



200 Years of

Missionary Endeavor

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Preparing for the Congress

Delegation of Japan-Korea

BACKGROUND: The last congress we had was in June, 2007 held in Mefu. That was the time when we were preparing for the transition from a “General Delegation” to a Delegation under a particular Province. It was the culmination of the Immense Hope Project. In that meeting, we identified the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities that we faced as a unit waiting to be re-born in the light of the guidelines set by the Immense Hope Program. Frs. Firth and Labaglay from the General Administration and Fr. Tanudtanud (Philippine Province) came to help us go through the process (Please refer to the printed sheets).

In October 2010, we became a delegation of the Colombo Province with our own statutes and rules.

I

GOALS: (WHY the Congress? WHAT do we want to achieve: Long-term and immediate goals) The 35th General Chapter has called us to conversion under the Five Headings: Community, Oblate Mission, Service of Leadership and Authority, Formation and Financial Stewardship (Please refer to your copies of the chapter document). The Introduction says:

What was needed, it was felt, was something brief, more specifically directive, focused on our theme of conversion, and highlighting very specific areas of conversion to which we feel we are called at this time. Our document The Chapter Call to Conversion is predicated on these premises. We state, almost apologetically, that we are not necessarily offering new challenges or challenges beyond those to which our Constitutions and Rules and past General Chapters have called us, but rather that we are offering some important challenges that need to be highlighted in our Oblate world at this time in our history. We leave these challenges with you, inviting you, as we were invited time and again at this Chapter, to empty our heads of judgments, our hearts of cynicism, and our wills of fear.

In his letter to the congregation on the occasion of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception last year, The Superior General reiterated the call to Conversion of the 35th General Chapter, particularly in the five fields mentioned. In the

same letter, he underlined the urgent need for us to make the serious effort to invite new members: *Without new members we will not survive for long and the poor will no longer be served by our charism. Also, to work specifically to invite new members to our religious family is to believe in our future and the importance of our work and ministry. It is when a family no longer believes that it has a worthwhile future that it stops welcoming new life into itself.*

II

REALITIES WE FACE IN OUR UNIT: Though we were blessed with two ordinations plus the entry of three new aspirants in Korea recently, on the Japan-side, we have suffered from “zero vocations” to the priesthood during the past number of years. The unit has been a beneficiary of manpower support from several Asian units but the seriousness of total absence of local vocations in Japan challenges our very presence in this country. If we continue not to attract Japanese vocation to the Oblate way of life, we should ask ourselves the difficult question: WHY?

The arrival of new missionaries from India and Sri Lanka has not only changed our demographics but has also forced us to change our approach to accommodate our new members who come from different cultural backgrounds and different theological training. We who have been here ahead of them are being challenged to create a common vision that will be inclusive of the different ways of perception of the mission. Furthermore, if more young Oblates are interested in joining our mission, what vision can we offer them? What kind of work do we have for them? What future for the mission can we envision together?

Aging of some members is another reality that we face as the unit. Three of our members have passed away during the past few years and a few are facing serious health problems. A few are advanced in age but still make an effort to be “useful” in various ways. Despite the aging of the unit and the health issues that some of us face we are thankful for the excellent health benefits that we enjoy especially in Japan and Korea.

The new members are painfully learning the rudiments of the mission. They need our full support as the new ones learn the language and as some of them take over from some of our responsibilities. Whether they like it or not, the young members will have to take care of many of aging members in the years to come.

We also take pride in the fact that despite our small number, we are sending two members to a different mission! It is sad to see a member go back to his home Province to retire but at the same time it is a moment to rejoice and to recognize the

hands of God in our life as Oblate missionaries.

III

GOALS (Immediate and Long-term. What we want to achieve):

With the limited time left before the Congress, let us take a look at what we have, let us take an inventory of some sort, of what we have accomplished, where we have failed, what lessons can we learn and from here, where we want to go.

A Vision-Mission Statement: Does it still describe us as we are? Does it express our mission and our vision?

“As Jesus’ mission was to bring hope to the poor and since the OMI charism is to serve the most abandoned, we in Japan also want to walk in that direction. We seek out those who cry out for salvation in Japan, wherever they are. We conceive this vision to be done in community, in communion with God, with our brother Oblates, Church and Society. We shall be ministering to:

-the Migrants

-the Youth

-Social Problems

-Advocacy

B Five Areas of Oblate Life mentioned by the 35th General Chapter: Where do we stand Individually and as a Unit with regard to:

COMMUNITY

OBLATE MISSION

SERVICE OF LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

FORMATION

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

C Challenge of the Triennium: Theme for the First Year: A NEW HEART
Harnessing the richness of the Triennium preparation materials.

IV

REVIEW the present landscape in Japan. (We can follow the same strategy

introduced during the meeting in Mefu in 2007).

We need to:

1. Identify Internal Opportunities for growth on mission.
Identify Internal Threats to mission growth
Identify External Opportunities for growth of mission
Identify External Threats to mission growth
2. Recognize our Internal Strengths and Weaknesses.
Recognize the Weaknesses and Strengths of the mission externally.
3. If we are to paint a picture of the Unit now, how would that picture look like? How would we like that picture be, 10 years from now?

V

POST CONGRESS: If we are to make a LIST OF WHAT WE WANT TO DO during the next FIVE YEARS, what would that list consist of? According to Importance? If limited to ten “most urgent?”

COMMUNITY & MISSION: Japan - Korea

Articulating the Direction:

What we want to achieve in the next five to ten years?

❑ WHERE WE ARE TODAY AS OMI of JAPAN – KOREA DELEGATION

Are the original reasons for Oblate presence: *“If no one else will, then we must go!”* is still valid? - *Oblate Foundation 1948* -

Ground situation of the Church in Japan, in 1940s

- Post war context, complete destruction of moral, physical, spiritual and economic.
- It is around this time that there was a call for missionaries who could respond positively to the spiritual and other basic needs of this devastated country.
- at the unwavering behest of Bishop Yoshigoro Taguchi, Ordinary of Osaka for missionaries from overseas, touched the zealous heart of Fr. Leo Deschatelets, OMI, the then Superior General, who is reported to have said: *“If no one else will, then we must go!”*. Thus was born the Oblate mission in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Ground situation of the Oblates: RESPONSE

- ❖ the first missionaries from Eastern American Province arrived Japan on November 29, 1948.
- ❖ They were entrusted to a quasi-parish Shin Itami and a small Kindergarten. Thereafter the Oblate apostolate spread out to other area
- ❖ Popular missions were: parishes and Kindergartens

Ground situation of the Church today

- The church in Japan continues to remain a minority. The old way of thinking that the more dioceses you have the more the church is present
- the immigration from various countries doubled and that’s the bone the Church in Japan has to chew and realize a whole new structure and vision.
- the Bishops are realizing that these immigrants are their responsibility. Some dioceses have more foreigners than Japanese.
- The Bishops want the missionaries to respond to this situation and help them.
- The Church continues to struggle to find its proper place in the wider Japanese society.
- It is very inward looking and has hardly made a dent in the society as a whole.

Ground situation of the Oblates today

- ❖ The Oblates co-exist with the struggling Japanese Church. Oblates came to Japan to answer a need at the time, and we continue to be present and to be of service to the local Church especially in areas where we think we are needed most.
- ❖ From the time of arrival of the first Oblate missionaries, parish work has been a major involvement.

Specialized Apostolate

As years went by, Oblates got involved in other **specialized apostolates**.

Apostolates: prison, apostolate to **substance-abuse dependents, orphanage, centre for battered women, psychological and counselling** services for juvenile delinquents and parents, apostolate to the **hearing impaired** and in recent years, **Pro-Life** apostolate and the vast area of apostolate to **foreign migrant workers**.

Priorities & future ministry

- ❖ There is now an influx of a younger generation with new ideas. With the new vision the priorities have been identified as:
Youth Ministry, Advocacy Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

- ❖ With the new restructuring of the Delegation that the greater portion of the members of the mission are/will be from the third world with new visions and ways of approaching problems.
- ❖ More lay people will most probably get involved, because finally some are recognizing the fact that we can't do it all.

❖ CHALLENGES

Oblate Personnel

- There are five Japanese Oblates (4 priests and 1 Oblate brother) and there are no seminarians although there is one young man who is a pre-novice in Sri Lanka.
Formation: Lack of vocation is big problem being experienced by all dioceses as well as almost all religious (women and men) congregations in Japan.
- The Delegation is heavily burdened by the aging of its members. **Strength of ministers**
Reduced ministry (90-80) 4; mostly active (79-70) 6; active (69-30) 13.
- Average age 59 (2012)
- It will continue to depend on other units especially in the Asian region to shore up its dwindling manpower resources. add to the "unpopularity" of Japan as destination for starting missionaries.

- ❑ **JOURNEY CONTINUES:** Mission to vice-province (1968), Korean mission entrusted to Japan (1990) General Delegation to join Colombo Province (2010).

SOUTH KOREA MISSION

Population & Ethnicity: South Korea is one of the most ethnically homogeneous societies in the world, with more than 99% of inhabitants having Korean ethnicity. Koreans call their society "the single race society".

There are migrant workers from Southeast Asia and increasingly from Central Asia.

Political history: There is a heavy anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea due to a number of unsettled Japanese-Korean disputes, many of which stem from the period of Japanese occupation after the Japanese annexation of Korea.

Christianity: Korea must be unique in that the first seeds of Christianity were planted there by lay people.

Catholic Church: The Roman Catholic Church in South Korea has seen prodigious growth in recent years, increasing its membership by 70% in the past ten years. Part of this growth can be attributed to the Church's relatively positive perception by the general public for its role in the democratization of South Korea, its active participation in various works of social welfare, and its respectful approach to interfaith relationship and matters of traditional Korean spirituality.

OBLATE FOUNDATION IN KOREA - 1989

The Oblate mission of Korea was duly established by the Superior General, Fr. Marcello Zago, in Council on June 12, 1989 and on the same date entrusted to the Vice-Province of Japan and certified again March 1, 1990. As of October 3, 2003, it was entrusted by the Superior General in Council to the General Delegation of Japan. Thereafter six years later the Japan-Korea Unit became a Provincial Delegation, attached to the Colombo Province, Sri Lanka, in 2010.

The purpose of launching out to Korea was:

- Fr. Zago and his Council saw Korea as an opportunity to enter China especially if Korea should succeed with local vocations.
- Koreans are probably by culture and language (especially Chinese characters) closer to the Chinese people.
- Korea being a dynamic Church Fr. Zago envisaged and hoped that there will be local vocations.
- Korea has been historically a bridge between China and Japan.

- One day there will be a possibility to enter even North Korea, where there is no church over there.

Oblates felt dismayed and lost and were facing a great impasse. They had been sent to found a mission in Korea, but the fact of the matter was that they were being "refused" by the local Church. They deeply felt that Korea had no need for them.

MINISTRY

Special Mission has 3 main activities:

- A centre for the homeless: Anna's House (We serve 450/520 people every day (Monday to Saturday))
- Four houses for street children
- An Office to promote the knowledge of dyslexia and help the dyslexic children.

The Care for Migrants in Diocese of Suwon has two goals:

A social goal: build relationships between migrants and local.

A pastoral goal is to help and foster life of faith of the catholic migrants and to witness the gospel and God's love.

Hospital Chaplain

Started in 1996 at the invitation extended by the Samsung hospital, which is close to Oblate house in Seoul.

Formation: Regarding first formation is out of Korea.

Regarding ongoing formation Mission does not have an organised programme (s). Oblates join the programmes of the delegation Japan-Korea and also other program that are conducted by the Congregation.

Evaluation: 10th Anniversary of Oblate presence:

- a long evaluation session on Oblate life, mission, finances and administration.
- Evaluation time was an opportunity to come to know each other and to have a better understanding of the joys, pains and expectations of one another in the community.
- This process has made us aware to go deeper and to reflect on how to share our Oblate charism with the Korean Church at large.
- there is a felt need to clarify the meaning of our presence in Korea.
- We march forward facing courageously the concerns and challenges, taking them as opportunities to grow personally, as a community and as a Church – the community of believers.
- Though we are a small community, yet our presence has made a big 'different' in the life of the people and to some extent to the religious men and women.

Need to update with the latest about Korea. Pl. ask from Maurizio

❑ Mefu - Osaka Meeting: April 2007 & Follow Up July 2007

The purpose of Mefu meeting was to clarify Delegation's MISSION VISION statement for next 10 years:

"As Jesus 'mission was to bring hope to the poor and since the OMI charism is to serve the most abandoned, we in, Japan also want to walk in this direction. Those who cry out for salvation in Japan now and for the next 10 year seem to be the migrant, the youth, the laity, the children and other marginalized. We conceive our mission to be done in community with God, our brother oblates, church and Society."

Oblates have responded the need of the local church, highlighting four ministries according to the opportunities that are available:

1. Ministry to the Migrant
2. Ministry to the youth
3. Ministry in parishes and Kindergartens
4. Ministry of Advocacy

We perform this ministry as apostolic men:

With God

- ❖ We, as a community, commit ourselves to a presence wherein we listen with docility to God's word spoken in the Scriptures. We seek to become more aware of why we have been called here.
- ❖ We therefore commit ourselves to take time together in order to deepen our relationship with Him, so that we can discern where He would have us go.

With our brother Oblates

- ❖ While recognizing the various forms that Oblate community life can take, some men expressed the need to live together in actual communities in order to better enable them to serve and to witness.
- ❖ Whatever form our community life takes, we will make it a priority to take the time and effort to create an atmosphere, within our self and among ourselves, wherein we sit down and recognize where we are at this moment, and share what we are doing.

With the Church

- ❖ We invite the laity to discover their baptismal vocation to serve the church and society, we will seek 'to be with them' as brothers and shepherds who accompany them in their search.
- ❖ We will actively seek out co-operators, fellow workers for the vineyard, both lay and religious, We will also put the youth in a central place in our Christian communities"
- ❖ We will be present for the church in her attempt to serve the foreign community pastorally.

With Society

- ❖ We are called to be in tune with and to be able to read the signs of the times and to listen to the voice of the people.

We will foster: ***special training in order to build competencies***

Being mindful of our charism, we will ***cooperate with the local Church*** through its bishops.

- ❖ **RECENT PAST:** "Call for Conversion" workshop:
Our conversion as a Delegation starts with:
 - *Developing community-based mission;*
 - *Reflecting on the quality of our life-style and why it is not the kind of witness that we want it to be;*
 - *Having the courage to put into practice our past decisions as a delegation;*
 - *Leaving our fear of change and insecurity behind and focusing on the vast potentials of the future:*
 - *Respecting the views of the "Southern Hemisphere" OMs ("South" being associated with the poor);*
 - *Paying more attention to the newly arrived Oblates;*
 - *Promoting the role of the laity in our mission, encouraging them to be more integrated in their surrounding communities*

Plenary Session Summary
Spring Meeting, Japan/Korea, 2011

FRAME OF THE WORKSHOP

Articulating the Direction: what we want to achieve in the next five to ten years. – the basic framework of the program of activities is:

WHERE WE ARE TODAY AS OMI of JAPAN – KOREA DELEGATION

Are the original reasons for Oblate presence: *“If no one else will, then we must go!”* is still valid?

MEFU – OSAKA REFLECTION

WHERE WE ARE GOING and

HOW DO WE GET THERE

Orientation on the whole process

Guided by the sources:

✚ *Scriptures: roots*

✚ *Oblate tradition: Charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod: roots*

✚ *Japan: Oblate roots*

✚ *Five calls for conversion (General Chapter 2010)*

✚ *Oblate Triennium: Life in Apostolic Community*

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