

Far East Star

Japan Korea Newsletter

September 2012 No. 1

Homeless in Japan



I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

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Korean Bro Ordained Deacon
PEDRO HONG, OMI



Fr. Mike Yamazaki, OMI celebrated his 50th anniversary as a priest with friends at Itami Catholic Church, Osaka.

Working with Japanese Homeless.
Feature Story on Page 4

Fr. Bradly Rozairo, Japan



Many thanks to our contributors for a great issue. Please note that the deadline for March issue will be at the end of January 2013. Please forward all articles and jpg format photos via email to team. Check our OMI Japan/Korea website for email addresses at <http://omijapankorea.net/>

Japan Korea Website

<http://omijapankorea.net>

Mission Vision: Our Vision places strong emphasis on the following: (1) a strong witnessing presence, (2) listening to the heart and pulse of society, and (3) seeking out especially the marginalized: The Migrants, The Youth, Social Problems and Advocacy.

From the Delegation Superior's Desk by Wency Laguidao



Dear Brother Oblates and Friends,

Summer is here and since the great tsunami of 2011 that caused the meltdown of the atomic reactor in Fukushima, life has been different for us in Japan. The effects of the closure of many atomic reactors will be felt significantly for the first time this summer. Rotating brownouts have been implemented since the beginning of July and everyone is being reminded of the fact that we do not have an unlimited source of energy. Perhaps, this is the challenge of the “integrity of creation” that we Oblates are being called to proclaim and protect.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and see you all at the retreat.

From the Mission Superior's Desk by Maurizio Giorgianni



Greetings from Korea

Actually I don't know what to say but I just want to share with you my heart of this period. Since I was appointed superior here in Korea, life has not been easy, Just the fact of being superior, many responsibilities and consequently many expectations and also blaming come to me. Sometimes it is personal relationship that become difficult other times are the difficulties and the problems of the mission that becomes heavy.

In all of this the only “lights” that guides me are two.
The first is that the mission is not mine or ours. It is God's mission and we are only administrators. What we need is stay in the place that God or the superiors) gave us with a strong faith and hope.

The second is that any cross, defeat, problem that comes in my life is an invitation from God to convert, to purify myself and to become closer to “that project that God” has on me and on us as community and mission.

These are “lights” that do not always shine, but these “lights” never extinguish and keep me praying for more faith and more hope. We are not in best moment of our mission, but in the eyes of God, he is probably preparing us and purify us to be worthy of his gifts to us.

This year we will have an ordination and perpetual vows and we have to be ready to receive those gifts. A prayer for all of you and I ask your prayers for all of us.

Caring is Involvement

Bradly Rozairo

When I was studying the Japanese language in Nagoya, I used to read the magazine “Hiragana Times” that helps students learn Japanese. Once I was asked to choose an article from the magazine and give a summary of it in my own words. As I was going through Hiragana Times, one particular title caught my attention. It was on the Homeless in Japan.

Coming from Sri Lanka, a poor country, I imaged Japan quiet differently. Since Japan is rich materially, I thought no one would be poor! When I read the article on homeless, for the first time I got to know about the poor in Japan. Although I could not do anything for them at that time, what I read 16 years ago stayed with me. After a couple of years of language studies, I was assigned to Itami and had the opportunity to learn more about the homeless.

Homeless in Japan

Homelessness was largely unknown in Japan until the economic bubble burst in the early 1990s and unemployment began to rise. This brought many people to the streets. Today men over 30, both single and married have become non-owners of property. During the day they are not seen very much, but late in the evening they gather in parks, subways and street corners. Now a days Internet and Manga cafes have also become homes to the homeless. The term ‘Net Café Refugees’ refers to a growing class of homeless people in Japan. Some small Internet cafes charge 1,500 or 2,500 yen per night. They also provide food, drink and shower facilities.

A 2009 government report states that there are about 15,800 people lived on the streets in Japan, but aid groups said the figure is much higher, with at least 10,000 in Tokyo alone. Those numbers do not count the city’s “hidden” homeless, like those who live in capsule hotels. There is also a floating population that sleeps overnight in the country’s many 24-hour Internet cafes and saunas. Many think that the true number of homeless is between 25,000 and 50,000.

Reasons for homelessness

Surveys indicate 8 reasons:

1. Lack of employment (27 percent), 2. Lay offs due to restructuring (13 percent),
3. Lay offs due to age (10 percent), 4. Job loss due to injury (7 percent),
5. Failure in changing jobs (9 percent), 6. Personal problems (7 percent),
7. Job loss due to employer’s bankruptcy (5 percent), 8. Other reason (22 percent).

Problems of Homeless

In Osaka there are 3 shelters in a park but they are over crowded. In these shelters homeless people are given one meal per day, and they are allowed to live there for 3 – 6 months. Within this period of time they have to find a job. Once they go into a shelter or support center, the government evicts them from their tents. If after 6 months they can not find a job, they have to leave the shelter and become homeless again. But they have no home to go back to because they loose their tents. The biggest problem that homeless people face is unemployment. They want to work, but getting new jobs is so difficult.



Another problem that homeless people face is getting through the cold winters. Many die in the cold weather due to bad health. During the rainy season some homeless people living along rivers are vulnerable to floods and typhoons. A few years back in a typhoon, a number of them had to be rescued. Although many have families they could live with, they choose not to do so out of shame.



During cherry blossom season some homeless are forced to pack up their tent homes and move from parks. In Kobe every year before Christmas there is the 'Festival of Lights', which runs for 10 – 12 days. Too much light and the crowds of people force the homeless to leave their

usual resting places.

Homeless people have become a target of youth. Recently some teenagers were arrested on charges of attempted murder after they set fire to a man who was sleeping in a park. The man suffered serious burns and was hospitalized. The boys described their action as “sweeping away rubbish.”

Catholic Social Action Center

Homeless people are never accepted by the society. Due to endless bureaucratic obstacles it is hard for those on the streets to obtain benefits. So they rely on NPOs and faith based volunteer groups for help and support.

The archdiocese of Osaka has built a center known as Catholic Social Action Center (CSAC) next to Kobe Catholic church. The Center gives food to the homeless (three times a week) in a park and also materials like clothes, blankets etc. It also provides them medical treatment, haircuts, showers and laundry facilities. Every Wednesday, late in the evening, some groups of volunteers visit the homeless. During this time they distribute hot soup, rice balls and some portable body warmers. CSAC does not only take care of the homeless but also helps foreigners, physically & mentally handicapped people and other groups like AA, NA are also welcomed.



Conclusion

For the outside world, homeless people may look like lazy people, but they are not. In their little tents they may have electricity, refrigerators and modern conveniences, but in the depth of their hearts they have a story to tell. But they find it not only difficult to share them but also ashamed to do so. They experience pain, loneliness and fear. Japanese society and government try to satisfy them by providing support centers, but more is necessary. They need recognition, acceptance and someone to listen to them. It is my dream they find this in faith based volunteer groups that actively work to better their lives.

Where do I go from here?

Tom Maher

This year it has been 60 years since I made my first vows. I would like to join my classmates at the Shrine of our Lady of the Snows in Belleville in September, but my knees say, “don’t push it”. I’ll see how things go. In May I turned 81 years young.

During this time I have been a prison chaplain for more than 30 years. The Emperor gave me, along with many others 2 certificates in appreciation, “Ransho and Zuihosho”, which even Japanese find hard to explain. This was inside the palace, which is seldom open to the public. I asked if my sister Pat could attend the ceremony with me, but they said no “just wives or husbands only.

I taught English part time in 2 high schools, one for 16 years, and the other for 23 years. I used an excellent text book written by Fr. Griffin, a Columban priest who used it for teaching religion. The course was divided into 3 parts. Part 1, the great adventure of knowing and accepting yourself and others. Part 2, meeting a fantastic person “Jesus Christ” in the New Testament. And Part 3, an awareness of God’s Love for us through the sacraments and the church. I myself learned a lot as those who attended.

I must also tell you about a wonderful gift I was given by God, the illness of alcoholism. God never gives a cross to us without some solution in mind, and this solution most often comes from others who have the same illness and solution, which in this case is Alcoholics Anonymous.

Nevertheless with age came other gifts, which other people like to tagged me with. Many people say that I am forgetful but when they tag you with dementia - that’s going too far. This has happened to me. So I asked my doctor to confirm my sanity. He did this by writing a letter stating I am physically, mentally and spiritually in good health. He also included that I could drive. I wish to include a short history of the recent experience I had in renewing my driving license.

At the Nakamura driving school we were taught things senior citizens should be aware of. It also included a driving test with the instructor and an eye examination. At the police station we were given another eye test before we could get the license. This permits me to drive for 3 years. Two others in the group applied for their driving license, for the second time since they turned 80.

The title of this article is “Where do I go from here”. A recent letter from a Jesuit Fr. John Powell who teaches at Loyola University in Chicago writes about a student who was in his Theology of faith class. I will try to make it brief. This student later came down with terminal cancer, and he had a spiritual experience.

He came to visit Fr. Powell and father asked him “would you like to talk about your change of values since you developed cancer”. “ Sure, what would you like to know”. “What’s it like to be only 24 and dying” father asked. Tommy replied, “Well, it could be worse”. “Like what?” father asked him. “Well, like being 50 and having no values or ideals, like being 50 and thinking that booze, seducing women, and making money were the real biggies in life”.

So I asked myself, where am I going?



Sabbatical experience

Jude Peirisulle, OMI

After finishing my one year Sabbatical experience, I came back to Japan —“Home sweet home” on 21st July.

My sabbatical year was divided into 2 parts. 1st it was to learn Spanish in Bolivia. I followed a 5 month course in a school run by the Maryknoll fathers. The school gives opportunities to learn Spanish and culture to those who want to work as missionaries in the Latin American countries. Lately they also welcome others, like me who want to be involved in the work of Spanish speaking people.

I started my 1st phase last year in July, and it went on till December. Besides learning the language, I had a home stay program, which helped me pick up the language faster. The family I stayed with had 4 members - husband, wife and 2 kids. Every Sunday with the other siblings they gather with the main family for dinner. This was an occasion for me to get to know the extended family and make friends with them. It was a tremendous experience.

During my school vacation, I took the opportunity to visit the Oblates working in Bolivia. One time I remember I took a 12 hour bus ride to see some Oblates working in real difficult areas. I also had the chance to visit a Sri Lankan Oblate working in Chile and the Oblates in Peru too.

I planned the sabbatical year in such a way that I be home for Christmas. After almost 25 years I was at home to celebrate Christmas with my family while my mother is alive. I am not sure whether I will get a similar one again.

The 2nd part of my sabbatical was to learn Tagalog in the Philippines. Even though I was planning to go there in January, due to my mother's ill health, I had to change the date in order to take care of her. In February when I arrived in Manila, the Oblates had arranged Grace park parish for me to stay and give my services to the Notre Dame School. It was very good for me to get involve in the school while having privacy in the church environment.

With regard to the language, it was too bad that when I arrived there I did not have a proper language school arranged for me to study Tagalog. Due to this I only had classes 6 hours a week for 3 months. In learning the language one disadvantage was that since I stayed in a parish I had less chances to practice Tagalog.

While doing my studies, I also had an opportunity to follow a 2 week intensive course on Psycho-Spirituality conducted by the Jesuits. This helped me look back on my childhood, 25 years of religious life and 20 years of priesthood.

Going around visiting places, seeing different ministries of Oblates and other religious in the Philippines made me reflect on my life in Japan. I thank the delegation superior & his council, and also the members of Japan/Korea for their prayers and support given to me to experience this sabbatical year.

In a special way I thank the guys who encouraged me sometimes through e-mails and calls. I also thank Eddie Williams for taking care of Koga in my absence. Many parishioners and Japanese friends too were a big help to me to go through this one year experience. It is true that I have made lots of friends both in Bolivia and in the Philippines. It is also true that now some of them know that there is a Congregation called the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and some men of that Institute are working in Japan.

After my experience in the Philippines I went back to Sri Lanka and spent a few days with my family. I feel it is nice to be back.



“My grace is sufficient...”

Fr.Hiran Jayawardena omi

Kochi Japan happens to be my first mission, after having studied the language for 2 years at YWCA in Osaka. Kochi is also the capital city of Kochi Prefecture of Shikoku island, the smallest of the 4 islands of Japan. Shikoku; (四国) which literally means “four countries” is true to its name as it is constituted of 4 Prefectures namely; Kagawa, Ehime, Tokushima and Kochi. This Shikoku Island is a fairly rural area and features a mountain range running roughly east west down the island. It is also famous for its 88 temple pilgrimage and the “Awa-Odori” in Tokushima and “Yosakoi-Odori” in Kochi; in other words, the dancing festivals held in August during summer. So this particular mission land in Kochi Prefecture is on the South coast of Shikoku Island and 40% of the population living in the capital city of Kochi.

The Oblate community in Kochi ministers to 5 different churches in Kochi Prefecture. They are Kochi church, Enoguchi church, which is about 2 km away from the Oblate community and churches in Akaoka, Aki and Nakamura that are situated respectively 20km, 40km, and 115km, away from the Oblate house we live-in. We celebrate the Holy Eucharist at Kochi chapel and Enoguchi convent chapel on weekdays and at all 5 churches on almost all the Sundays. The diocese of Takamatsu to which we belong to adapts a method called “Team Ministry”. When it comes to pastoral work as such this method allows us to rotate to all 5 churches.

An important feature of this part of the mission is the number of faithful at each of these well-built churches. It is simply not an exaggeration to say that the church in Aki has got just 5 to 10 Christians and Akaoka has around 15 to 20 at maximum. The number laity in the other churches is not that low, but not of great numbers either as we might find in any other Asian country. On this condition, someone may ask me as to where do I find poverty in Japan. Among many other aspects, this is one of the most striking factors of poverty in Japan and very especially in this part of Shikoku. When the laity is not that young in age and few in number, what a feeling of helplessness and poverty, they might be undergoing in their mind. Added to this factor, Japan is also a community-oriented society. In other words it is the group or the community, to which one belongs gives meaning to the individual-life. In such a social set-up, to belong to a

group or to a community with just 5 or 10 in number, I believe, I need not explain to my dear Oblate world the utter poverty that Christians here experience when they live a life of western in nature but being situated in the Asian context. But there is the GRACE OF GOD. That may be the reason, though they are few in number, yet burning with full enthusiasm. This reminds me of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians "We live by faith, not by sight". (2Cor 5/7)

That itself is enough to call it a mission I believe, yet not. It is no secret as the Japanese language with 2 sets of alphabets and Chinese characters known as Kanji, is almost an impossible accomplishment for any foreigner, if it is mere human effort. But there is the GRACE OF GOD.



**Akaoka
Catholic
Mission**



**Enoguchi
Catholic
Mission**

In all these, I believe, Shikoku offers us the Oblate community in Kochi a challenging mission, where we would deepen the missionary spirit of our dear founder St.Eugene De Mazenod. Not because it is our work, but of God's work. "We are unworthy servants" (Luke 17:10) and simply powerless before all these dire realities and yet, the Lord strengthens us saying: "My GRACE is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness". (2Cor 12/9)

Two Upcoming Events



Nobuhiko Yagi, OMI

1. The next World Youth Day is scheduled for July 23 to July 28, 2013 in Rio de Janeiro , Brazil. I have been appointed to the committee in the Osaka Area in order to prepare for the WYD. For this reason, I want to minister to the best of my abilities, to the preparation of the Youth who will attend this WYD.



2. The Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident, instead of getting better seems to bring on other problems. Instead of emphasizing the safety of the people of the area, the economic and convenient reasons seem to be more important. This problem will not end with Japan but most probably spread throughout the world. I ask for your prayers.



Japan's 100 Billion Dollar Sex Industry

Jerry Novotny

The other day I ran across an article entitled "Sexnomics: Japan's 100 Billion Dollar Sex Industry And The Pink Zone". The article dealt with Japan's semi-legal sex industry which exists on a mind-boggling scale and touched on the role it plays in the national economy. The Pink Zone refers to the Japanese law which forbids prostitution but sets no punishment for the prostitute or the customer. The reporter centers his thoughts on a book, "SEXONOMIC: PROFITS IN THE GLOBAL SEX ECONOMY・世界の「下半身」経済が儲かる理由", written by Takashi Kadokura. Taking his statistics from a Japanese government survey, he writes that 1 in 10 Japanese men have pedophilic tendencies and 25% of the male population has viewed or own child pornography. What caught my attention and made me order the book immediately were the following two sentences: "...there are an estimated 170,000 junior high and high school girls engaged in prostitution each year in Japan, charging higher than the standard market rate (30,000 yen) or roughly 50,000 yen (\$600) per customer. The teenage prostitution market is estimated to be as high as 54,700,000,000 yen per year (approx. 700 million dollars)." To protect our youth and the family in Japan, the Catholic Church must take a strong stand and speak out publicly on this current issue. (more to follow on Jerry's Blog, www.omijapankorea.net)

Reflections on 40 years of priesthood and the future

Francis Hahn

On April 29th I had the joy of returning to my hometown to celebrate with my family and friends, 40 years of ordination. Most of the major figures and persons that were influential in helping me to get there are now “home with our Lord” and yet I was amazed how many still remember the day and were able “to rejoice and be glad with me”. Before that day I had the privilege of joining two great people, Dotty and Charles Bradford, who were celebrating 60 years of marriage. That was in the Washington D.C. area, Silver Springs, MD to be exact. It was to be a joint celebration, but as far as I was concerned they were the real “Stars”. They renewed their marriage vows and I my vows to the Oblates and priesthood. It was a great moment and followed by a wonderful party in their parish hall.

As I reflect on these 40 years of grace it is clearly the Oblate order and all the great priests who inspired me to follow them and of course my family and people like the Bradford’s who have carried me forward on this journey. Most of the persons who have encouraged me naturally have been here in Japan, where I have spent 45 years of my life. I tried to remember them all as I offered my masses. So many of the faithful in the parishes I have served, and as well as the people I’ve met in the Neo Catechetical experience, and many of the non-Christian Japanese who have befriended me and encouraged me along the way. I’ve come to believe that each person we meet is in a sense “a unique face or mirror of God. In that sense He reveals Himself to us in so many ways each day of our lives.

I started my 40th by asking for a sabbatical, and found two courses that I felt would help me chose how to “walk the good walk” as I am well into the “twilight” hours of this journey. One course was in India, and at Divine Word Fathers Institute named “Ishvani Kendra”. It ran from January 9th till March 3rd. Aside from a sister from Sri Lanka, I was the only non-Indian participant, and an American who had never been to India, as well. The head of the Institute and staff were a bit hesitant as to whether I could eat the food or live in the simple facilities they provided. But they finally agreed to try and we were both delighted with the results. India was not a country I ever want to visit, the poverty and sheer vastness and diversity of religions,

often in conflict, as well as the somewhat over bearing impression I had of most of the Indian people whom I had met, had turned me off so to speak, but of course I soon found out how wrong I was.

I really loved being there, had a hard time with their English dialect, it is very different and till the very end I had to ask for interpretations of what the teaches said, but I was deeply impressed with the faith, commitment, and level of scholarship shown by all. Hearing the stories of the experiences of the nuns and priests and how they suffered for their faith humbled me, and even thought the course was an excellent source of personal insight and reflection, better that I could have hoped for, my real joy was to have meet so many wonderful priests, and nuns and experience even in very small way the wonders of India and the people. I was also blessed to meet several Oblates and the Institute was near one of our theology houses so I was able to pray and stay with the seminarians several times and at the end visited the Provincial house at St. Thomas Mount, an ashram built by a Sir Lankan Oblate, and a few Hindu shrines.

I returned home to Itami for the last four weeks of lent and Easter, then left for the celebrations mentioned above in the States. Now I'm preparing for the final part of my Sabbatical, a four-month course at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. The course is entitled Ministering to Ministers, and I'm hoping to find out how I can best use the remaining years I have to serve the congregation and delegation, while at the same time seeing what will be the best way to retreat from any positions of responsibility, Pastor, House or District superior, to allow the young men who have arrived on the mission to start taking up the "torch" and carry on the mission in the manner they feel best, in the way they feel most comfortable. I hope to be in the background to support them, but if I'm going to be a hindrance or brake in their taking



full responsibility, then it is time for me to retire elsewhere. I will be spending the next four months praying and discerning what the Lord wants, but I have the feeling He'll just say be quite and "take up your cross and walk". Your prayers will be gratefully appreciated.

From Jack in Tokyo



I explained time and time again to university administrators that OMIs are not allowed to accept titles or wear gold buckles on their shoes, but the university insisted and, in mid-April, bestowed the title of Honorary Professor/Professor Emeritus on me, anyway. Actually, I thought they would've contacted all of you to inquire about me as part of the vetting process (the background check)! But you all would have vouched for me, right?!?!

Shortly after the above event, I was able to make still another trip to Tohoku, including Morioka, Sendai and Fukushima. The Fukushima and Iwate Deaf Associations have since invited me to give "signed" lectures on October 21st and December 9th but the invitation I treasure most is the "standing" invitation to visit the Miyagi School for the Deaf. The following picture alone might explain why. The kids were delightful, God bless them.



Their stories of 3/11 will be told on TV tonight (6/17) and will soon be made into a DVD documentary.

Lastly, I am taking an extended leave this summer to stay with my younger brother Phil who is on a lung-transplant waiting list. Since I have never been on medicine and have never had any heart, sugar or cholesterol problem (thank God), and if I lose this spare-tire that I've been carrying around for the past 25 years, I could very well become a "lobe" donor. We shall see. At any rate, please keep my brother in your prayers. Thank You.

Almost forgot...on returning to Japan, I will join the ranks of you Prison Chaplains. Am looking forward to asking for suggestions and your advice whenever the occasion calls for it, OK?

As always, blessings to you and the people you serve,
Jack

Martyrdom

Bert Silver

Benedict XVI says that martyrdom is “exclusively an act of love for God and for man, including those who persecute him”.

On the first of July, at our mission of Anan, the celebration of the martyrdom of one of the one hundred and eighty eight Japanese martyrs, Father Diogo Yuki, SJ took place. Representatives of the three missions of Tokushima, Naruto, and Anan gathered in Anan. After lunch together, a lecture on Father Yuki, was given by Professor Kondo, a historian. The Bishop, Bishop Suwa, presided at the Eucharist with the Fathers of Tokushima, Naruto and Anan.

The ceremony making them blessed took place four years ago in Nagasaki. The reason for the ceremony being in Anan is that Father Yuki was from this area. It was near here that he was turned in to the police by his own relatives, brought over to Osaka where he was hung upside down for three days. Only four of the one hundred and eighty eight were priests the rest were entire families. Some were women burned alive with their children. Father Peter Kibe was among those beatified; he suffered 10 consecutive days of torture as he encouraged the catechists who accompanied him to stay faithful.

As we look around the world today with the political turmoil that exists and its result in persecutions. Are we not reverting to the time of the last Japanese martyrs? All of us are called to a renewal of our faith in Jesus. As we start the Year of Faith let us ask the Japanese Martyrs to give us the same faith that they had so that if martyrdom is necessary we will be able to show the faith that we have in Jesus.

Celebration at the Anan Mission for Father Diogo Yuki, SJ Martyr (Sunday, July 1, 2012 Anan). After lunch Professor Kondo (Tokushima) gave a talk about Fr. Yuki..



The Eucharist was celebrated by Bishop Suwa, Bishop of Takamatsu. With him were Fr. Inui, OMI, Naruto; Fr. Hayashi, Tokushima; Fr. Silver, OMI, Anan.



News from Korea

Greetings from all of us.

It is a hot summer here in Korea and the sweating is increasing because of the many pastoral activities. For several reasons since the beginning of June we are left with only



4 in Korea. We continue to minister to our people with zeal and faith.

We have two “big” events to prepare in our unit. The first is the perpetual vows of Br. Samuel. Still the date is not decided but it should be sometime in October.

Br. Samuel joined the international scholastics in Rome to have his preparation for final vows. He also joined some pastoral programs with the Mediterranean province. In spite of the difficulties in language he is enjoying the experience and keeps in touch with us. Also the others are very happy of his presence.



The second event is the priestly ordination of Br. Peter. He finished his formation in Australia. He got back to Korea at the beginning of August. He has to finish his thesis and also minister his diaconate in Korea. Most probably his ordination will be at the beginning of December. Of course you are all invited to join us. Once the dates are fixed we will let you know. For the moment keep praying for them.



We have also our two scholastics, Br. Simeon and Br. Joseph back for their vacation in Korea for a few months. One is in the Philippines and the other in Sri Lanka. They are keeping fine in spite of the normal struggles of adaptation. Keep them in your prayers too.

All four of us continue our ministry. Fr. Anselmo is taking care of MAMI and vocation recruitment. It seems we could have some young people who want to experience our life this year.

Fr. Vincenzo is taking good care of the street people and street children with zeal. He has a very busy schedule.



Fr. Shitol continues his apostolate with the migrants in Pyonthaek area, that has the biggest U.S.A Army base in South-Korea.

Fr. Maurizio continues the apostolate for migrants in Gwangju area, with all the other responsibilities in the mission administration.

Due to the absence of Fr. Varam we keep doing the apostolate in the hospital in a “shared mode”, which means help together.

Have a good summer.

Your brothers in Korea

SUMMER of 2012

Wency Laguidao



50th



MIKE YAMASAKI CELEBRATES 50th ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY



50 years ago. Mike's ordination in Kochi.

The parishioners of Itami Church organized a simple celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of Mike YAMASAKI with a mass followed by snacks on June 24, 2012, Feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist. Mike was ordained at the Nakajimacho Parish church in Kochi on June 24, 1962. Ordaining prelate was Bishop Paul Taguchi of Osaka. Mike did his Novitiate at the former novitiate in Tewksbury, MA, USA (1957-58) and his theology at the former theologate in Washington, DC.

The celebration in Itami became an instant reunion of many of Mike's old friends in the parish, some who have moved to other places came back just to greet Mike. Mike was pastor of Itami in the past. It was a good occasion for those who attended to reminisce the "good old days."



50 years hence, in
Itami, June 24, 2012

NUMBERS SPEAK!

The following Table is part of the data contained in the Delegation Report that I am making for the next Inter-Chapter which will be held in Bangkok, April 2013. I made a comparison of two sets of data on the Japanese Church put out by the Vatican and published by the Bishops' Conference of Japan. The numbers speak for themselves and believe it or not, even the number of sisters is decreasing in Japan! However, please take note that just as in the past, the 2010 census does not include a sizable number of foreigners who remain undocumented or unregistered. The "Total Catholic Population" likewise falls short of an accurate number that should include foreigners whose number is estimated at several millions.

Statistics of the Japanese Church

TABLE I	Present	Past
TOTAL POPULATION	127,558,000 (2010 census)	126,280,000(2000 census)
TOTAL CATHOLIC POPULATION	529,000	448,000
NO. OF DIOCESES	16	16
NO. OF PARISHES	830	815
NO. OF BISHOPS	24	26
NO. OF DIOCESAN PRIESTS	513	516
NO. OF RELIGIOUS PRIESTS	994	1,117

NO. OF REL. BROTHERS	203	234
NO. OF SISTERS	5,878	6,316
NO. OF SEMINARIANS	139 (61 diocesan/78 religious)	151
<p>“Present” Catholic Data as of 2009. “Past” Catholic Data as of 2002. Numbers in RED denote decrease.</p> <p>SOURCE: 2004 Cathopedia; 2012 Yearbook, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan</p>		

A VISIT WITH OUR YOUNG OBLATES

I made a quick visit with our young Oblates in Kochi and Fukuoka. KOCHI:



Hiran: Young missionary to the Tosa people.

First, I visited Hiran JEYAWARDENA who is now a member of the pastoral team in Kochi after finishing his two-year language study in Osaka. It was a very rainy Sunday when Hiran and I covered the Sunday masses in both Aki and Akaoka parishes. It was also a good chance for me to re-visit the two places after sometime. Both places are living testimonies of the “dream” that our founding fathers had for the Tosa region.

Three parishioners came to the Sunday mass in Aki. In Akaoka, six parishioners attended. Both parishes are in the coastal areas and after the big tsunami in March 2011, many people have moved out for fear that another tsunami might strike anytime, leaving many houses empty and making these places practically look like “ghost towns.” Even our rectory in Aki looked deserted with no resident priest. Akaoka property (which belongs to the diocese) has several empty buildings. Unlike other places, Aki and Akaoka surely have an abundance of rooms. John IWO has four bedrooms for himself at different rectories!

It is a big challenge for a young priest like Hiran to be assigned to places like Aki and Akaoka but he takes the difficulties in stride and remains very optimistic, “in fact I am starting to like Kochi,” he says. The members of

the Kochi team take turns in covering the parishes of Nakajimacho, Enoguchi, Nakamura, Aki and Akaoka.



Robinson presides at his first Japanese funeral

FUKUOKA: Robinson ROBERT, Bern ONDAP and Christy PAKIANATHAN continue their study of Japanese diligently and even help out with the daily and Sunday liturgies in Koga and Yoshizuka parishes. Robinson “had his first funeral” in Japanese recently and jokingly said: “I have been waiting for this chance!” Christy and Robinson are in the last stage of their Japanese course and are looking forward to their vacation. After that, they will report to their first assignments. Bern has a few more months to complete his two-year Japanese language course. The four young Oblates are indeed giving the mission a “new face.”



Bern and Christy at the regular Sunday dinner of the Koga community



THE DELEGATION COUNCIL, L-R

Wency, Jack,
Maurizio, Bradly,
Nobu and Ray during
the last Council

An Odyssey

Bill Maher

After Easter I moved the Oblates and myself out of the parish of Tokushima after 63 years or more of service there. In two terms I had been there over 18 years. After moving my belongings to Koga with the permission of the delegation superior, Wency Laguidao I started my Odyssey, two months of travel. First a month in China seeing what the Oblates are doing there and a month in the States visiting with family and friends. It's been a wonderful two months and a highlight of my lifetime. It will be hard to go to work again to a scheduled lifestyle. In these months I've been blessed with meeting so many highly motivated people who have experienced the call of the Lord and at a great sacrifice to themselves, have answered it.

China is a different world to anything I've experienced till now. First I visited two Chinese whom I met in Tokushima. One's a doctor and the other a pharmacist both teaching at Universities in China and very devout Catholics. Besides the sightseeing we visited many Churches and I saw Masses well attended with beautiful liturgies. You wouldn't know that the Church is closely controlled by the government and some even persecuted. Some Bishops are appointed by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and some by Rome as well as some approved by both. One priest, who is considering joining the Oblates, did his theology by moving every month to a different sight so the authorities would not find them. After finishing his studies he was ordained by an 'underground Bishop. It sounded like the stories of the Church in Japan during the persecutions.

During my time in Beijing I was a member of a group from Collegeville Pennsylvania who were there to experience what the Oblates are doing in China. It's called the Oblate Missionary Experience China.

The Oblates have been in Hong Kong since after the Second World War but as recently as 2006, they have tried to work in mainland China, in Beijing. In Hong Kong they are very free but in Beijing they try to keep a low profile so they can keep their visas and continue to work in the country. They rent three apartments in a large apartment complex and lead their Oblate religious life and activities from this base.

They have an officially registered Company called the De Mazenod Inter-Cultural Exchange Company, where they teach English and other things and try to meet the people of the area as well as help with other groups in various ways. One group whom they help out a lot is China Little Flower a NGO registered in the USA who work with abandoned children at various age levels, (from premature babies to teen-agers). We visited and helped out in their baby home, foster homes, and home schooling projects. Another group whom they work with, train youth leaders for the Church in China. They are already booked up for two years to work in various parishes. What a highly motivated group they were.



I would like to quote from a sermon given by the bishop of Hong Kong, John



Cardinal Tong Hon, at the Mass for World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. This will give you some interesting facts about the Church at the present time. The Cardinal summarized the situation as, “wonderful, difficult, possible.” Wonderful because the number of faithful has grown from

around three million in 1949, the year the communists came to power, to around 12 million today.

Cardinal Tong also observed that the number of religious sisters is up to 5000 now, with some 4500 having made their final profession since 1980, just after China opened its doors to the world and practice of religion was restored.

He also found hope in the around 1,400 seminarians now studying for the priesthood noting that the average age for 90 percent of priests is between 25 and 50-years-old.

Cardinal Tong pinned the difficulty on the Chinese government wanting to monitor the Church through the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and how the faithful are often placed under much duress.



The cardinal said, however, that there is hope because of our faith in Christ. The cardinal mentioned a letter from a bishop friend in mainland China who pointed out to him that in every communist country those in power will try to control the Church through people who are nominally Catholic, in this case the Patriotic Association. However, the bishop also noted that compared with the situation only a few decades ago, the present difficulties are lighter.

Cardinal Tong said that, five years after Pope Benedict XVI's letter to the people in China, the role of the Patriotic Association seems to have lessened and the people are more aware of the importance of faith formation. So there is hope."

After two weeks in Beijing as a member of the group, I went down to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong the Oblates administer three grammar schools and one high school as well as take care of two large parishes. Here religion is practiced much more in the open without many of the restraints they have in Beijing. Again the churches were full and the liturgies were beautiful.

On the Sunday I was there, Fr. Thomas OMI from India said the English Mass, at St. Alberts and I preached. The church was packed mostly with Philipppians who work as housekeepers and nanas for the children. I was impressed by the vitality of the Church in China even under their adversities. There's truly a lot of hope and the Spirit is working in China.

Since this is already too long I won't go into detail about the visit in the States but that time was one of great blessings also. I was able to spend quality time with my older sister Pat in Bremen, Georgia, younger sister Judy in Fort Mills, South Carolina and Tom's twin, Jack in Chicago, as well as renew relationships with many relatives and friends. At my age you wonder if you'll see them again on this side of the 'pearly gates'.

If anyone would be interested in seeing a summary and some pictures of the Oblate Experience in Beijing China I can send an E-mail. The brother-in-law of David Ullrich, Jack Orlandi, who's a deacon and lead the group has made a nice presentation of the whole experience. You can also open up a tab to get more on China Little Flower the group who works for abandoned children.



Dedicated Missionaries

Missionary Oblates of Mary



After finishing language studies in Tokyo, Fr. John served in various areas of the Japanese mission: Itami, Kochi, Anan and Koga. While in Kochi he was appointed Superior of the Mission. Under his guidance, the Mission of Korea was started and today we have one Korean Priest and 4 seminarians. Finishing his term as Superior, Fr. John took a sabbatical in the United States. Upon his return to Japan, Fr. John came down with a paralysis condition while in Koga which resulted in his having to return to the States. He chose the Oblate Retirement Home in San Antonio. It was there that in 2011 he died. He is buried at the Oblate Cemetery in Tewksbury, MA.



Ordained in Belgium and upon arrival in Japan, Fr. Xave began his two-year-study of Japanese Language in Tokyo. Upon finishing, he went to Kochi Prefecture where he remained until his death in 2011. His missionary apostolate centered on pastoral, work social work, and education involvement. In order to become more adapted to Japan, Fr. Xave decided to become a Japanese Citizen with the name of Tosa Yoshikazu. Tosa is the historical name for Kochi. Instead of living in a rectory, Fr. Tosa lived in an ordinary house which he rented. It was there that he met his death in 2012. After his wake and funeral at Nakajima Church in Kochi, his ashes were buried near Nankoku City, the Catholic Cemetery in Kochi.



Fr. Angelo's first assignment after language school was to the mission of Naruto where he served as an assistant and for years taught at two of the Colleges in the area. He also spent much time at the mission station attached to Naruto. While in Kochi for two years he was appointed as Superior for one term. In 1986 he took a sabbatical to St. Louis for a year. Upon his return he was placed in charge of the scholastics in Nagoya and in 1992 was appointed for his second term as mission superior. After director of the school and pastor of the mission of Naruto, Fr. Ange went to the parish and school in Koga. This was when he began his third term as mission superior. At this time it was discovered that he had spinal cancer. In 2011 he died in Buffalo and his remains were brought back to Japan and placed in the Chapel of the Naruto Mission.



Birthdays:

September

09 Iwo, John
12 Antonysam, Iru
17 Peirispulle, Jude
17 Jeyachandran, James
22 Hahn, Fran

October

05 Furukawa, Kenichi
30 Rozairo, Brad

December

15 Santos, Eduardo
15 Shitol, Nokrek
24 Yamasaki, Mike

January

02 Williams, Ed
22 Bourgoin, Ray
30 Indika, Hiran

February

13 Giorgianni, Maurizio
15 Inui, Len

Ordinations:

September

15 Indika, Hiran
15 Santos, Eduardo

October

19 Giorgianni, Maurizio

November

30 Ondap, Bernard

December

03 Antonysam, Iru
14 Nirmalarajan, Christy
14 Robinson, Robert

January

15 Jeyachandran, James

February

05 Shitol, Nokrek
17 Furukawa, Kenichi

Deceased Members:

Robert Gill, OMI
Charles McBennett, OMI
Len Robitaille, OMI
Timothy Mulvery, OMI
Nicholas Neville, OMI
John Otto Meyer, OMI
Bro. Sueho Tsuda, OMI
Daniel Ward, OMI
Gerard Stevens, OMI
Leonard Scannell, OMI
Patrick Brady, OMI
Edward Lowney, OMI
Donald O'Brien, OMI
John Barrett, OMI
Leo Simons, OMI
Xavier Delporte, OMI
John K. Mahoney, OMI
Angelo Siani, OMI

Oblate Mission Areas ->

South Korea

- *Seoul
- *Suwon



Japan

- *Tokyo
- *Nagoya
- Toyohashi
- *Osaka
- Itami
- *Shikoku
- Tokushima
- Kochi
- *Fukuoka
- Koga

