
From the Delegation Superior

Wency Laguidao, OMI

YEAR of FAITH: ***"I Believe..."***

"We want to celebrate this Year in a worthy and fruitful manner. Reflection on the faith will have to be intensified, so as to help all believers in Christ to acquire a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel, especially at a time of profound change such as humanity is currently experiencing." (From the Apostolic Letter of Benedict XVI on the occasion

of the opening of the Year of Faith). From Oct 11, 2012 (50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II) to Nov 24, 2014, Feast of Christ the King has been designated as the Year of Faith. What does it mean "to believe in God" in our times? The 35th General Chapter has called us to Conversion, communally and individually. The Chapter document repeatedly asserted a "given" that is non-negotiable: **"Jesus Christ is the Centre of our life and mission"** in the various aspects of our Oblate life: Community, Mission, Formation, Leadership and Financial Stewardship. The call of the Chapter presupposes an unwavering Faith. If we cannot call ourselves "men of Faith" then our preaching will be empty and our efforts futile, like the "noisy gong and clanging cymbal" that St. Paul mentions. When Jan van Hoydonck was leaving Japan for good, I personally asked from him a framed message said to have been discovered in a cellar of a prison after WWII in Germany. It still hangs on my desk and it says:

I believe in the sun even if it is not shining.

I believe in love even if I feel it not.

I believe in God even if He is silent.

The forces of evil are at work in the world: indiscriminate massacre of innocent people even little children, terrorism, break-down of moral and religious values, apathy, indifference and the list is getting longer. And it is amidst these realities that we are called to reaffirm that Jesus Christ is the center of our life and mission. And that, despite all, we still can say with unwavering Faith ***"Yes, I believe in God."***

From the Mission Superior of Korea

Fr. Maurizio



Sometimes I am still surprise when I hear the word “thanks”.

It happened recently. A migrant was looking for a job, and since there was a factory asking for workers we made a visit to the factory.

It was really a cold winter day. He came very early to our Counseling Center and was waiting for me. After a warm cup of coffee we set off by

car. The factory was huge but the work is very hard to do. On our way back to the Center we were talking about his family, lifestyle in Korea, etc. I felt sorry for the guy because our trip to the factory did not fulfill its purpose. But what surprised me was his gesture of gratitude when he said, “thank you Father, today was a very good day for me”!

I asked “for what”? He said that he would like to thank me for what I did to him and also for giving him an opportunity to reflect on his life in Korea.

For him to spend the time together was a reason to say “thanks”. I asked myself “What about me”? Do I thank the Lord for being with me all the time? Do I thank my brothers for being with me? Am I grateful to God for the life He has given to me or am I trying to be ambitious? Do I express my gratitude for the love and smiles I receive from others?

THANKS to all of you for what you are to me.

Tohoku earthquake events of the past ...?

Br. Yagi Nobuhiko

Two years ago Japan was hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami. Reconstruction work proceeded gradually, and now this disaster is becoming an event of the past. However, the problem of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident is not over yet. I am not sure whether this article will give you total correct information or not, but after having examined certain facts I write the following.

Even after two years of the nuclear disaster, we do not know for certain what the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant is. Because of the high levels of radiation, people and even machines are kept away. Due to this fact, appropriate action cannot be taken. Even now the area within a radius of about 300 km is badly contaminated by radioactivity from the Fukushima Daiichi plant locations. This area includes Japan's capital city of Tokyo and other major cities. The media does not convey this dangerous situation. In spite of this fact, a large number of people should be evacuated from this area, but not knowing the real situation they continue to live there.

What has become a serious problem at the Fukushima Daiichi Station is the use of reactor No. 4's fuel storage pool, which, due to an explosion, has lost much of its containment strength and is in a state of suspension. Even if they proceed with the reinforcement work, which has to be done amidst high levels of radiation, it will never be as strong as the original structure. Suppose there is an aftershock or a major crack in the wall occurs and the water leaks, the 1,500 fuel rods will catch fire and the fuel will burn fiercely and the water will quickly evaporate. When this happens a large amount of radioactive material will be spewed out into the air and a considerable region in the northern hemisphere will become uninhabitable. To overcome this problem there is an urgent need for the world to join forces to deal with this problem, utilizing all available technology and knowledge to stabilize this problem. And yet, being aware of this, the government is still trying to build and operate more new nuclear power plants.

Mankind has created this monster. Tragically we in Japan have lost something important. Is it necessary for us, who have been endowed with such knowledge and skills from God, to use them in this manner against nature which has been created by God? It seems to me that this approach is due to a priority being given to the economy and to maintaining a convenient life style, over respect for the human person and our coexistence with nature.

It's sad that in the wake of this nuclear disaster, each individual does not return to God with humility, and relearn how to live on the foundation of love. I strongly feel that it is important to place emphasis on this strong determination in our hearts. If we don't learn from this disaster and take proper action, we will mourn for many more precious lives that will perish

in the northeast of Japan in the future.



Greetings from Tewksbury!

Dick Harr

I want to wish each of you my most sincere best wishes and prayers for continued success in your lives and labors for our Lord and Mary, our Mother.

Looking over the years of my Oblate priesthood and religious life, I am most thankful for all of the graces I have received from the Oblates and my fellow Oblates, now and over the years.

Back in 1954, after 2 years of preparation I began my first assignment in Fukuoka. After 52 years of mission life, I suddenly lost my ability to walk. They sent me here to Tewksbury, and I've been here ever since. This Oblate facility is meant for retirees and the sick. It is an excellent facility, caring for the physical and religious needs of 30 Oblates at this moment. This is a very good community and has helped me very much.

There is very little I can be of help here. The community is very helpful, the nurses and facility are most helpful and eager to assist each of us. I try to help out whenever and wherever I can. For example, I distribute the mail each day, read the scriptures at daily

Mass, provide the needs of the community celebrations and try to be helpful when needed. These chores are all small things and it is no trouble to do them. It is a joy. All of my life as an Oblate, I've looked forward to this latter part of my life, and I've enjoyed the daily religious exercises and being so close to our Lord and His Mother in my daily life. Truly, this is a real joy in my life and the Oblates are providing this. I hope to be as helpful as I can for my community here.

The first year with the Migrants

Fr. Shitol Sebastian Nokrek, OMI

It was last year that I started the work with the migrants. At the beginning it seemed to me like a ship sailing in the ocean. I was confused and did not know how, what and where to start, but the Oblate community was a great strength to me. The guidance and direction of the mission superior Fr. Maurizio, and his sharing of experience in the mission made me go forward. As the days passed I tried and am trying to make myself available for needy migrants who work from dawn to dusk. Since they are very busy I try to match their time with mine and organize spiritual refreshing programs for them, especially for the Filipinos. The Migrant Center where I work was not established by a priest or a diocese, but by a lay person. Besides doing some counseling I also take care of the pastoral needs of the migrants. I hope and will try my best to journey with them and show that God loves them all.



Refreshing Occasion

Christy Pakianathan

It's always a very refreshing moment, I felt, to take a little break after the language studies, for the mind to rest a bit, before assuming the first assignment with the little knowledge of the new culture, people and language. The two-year language program not only gives me language literacy, but also paves the way to get immersed into the mission and opens up new avenues. On the whole it also broadens up the perspective of looking at things.

On the other hand, going home for a holiday after two years is an enriching experience, for the simple reason that leaving your own country for a foreign land demands sacrifice. Being away from home, in some sense makes me feel that I miss some significant moments of being with my people in their ups and downs. But at the same time, it makes me feel the importance of my call as an 'Oblate'.

I returned to Japan refreshed and ready to take up a new assignment. Right now, I am in Itami and involved in the kindergarten and parish ministries. This new environment gives me a boost to go forward with my missionary activities and doubles my enthusiasm to be more innovative. Getting to know different personalities with their own pros and cons and working with the kids in the kindergarten is an interesting and very enriching occasion to learn a lot and apply my talents and experiences.

Justice not Just

Fr. Maurizio omi

During the last four months, I was going back and forth from Chollado to help a multicultural family. The issue was sad, because the couple was preparing for a divorce. The wife needed someone to help her with translation to understand the questions presented by the courts.

For me it was the first time that I went so many times to the courts. Sometimes there was a feeling that I was not in the right place. As a priest, I am supposed to unite people and not

divide, but my role at the courts was a translator.

Multicultural families usually belong more to the poorer class of society. After getting to know the story of their marriage, I could understand the pain and suffering each member of the family was going through, especially the mother who has been carrying some physical and psychological wounds. Every time I went to the court I could know the family better and also their situation. I was thinking more about the children of this family. Last time when I met the family it was time for the couple to decide their future course and the future of their children too. Before the court would make a decision, every detail of their divorce was discussed.

On the day after the judgment was passed I went back home deeply sad. I was thinking to myself, for sure the problem between the two is solved; for the wife, from now on no more beatings and screaming now that they are divorced, they can live in peace. Love turned into hatred and selfishness divided their family.

But was divorce the right solution to their problem? My impression is that the two were so deeply wounded inside that they could not think of anything else but divorce. But again was the judgment passed right and just? Was justice done to them? I wonder. Human justice to some extent can help change the situation but the justice of God cannot.

It happens that when it is so difficult to solve a problem we go outside seeking for advice and solution. At times we think that if we were to really forgive the other, we may lose our dignity and suffer more consequences. I think the real solution to our problem comes only when we have a change of heart.



PERPETUAL PROFESSION IN KOREA

by Wency Laguidao

Scholastic Bro. Samuel HONG SEONGCHEOL, OMI made his perpetual profession as an Oblate on Dec. 8, 2012, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the Parish of Perpetual Help in Suwon, Korea. Fr. Rohan SILVA, OMI, Provincial of Colombo received the vows of Bro. Samuel. Incidentally Bro. Samuel has already completed his theological studies and is already preparing for his ordination to the Priesthood this year. He also has finished his course of Social Welfare at the Sogan University in Seoul.

The vow day was witnessed by many of Bro. Samuel's relatives and friends including his parents and members of his immediate family, MAMI benefactors, friends and Oblates from Korea and Japan. Congratulations Bro. Samuel!



News from Koga-Fukuoka

Jude Peirisipulle, OMI

2013 is a New Year with lots of new spirit. We the members of Fukuoka DISTRICT, Eddie, Bill, Ken-ichi, Bernard and Jude keep the Oblate Flag flying in our various activities.

Eddie Williams continues the work in the Kindergarten as a Principal with his broken shoulder. Bernard comes to the kindergarten at least twice a week to get some training while helping there. His presence is a big support to Eddie and all the kindergarten teachers. I do not know who enjoys more, Bernard with children or children with Bernard!

Bill Maher is serving the Christian community at Wakamatsu Church in Kita Kyushu. He spends Sunday afternoon and Monday with us here in Koga.

Ken-ichi continues as the Principal of Iitsuka Kindergarten. In spite of the long commute to the kindergarten, he goes there everyday. He is also part of the staff at the Montessori school where he gives classes to the teachers studying to get the Kindergarten degree. Bernard and Ken-ichi who live at Yoshizuka church are able to do their ministry efficiently. By living together, they make the people around realize the importance of community life and missionary work.

Jude, after coming back from sabbatical, has resumed his former work. Besides doing the parish work he spends time with the diocesan youth and immigrants. For him, living with Eddie who is advancing in age gives an opportunity to show the people around that we are brothers of a missionary congregation.

Community living may always remain a question. But at least here in Fukuoka five members belong to four different nationalities and are able to get together every Sunday afternoon and evening for meals. Bernard who works at our kindergarten has meals with us other than Sundays. Getting together for meals as a district gives us a very good opportunity to share our work, joys and sorrows of the mission.

Having both young and old together refreshes the community/district. It also gives us

mutual support in the mission. Of course, Eddie's humor and jokes keep everyone happy. A smiling community is a good sign of what the Oblates are!

While thanking God for the many blessings given to Fukuoka district, we also say a word of thanks to each other for the contributions made to keep the community happy and alive.



Sabbatical Reflection

Francis J. Hahn

In 1997 I took my first sabbatical. I attended a five-week study seminar run by the Archdiocese of New York. Then I attended the World Youth Festival in Paris, and then on to Belgium to visit a former confrere. Next, I went to Israel for 4 months of study at the Ratisbone Jewish Christian Center in Jerusalem, and finally to Aix En Provence for a 3 month Oblate Spirituality course. It was a grace filled year.

This past year I hit the 40 mark of ordination and in September turned 69. While not ready to retire I recognize that my energy and usefulness are not what they used to be. I asked for a half year sabbatical to discern how to approach the final years of my active ministry with two goals in mind. The first was to challenge my way of thinking, which is very western and conservative. The second was to assess my strengths and weaknesses to better focus my energies for my remaining years of service.

Our Delegation is undergoing great change. The older European-American presence is diminishing and the new energy is coming from Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent Brazil. We are now under the Sir Lankan Colombo Province. These new men and their culture are more in tune with the far east, and very different than mine. I decided I need an exposure to that world. I found a course in India, while not the same culture as Sir Lanka it is close and would challenge my theological mindset and preconceptions. I was accepted at the Divine Word (Ishvani Kendra) Center for Personal renewal, in Pune.

It was wonderful to see the vitality and power of the Indian church and their innovative ways of thinking in all aspects of religious life, and formation. It is a church under great pressure from an ancient culture that is often hostile to what it perceives as a western imperialistic threat to theirs. I came back with a great appreciation for India, its people, and for church. I also loved the food and learned a new language - Indian English.

The second half of my Sabbatical was at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. I chose it not because it was Oblate, but time wise it fit my schedule and goal; to reassess myself and discern the options I have left in my "twilight years". The program started on August 13th and ran till December 9th. There were 26 participants from 15 different cultures. We spent 4 intensive months listening to each other's stories, studying scripture, theology, how to keep healthy through exercise and diet. We also had faith sharing groups and private spiritual direction, culminating in an 8-day directed retreat. I learned how to take time for myself, relax and found a hobby that I enjoy. I know more about what some of my issues are and have some tools to try and face them. The rest is up to me. This program was so good that I said, half in jest, I could not believe it was Oblate run.

I went with the intention of trying to discern when to pull back and let the new generation take control. I've resolved to resign from areas where the younger men can take over such as district and house superior, and as pastor of the parish I am assigned, if there is someone who wants to do this job. I want to do this not because I am not happy to do these services, but because I feel it is time to let go and let the younger men take over when and where they can. I will support them in any way and do any job that is necessary. Ultimately this has to be discerned by the whole Delegation for the benefit of the future of our mission and the church of Japan. I have hope we will do so.

2nd Korean Oblate Priest Is Born!

by Wency Laguidao, omi

The frigid sub-zero temperature did not deter thousands of Catholics including some 400 priests from witnessing the Sacerdotal Ordination of 15

Korean seminarians at the Jeongjadong Cathedral of St. Joseph in Suwon, Korea on Dec. 7, 2012. Ordaining prelate was His Excellency Mathias Ri Jong-Hoon, Bishop of Suwon. Parishioners from around the diocese came in droves as if to root for their favorite hometown idols who were being ordained to the Priesthood. Not necessarily in “Gangnam-style,” the

liturgy was beautifully planned and executed with lively local liturgical music filling the air of the cavernous cathedral. There were tears of joy as well as occasions for laughter as the 3-hour ceremony unfolded.

Among the 15 who were ordained was Oblate scholastic Peter JONG WON HONG, OMI, who first came to us as a young boy attracted to the Oblate life which he described as “missionary and joyful.” He officially joined the Oblates in 2002. He was born in Chungdam, Seoul, on January 24, 1983. He lost his father at an early age and his young mother raised him and two sisters single-handedly. They are a proud family who gave away their only son and brother to the Oblates. Peter first studied Philosophy in Seoul in 2002 before going to the compulsory military training in 2003 to 2005. He was sent to Bandarewala, Sri Lanka for his Novitiate in 2006 to 2007 and then to Melbourne, Australia for his Theology in 2008 to 2012. He made his Perpetual Vows in Sept 2011 and was ordained to the Diaconate in May 2012, both in Melbourne, Australia.

Peter is the second Oblate priest who comes after Fr. Anselmo RYU HI GU, OMI, the first Korean Oblate. *Ad multos annos!*



“Settle down” mentality in mission

- Bradley Rozairo

I would like to share with you one of my reflections. I, as a person who comes from a poor country can find my heaven in Japan. Being one of the economic super powers in Asia, Japan is very kind especially to the third world countries like Sri Lanka.

I remember my beginnings in Japan. When you are exposed to a new environment there is a tendency to get lost. Sometimes it can also takes you to extremes. For me as a religious, one of the challenges is how to live in a country that is materially rich. This has been bothering me from the time I first began life in Nagoya City. I think there is nothing wrong in enjoying life's comforts provided I keep in mind my humble beginnings. If I am not aware of this, I can easily get settle in one place while creating my own “comfort zone”. And as I grow older it may become hard to get out of it, because I may have the fear of loosing my security.

I feel that the mission in Japan creates an environment where one can easily get settled down without his knowledge. I say this, because we have fairly well-established religious houses that have people to serve our needs. Since parish ministry is common to our mission, one's assignment after language studies is more or less decided. In fact as I was finishing my language program in Nagoya, a young priest in the community jokingly mentioned the name of the parish I would go to.

I like parish ministry, and at present although I'm not in charge of a particular parish as such I continue to help 3 mission parishes. But according to my experience, parish can create an environment where I can find comfort and security. It can keep me away from the challenges that ordinary people face in the society. It also creates some kind of a “settle down” feeling of complacency rather than the urge of being missionary. I see this as a ‘danger’ in the mission.

My recent involvement in social ministry challenges my way of life as a missionary and invites me to be more aware of my humble beginnings back in Sri Lanka.

My “shillelagh” and me

Jack

Greetings from Tokyo!

I'm happy to report that, even after retiring from the university, requests for "Signed" Lectures have continued to find their way to me. Of course, I intend to accept them all, but only after the heel heals. A “Signed” Lecture is always a chance for a genuine exchange with hundreds of deaf Japanese but now it'll be a golden opportunity to discuss the movement that is underway to establish Japan's long-overdue Disabilities Act. Such an Act/Law would help to eliminate, among other things, discrimination against competent deaf people in the workplace. As much as I would like to accept right now the recent offers to Hokkaido, Okinawa, Morioka and Sendai, I doubt if my "shillelagh" would ever survive my weight during all the travelling and standing that would be involved. So, I guess I'll just have to be patient (not exactly my strong suit).

On the other hand, while the heel problem has limited my mobility quite a bit, it hasn't prevented me from starting with the Prison Chaplaincy. On my first visit to the Fuchu Prison in December, I thought for sure that the guards at the gate would confiscate my “shillelagh” because it is a mean-looking blackthorn stick, but --- the warden very politely said: "As long as it's for balancing and not brandishing, then, no problem!" He soon added that there are over 400 foreign inmates, among the 1500 prison-population --- and --- that, since the Chapel is quite small, he would like to have 4 Masses a month in English. In addition, there are the 5-hour "one-on-one" sessions every week (quite an education, to say the least). Am especially looking forward to meeting the only "deaf" inmate on February 13th.

I'm also happy to report that I'll be returning to where I started --- 37 years ago!!! I've been asked, beginning in April, to help out at the only orphanage for deaf children in Japan. That's where I really learned Japanese Sign Language and so, I'm very anxious to return there and work with these kids whose parents are either deceased or otherwise unable or unwilling to care for them. Along with the Prison Chaplaincy, it should be still another source of tremendous grace, with the help of God!



"How did you get infected?"

Jerry Novotny, OMI

Recently an article appeared in the Philippine Daily Inquirer. The headlines read "Church: Don't judge those with HIV/AIDS". The Catholic Church issued a statement that the public should not judge people infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes the dreaded Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Fr. Dan Cancino, who, along with myself, is also a member of CAPCHA (Catholic Asia-Pacific Coalition on HIV/AIDS), said people with HIV should be given emotional and spiritual support instead of being discriminated against. He said that "The first question should NOT be, 'How did you get infected?'"

"Many people with HIV want to change their behavior but do not have the support" is a major problem facing Asia-Pacific countries. It is of interest to note that the Philippines and Japan are two of only five Asian countries where the rate of HIV infection continues to rise at an alarming pace. Is society excited, is the Catholic Church speaking out?

Msgr. Robert Vitillo, a special adviser to CAPCHA and Caritas Internationalis, said at our meeting in Thailand last September that discrimination against people with HIV in Asia remains a "very serious" problem with stigma and rejection even by family members. He said that we need to teach people to take care of those in their families and those in their neighborhood living with HIV.

Bishop Isao Kikuchi, Ms Nobuyo Miyamoto, Ms Kazuko Ito and myself represented Japan at the 2012 CAPCHA Conference in September. We spent five days together, exchanging ideas

and sharing information about the HIV situation in Japan. During my presentation, I strongly suggested that "We should have one voice on this issue in Asia as a Church!" With the huge migration taking place, an overall approach is necessary to stop the epidemic. A lot of Asian workers travel to surrounding countries for jobs and return home with the HIV virus. In Japan, most women receive the virus from their husbands.

Many foreigners who live in Japan are surprised to learn that HIV and AIDS is increasing rapidly. While HIV/AIDS infections in North America, Western Europe and Australia peaked in the late 1980s, Japan's HIV infections have continued to increase. It is difficult to obtain exact data in Japan since many families do not report related cases to authorities due to the shame it brings on the family. It's interesting to note, that concerning AIDS cases in particular, an HIV infected case in Japan once registered as an "HIV case" is NOT registered as "AIDS case" even if he/she subsequently develops AIDS; consequently, many AIDS cases are still listed as HIV cases, leaving the exact number unknown.

The group most at risk of HIV is the MSM group - men having sex with other men. The age group with highest incidence for HIV cases is 20-30 year olds, and that for AIDS cases is 30-40 year olds. Geographically, Tokyo, Osaka, Aichi and their surrounding areas continue to report large number of HIV/AIDS cases and more recently other areas, including Kyushu area, have started to report an increase. Note that in 2011, 51% of non-Japanese HIV males were infected in Japan. Sex tours make up most of the other half.

The Catholic Church is actually at the forefront of the global fight against HIV and AIDS being responsible for up to 75 percent of the care in developing countries. She does not support the widespread distribution of condoms because there is no evidence that this strategy is effective at a population wide level.

In Japan, many people with HIV want to change their behavior but do not have support. How can we, as Oblates and the Catholic Church, help to support people with HIV and become more involved in their lives? How can we stamp out the stigma and rejection facing them from society and family members?

For a brief summary on HIV/AIDS trends in Japan published in February 2012, go to the

following link:

http://www.unaids.org/en/dataanalysis/knowyourresponse/countryprogressreports/2012countries/ce_JP_Narrative_Report.pdf

WEBSITE: Catholic Asia-Pacific Coalition on HIV/AIDS - <http://capcha.org/>



This is My Ministry, Sharing the AA With Each Other

Tom Maher, OMI

Alcoholic Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

"You're what!" "I am an alcoholic. I am recovering in the alcoholic anonymous program (AA)."
Let me tell you my story.

Kochi Prefecture is known for its heavy drinkers. If you are born with a physical disposition and allergy towards alcohol and you drink like I did, you will progressively become an

alcoholic. It is a sickness not a matter of willpower.

Fortunately for me, the provincial was aware of a place called "Guest House", which has a program for priests and brothers based on AA. It is NOT run by the Catholic Church but by recovering alcoholics. Over a thousand of us have recovered there and continue to recover in the AA meetings throughout the world. At the last AA convention, there were 90 countries represented. But that is beside the point.

To make a long story short, I was confronted by a group, two Provincials included in the group, and they told me they would take me to the "Guest House" that afternoon. I was dumbfounded. I escaped but I knew that if I did not go to the Guest House I would not be able to return to Japan. Again to make a long story short, I spent 3 months in the Guest House, learning and putting into practice the AA program. I was very angry with Father Ronald LaFramboise OMI at that time. For confronting a priest takes courage but now I am full of gratitude to Ron for his "tough love" and I want to publicly thank him for his confrontation.

In the AA "12 steps" of recovery, the 12th step reads, "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". Also in the "fifth tradition" of AA each group has but one primary purpose to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. If we don't carry the message of sobriety to each other by attending meetings, we are in danger of losing our sobriety. In closing, we are reminded in the program that, "we are not Saints". The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we had set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

I wish to thank Alvin Bantasan for doing such a fantastic job typing this article on the computer. He is working in Shimanto Shi under the Kuroshio Agricultural Development Cooperative for a period of 3 years.

P.S. There is no retiring from AA as long as I live.

AOFC in Manila

Br.Yagi Nobuhiko

Asia Oceania Formators Conference (AOFC) 2013 was held in Manila and Cotabato City from January 14 – 19. A total of 22 Delegates from 11 countries {Australia (1), Bangladesh (1), China (1), India (1), Indonesia (2), Japan (1), Korea (1), Sri Lanka [Colombo (1) & Jaffna (2)], Thailand (1), Vietnam (1) and the Philippines (9)} participated in the program.

‘Formation today’ was looked at from different perspectives. There was also sharing among the participants. I strongly felt that the joy and difficulties we experience as we come in contact with youth in today’s society, is a common feature which is not limited only to a country or region. I think during this meeting as participants we could hold that as a common feature.

At intervals, I went to visit some Oblate run centers. I was impressed and excited to see the active involvement of the Oblates of the Philippine province in various fields such as schools, retreat house, parishes, Radio and social welfare centers. Whatever place I visited there was warm welcome and good food. I felt that the Oblates are well accepted by their locals. We, the participants also received a great deal of hospitality by the Oblates. I am very much grateful to the Filipino people and the Oblates not only for a well-organized meeting, but also for making my stay a comfortable one. On the whole AOFC was a meaningful gathering.



Greetings from Korea

Samuel

I guess this is the first time to introduce myself to you through the newsletter. I am Hong Seoungcheol Samuel. I was born in Seoul on 22th July 1978. I have my parents and a younger sister. My father who was poor when he was a child used to get some help from a parish. I was told that this is why he began going to church. I too have attended church with my family from my childhood.

I professed perpetual vows on 8th Dec 2012 the day of the Solemnity of Immaculate Conception. It was really a grace filled day for me.

One day I happened to read a book about Albert Schweitzer who was a great missionary, pastor, doctor, and musician. As I read the book, I was deeply impressed by the man and then I decided to become a missionary and doctor like Schweitzer. I could not become a doctor, but now I am a missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Before I joined the Oblates, I was in a diocesan seminary. In the seminary, I was taught English by an American Oblate. His name was Jerry Orsino. He taught us not only English but also as to what a priest should be like. My classmates and I were really inspired by his presence. I left the diocesan seminary in 2005 and joined the Oblates.

I firmly believe that God's grace has been leading me until now. Now I have a chance to look back on my life as I was preparing to make perpetual vows. I wondered what drove me to my present state. I sometimes think that it was my will and the example of others. But when I reflected more on this, I come to realize that beginning from my birth to the present, every moment and every decision was God's will.

I am really happy to be an Oblate like you. Through my experience with the Oblates I can to some extent grasp the meaning of what it is to be an oblate. On the day of my perpetual vows, I strongly felt that "Jesus has called me to be a member of this big Oblate family and I cannot help but love my family. Oblate missionaries are friends of the poor, and I am happy to be part of them".

I must take this opportunity to thank God and all of you for welcoming me as your friend into the Oblate family.

Listen to the cry of the poor

I hear the doorbell and go to open it. In front of me there is a man with well-groomed features; hanging from his belt are a pair of pruning shears and a small saw. He asks me if he can cut and tend to the trees in our garden. I don't see the need so I refuse. In reply, he says to me: "I need to earn my daily living. Give me this opportunity." At these words I let him in and he begins his work. In a moment of rest, I offer him a cup of coffee and we start talking. He tells me about his painful experience: "I



was a manager of a large industry, I lived comfortably and had a nice house with a small garden just like this. As a hobby, I would spend the weekend taking care of my lawn and flowers. Thus, little by little, I learned this skill. When the factory went bankrupt, I was fired. Suddenly I found myself without a job and with three young children to support. I made many job inquiries, but no one took me on because I am no longer young. Needing to support my family, I started to do this work. Sometimes I can earn my daily living; on others, I encounter only closed doors. Those nights, I do not want to go home ... I am ashamed of not being able to offer anything to my loved ones."

Every morning, leaving the house, I predictably encounter the lady who delivers milk door to door in our neighborhood. For years, we've known each other and always exchange a warm greeting. Once she started to tell me about her sad story: "My husband was working and earning a salary that allowed us to live in dignity. But one morning, he was suddenly struck with paralysis. Then followed months and months of pain and costly treatment to recover only, in part, his motor skills. In the meantime, I looked for a job, but to take care of my sick husband and work were two realities that cannot be reconciled. So I found this unsteady employment which helps me live and support my family."

I think of my friends who with their little carts roam the streets of the city all day long, collecting only poverty, loneliness and scorn. How many real-life afflictions surround us and perhaps we do not realize it! Christmas can become for us an opportunity to open our hearts, to see and hear the cry of so many men and women who are suffering around us.

Life at the Wakamatsu Parish

Bill Maher

When I came here to help out till Easter I thought I'd have plenty of time to get all those things that I've wanted to do for so long done but this has not happened. Something always seems to come up and I'm behind again. I guess this can also be part of being 75 years old. I've been in the Fukuoka Diocese before but this is the first time I've been working in the Kitakyushu area. It's quite an enriching experience. The Paris Foreign Missionaries developed the area and did a great job but as other groups their numbers have dwindled and the diocesan priests have taken over the established parishes. So, they've been successful in their work.

As we did in Advent, all the parishes have a healing service during Lent so there will be a lot of visiting other parishes to help out with confessions. I was impressed with the way the services are conducted and the attendance. Next week we have the retreat for the Sunday school and the kids' confessions and the following week Ken-ichi has asked me to give the retreat at the Yoshizuka parish. The theme will be 'Does Jesus have a mobile phone?' or Faith. Don't ask me what the connection is I'm not finished preparing yet.

Every Friday during Jan. and Feb. we help out with feeding the homeless. Three of us go from the parish and after the bulk of the group has been fed in Kokura we take food to four or five people in this area. I can't see how they can survive living in their cars some of which are the small size. I always enjoy getting into a warm bed after that. It gives you something to thank the Lord for.

I enjoy going into Koga every Sun. and Mon., where I have a room. On Sun. night Jude, Ed and I, Kenichi and Bernard, from Yoshizuka parish have supper in Koga. There's even talk of a movie this Sunday. But these young fellows like movies like 'Spider Man' and this time 'Die

Hard'! And all this in Three D! Ed always keeps us entertained in spite of his injuries. I think he's in a lot of pain but it doesn't affect his enthusiasm. Now that there's a position in the Vatican open I think he's going to apply for the job. He can handle it till he's 90. I hope all have a grace filled Lent and Easter. See you on April 1st.

Personal reflections on Martyrdom in the Japanese Church

Bert Silver

In November, I was privileged to be able to spend five days in the Nagasaki area visiting the areas of the Japanese martyrs and the years of the hidden Christians.

This month with Fathers Hayashi, Inui and myself with Catholics of the three missions of Naruto, Tokushima and Anan we were able to visit the sites of the martyrs of Kyoto. The Bishop of Kyoto, Paul Yoshinao Otsuka, wrote the following: with regard to the "Special characteristics of Peter Kibe and the 187 other Martyrs". There are several features, which characterize this particular group of martyrs. Firstly, the places in which they were martyred are to be found all over the country, in Tohoku, Kanto, Kansai, Chugoku and Kyushu. Secondly the group includes people from all walks of life, lay Christians, religious, priests, townspeople, farmers, warriors etc. Thirdly, the martyrs were of all ages, from children to the elderly, of both sexes and included physically handicapped as well and able-bodied people. The following is indicated among the Roman Catholic Church is the criteria for raising people to the status of a saint. 'First to all they should reflect the Age of the Laity and priority should be given to representative lay people.

Furthermore, the person should be one who in his own aged cared for family, educated children and led a lively faith life'. The people to be beatified from the early period of the Japanese Church are for the most part lay people of all ages and both sexes, including children and the elderly, who lived with their families. We of the Japanese Church should be proud to have these martyrs who have no equal anywhere in the world".

As missionaries in Japanese we should have a deep devotion to those in the Japanese church who gave their lives for Christ. Their courage in the face of a martyr's death is a gift of

faith not only for those who were martyred but also for us who are striving to bring the message of our Lord to the Japanese. Many of the present Japanese who have become Christians are in many ways suffering persecution. In their public life, and private life. I personally witnessed the father of a Christian before me ridicule him for his choice in becoming a Christian. Even when his father died there was no mention of him in his will. Brides from the Philippines that are not allowed to attend church services. Choice of schools in the hands of the grandparents. So, we pray for those who are not able to practice their faith and are not able to raise their children in the faith of the mother.

Persecution is happening the China and Islam countries at present. Pray for to the Japanese Martyrs for Freedom of Religion.



From Around the Delegation: Announcements

- ◆ 2013 SPRING MEETING: April 1 to 5, Topic and Resource Speakers: 1) Korean Situation (South and North) Fr. Jerry HAMMOND, MM, a Maryknoll missionary based in Korea. 2) Church of Japan from the eyes of a foreign missionary: Fr. Bill GRIMM, MM, (Maryknoll missionary based in Tokyo and Publisher of UCANews).
- ◆ VISITORS: Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, OMI, Vicar General. Fr. Paolo will visit Japan and Korea before going to the Inter-chapter in Bangkok. He will be here April 1-8. Fr. Rohan SILVA, OMI (Provincial). He will be here during the

Spring Meeting to conduct the consultations since the present Superior is finishing his 1st term.

- ◆ ASSIGNMENTS: (Some announcements already made earlier) Robinson ROBERT is happily settled down in Toyohashi Parish. Starting April 1st, Eduardo SANTOS will take the title of Parish Priest and Robinson as Priest-Cooperator. Christy PAKIANATHAN is in Itami as cooperator in the parish in an unofficial capacity. He also teaches English at the kindergarten. Hiran JEYAWARDENA has taken on the task as Priest-incharge of Enoguchi Parish in Kochi. He is also the new District Superior of Kochi. John IWO will be in charge of Akaoka and Aki. Iru RAJ takes back his old post as Superior of Nakajimacho House in Kochi.
- ◆ DEACONS FROM INDIA : We are still waiting for a word from the Province of India regarding the two deacons Stephan Rosario SAVARIMUTHU and Arul Doss LOORTHU, who are yet to start their visa applications to come to Japan as missionaries.
- ◆ AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AGING (for lack of a better name): A three-member committee was formed to look into the different angles involved in the reality that many of us face: AGING. The members of the committee are Jude PEIRISPULLE, Fran HAHN and Bern ONDAP. Among the tasks they were given is to make recommendations to the Delegation Council with regard to the care of our aging members, now and in the immediate future.