

# OMI Retreat, 2015 In Fukuoka





From the retreat notes of Brad Rozairo...

### **OMI Japan-Korea Annual Retreat: August 31 – Sept. 4, 2015**

Preacher: Fr. Derrick Warnakulasooriya OMI, (he was the Delegation Superior of Pakistan then)

First day: Aug. 31

- Morning conference

#### **What is a Retreat?**

Retreat is a God experience event. God makes an appointment with me and the believer is invited to receive grace from Him. Therefore, the retreat becomes a faith experience.

Retreat is also a confrontation with God.

Example: Genesis 32:23-32 – Jacob wrestles with God.

It is a confrontation where he gets to know God. He also gets a name – 'Israel', meaning "God prevails". We also confront God and through that confrontation we come to know God, know ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses.

When God confronts us (our life) we open ourselves.

Retreat is a genuine meeting of God where we experience our powerlessness.

During a retreat, we question our convictions.

Retreat helps us scrutinize our values; shift out stand points; change our gears and branch out in a new direction.

In a retreat, we have to make a frame of mind allowing God to enter ourselves.

Rev. 3:20 – look I am standing at the door and knock. If you open the door to me, I'll come in and will eat with you. "If you open the door"

#### **What do you expect from this retreat?**

Luke 18:35-41 – Story of a blind man in Jericho.....Son of man, have pity on me. He wanted his sight back.

What do I want from this retreat?

What do I really want to become?

My answer has to be specific, something personal and concrete. During the retreat pray for it.

Retreat is time to fix what is broken in me, time to recollect, pray, recognize my life, vocation, religious living etc.

Allow the Spirit to guide you, to do something in you.

There is a need in me to renew myself with the help of the Spirit and so, have the hunger and thirst for it.

During the retreat give some quality time to the Lord.

Reflect on the story of a missing brick by Paulo Coelho –  
<https://paulocoelhoblog.com/2018/04/02/the-missing-brick/>

#### - Afternoon conference

#### **Priestly Identity:**

People outside will identify us by the way we look, behave etc.

John 2:1-5 – Wedding at Cana & wine

Application to priestly life:

- Our priestly life itself is wine. This wine is something that we should have, but do we have enough?
- Our apostolic life, ministry, commitment, service, spirituality, prayer, community life, witnessing life, love for people, faith life, life style...these are all wine.
- In the wedding at Cana I am the host.
- If I am the host as a priest/religious and do not have enough wine, how can I satisfy my guests?
- Do I have sufficient wine in the form of the above elements (ministry, commitment, service, spirituality etc.)?

Priest primarily is the “man of God”. As man of God his life should carry some sort of sense of God, spirit of God and divine flavor. If the jar of my life does not contain these elements, then I am lacking wine. Being a man of God I should have qualitative modification, meaning something that characterizes my character. Something that is around the priest that permeates his actions, values, lifestyle as a person and shepherd. Such a man speaks of God. Even if he does not speak, his behavior etc. speak.

Example: a few Deacons in Pakistan drank too much of liquor and got drunk. From the eyes of the people in Pakistan that was a poor show of a man of God. There were no ingredients like spirituality, kindness, passion, vocation etc.

Let us place ourselves in the place of the “host” in the parable.

Today we are experiencing a collapse of priestly flavor.

When we do not have priestly/religious qualities, our level of wine is low and so we have to find it somehow somewhere.

Why we have no vocation today/less vocation?

Because my wine is not enough or do not have adequate wine.

#### Second day: Sept. 1

#### - Morning conference

Story of a pencil – 5 valuable lessons to learn so that you become the best pencil you can be.

1. You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in someone's hand.
2. You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil.
3. You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.
4. The most important part of you will always be what's inside.
5. On every surface, you are used on, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition, you must continue to write.

### **Continuation - Wedding at Cana and wine:**

A follower of Christ (priest/religious) is a: faithful follower; father and friend; loving guide and teacher; loving leader; disciplined disciple; prayerful disciple; servant and shepherd. This is free flowing wine in us. When we have free flowing wine, our concerns, fears etc. are answered.

Free flowing wine = responsible host.

As a responsible host, I should have adequate wine. Do I have free flowing wine to serve my guests? Do my guests respond to me when I guide them, minister them etc.?

If the response is good, then I have free flowing wine. Free flowing wine means 'happy guests'.

From the time, we started the mission/ministry in Japan-Korea was there enough wine, free flowing wine? How about now? Do we have enough?

How about the guests – what do they see in us? Are they happy guests now? Do they see in us the free-flowing wine?

Responsible host means – constantly vigilant

Vigilance – we need to get inculturated into the context of our mission. We are vigilant and aware of the needs of the guests.

Responsible host is a good steward. A good steward attends immediately to the needs of the guests like a steward in the plane who attends to the passengers. My life-style and my accountability come to play in serving my guests. A good steward will not allow supplies to go dry or low.

For reflection:

As a religious – Am I a prudent steward? Am I a happy host? Are your guests happy? What is for you when your guests say “we miss you”? Am I a responsible host? Do my guests feel satisfied with my service? Have you had any occasion where your guests were not happy?

- **Afternoon conference**

What is it that caused the wine to go down at Cana?

Unpreparedness? Lack of foresight? Lack of knowledge with calculations? Lack of vigilance? Lack of organization?

In our priestly/religious life also these above-mentioned things can cause problems.

Then what is the remedy? The answer is: “do whatever he tells you”

How can we religious corporate in order not to allow our jars to go low?

**See separate 4 paged document:** 20 points to become religious/priests of the day.

These 20 points can be added into our jar to make our wine tastier.

**Third day: Sept. 2**

- **Morning conference**

**Sharing on OMI Mission in Pakistan:**

OMI Foundation: 1971

Pioneers: 3 Oblates from Sri Lanka

Christian Community Development (CCD): started by Fr. Theo in Pakistan

Formation houses: 3 Juniorate – 20 students, Philosophate in Lahore – 14 students

Scholasticate in Karachi – 11 students

Personnel of the Delegation: 30 (24 Pakistanis & 6 Sri Lankans)

Quetta – vicariate given to the OMI; Bishop Victor is in charge

Population: around 200 million (3% Christians, 2% Catholics)

Parishes: Karachi – 1, Lahore – 2, Multan – 1, Quetta – 10 Oblates are working.

- Afternoon conference

**Parable of the baron fig tree: Luke 13:6-9**

Figtree is a by-plant that can bring extra income.

We think in terms of fruits that a fig tree can bring. Apart from income, a fig tree can give shade, can become a shield, protection in times of a storm etc. The leaves of fig tree fall on the ground and become fertilizer. The fig tree's roots protect land and soil erosion.

As a by-plant a fig tree should provide these and an extra income.

Let us say that the vineyard is a society and the tree is religious life/priestly life.

Is it necessary to have religious life in society?

If there is religious life in a society, it should bring income useful to society. Our life in society has to be fertilizer. We have to comfort, console and support people. We do this in order to work against many viruses in the society. We have to be pesticides that can kill viruses.

How many of us feel that our working places like institutes, schools, parishes are fertilizers?

Is our presence felt by others?

Is our absence missed? or are we just a society/a club keeping adding members?

Think about the missionary/Oblate life...

Religious life can become a tree without fruits, a baron tree.

Will Jesus be happy with our life that does not produce fruit?

Ezekiel 17:5 – he took one of the country's seeds and put it.....like a willow tree he placed it.

He took a seed from a land and re-planted in a land where there is abundance of water etc.

There are 2 lands in this text:

1. Land: family, home, parish, neighborhood...
2. Land: priestly/religious vocation, religious and Oblate life, my education, formation and further studies, medical care, mode of travel, comfort life etc. All these are abundance of water.

For Reflection:

I should make use of my resources and blessings to produce fruit.

Count the blessings and name them from the time we were re-planted. What are they?

Am I really bearing fruits with these blessings to the expectations of our Founder, our religious life?

Fourth day: Sept. 3

- Morning conference

**Continuation – Parable of the fig tree: Luke 13:6-9**

1Cor.1:26-29 – God chooses what the world considers foolish, to shame the wise; he has chosen what the world considers weak to shame the strong...

When the owner comes looking for fruit, he decides to cut down the tree because it does not bear fruit.

We take the charism of the Founder but we must have enough fuel, new fuel to re-interpret the charism. We don't allow the charism to die. Cutting down takes place because we allow the charism to die.

Lack of vision, knowledge etc. will be the cause for cutting down. Therefore, our charism needs to be interpreted according to the context.

If we are occupying a good soil, then we must bear fruits.

Luke 13:8 – leave alone for one more year...

This allows room for delay in cutting.

Delay in cutting: means time for assessment, time to repent etc.

To my personal and community life I must take this seriously because at personal and community level too we go down and can be cut in future!

The digging (meaning – council, advice people) is important.

Allow the person who corrects you or challenging you because that person is digging your life by counseling you or corrects you. Allow that as far as the manure touches the roots.

If the water and manure have not touches the roots, then they may remain only at the surface.

#### - Afternoon conference

Mt. 7:19 – any tree does not bear fruits is cut down and thrown into fire...

Mt. 11:12-14 – next day as they were leaving Bethany...

Jesus is hungry for fruits; he likes to see fruits; he must have seen green leaves in the tree, but no fruits.

Green leaves: means the ground is good.

In our case, may be the first ground (family, school, church...) is good but it does not help because no fruits.

What has happened to all the water, manure etc.?

The leaves have sucked the sap.

What do we mean by leaves in our religious life?

Leaves in our life may look good for appearance (for us and outsiders) but no use because no fruits.

In our mission are we keeping the people hungry – hungry for fruits/food?

Leaves are only superficial, irrelevant elements and not the most essential things.

In our ministries, we have to see whether we are bearing fruits or having always only the branches.

Example: everyone wants to be a parish priest and do that ministry only. Whereas there are other ministries that we can get involved in, but many don't want to opt for them.

Fig tree symbolizes the chosen people who cannot have season. We need to bear fruit without the season.

Baron tree stands for empty lives of the chosen people.

We religious and priests belong to that chosen people, and we are to bear fruit throughout because we are special fig trees.

On the same theme as few quotes below:

2 Tim. 4:2 –

whether it is welcome or unwelcome you proclaim the Word.

In season or out, proclaim it.

Rev. 22:1-2 –

Bear with capacity, energy, passion, commitment all throughout.

Jer. 17:8 –

We cannot pick and choose the places and ministries we would like. We must be available as fig trees to go to any place and do whatever ministry given to us.

A retreat should dig our lives and help us bear fruits.

Fifth day: Sept. 4

- Morning conference

Wrap up of the past days.

### **John 4 – Jesus and the Samaritan woman**

John 4:28 – Samaritan woman (Read the whole chapter)

Verse 28 – The woman put down her water jar and went to the town to tell people...

Jesus crosses borders/boundaries.

Jesus crosses the geographical border because he is going out of his own place.

Jesus crosses the cultural border because according to the culture no man would talk to a woman etc.

Jesus crosses the ethnic border – Jews and Samaritans, their culture, tradition etc.

Jesus also crosses religious border.



Also, the woman is crossing borders: border of fear, culture etc.  
For conversion, we need to cross borders. One needs to talk about it in a bold manner.

**Jar:**

The woman at the well “left her jar” and went into the city.

What is this “jar”?

This is something fixed into her life.

She gives up all the old habits, her old life etc.

She runs to tell others of her experience.

Anyone meeting the Lord either would change or die.

Meeting the Lord is the changing point.

She becomes a missionary by keeping her jar down.

We need to keep our jars down to become a missionary.

Many are carrying their jars. It can be a personal or collective jar that is attached to our life.

Holding onto jars never allow us to become followers of Christ.

Leave jars behind and cross borders.

Change will not take place without saying ‘no’ to our jars.

People, structures, institutes or anything there are jars.

Discover yourself the jars you have. Jars that are bound to you.

It can be certain ideas, thoughts, behavioral patterns...all these are jars we need to put down.

Seek the council of the Spirit for enlightenment and inspiration to put down your jars.

To be liberated we have to put down our jars.

### The 20 Points to become Religious/Priest of the day .

1. PH is **following the pattern of Jesus, but to situate ourselves in the context** of the Church's mission, which is at the service of the KOG, to build up a community beyond the barriers of religion, caste, gender, class etc. That is the entry point to the saving mystery of Xt.  
The Text you preach needs to comply with the context you live.....
2. The **true priest is deeply within the community**, experiencing the condition of the people, the poor, and the powerless. Jesus identified and sympathized with the poor by becoming a slave, emptying himself. Thus a priest is not set apart from them, but deeply within the community of people. Solidarity with the people means that one who knew the condition, temptations of the people.
3. Still **he is 'set apart'**. He is set apart from the powerful and the rich, so that by his powerlessness, and with the powerless of the world, and with the power of the Gospel, he may oppose the powerful of this world. One can stand out of the system of the world and can stand for the values of Xt. He is himself human in all things, but sin. He is with human qualities, an emotionally and physically an integrated person, involved, genuine, yet not attached. He is a person truly free, free from greed, lust hatred, fear and attachment..
4. He **is a revealer and pointer of God**, he reveals that God unconditionally loves by his own acts and witness and compassion, concern for the wellbeing of the people. All these will reveal who God is.
5. The **priest is at the service of wholeness of life of the humans**, especially when people are deprived of their rights to dignity, freedom, self respect, self determination, wherever God's image is destroyed or tarnished in them. The priest's work is to rebuild the broken image of God.
6. He is a **Prophet of God, speaking in God's name and with his authority**. He, as a prophet should know the socio-political and economic situation of the people. He should be a voice in such a

situation. Should have the courage to reject the consumerist culture and be a prophet announcing the word of God.

7. He is first of all a **man of God, rooted in God**, with God-experience. Then only he will have authority to speak to the community. A man of prayer, he found himself in God; spends time to be transformed by God. Acknowledges dependence on God.
8. Man of God means, **one who can go beyond prejudices and loving everyone** as Jesus expected from his disciples, 'love as I have loved you'. For him love should not be an attachment, mutual pleasing, possessiveness etc. he transcends what the world considers important – wealth, position, success, good name, reputation etc. he reveals true love where it is rare, where love is just an empty talk, he witnesses to forgiving love (Mt 18/21-22- seventy times seven). He can be a good priest if he is internally secure, but does not seek security in his achievements, possessions or positions.
9. Priest is a **man of faith**: open to reality, to God's vision, he has a faith vision for the community – where everyone sees the other as brother and sister.
10. The **priest is a minister of reconciliation in a divided world**, society or the community, not only by the sacrament of reconciliation but being a man of justice and peace, empowering the people. Priest is not only a Good Samaritan – a healer of the broken, but works for social transformation and justice. The priest needs to be above factions, above groupism, all types of divisions but one who in the name of God challenges the community become the Kingdom reality that God wanted, namely a contrast community, a new family.
11. **The priest is a Disciple par excellence** (Mt 8/18., 10/37, 16/24..). One needs to be a good disciple to be a good leader. His leadership is not based on imaginary powers, or on technical know-how. He should be able to say be imitators of me as Paul said (1 Cor. 11/1). This is the distinctive mark of a priest, not his dress, his celibacy, or his liturgical powers. By his very vocation priest should be a good disciple.



12. **Priest's ministry is under the power of the Spirit** (1 Cor 7/40, 2 Cor 10/7..). He is a spiritual father, a man of the spirit (Gal 5/22...). He is led by the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit that he received (2 Tim 1/6...) is to be a friend and son of God in the fullest sense. Priest should be a man of dreams, a man of vision, looking for the presence of the Spirit everywhere, and always at his service. He is a giver of the Spirit and a communicator of the Spirit of God.
13. He is **man of the Eucharist – not only at the celebration of the mass**, but that he becomes the body given and blood shed in the service of the community. He has to become the words he speaks. as if to say, 'Be this in memory of me' – he is the symbol what each one has to be in the community.
14. He is **not a one man team, but like a conductor of an orchestra**, who harmonizes the various charisms of the community. He is expected to have certain standard especially when he has to speak to those outside the community. He should speak with some authority, thus needs a strong personalization of the faith. This demands a capacity to be imaginative and creative. He too should listen to the people, inspire them, encourage them empowers and enables them. He is the leader of the community in its self expression in worship, in its stand against sin and injustice. They must not be like the leaders of the world, but different (Mt 20/24...Mk 10/41 ff, Lk 22/25 ff, Jn 13). His leadership is not a matter of privileges (Mt 20/20 ff), but needs concern for the well being of the community (2 Cor 9/1 ff, 1 Thes 1/2 , Phil 1/4)
15. He is **called to build up a community of love**, even **beyond the boundaries** of baptized, because he is working for the Kingdom in a divided and sinful world. He who complains that he has no work, because there are no Catholics, is not faithful to his mission which is not for Christians alone. His contacts and coming to know must not aim at conversion to the community.
16. He is a **public figure**, and thus, what may be all right for others, may not be right for him. His attitudes to certain sensitive areas of life must be taken care of because of his commitment and the critical observation of the people. Priest should not use his pulpit to blame the people, but needs to be humanly mature in his dealings with the people.

17. He is a **minister of the Proclaiming Word** and interprets it in the **context** of the place he serves. Preaching is indeed an essential part of Christian ministry especially of the ordained minister's duty is that. This proclamation is specified to each place and people in a relevant manner.
18. Following Christ in a radical way means **to be condemned to the cross, become** helpless, powerless and be persecuted. The priests join the long list of martyrs in the world
19. Priest should be a **man of character – marked for death for the community**. Priest is called sent by the Lord to be a witness of the Resurrection, of new life, new possibilities of transformed life. He should no more live according to the flesh or the world in its material form, but according to the Spirit of Xt with all his attitudes.
20. Priest's responsibility as a **minister is to assemble, to build the community**, proclaim and teach the word of God, celebrate the sacraments and to guide the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.