

## OMI Japan-Korea launches the “Year of Oblate Vocations” - Fr. Bernard Ondap OMI

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.



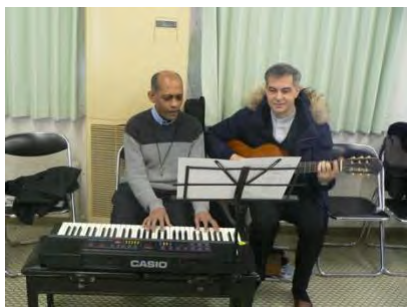
More than as expected, 14 young men responded to the invitation of the Oblates. Most of the mission areas where the Oblates are working are well represented. Korean seminarians and candidates together with the Mission Superior, Fr. Maurizio, OMI, also graced the affair. It was indeed a multi-cultural 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

Getting to know each other

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.



Bro. Yagi inspiring the youth

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

Fr. Iru, Fr. Bradly, Fr. Maurizio

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

The musicians...jack of all trades

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. 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.

Rendering a song to Mother Mary,  
SALVE REGINA



Listening intently to Fr. Steve's vocation story

Actively participating in the Mass



Bro. Yagi singing the Psalm



Candle Offering



Communion Song in Korean





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***Above Photos Enlarged***























