

The Young Oblates Gathering - 2018

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It was June 3, 2018. The Young Oblates arrived in Korea for the gathering. There were nine Oblates who joined the gathering. Frs. Shen and Bladimyr from Hong Kong Delegation, Frs. Bernard, Steve and Selva from Japan Delegation and Frs. Shitol, Peter, Sobuj from Korean Mission and Samuel, who is a missionary in Kenya, was back for his holiday and joined us.

On June 3, Sunday, we all arrived from different places and went to the retreat house at Aron, which is run by the Suwon diocese in South Korea. The gathering took place from June 3-7, 2018. The first day was day for relaxation and the time for getting to know each other. The second day we started our program. Fr. Simon, a professor who teaches moral ethics at Suwon Catholic University helped us during our whole program. He also enlightened us with a valuable conference on "East Asian Church and its growth." In this conference, he touched on the growth of the church in China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. He said "Every country is now touched by modernism, fewer vocations and local resources causing our strength to become weak. The big expectation is from China, but due to modernization, people are less interested in religion. In such a situation, Korea can be a model and resource country. Korea can come up with its material and personnel resources to evangelize in East Asia. Comparing to the other countries, Korea is better and more resourceful."

In addition to his talk, Fr. Simon took us to visit different Shrines in South Korea in order to know the Catholic history of the church. One of them was "Cheongjinam Shrine" where the Catholic Church in Korea started. We were also enriched and delighted with the history told by the priest in charge of the said Shrine. In this sharing we came to realize how not the priests, but local faithful played an important role in spreading the Good News in Korea. Their determination, devotion and dedication helped the Catholic Church in Korea grow. We also visited Haemi Martyrdom Holy Ground where 1,000 Catholics in Chungcheongnam-do were buried alive during the time between the Byeongin Persecution in 1866 (3rd year of King Gojong) and 1882. At that time, Catholics were executed outside Haemieupseong Fortress' Seomun Gate (West Gate). As it was difficult to execute them one by one, the martyrs were buried together alive in a big hole.

It was a very fruitful gathering. We were able to enrich our mutual relationship, as well as, getting to know about East Asian Churches. We also enriched ourselves by understanding not only about the local church but also about the ministries of the Korean Mission. We thank the Superiors of China and Japan delegations for making this gathering possible. We pray for each other that this kind of

gathering will increase and may always help us to know the church history of East Asia, its culture in order to help us evangelize the poor and marginalized. May God, Mother Mary and St. Eugene bless us all, and our ministries.



