

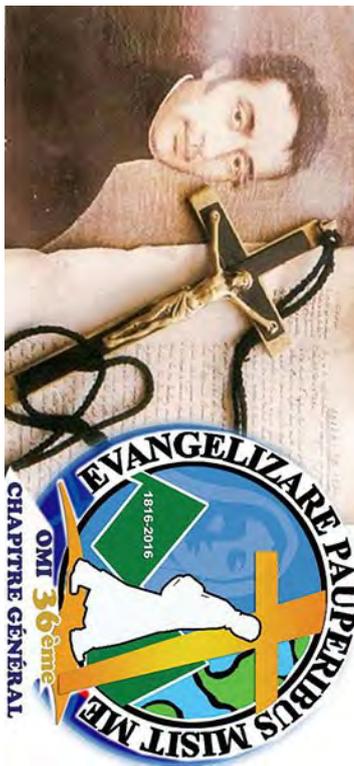


Far East Star

Summer 2017

THE NEW FACES OF THE POOR

“As Oblates, for some time already we have spoken about the poor with their many faces. At this General Chapter, we have insisted on giving priority to the new faces of the poor whose situation has the greatest claim on salvation understood in an integral sense that only the gospel can offer. They are new because new social, political, religious and economic realities deprive them of their dignity, or because our more courageous reading of the signs of the times helps us to recognize them more clearly.” Acts of the 36th General Chapter (2016), No. 5



The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (Dec 8, 2015 to Nov 20, 2016) proclaimed by Pope Francis was winding up just about the time when the 36th General Chapter (Sept 14 to Oct 12, 2016) was convened with the theme that has guided the congregation in its 200 years of mission: **Evangelizare pauperibus misit me... Pauperes evangelizantur.**

During our Spring Meeting this year, facilitated by Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO, OMI of the Thai-Lao Delegation and 36th General Chapter commissioner, we acquainted ourselves with the call of the last Chapter expressed in the concluding document. During the three-day discussion, we discussed, albeit superficially, the challenges made by the document, especially the six areas of Oblate mission: the Poor, Youth, Formation, Interculturality, Social Media and Finance. This issue of the newsletter is an attempt to keep the discussion going on matters that define our identity as a group coupled with the hope that we will see some concrete results in the near future.

If there is one word that best describes the papacy of Pope Francis, it is undoubtedly “MERCY” in all its depth and all-embracing character. Pope Francis’ papacy is the “Papacy of Mercy.” God’s mercy is far greater than we can ever imagine, greater than any sin that man can commit, says Pope Francis.



As Oblates, we take note of Pope Francis preference for people in the

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“peripheries” and his insistence that the Church should be like “field hospitals” taking care of the wounded and the dying. In fact, these are terms and analogies that have been used and reflected in many Oblate documents in the past. At one time, our Superior General commented on Pope Francis’ use of certain terms dear to the Oblates: “Is he singing our song?” or something to that effect.

There is always the danger of being lost in rhetorics and our good intentions beautifully expressed in many of our documents ending up like lip service to the sufferings of the poor in our midst.

There are initiatives taken around the congregation in putting into action the Acts of the 36th General Chapter. For example, the JPIC of USA Province and the Province of Lacombe in Canada have joined forces to organize a symposium with live-streaming across the Oblate world on the topic: “The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. The new faces of poverty.”



Some of the catchphrases that we have heard so far are: “GO OUT AND DO SOMETHING!” and “IF WE ARE NOT IN PLACES WHERE WE SHOULD BE, WHY?”

Pope Francis has a friendly reminder to all of us: STOP WHINING (and DO SOMETHING!)

II “ARE THERE POOR PEOPLE IN JAPAN?”

This is the kind of question that many of us have been asked when we are home on vacation or attending international OMI meetings. It may be a rhetorical question, one that doesn’t need an answer because the person asking already has a formed-opinion of what he is asking about.

Visitors to Japan rarely encounter the usual markers of poverty: seedy and crime-ridden areas, beggars plying the streets, out of school children, etc. The homeless are concentrated along riverbanks and public parks where there is running water and toilets. And, yes, everyone seems to be properly dressed. We made jokes in the past about how some beggars who appear at our doorsteps come in business suits and even with a calling card. Trains run on time, everyone seems to be hurrying to get to their workplaces, there is compulsory education until age 15 (which include a decent lunch served at school), a relatively good and affordable national health care and accessible pension system. Social welfare is available for those who are brave to bear being ostracized as recipients and being looked down upon as parasites living off tax payers’ money. Living on welfare is considered a personal failure that many of the poor don’t avail of it unless there is no other recourse.

However, it comes as a surprise that the world’s third largest economy is not doing very well among the developed nations in terms of addressing the effects of “relative poverty” (level of income required to maintain the minimum acceptable standard of living). Japan would rather keep the statistics on poverty under wraps.

The generation that experienced extreme poverty that followed World War II is slowly dying-out and the generations after that, the baby-boomers, Generations X and Y, the millennials and later are almost ignorant about the kind of poverty that their grandparents had experienced.

III A FEW IDENTIFIABLE PROBLEMS IN THE JAPANESE SOCIETY

A. SELF-IMPOSED SOCIAL RECLUSION (Hikikomori)

What causes a young person to withdraw from friends and even his or her family, leading to a life of total self-alienation?

Identifiable causes are varied but the social disease is gnawing at the lives of many young Japanese. Usually caused by self-inflicted wounds, “hikikomori” is a form of severe social withdrawal manifested by many Japanese young people in today’s Japan.



Sufferers usually quit school and lock themselves up in their bedroom and avoid communication even with their own family members and become recluses in their parents’ home. They slowly knit a virtual world only for themselves, inhabited only by the people and things that are meaningful to them and negate other realities that they find oppressive and “uncool.” They are not necessarily products of a dysfunctional families, in fact, a good number come from normal and oftentimes affluent background. Some of them come to our parishes perhaps looking for answers to their problems that they can’t explain and oftentimes want to ignore. The estimate is: there are about 700,000 youth suffering from hikikomori in Japan.

B. ADDICTION TO THE DIGITAL WORLD



Call it the bane of civilization but most people will admit that the internet is one of the greatest thing that has happened in our age.

When we think about the youth, what comes to mind immediately is their fascination with the internet and everything that comes along such as gadgets, devices, mind-boggling applications (APP of appuri in Japan) that enhance the use of the internet. Through the internet, they create virtual worlds and virtual realities and they can even inhabit or live in virtual existence!

Social media is the platform for social communication among young people. Facebook, Twitter, LINE, etc. are available to everyone regardless of age and oftentimes, anonymity is a key factor. The downside of social media are the abuses especially when the platform is used irresponsibly and for evil purposes. Cyber crimes, pornography, sale of illegal drugs, etc. happen in the internet under cover of darkness or anonymity. Bullying is very common through the social media leading to a state of mental depression among victims and, in worst cases, suicide.

C. CHILD POVERTY (Kodomo No Hinkon)

Japan Times run a series on “child poverty” in Japan early this year in response to the findings of UNICEF which ranked Japan as only No. 34 among the 41 member nations of OECD in terms of child benefits. (OECD stands for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It started as a group of 18 developed nations coming together



Feeding Underfed Children (kodomo shokudo). Volunteers provide food for underfed children.

for cooperation on different levels. They also put out related data such as poverty index among member nations.)

Here are some of the observations:

“Japan has some of the worst wealth inequality and highest rates of child poverty among world’s developed nations...”

“Japan is in the top third of the OECD in terms of average family income but child poverty is at 13.7%, even higher than the OECD average of 12.4%.” N.B: Norway, Iceland and Finland are the top 3 countries among the developed countries that take care well of their children.

“Abenomics” (Economics according to PM Abe Shinzo) may have benefited big Japanese companies but one segment of the economy remains behind: the poor.”

“One in 6 Japanese children lives in poverty... parents who cannot afford the high cost of education (including cram-schools) to ensure decent jobs in the future condemn their children to a doomed future life of poverty.”

IV CONCLUSION

The safest way to conclude this compilation is perhaps to return to the words of Pope Francis addressed to the capitulants of the last Chapter given on October 7th:

Quotes from Pope Francis:

“Pope Pius called you ‘specialists of difficult missions’; today the Oblates of Mary Immaculate are called ‘to work for a Church that is for everyone, a Church that is ready to welcome and to accompany.’”

“St. John Paul II called Fr. de Mazenod a ‘man of Advent,’ docile to the Holy Spirit in reading the signs of the times and in assisting the work of God in the history of the Church.... May you be ‘men of Advent,’ able to recognize the signs of the times and to guide our brothers along the way that God opens up in the Church and in the world.”

“Today, every land is a ‘mission territory.’ every human dimension is mission territory, awaiting the proclamation of the Gospel”

“Therefore, there is need of you, of your missionary courage, your availability to bring to everyone the Good News that frees and consoles.”

LASTLY, Japan and Korea have different challenges but the problems are similar, if not all together the same. Incidentally, Korea has the fastest internet connection in the world and Japan comes close. Also worth noting is the fact that KOREA has the highest SUICIDE rate in the world, followed closely by JAPAN.

compiled by Wency LAGUIDAO, OMI



From the Desk of the Delegation Superior...

Brad Rozairo, OMI



Dear Brothers,

When heat and humidity are at their highest, it's never a bad time to take a break!

Hope you find some time for a break or go at a slower pace during this hot and humid month of August.

Reflecting on our last spring meeting in April this year, I feel that coming together was an opportunity for us to study, reflect and understand the 'Acts of the 36th General Chapter' which we, as a congregation are supposed to put into practice within the next six years. Thanks to Fr. Claudio Bertuccio for facilitating and helping us come up with a summary of our group discussions on six various topics based on mission. I wish to also thank each and every one of you for your active participation and contribution.

Pope Francis in his message to the participants of the last General Chapter in Rome mentioned that "today the mission field seems to widen every day, always embracing new poor, men and women of the face of Christ who ask for help, consolation, hope in the most desperate situations of life. Therefore, there is need of you, of your missionary daring, of your readiness to take to all the Good News that frees and consoles".

Going through the summary of our last spring meeting, I feel that there is need for us to choose a particular topic, and to concentrate on a specific issue. For me that would be as Pope Francis says 'embracing new poor'. You might remember our group discussion on the new faces of the poor in our specific context. We named them as Smart phone and social media addicts, Migrants (care givers, students etc.), Young people, North Korean refugees, Spiritual poverty of some Oblates, Women segregation (victims of divorce, girl marriage and dysfunctional families), Mentally challenged, Victims of natural disaster, Occasional Christians (lack of basic catechism), Homeless, Street children, Lonely (e.g. Elderly), Prisoners, drop-outs of the society, and People hurt by the church.

We also came up with some concrete steps to answer the needs like Studying the situation (finding out why they become poor), Education, Networking, Yoga and our Availability to reach out and build bridges with those at the peripheries.

Brothers, for us the challenge is how to put into practice what is on paper. I also see our commitment to serve the new poor as a challenge. Therefore, I would invite you to think and reflect on this personally as well as in your district meetings, and try to work towards an action plan that might help us live the Chapter message in our specific context.

Shall see you at the retreat.

Brad Rozairo

Delegation Council. Six members, six nationalities.

Front (L-R) Nobu (Japan) Iru (India) Maurizio (Italy)

Rear: Bern (Philippines) Ray (USA) Brad (Sri Lanka)



WELCOME!

Here to preach our annual retreat is Father Ray WARREN, OMI Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province. Welcome!



Congratulations to Bradley ROZAIRO and Jude PEIRISPULLE who are celebrating the 25th Year of their Sacerdotal Ordination. They were ordained on August 22, 1992. *Ad Multos Annos!*

Beyond the Peripheries Into “No Man’s Land”

by Vincenzo BORDO, OMI, October 12th, 2015 - South Korea (A REPRINT)



Vincenzo received the HO-AM Prize (So. Korea’s equivalent of Nobel Prize)

"No man’s land." that’s what they call the minefield on the border between South and North Korea. Since Pope Francis arrived at the Vatican, it is fashionable to speak of the "peripheries." For us at Anna’s House, where we have been living in the peripheries or suburbs for 23 years, it’s time to go beyond, into "no man’s land." It’s a minefield where life does not count because at any moment, a mine could explode. In these long years living in the suburbs, we have met the street children, runaway teenagers, abandoned by their families and by the State, who have run away from everyone and everything. For them, we have created a network of solidarity which welcomes them and supports them and once again inserts them into the family and society.



We have the RED HOUSE which is their first reception center (the Pope would call it a "field hospital"). Here, the youth have interviews, meetings, therapy and counseling with a specialized staff. The goal is to place them again with their own families. When this is not possible because the family situation has degenerated beyond all possibility of reconciliation and dialogue, the older ones are welcomed into the YELLOW HOUSE and the younger ones into the BRICK HOUSE. In these houses, the youngsters are guided toward completing their studies and receiving a diploma. The others who do not want to study are inserted into the world of work; they live in the GREEN HOUSE. Each year, about 200 youth pass through our programs.

Good job, you may think. That's true. But according to official statistics of the city where we live, every year there are about 2,000 boys and girls who drop out of school and families: runaway children. We should ask where the other 1,800 children are who do not attend schools, who don't live with a family and who are not in the welcoming center. They are in "no man's land." At any time they can blow up and they can destroy their lives by mines called alcohol, prostitution, theft, violence, prison, oppression.

Discovering this dramatic reality, we thought: "Since they don't come to us, we will go to them." So we decided to leave the suburbs, which are too comfortable and easy for us and we will go to the minefields of life, where 1,800 young boys and girls are wandering about dangerously. In this way, AGIT was born. It's a movement with few things: a multicolored minibus, a tent, two tables and four chairs. From 7 p.m. until 2 a.m., we go through the streets of death desperately looking for these teenagers. There are not many of us, but we are all filled with such passion and love for these young people. Yes, we are a bit crazy, but we really love these guys.



I can personally say that since we began this AGIT experience, my sleep has been terribly shortened but my life has been infinitely lengthened onto new horizons, dramatic and beautiful at the same time. In this gloomy and brutal "no man's land," where it seems that there is no room even for God, because it is filled with violent fights, the sexual abuse of minors, drunkenness and suicide, like Moses at the burning bush in the desert, I have found a new face of God. This God tells me: "Take off your shoes because this is a HOLY place. Yes, absurdly enough, this place is holy because His beloved young children are here. And He is with them. He never abandons them. So I have decided to leave the suburbs to go beyond, into no man's land, to stand beside these boys and girls.

On a dark and cold night, I met a 15 year-old girl who tied around my wrist a little cotton bracelet, telling me: "Whenever you look at this gift, remember to pray for us." I hate bracelets and rings and necklaces. I don't even wear the beautiful golden chain that my dear parents gave me on the day of my priestly ordination. But I now always wear this bracelet of string because it binds me lovingly to the so many and the too many children left to themselves. AGIT is in the style of Jesus who, having left the 99 sheep in the sheep-fold, went to look for the sheep lost on the dangerous clefts of the mountain. This is our mission.

Helping Seoul's Homeless Kids in the Spirit of Jesus

by Cristian Martini Grimaldi, Seoul, South Korea (A REPRINT)



Two teenagers with an AGIT volunteer (right) inside the charity program's tent. Twice a week volunteers go out to help Seoul's homeless youths.

With a minibus and a good heart, Italian missionary leads volunteers to give neglected teens hope

Lee Hyun seemed destined to wander the streets of Seoul after he ran away from a boarding school but a chance befriending of some people in a minibus changed his life. "My dad left my mom, me and my brother when I was very small," says 18-year-old Lee who lives on Seoul's outskirts. "My mother had to work so she sent me to a boarding school," Lee says. "That's where I lived until the age of 16 when I ran away because life there was too tough, and sometimes bigger kids would beat me," he says.

Lee became one South Korea's estimated 250,000 runaway children and for a year he wandered around the outskirts of the country's capital until he met his "AGIT friends," as he calls them. "They welcomed me, listened, helped and finally I went into the shelter for boys," says Lee. "Here I went back to school for my final year and I'm getting ready to take a diploma, then I will try to get a job."

AGIT is a Korean acronym that means "the car that takes care of the young." The program runs on a few things: the dedication of its volunteers and a multicolored minibus, a tent, two tables and four chairs. The program is fully funded via donations and its volunteers travel through the streets of the city's 'no man's land' looking for homeless teenagers to help.

Father Vincenzo Bordo, an Italian missionary, established AGIT in March last year. The priest initially arrived in Seongnam — a satellite city of Seoul — in 1990 and for his first four years in the East Asian nation he was an assistant pastor. He worked hard to integrate into his new environment and for two years he studied Korean. After being inspired by a nun who helped the poor, he opened a cafeteria for the elderly in 1993.



This bus is part of the AGIT program's effort to help Seoul's homeless youth.

Father Bordo likewise established a center called Annas House to help the homeless find jobs. The center also offers medical and psychiatric services. There he gave cultural classes and religious counseling. When he became aware of the homeless kids the Italian had to do something to help them.

"They may be abandoned by their parents but it doesn't mean they have to be alone," Father Bordo says. "So we decided to leave the suburbs, which have become almost too comfortable and easy for us," he says. "And we go out into the no man's land, where thousands of boys and girls are wandering about dangerously."

Three times a week, between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m., AGIT volunteers go out to help the homeless kids wandering the streets of Seoul. Not only do they offer the kids food and clothes they're there to listen and offer counseling as well.

Most of the homeless adolescents come from broken homes or have suffered some form of domestic abuse. Some of them end up in a life of crime or in the sex trade.

Typically these teenagers avoid shelters and prefer life on the streets. During colder months they may share small rooms. They tend to trust friends more than adults and for this reason they are always connected online with their friends through social networks.

To survive many of the kids take on small jobs, which are plentiful in South Korea, especially in the service industry. They generally work in the same place for no longer than a few weeks and get paid cash under the table.

"There are not many of us volunteers," says Father Bordo, "but we are all filled with such passion and love for these young people."

Father Bordo wears a cotton bracelet around his wrist that was given to him by one of the youths.

"Whenever you look at this gift, remember to pray for me," the girl told him. The priest says he usually dislikes bracelets, rings or necklaces but not this one. "I always wear this because it binds me lovingly to the children who are left to fend for themselves," he says.

One of the first young people to be helped by AGIT was a 20-year-old named Jin. "I never met my father," says Jin. "All I know is that he was a foreigner. After my mom got pregnant with me he ran away," he says. "For many years my mom raised me herself." Jin's mom ended up marrying another man and she was given to his grandmother for care. "I lived with her for a long time but the anger I had inside made me run away from her home several times," he says. Jin survived by working in a small Chinese restaurant where he washed dishes. "I hate my father and I am very angry with him. When I was very depressed I even tried to commit suicide," he admits.



Under the shelter of this tent, AGIT volunteers offer food, clothing and counseling to Seoul's homeless teenagers.

After meeting and becoming friends with Father Bordo and the AGIT volunteers, Jin had a change of tact and went back to live with his grandmother and finished his studies. After he graduated he entered the boys shelter that Father Bordo established. Jin is now aiming to get his driving license and is ready to begin a new life.

That is what AGIT is all about, says Father Bordo. "AGIT is in the style of Jesus who, having left the 99 sheep in the flock, went to look for the one sheep lost on the dangerous cliffs of the mountain. This is our mission," he says.

Success and Happiness

Maurizio GIORGIANNI, OMI

One day a migrant worker from Africa came to Emmaus Gwangju center asking for help.

He worked for more than one year in a factory in Gwangju area but he didn't receive his separation fee.

Since the negotiation with his boss was giving no result, we decided to report the case to the ministry of labor.

He was living and working at the present in a new place very far from Gwangju, so he decided to come to the center the previous day and sleep in the center.

He called me around 5:00 pm telling he was leaving his place. He arrived in Gwangju almost close to midnight. To tell you the truth I was a bit tired and angry waiting for him, because I had to go to my house in

Suwon, but it was a rainy day and thinking about how much he must have been tired too, I couldn't say a word.

He was just happy to find me there waiting for him and to find a warm room, a bed and a place where he could sleep and take a shower. His happiness made me calm down and I was happy for him and with him.

The next day we left together the center and go the ministry of labor. It was also raining. I was a bit worried and I was thinking what to say to the officer so that we could be successful and receive all the money. But during the travel we started talking and sharing many things. He told me about his life, his faith, and it was a very enjoyable time. The worries disappeared and we laughed and we were very happy.

At the ministry of labor the officer was waiting for us but not the boss. The officer called the boss on the phone to negotiate about the separation fee. After some calculations, the offices made a proposal to us. It was not what we expected and the money less than what we thought.

I was very sad for the worker but I let him decide what to do. He looked at me smiling and decided to accept the money. So after signing few papers we left the office and went to the car going back to Gwangju.

I was still disappointed and sad inside of me because of our unsuccessful trip, but in the car the worker was so happy, he was saying thanks to me and praising me for giving help to him, for making him feel at home. He even told me that he was happy just to stay with me and that I was a person who gives joy to the others... I was surprise about his reactions and his words, and listening to him I realized something very important about success and happiness.

Success and happiness are certainly related, but not in the way we usually think.

We think that success brings happiness in our life. So we try very hard to look for success in life hoping that we will be also happy. But sometimes the result is that the searching for success brings in us stress, worries, and finally unhappiness, because many times we have to face failures.

In reality it is not success that lead us to happiness, but as it happened that day with the worker from Africa, it is to find happiness in the simple moments of our life, to be grateful, to be happy for what we receive even though is not according to our expectation that makes the day, and the life a success.

Finally, it is not success that leads to happiness, but it is the happiness that we have inside and we give and share to the other that lead us to have a successful life. Being happy is a success.

I understood that lesson with the worker and I am grateful to him. Many other lessons I learn everyday being with the migrants. They are a gift to me and I hope you would welcome them as a gift in your life too. I wish for all of you a happy life, It will surely be a success.



Reflections on the Japanese Youth

Bro. Nobu YAGI, OMI

(Bro. Nobu has been the Youth Coordinator of the Takamatsu Diocese for 11 yrs.)

Quoting from a Japanese writer Haruo Oyanagi's works: *Hikikomoru Chiisa Na Tetsugakushatachi e* (To the Pseudo-Philosophers Who Are Detached From Reality) and *Otona Ga Tachidomarenakereba* (If Adults Refuse To Stop And See), I would like to stand in defense of today's youth. The keyword to my reflections is "abundance" or "affluence."

From the beginning of civilization up until recently, people lived in virtual deprivation and we



agree that it wasn't easy to be deprived of the basic necessities to live a decent life. We are thankful for the industrial development that put an end to the many sufferings that our parents and the generations before them had to endure mainly because of not having enough material things.

People have worked tremendously to be freed from deprivation and dreamed of the coming of an age when tools and machines will make our lives a little bit more convenient. Invention and manufacture powered by consumerism created an insatiable desire to have more, and buy more. Somehow, it is not really the kind of world that we have originally dreamed about. We have created a jungle of

goods and information.

Not having experienced the kind of deprivation that their parents did, today's youth are just overwhelmed by the abundance of goods in the market and the affluent lifestyle that many of them are exhausted or forced to bear unnecessary burdens in trying to keep up with their peers, trying to live up to people's expectations or simply trying to adapt to the demands of the new realities brought about by affluence. In other words, the mere multiplication of tools, appliances, gadgets, devices has only created some kind of a "monster" among many young people in Japan and the rest of the world.

Information highway or technology (IT) has even made the life of many young people burdensome. Many of them cannot handle the amount of information that are readily available to them. They are bombarded from all sides and are forced and challenged to make diverse choices bringing frustration and suffering. Many get sick and a number of them withdraw from society.

The adults blame the youth of today for lacking in "responsibility." The gap between today's youth and the generations before them is getting bigger. The youth look for answers from their elders but often-times the older generations don't have the answers. For today's Japanese youth, the lessons learned from "life of deprivation" are not enough to cope with the challenges posed by the age of abundance and affluence.

The search for meaning amidst abundance and affluence among the youth might be a window of opportunity for us to invite them to walk together on that path that Christ wants to show today's young people.

"Invisible Chains"

Jerry NOVOTNY, OMI

The article below is just one of the many that appear in Jerry NOVOTNY, OMI's blog. For more articles by Jerry visit: <https://jerry789.wordpress.com/>

Dear Friends for Life: The First ***"International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking"*** will be celebrated throughout the world on February 8, 2015. *The day is intended to **raise greater public awareness and encourage reflection and action** on the violence and injustice that impact victims of human trafficking.*



Human trafficking victimizes 27 million people each year. 70% of these are female victims who are trafficked into the commercial sex industry. Modern-day slavery is one of the most lucrative **illegal activities** in the world.



A common response to the problem of trafficking is to ask why the victims don't just run away. Pope Francis has described the **"invisible chains"** which have kept victims imprisoned and cut off from the rest of society. **These "chains" include** the **fear** that traffickers may kill or torture victims, **threats** against their family back home, **worry** about arrest for crimes they were forced to commit, **not knowing who to trust** or where to go, not having the **language** to communicate the facts of their situation, and **suspicion** of police and other officials based on life experiences.

Human trafficking and modern slavery occur *because some people do not accept that equal dignity and human rights apply to everyone.* All human beings have a role in challenging this mentality. In the Pope's words: **"The globalisation of indifference**, which today burdens the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters, requires all of us to forge a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity capable of giving them new hope and helping them to advance with courage amid the problems of our time and the new horizons which they disclose and which God places in our hands."



Together let us fight for the victims of this modern slave trade which continues to expand daily. **The Dalai Lama** warns: *"Change only takes place through action not through meditation and prayer alone."*

Pope Francis also encourages us to become active: *"All of us are called by God to be free, all are called to be sons and daughters, and each, according to his or her own responsibilities, is called to combat modern forms of enslavement."*

God Bless

Jerry Novotny, OMI

<https://jerry789.wordpress.com/>

ROPE (Recently Ordained Priests Encounter) in Hong Kong

Bernard ONDAP, OMI



Young Oblates of Hong Kong, Japan and Korea

Last May 3-7, eight young Oblates from 3 Oblate mission areas (*Japan, Korea and China*) gathered in Hong Kong for an On-going Formation Program meeting. The said gathering was labeled as ROPE which stands for *Recently Ordained Priests Encounter*. The acronym ROPE is really symbolical since it also stands for the very purpose of the gathering which is to strengthen and enrich the missionary zeal and bond of young Oblates as they face a new chapter in their missionary lives. The participants were: Japan (**Steve, Selva, Burns**); Korea (**Peter**); China- Hongkong (**Mark, Rey, Johnny, Paul**). The group missed the presence of Shitol and Yoniz. Shitol was not able to acquire the necessary visa on time while Yoniz went to the Philippines for a retreat.

This is the 2nd encounter where in the young Oblates from 3 mission areas collaborated for a joint On-going Formation Program. The 1st gathering was held in Japan last September 2016 through the invitation of Japan mission. The said gathering gave a positive impact on each young Oblate that they highly rec-

commended for another encounter. Through the generosity and warm hospitality of China-Hong Kong mission the 2nd encounter was made possible.

The encounter began with a Eucharistic celebration presided by Fr. Slawek, OMI, the China-Hongkong delegation superior. In his homily, with all enthusiasm, he happily shared to the young fellow Oblates his experiences as a young Oblate Polish missionary in Hong Kong. He also challenged the fellow Oblates to have an open heart as they share in God’s mission in wherever mission they are sent.



No Hong Kong “mafia”



Some serious discussion

Fr. Fernando Velazquez, another young Oblate currently pursuing a Doctorate degree on Missiology at the Gregorian University in Rome, facilitated and guided the young Oblates in their sharing and discussions. Fr. Fernando gave a very enriching talk about mission towards inter-cultural communities and the challenges that it brings to young Oblate missionaries. Since the participants were coming from different nationalities and ministry backgrounds, the gathering was indeed very informative and a sort of an encouragement for everyone. The participants also visited the different mission areas of the

China-Hong Kong mission as part of the program. The young Oblates were warmly welcomed by the students and Oblate mission partners from the 4 different schools where the Oblates are administering. One of the mission partners thanked the Oblates for giving a huge impact in the society through the school ministries.

After 2 days of sharing, discussion and mission visitations, the young Oblates went to the famous “the Peak” and “Ocean park” for some recreation and fellowship.

The participants would like to thank the China-Hong Kong mission and our mission partners for making this encounter a memorable one.



With students at an Oblate-run school

2017 SPRING MEETING: on the Acts of the 36th General Chapter

Summary of group discussions:

1. Mission and the New Faces of the Poor:

What are the new faces of the poor in our specific context?

- Smart phone and social media addicts
- Migrants (care givers, students etc.)
- Young people
- North Korean refugees
- Spiritual poverty of some Oblates
- Women segregation (victims of divorce, girl marriage and dysfunctional families)
- Mentally challenged
- Victims of natural disasters
- “Occasional Christians” (lack of basic catechism)

- The homeless
 - Street children
 - Lonely (elderly)
 - Prisoners and drop- outs in society
 - People hurt by the church
- Priorities, Concrete steps to answer the needs?*
- Study the situation (find out why they’ve become poor)
 - Education
 - Networking
 - Yoga
 - Our availability to reach out and build bridges with those at the peripheries

2. Mission with Youth:

How can we accompany the youth?

- Reach out to the youth and share their life and eventually offer accompaniment
- Collaboration with other Congregations
- Networking with youth groups

Priorities, Concrete steps to answer the needs?

- Listen to the youth and know them
- Recreation and Fellowship (coffee, movie, karaoke etc.)
- Seek support from parents
- Communication through media (Facebook, Messenger, LINE, etc.)
- Cooperating with networking
- Spiritual guidance

3. Formation for Mission:

What are the challenges we face in the unit concerning first and ongoing formation?

- How to attract people
- Trained formators
- Accompaniment of candidates in first formation
- Proper orientation for Oblate new comers
- Busy schedule and responsibilities
- Lack of personnel
- Differences in cultural backgrounds

Answers to the challenges?

- Spring meetings
- OMI documents (Founder's writings)
- Collaboration with other units and laity
- Sabbatical programs
- Commitment
- Follow up on guidelines on first formation
- Community gatherings for faith sharing

4. Mission and Interculturality:

What can we do to choose interculturality as a lifestyle, as a way of being in mission?

- An open mind, attitudes of dialogue and humility
- Mutual enrichment
- Learning the language, culture etc.

What concrete steps are needed to become a real prophetic sign in our mission?

- Living together is a prophetic sign of giving witness to others

5. Mission and Social Media:

How can we be present in the social media in order to use it as a tool for evangelization?

- Share our reflections, homilies, pastoral guidance on social media
- Use of media should lead to have person to person relationship.
- Proper use of media
- Our final evangelization is person to person, for which the media should lead people to personal contact with others
- Uploading sermons, religious thoughts

What can we do to prepare people for this ministry?

- Technology and social media should be included in the curriculum

6. Mission and Finance:

Are we transparent and accountable in the use of the goods and funds entrusted to us?

- Accountability and responsibility in using money, goods and resources (talents etc.)
- Sharing: Give back in gratitude for what the delegation has spent on us.
- Transparency

What can we do to change our mindset towards finances in order to share all what we receive and have for the good of the mission?

- Growth in awareness that what we use is Oblate



SPRING MEETING 2017