



Far East Star

Spring 2018

YEAR OF OBLATE VOCATIONS:

December 8, 2017 – January 25, 2019

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Pope Francis has called the Bishops around the world to convene for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will be held in Rome in October 2018. The theme of the Synod will be "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." The aim is to accompany the young people in their journey to maturity and in their struggle to discern what to do with their lives. The Holy Father also reminds the young people of today the words of Jesus to his disciples who asked him "Teacher... where are you staying" and to which he replied "Come and see." (Jn1:39) "Jesus looks at you and invites you to go with him amidst the noise and confusion seemingly prevalent in the world today" says Pope Francis as he exhorts the young people of today to heed the call of Jesus to make a difference in the Church and in the world today.



Our Superior General, Father Louis LOUGEN, in his letter to the congregation on December 8, 2017 said: "In response to the call of the General Chapter, I announce the "Year of Oblate Vocations" from December 8, 2017 to January 25, 2019. The theme is that from the Congress of Vocations of 2016: Come and See! (Jn1:39): Focusing on the Joy and Generosity of Our Oblate Life. This "Year of Oblate Vocations" will both give support to and be strengthened by Pope Francis' call for a year dedicated to "Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment."

The Delegation of Japan and Mission of Korea join the whole congregation in praying for vocations and discerning how we attract young people to our lifestyle. After Christmas last year, instead of the usual party for Oblates only, we gathered in Koga with a good number of young people from our parishes (read Bernard ONDAP's article on page 4).

The whole Church of Japan is experiencing a serious draught in vocations.

To get an overall picture of the Japanese Church in terms of numbers, please read “The Japanese Church in a Nutshell” on page 3. As Oblates, when we come face to face with the problem of local vocations, we have to look at the situation of the whole local church.

From the DELEGATION SUPERIOR



Dear Brothers,

In the General guidelines for the Year of Oblate Vocations it is mentioned that during the Year of Oblate Vocations, *“we listen to some vocational stories in the Old Testament.....we also reflect on our own vocation stories, share them with others, renew ourselves in the calling we received some years ago and continue to receive today”*.

Recently in preparing my homily for the Sunday liturgy, I came across a vocation story that of Samuel (1Sam. 3). Samuel would not have perceived his calling had it not been for his aged mentor Eli. I think the call of Samuel invites us also to reflect on our vocation stories and to remember our mentors who have been instrumental on our vocational journey.

I remember as a teenager I used to serve mass and attend different activities of pious associations in my parish. It was mainly because of a very holy and elderly parishioner, who used to encourage young people to come to church. I always looked up to him and took his advice. One day he came to me and said that he was praying for me to become a priest! This always stayed with me especially as I was going through different stages of formation. It was very encouraging to know that he was journeying with me in spirit. As a newly ordained priest I was happy to get his blessings, and when he died a year after my ordination I was invited to preside at his funeral mass. Last year when I was home to celebrate my 25 years of priesthood in the parish, I very much felt his absence. I believe that he continues to pray for me from up above. Whenever I share my vocation story with others I remember him and proudly say that he was my “Eli”. I am sure there are “Elis” in your life too.

During this Year of Oblate Vocations, as we pray to God to send us generous young men passionate for Jesus, it would be also good to remember and pray for those who have opened the doors for us in life. Perhaps at a crucial moment in our lives they pointed us in the right direction and we are grateful to their act of kindness.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the organizers and the participants of our Christmas gathering with youth on Dec. 27 in Koga, Fukuoka. I think the opening liturgy for the Year of Oblate Vocations was well organized with the involvement of youth and a few lay associates. I hear a follow-up of that, is already being planned by the youth committee. As we continue to pray for vocations, let us also try in our own little ways to introduce to the youth who the Oblates are especially through our way of life.



Brad ROZAIRO

The JAPANESE CHURCH - In a Nutshell

The BONSAI Church

Bonsai is a Japanese art of growing trees on a pot under controlled environment. For example, a bonsai apple tree may successfully bear apples the size a little bigger than peas. *Bonsai* is an art of stunting the growth a tree for artistic value.

The Japanese Church has often been called a “*bonsai* church” because it doesn’t grow much in number. However, recent statistics show that during the last 10 years or so, the numbers (under different variables such as number of baptisms, number of deaths, number of priests, religious, seminarians) have changed from “very slow growth” to “slow decline” as the statistics below indicate.

NUMBERS Speak:

Here are a few totals and comparisons (Japan has 16 dioceses present in 43 Prefectures) Source: CBCJ Yearbook 2015 and 2018.

Total Population of Japan: 128+ Million

Total Catholic Population: 434,054 as of end of 2017; (436, 505 in 2015); (436,291 in 2014); (436,670 in 2013); (438,079 in 2012).

IMPORTANT: Total Catholic Population only inclusive of catholics registered in parishes. Not included are foreigners all over Japan whose numbers are estimated at several millions. Data as to how many foreign catholics attend Sunday masses are also unavailable but number of masses for foreigners are on steady rise: 716 masses in 2018; 628 masses in 2015.

Total Number of Baptisms: 5508 (as of end of 2017); 5665 (in 2015).

Total No. of Deaths: 4404 (as of end of 2017); 4305 (in 2015).

Total No. of Priests (diocesan/religious/native and foreign combined):

1349 (as of beginning of 2018); (1409 in 2015).

Total No. of Seminarians in Theology: (diocesan/religious/native and foreign combined): **66** (as of beg. of 2018); (**79** in 2015).

Total No. of Religious Sisters: 5018 (as of beg. of 2018); (5303 in 2015).

Total No. of Bishops: 23 (in 2018); (27 in 2015).

OTHER REALITIES Worth Noting

As we notice the gradual decline in the number of registered catholics, we also take note that Japanese are living longer while birth rate continues to be very low. Even in our parishes, people are living longer and most of the active churchgoers are old people. The youth, while they are in school, usually have no time to come to Church because of pressing school schedule that includes extra-curricular activities even on Sundays.

There are no accurate statistics as to how many registered catholics are actively participating in church activities, especially Sunday masses, but it is estimated that only one-fifth of the total number come to at-

tend Sunday masses. The number of the “un-churched” catholics (those who for various reasons have stopped coming to church) is significantly high.

If the numbers of churchgoers are unstable and mostly old people attend, the income of the parishes is bound to go down. Non-catholic weddings which used to be a lucrative source of income for many parishes have also gone down with many Japanese avoiding expensive weddings. It is said that nowadays one of the main income of the parishes is from funerals!

Foreigners in Japan: We are not talking about transient visitors, tourists or those who are here on company assignments. There is a big numbers of foreigners who are here doing odd jobs, many are “technical trainees” or on “student visa” with the purpose of finding jobs. Also many are married to Japanese, etc. Chinese and Koreans are the biggest groups of foreigners who are here to find jobs. Many foreigners also fall prey to organized human-trafficking. Filipinos comprise the biggest catholic group among foreigners. Will they (Filipinos and other catholic foreigners like Vietnamese, Brazilians, Peruvians, etc.) be the pillars of the Japanese Church in the future? In fact, there are already a few vocations from children of Japanese and foreigner inter-marriages.

Perhaps, instead of portraying the Japanese Church as a “dying Church,” it may be more accurate to look at it as the Body of Christ shedding its old self and evolving into a new form of Church, from an “elitist” Church to a Church that embraces people from poor countries. Indeed, there are many factors that have to be taken into consideration as we discern our future as a foreign group that is experiencing serious vocation shortage in the Japanese Church.

OMI Japan-Korea Launches the “Year of Oblate Vocations”

by Bernard ONDAP



After celebrating Christmas with the parishioners and co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord, Oblates in Japan usually gather every year in Kochi City for their Christmas party. Oblates from different parts of Japan would bring with them the beautiful and inspiring Christmas stories that they encountered in their respective ministries. However, there was a little twist in this year’s (2017) Christmas gathering. Instead of having it in Kochi City, it was held in Fukuoka City, a place more accessible especially to our brother Oblates from Korea. Instead of limiting the gathering among Oblates and honorary Oblates only, some of the youth and parishioners were invited. Instead of the usual 3-4 hour gathering, it was made into a 6-hour gathering.

Why such a change? It was a change with a cause. It was a change to respond to Fr. Superior General’s call to make the “Year of Oblate Vocations” meaningful and fruitful. It was a change so that the Oblates in Japan-Korea could formally launch the “Year of Oblate Vocations” with a Eucharist celebration together with some invited young men, MAMI supports and mission partners.

More than as expected, 14 young men responded to the invitation of the Oblates. Most of the mission areas where the Oblates are working are well represented. Korean seminarians and candidates together with the Mission Superior, Fr. Maurizio, OMI, also graced the affair. It was indeed a multi-cultural gathering. Through the generosity of some parishioners and Oblates who provided the necessary simultaneous translations, the discussions and sharing among the participants were smooth.

An hour before the Mass, the young men and some Oblates gathered at the Akenohoshi Kindergarten conference room for an orientation and ice-breaker. To start the gathering, the group sang “Joy to the World”

in English, Japanese and Korean languages simultaneously. Though, as a group, it was the first time that the participants met but it did not hinder them but giving a well-blended song. In a very creative way Fr. Steve, OMI, facilitated the “getting to know each other” portion. Instead of the usual self-introduction wherein the participants would stand up one by one and introduced one’s self, the participants were asked to move around, introduce one’s self and gather as many information from as many people as possible. The allotted 15-minute for self-introduction was not enough that everybody begged for an extension. It was indeed a good start for a gathering.

Bro. Yagi, OMI then gave an insightful background why the Oblates have invited the young men. With the use of some videos, Fr. Bernard, OMI introduced to the young men who the Oblates are, what charism do the Oblates have, and the present Oblate missionaries ministering in Japan-Korea delegation. The first session, ended with the video clip featuring the “We are Oblates” song.

At 11:30AM, to formally launch the “Year of Oblate Vocations” a Eucharistic celebration was held at Koga Catholic Church. It was a trilingual mass. The liturgy of the word, hymns and prayers of the faithful were done in Korean, English and Japanese. During the offering, the young men, representative of the Oblates and of the parishioners offered candles in front of the baby Jesus and the Oblate cross as a sign of their commitment to be a missionary in their own little ways.

A simple and very international buffet lunch was served at the kindergarten hall. Filipino menudo, Sri Lankan curry, Indian chicken masala, Japanese sashimi and sushi were some of the viands served. After an hour of eating, laughing and story sharing, the young men introduced themselves to the Oblates, MAMI members and parishioners (*those who were not present during the morning session*). As a response, the Korean seminarians and candidates with the skillful display of guitar skills of their Superior, Fr. Maurizio, rendered some Korean Christmas carols to the group. The Oblates then sang from their hearts (*never mind the tone*) the “We are Oblates” song with Fr. Bradly, (Japan-Korea delegation superior) on the keyboard and Fr. Maurizio on the guitar. Though, it was the first and final practice as a delegation, the Oblates received some praises from the audience. The entertainment portion would not be complete without the much-awaited BINGO game. The lucky winners received different meibutsu (special products) from different prefectures in Japan. The group then sang the Salve Regina to end the Christmas lunch.



Oblate Vocations Gathering, Koga Parish, Dec. 28, 2017

For the last session, the young men and a few Oblates gathered again at the conference room for the vocation storytelling of Fr. Steve, OMI and Sch. Simeon, OMI. The sharing(s) were concise yet inspiring. The young men then make turns in giving their impressions and insights with regard the simple Christmas party and launching of the “Year of Oblate Vocations”. To give the young men some more words of wisdom Fr. Bradly (*delegation superior*), gave the closing remarks. As a token of appreciation for responding to the invitation of the Oblates, Fr. Bradly gave to each young man an Oblate crucifix as a souvenir.

These young men came and had a glimpse of our life as Oblates. We do hope that they would come and participate again in our planned gatherings within the year.

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE OBLATE VOCATIONS GATHERING



Celebrating Mass



Participants introduce themselves



Procession of Candles



Offering of Candles



The Mass



"We are Oblates... sent to the poor."



Oblates trying to keep the tune



Oblates and future Oblates

Korean Mission Has A New Superior

Anselmo RYU HI GU was installed as the new Superior of the Korean Mission in early February. (Councillors are Shitol NOKREK and Maurizio GIORGIANNI). Anselmo was born on March 24, 1969 in Gang Geung So. Korea to a “very catholic” family, two of his sisters joined the Franciscans (one died early). He joined the Oblates in 1998; studied English in the Philippines in 2000, did more language study in Australia and joined the Pre Novitiate and Novitiate programs of the Australian Province in Melbourne. He eventually made his First Vows also in Australia in 2003, went back to Korea where he made his Final Profession in 2007. He was ordained to the Diaconate in February, 2007 and Priesthood in Suwon, Korea in August, 2007. Among the works he did: Social work with Vincenzo 2007-2009; Missionary experience in Bangladesh 2010 to 2012; He was the Vocation Director when named Mission Superior. He also works as Chaplain of A-Joo Hospital, the biggest hospital in Suwon, So. Korea. Good Luck Anselmo!



New Mission Superior is installed



After the installation

Korean Mission Welcomes New Member



Just call me Sobuj

Sobuj Samuel SIMSANG of the Delegation of Bangladesh received his Obedience to the Korean Mission and has arrived in Korea last February 2. Sobuj was ordained to the Priesthood on February 3, 2017 in Bangladesh. Welcome to the Delegation of Japan-Korea!



Welcome to Korea!

Formation News, Korea

by Shitol NOKREK

In the year of the vocation, we, the Oblate Mission in Korea is blessed with the six students. Among them Bro. KIM Ok Ki (Simeon) is finally professed and doing his masters on theology in Korea, Bro. LIM Joon Bin (John the Baptist) is a scholastic having exposure program in China and will be joining the theological program of the Philippine Province in August, WON Hyon Heo (Paul) and KIM Hyeon Jo (Justin) who are going for their pre-novitiate in Mannar and novitiate in Bandarewala in Sri Lanka next month and PARK Moon Gi (Peter) and KIM Sung Hoo (Sabino) are going through the catechetical course while residing at the House of Formation in Suwon. We thank God for these young men who are willing to become Oblates and want to serve most abandon. We pray for them and wish them all the very best.



Scholastic Br. Simeon



Paul, Justin, Sabino and Peter sing with Fr. Maurizio



Joon Bin "JB" to Manila

I Miss...

by Maurizio GIORGIANNI

I have to confess to you that since 4 years I have got a close friend. I spend with her sometimes taking a walk and relaxing. Her name is Luna. Don't worry, she is not my girlfriend, she is my dog. She is a Jindo and I had it since she was one month old. To tell you the truth I learnt many things from my dog. She is sincere, she never says lies, and she expresses her feelings very well. When I got her, one of my first concerns was to give her good place to stay, a nice garden and a nice doghouse. I thought that was what she needs and I make it very comfortable. It happens sometimes that I have to go abroad for long or short times, my students living with me in the community, told me that Luna, when I am out, she never goes to



sleep in her house, she sleeps under a tree looking at the main gate... waiting for me. I thought I gave her all she needs, a house, food. I realized that what she most needed was not that. Luna needed my time, my presence, walking with her; she needed a close relation with me. She was waiting for that every day. Thank to Luna for teaching me that.

When I am in Gwangju Emmaus center, I always ask to myself if I am giving to the migrants what they really need. They come many times asking for help, they get sick, the need to be hospitalized, they need money, they need to learn Korean, they need to be payed properly...so many needs. Sometimes I wish I could have a bigger place, Gwangju Emmaus center is very small. I wish I could have more rooms, more money to buy food for all, to pay bills of the hospitals etc....but it came to my mind Luna. If I have a big center, a lot of money, a big organization nice programs for the migrants, and I am always out to look for money, build structures, etc., Am I sure that I am giving them what they really need? If I do not have time for them, I do not spend time with them, share the food with them, walk with them, feel the hot and the cold with them; probably I am not giving them what they really need. Last summer one Filipina broke her Achilles tendon. She had to undergo surgery and rehabilitation. We were together almost every day, going back and forth from the hospital, being there for the surgery, going to visit every day for two weeks. Many migrants generously gave help. They went to bring her food, someone was working in the morning and going to sleep at night in the hospital, assist her in anything. One day she told me: "father you are my real father, and I understand what the community is". I was touched and through that sentence, she told me what she really needed... **"A father" and "A family"**. When I am out of the country, when I come back, the migrants tell me "father we missed you". I think they really mean it, I think they are telling me what is more important for them, which is **to be with them** than to be busy only **doing something for them**. Gwangju Emmaus center is very poor from some points of view of (space, money, etc.), but I have the dream to make it rich with fraternity and the human relation-

ship that is among us. We are in lent season, preparing for Easter. I think when Jesus became man for us and shared with us even death, he wanted to show us that he **wants to be with us**, and that we **are part of the family of God**. Emmanuel means, **“God is with us”**. If we **let God be with us**, enter in our heart and if we try **not only to do something for someone but also to be with someone, to be a family for someone**. I hope many migrants can find in our **Christian community a family, people that welcome them and want to be with them**. The migrants miss that so much.



A day of outing for the migrants



At the migrants' center in Gwangju



Passing on the Olympic torch

The Olympic runner

Now iconic picture of Vincenzo bearing the Peong Chang Winter Olympic torch. (Factoid: The torch is 700mm in length representing the altitude of the Olympic venue Peong Chang which is 700 meters above sea level) Run Vincenzo run. Hope you did not have to give back that nice looking outfit!

2018 Asia-Oceania Regional Conference (AORC) in India

The annual meeting of the Major Superiors of our region was held in Chennai, India from Feb. 19 ~ 24. The theme of the Conference was “Poor in Asia” with special emphasis on the social, political, economic, religious and cultural situation in India.

Some issues that were highlighted in the presentation of our resource persons were child abuse, child labor, caste violence etc. Certain visuals that were presented to us during the talks helped us understand better the ‘hidden faces’ of the poor in India.

As we continue to see the poor with their many, and new faces, the question that keeps challenging us is, as Oblates how committed are we in serving them not just in our own units but as a region.

Apart from the talks and discussions, we also had time for prayer, sharing, recreation and some sightseeing. Thanks to the Oblates of the Province of India and also to the Society of Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI), founded by Fr. Arul Raj OMI for their hospitality and kindness.

Brad Rozairo



Opening liturgy



Welcome address



Indian style welcome!



"Poor in Asia" by Fr. Maria Arul Raja SJ



An evening with the Scholastics



Visit to Oblate (Aanmodaya) Ashram



AORC family



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

As announced by the Delegation Superior in his email February 15, the following CHANGE of ASSIGNMENTS are to take effect by April 8, 2018:

Bernard ONDAP: from Priest In Charge of Yoshizuka & Minami-Kazuya Parish to Priest In Charge of Koga Parish, Fukuoka Diocese.

Jude PEIRISPULLE: from Koga Parish Priest In Charge to Toyohashi Parish (Nagoya Diocese) Priest In Charge.

Robinson ROBERT: from Sanbonmatsu (Takamatsu Diocese) Priest In Charge to Yoshizuka & Minami-Kazuya Priest In Charge.

Bill MAHER: from Mizumaki Parish (Fukuoka Dioc.) Priest In Charge to Yoshizuka & Minami-Kazuya cooperator.

Stephen ROSARIO: from cooperator in Koga Parish to Priest In Charge in Naruto Parish (Takamatsu Diocese).

Ken-ichi FURUKAWA: takes over from Ray BOURGOIN as Delegation Treasurer.

WELCOME!

Fr. Peter STOLL, General Councillor for Asia-Oceania.

Fr. Marc DUSSUREAULT, Treasurer General.

They will be our Resource Persons for our SPRING MEETING, April 2-6, 2018 in Fukuoka.



*Happy
Easter to all*