower, we share in the guilt and responsibility towards the poorer countries in Asia. Justice and Peace evangelization and total human development is our concern. When I speak of the Oblates in Japan, I include also the people entrusted to us (parishes, kindergartens etc.). I'm thinking of an organized action like the MAMI. But not an action to benefit the Japanese Province (which is also necessary), but an action 'ad extra'. This action should not be 'we' doing it 'our' way,

but making it possible for them to engage in human development the way they think it should be done. We must avoid the superiority complex where we are above and they are below. It must be on equal terms but in their way.

Of course, this proposal must be discussed and discerned among us and among the superiors of other Asian countries. Anybody with concrete proposals?



HEAD OF THE VOLUNTEER BUREAU : FR. SIMONS

Volunteer Bureau Workers
Muneshige TSURUMI and Kazuko MIYAZAKI

We would like to introduce the Head of our Bureau from up close.

He was born close to the place of birth of St Thomas a Kempis in Flanders Belgium in 1925. He has been in Japan for 43 years. Most of his pastoral life has been in Kochi Prefecture but he did spend some time in Awa-Ikeda and Fukuoka. At present he is the Pastor of Akaoka Parish.

Back when the word "Volunteer" was quite unknown to Kochi-ites, in 1975, Fr. Simons opened the Volunteer Bureau in the Nakajimacho Parish. Later in 1980, with the blessing of Bishop Fukahori he was able to build an office on the property of the Enokuchi Parish.

The first Parent Training Program (P.E.T.) was introduced in Japan by Fr. Simons. He has led 50 groups through the program until now and has about



Volunteer Bureau

480 people who participated. He also has periodical gatherings of these "graduates".

Again in 1986 he opened a telephone counseling service for people who have problems called "Dial a Heart". At present he has over 35 people whom he has trained in the art of telephone counseling, who take turns sitting by the phone. He also has a monthly follow-up training course for them. When he started this program there was nothing comparable in Kochi. The "Life Line" is now setting up down here so they are joining forces using the original facilities. In a society which is becoming more complicated, where many people suffer under the weight of various problems they are happy to have a place where they can call and be listened to by people who care. There are many people who want to remain anonymous and speak to someone feeling at ease when they call. Fr. Simons knew he would have to face many problems in opening this service up but as he says: "In a generation with so many problems

the telephone is a marvelous way to help our neighbors and share with them the hope and will to live." This has been the leading force in the founding of this program. The basic principle behind it all is that each individual is unique and priceless. We see in Fr. Simons this fundamental outlook in all he does. He insists on that with all the people who have anything to do with the phone service.

Besides this he has other important programs like training young people to help people on wheelchairs, counseling programs for people who need it, aid programs to help dig wells abroad and send medical help to foreign countries.

He started a home for battered women in Akaoka where he has helped women from Hokkaido, the Kinki Region and Fukuoka. 3 children have been born there.

He gives full cooperation to the AA, NA, AC and DARC movements. He is also the vice-president of the Volunteer Associations of Kochi.



Leonard SIMONS
(founder of Volunteer Bureau)



HAKUAIEN

Nobuhiko YAGI



In the summer of 1976, at age 16, I was invited to participate in the Work Camp to be held at Hakuaien* having no idea what the place was like. At the time the head of this orphanage was Toshi TAKEDA and Fr. Leonard Simons used to go over and be with the children.

The camp lasted one week. During that time I was able to be with these children who didn't seem to have a care in the world and always went around wearing a smile. This made it easier for me to become part of their lives. And also I realized that I had been taking for granted family life. At the same time however behind the smiling faces of the children I could see hearts that had been scarred by the various situations they found themselves in the family. Abandoned by their parents, thrown aside by their families, given the impression that it might be better for them not to have been born, they were living on carrying this negative feeling with them. Of course they would hide from the other children at school that they were from the orphanage. They always feared for the day that their friends would find out. In this situation I began to ponder their fate.

It was at that time that I learned from Ms. Takeda and Fr. Simons that these children's lives had value no matter what their background was, that they were all precious individuals and that we had to let them know this. Since then 20 years have gone by. Through a happy chance I now go to the orphanage three nights a week and am able to be with the children. I'm often asked what I am doing at the orphanage. "I'm simply someone to talk to, a listening ear" is my usual reply. This may be nothing glamorous but I believe "listening" is so important in order to let the person in front of you realize he/she is greatly valued.

Times may change, values in society may change but what is timeless is that we are very important and precious individuals wanted by God. If we can pass this awareness to the children at Hakuaien we will have done a lot for them. This is what God has called me to and I humbly feel that it is a vital role for an Oblate Brother.

*Hakuaien is an orphanage which takes in children who come from various family problematical situations



Nobuhiko YAGI and Orphanage children



OBLATE SUMMER VOCATION CAMP

We asked Brother Nobuhiko YAGI to give us a thumbnail description of the Summer Vocation Camps held annually. The following is his reply.

“After many years of non-existence the Summer Camp was revived in 1985 at the Nakajimacho Parish with 6 participants. Through the years it grew little by little, so that last year, 1997, there were 35 participants. As for myself, I have been able to participate in all of them since except for the 1986 one in Koga. From 1988 I have been in charge of organizing the camp so that I had to think about its structure and aim many times.

At the 1991 camp I took my perpetual vows as a brother so that it gave us the opportunity of reflecting on vocation together. I became aware that till now the camp was being held for middle and high school students only, who are more apt to drift away from the Church because of other activities. Also we felt the need to make connections with younger people and therefore we decided to change the age limit of the participants to the 5th and 6th graders as well as middle school students as our primary target. This we did starting from 1992.

From the beginning we would hold the camp where nature abounded and we could play sports, sight see, recreate etc. and through these we would have a chance to mix with the kids. Within this schedule would come talks from the seminarians, visits to churches where Oblates ministered with another talk by the priest there. This was the general pattern. However many kids slept through the talks or showed that they were bored as they were passive in this whole process. Plus the fact that we started to wonder if we were really leaving them the message of the Founder who had such a great spirit.

At that point we decided to use what they like most, games and quizzes worked around the Oblates and the Founder and had them solve puzzles by themselves in groups. This way they would learn naturally.

With this new pattern it would be impossible for the few seminarians alone to run the program so, as leaders of the various groups, we enlisted the help of high schoolers, university students and young men already in society. In order that they could better function in their relationship with the kids we would train them for this. With this set-up, even if the target group was 5th and 6th graders and middle school students, it became possible for greater participation by others on a different level. I believe we started this pattern in 1993. From that time on, with a wider participation, relationships between the various age groups grew and a wonderful atmosphere of brotherly love evolved.

This year, 1998, the summer camp is 14 years old. Since 2 years ago the organizing of the camp was more and more shouldered by the seminarians. This year it is totally their responsibility. I am a product of the earlier summer camps when it was held more or less for the altar boys. One of the present seminarians is also a product of the summer camp program. With this we hope that the summer camp will continue producing leaders and seminarians.

From hence forward we hope to have frank and honest young men, young people who can be themselves, who come to realize that they have received a uniqueness from God and are cherished and loved. That's the type of camp we want to keep having. Please pray for us.



1998 Summer Camp participants

COOPERATORS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

We could not cover 50 years of OMI involvement in Japan without referring to the immense help we've had from the laity in various forms. We've had very helpful and able Catechists who served for many years: first of all there was Joseph Sueho TSUDA, who later became an Oblate, others included such men and women as Kazuo NAKATOME, Sachiko MIZUNO, Susumu HAYAKAWA, Akihiko KIDO, Masaharu NARUI, Takayoshi KONDO, Shojiro TSUNODA, Jun-ichi KANZAKI, Ken SASAKI and Hiroshi NISHIKAWA. We also had many faithful cooks and housekeepers, too many to name individually here for fear of leaving someone out. There are also numerous teachers that worked with us in the kindergartens.

Over the years we had a good number of sisters who assisted us either in the pastoral field or in our kindergartens. We thank them all. At present the St. Joseph Sisters of Osaka are helping us in Tokushima Prefecture. They were founded the year the Oblates

came to Japan. The Ottawa Sisters of Charity, also known as Grey Nuns, who celebrated the 150th year of their foundation two years ago, help us in Kochi Prefecture. They have a history of working with the Oblates from their foundation, especially in Canada.

We always have had good cooperation from the parishioners of our parishes and from many other people who got involved with our non-parochial works. Almost every Oblate can attest to that on an individual or collective basis.

We also have had through the years a MAMI group which you can read about elsewhere in this album.

In this variety of forms there has been and is an interplay between Oblates and laity. Besides the teaching of the Church we try to inform them about things Oblate, Oblate spirituality and charism, offering them a chance to participate in these; the laity, on the other hand, help to evangelize the OMI to the reality of laity and its demands.

THE OBLATES AND MAMI

Leo Satoshi Kawaguchi, MAMI Director

What is MAMI? It is an acronym composed of the first letters of "Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate". MAMI is a group of lay people who fulfill part of their vocation by supporting and cooperating with the Oblates in the work of evangelization throughout the world. MAMI in Japan has walked with the Oblates throughout the 50 years. This is because there have been lay people supporting the Oblates from the time of their arrival in Japan. However the association was not formally launched here till later. Once launched it has functioned under the name of "Third Order". At some point in time it ceased functioning as a society although the members never ceased to support us with their prayers and sacrifices.

In the spring of 1988, with a membership of 150 people, MAMI was restored to its prime position. Before my eyes I have the first issue of the MAMI

newsletter dated November 1988. In that issue Fr. Ron LaFramboise, as the director, has a lead article where he expresses his greetings of joy on the first page. There is also the self introductory messages of the 4 brothers at the seminary at the time. News of the handing over of the parish in Fukuoka to the diocesan authorities is also mentioned. Joseph Gerard who labored so long in South Africa was proclaimed Blessed that year. And also that was the 40th year of Oblate presence in Japan. From this you can deduce that the re-launching of MAMI in Japan was exactly 10 years ago. To this day, including myself MAMI has been a big support to our seminary. Thank you very much MAMI members. We would also pray for the MAMI members who have passed away. We ask that you continue your support and cooperation for at least the next 50 years.