



Far East Star

Summer 2020



From the Desk of the Delegation Superior...

Brad Rozairo OMI



Dear Brother Oblates,

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to threaten the lives of people throughout the world, Pope Francis, on the occasion of the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (Sept. 27, 2020) has sent out an important message, that invites us to be united with the suffering humanity. This year our Holy Father devotes his message to the **'Internally Displaced Persons'**. Although there are so many who have been already displaced due to various reasons, the present crisis of COVID-19 has added more burden and has worsen their life situation.

Two years ago, on the occasion of the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, our Holy Father had invited us to *Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate* our brothers and sisters.

To these four verbs, Pope adds six phrases to his message for this year, and invites us not only to pray for the suffering, but also to look for ways and means to bring hope to the struggling world. I have tried to summarize the six phrases with a few questions from my personal reflection.

1) **Know in order to Understand:** We are invited to know and understand not just statistics, but real people and their suffering. The uncertainty and fear we experience due to the pandemic will make us also understand the pain and suffering of the migrants, refugees and the internally displaced people. *Do we really know and understand the stories of the suffering?*

2) **Be Close in order to Serve:** Getting close to others demands taking risks. This has been taught to us during the pandemic by doctors, nurses and health care workers. Their readiness to draw near and serve the sick, goes beyond duty. *Are we ready to put our lives at risk in order to serve the sick?*

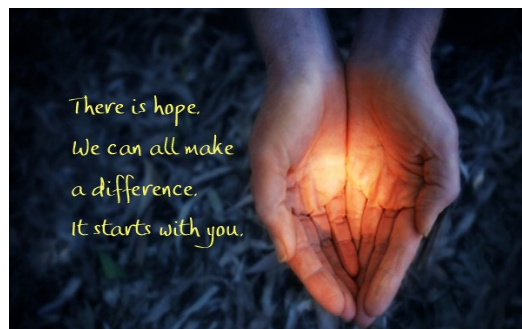
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- 3) **Listen in order to be Reconciled:** The pandemic has created a dramatic and troubling silence that has given us an opportunity to listen to the cry of the poor, the abandoned and our seriously ill planet. Perhaps, to be reconciled with our neighbour we need to carefully listen to him/her. *Do we listen attentively before we make peace with the other?*
- 4) **Share In order to Grow:** The pandemic has reminded us that in spite of our differences in nationality, race or colour we are all in the same boat. And, what we have in common are our concerns, fears and anxieties. This enables us to share what we possess and makes us grow together. *What has been our contribution towards growth?*
- 5) **Get Involved in order to Promote:** The pandemic has also taught us the importance of co-responsibility and the contribution of each person. What I promote through involvement becomes my contribution that makes a difference in my life as well as in the life of the other. *What have we promoted through involvement?*
- 6) **Cooperate in order to Build:** One of the things the pandemic has highlighted is the close co-operation with the community. Pope Francis at his “Urbi et Orbi Message” on April 12, 2020 reiterated that the pandemic is “not a time for self-centredness because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons”. He also invited us to make a commitment and show our solidarity with the suffering. *Have we really co-operated in building a better world?*

Brothers, the message of Pope Francis is addressed to all of us. We read his message (perhaps not always), talk about it, but have we done anything to show our solidarity with the suffering?

You may remember that during the lockdown period, Oblates throughout the world took different initiatives and came up with some concrete action plan to help the needy. Other than our online masses and Bible sharing program, what is it that we, as a Delegation have done outside the church? Let me invite us to come up with a concrete action plan to help the poor.



Mission in Toyohashi

Jude Peirisulle OMI

Parish Priest, Toyohashi

Introduction

It is more than fourteen years since the Oblates came to Toyohashi, but I wonder how many of our own members have visited this mission! Even if somebody has paid a visit, one might not know all about the Toyohashi mission and what is going on here. Therefore, I thought to help you understand, it would be good to give you a picture of this place in my own little way.

History in a nutshell

Missionaries from the Paris mission Society based in Tokyo stepped into Toyohashi in 1877, and then eventually this parish became part of Nagoya Diocese. At first, a visiting priest came to say mass for a few Japanese lived in the area. Later on, a priest belongs to the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) who was working in Nagoya diocese came to serve the people in 1922. In the map of the diocese of Nagoya, Toyohashi mission is situated more towards the border, closer to Yokohama diocese.



Oblates in Toyohashi

With the globalization of economy, the number of Brazilians, Peruvians, and Filipinos of Japanese descent rapidly increased from around 1990. At that time, the priest who was assigned in Toyohashi welcomed foreigners coming to church and took care of their spiritual life by celebrating mass in their native languages. After a few years, he left Toyohashi on a transfer in March 2006, and the Oblates at the invitation of the Bishop of Nagoya decided to take residence in Toyohashi.

The first Brazilian missionary Fr. Genivaldo (Gen) joined the Delegation of Japan in 2001. After his language studies, he served the Oblate parish in Zendana, which was the only Oblate parish in Nagoya diocese. During his stay, there, Gen started visiting many Brazilians in the area and gave them mass in Portuguese. These are Brazilians mostly of Japanese descent (2nd or 3rd generation) who came to work mainly in the car factories connected to Toyota or other automobile manufacturing companies. Considering the situation at that time, the Oblates made an agreement with the Bishop to exchange the two priests of the parishes of Zendana and Toyohashi. This way it was easier for Gen to take care of many foreigners especially the Brazilian community in Toyohashi. Also, having agreed with the Bishop that along with a Brazilian Oblate that there will be another Oblate to form a community, Fr. Edward Williams (Eddie) was assigned to help Gen. Thus, in 2006 the two of them took up residence in Toyohashi.

As time passed by, the Oblate Delegation was blessed with the arrival of another Brazilian Oblate Fr. Eduardo. At first he came to Japan as a scholastic, and after his ordination he officially joined the Delegation in 2008. Having graduated from the language school, Eduardo joined the community in Toyohashi. Later on, a few transfers in the Delegation made Eddie leave Toyohashi, but the two Brazilians continued to serve the mission. After some time, when Gen decided to take a sabbatical, Eduardo was made the Pastor of Toyohashi and he was assisted by Fr. Robinson from the Province of Jaffna. Since the two of them could not get along well, Robinson was moved to Takamatsu diocese leaving Eduardo alone in the parish. Gen, after his sabbatical went back to his Province of origin, and later on his countryman also followed him! Now, we no more have Brazilians in the Delegation.



Having served in Toyohashi for the last two years, I realize how hard it is for one to be in charge and to take care of different needs of people in this parish.

Present Situation

Before I came to Toyohashi, Frs. Gen, Eddie, Eduardo and Robinson had served this mission either as pastors or assistants. There were times when help was needed Frs. Wency and Fran had come to help people. In the past Frs. Selva and Steve also had their experience here. Towards the end of last year when I was to take a vacation, Frs. Brad, Bernard and Steve came forward to help me. I really appreciate the contribution made by these men to the parish.

Right now, among the many activities, our focus is to nurture different nationalities who visit this church. Every month, with the help of a few priests from outside, we have organized masses in Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, English, Vietnamese and Japanese. I have no problem in celebrating masses in English and Japanese, but when it comes to real pastoral work as such, I feel that I lack the skills needed to serve a multi-lingual and a multi-cultural community.



For the last two years, in spite of my limitations I have performed funerals, weddings and other sacraments. When it comes to confession and consultation, more than me, people are lost and not able to express themselves properly. Since I have been involved in this type of work from the beginning, I continue to give my services not only in the parish but also at the diocesan level by giving support to persons in charge of various offices. Outside the church there is also a great demand to go into the society to work with the poor and the abandoned. For example, work at the immigration center, police

and at the courts as an interpreter gives me an opportunity to come in contact with many immigrants and try to help them. Nagoya being the center in the island of Honshu, is convenient when it comes to travel and work.

Towards Future

Toyohashi for me is a place full of hope. We have so many children coming to church, and there is a good number for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. I think, in the whole diocese of Nagoya, we are on the top! Apart from children, there are also adults who come here seeking advice and counselling for their problems concerning family, children, marriage etc. One might think that these are only pastoral problems, but they are not. As I always say, parish is a place where we not only meet people, but it is also a means to lead people to the society in a proper way.

Conclusion

Seeing Toyohashi mission through its history, I can say that many changes have taken place. At the same time, I feel that as Oblates although we committed our-





selves to this mission, we have been late to listen to the people and try to answer their needs. Since for a few years Toyohashi was left to one person, at times it looked like a private mission of a person. This I do not want to see repeated in the future. I often ask the question, what is our future in this mission? I am happy that in one of our Oblate district meetings we had the chance to discuss this. I understand the present situation which has forced me to work alone. I also know that due to lack of personnel in the Delegation we are not doing justice to the contract made with the Bishop. However,

I hope that the process of reflection, evaluation and future planning of Oblate presence and mission which we have already begun, will bear fruit, and thereby in the near future a community be formed in Toyohashi.

Pro-Lifers as Modern Disciples – The India Experience

Jerry Novotny OMI

In the last issue of our Delegation newsletter (spring 2020) I shared with you about the 22nd Asia-Pacific Conference on Faith, Life and Family, a biannual Pro-Life Congress, which was held in Kerala, India from January 17-22. After attending that Conference, I boarded a plane for a ten-day Pro-Life lecture tour of the Oblate Institutions in Chennai and Bengaluru.

One hour later, at Chennai International Airport, I was met by Fr. Chinnappan (Provincial) and Fr. Benedict (OMI lawyer). The Provincial House, only 15 minutes away, is situated on the path of planes arriving and departing the Airport. At first the shattering 10-second noise was difficult to adjust to, but gradually it blended into the daily routine and became live-able.

The next day was open. Although it was still winter, the daily temperature averaged 34 degrees Celsius. I was told that when summer arrives, the temperature goes up 10 degrees. One always carries water since this is the dry season and the air is very dry.

On the 24th, Fr. Chinna (short for Chinnappan), in his 14-year-old land Rover, drove me to De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy for the first lecture. The House of Philosophy has 24 students from seven states in India, who speak seven major languages and minor dialects.

Upon arrival, I was met by Fr. Harry Immanuel, the Rector. Then without any prior explanation, he painted a red spot on my forehead and asked me to stand in the school entrance. The students had gathered there and began singing a song in their native language. Another student stepped forward and held out a burning candle before me. On completion, Fr. Harry wrapped a colourful shawl around my shoulders, presented me with a bouquet of flowers and said, "Welcome Fr. Jerry to our community". It was explained later that this was a traditional Indian custom when welcoming a guest.

In earlier days, the lighted lamp was placed between the host and guest to make their facial expression visible to each other, removing all barriers between the host and guest. The flowers discharged a pleasant fragrance which placed the guest in a good frame of mind for the visit. A red

dot on the forehead represented Shakti (strength) and also symbolized love. Finally, it's a practice to honor the guest as a mark of respect with a shawl.



Traditional Indian Welcoming Custom

The 25th was rest and preparation. After lunch with Fr. Varam's brother and family, we went to the National Shrine of St. Thomas, the apostle. St. Thomas had come to India in A.D. 52, died a martyr in A.D. 72, and was buried in Chennai with the blood-soaked earth and lance that killed him. A huge Basilica is built over his Tomb. The grounds include the cave where he hid before being captured and executed, a stream of drinking water still flowing through the cave, a peace monument and much more.



left to right: **Lunch, Fr. Varam, Cave, Drinking Water**

The next day we drove to Aanmodaya Ashram to visit Fr. Chinnappan Maria Susaik, OMI, who is the only Oblate Guru. After the traditional welcoming ceremony, we toured the shrine and Fr. Susaik explained the 30-year history of Oblate involvement. Fr. Swami Amalraj Jesudoss, OMI, the founder and Guru from 1991 to 1995, visualized the Shrine as an expression of the Beatitudes of the Gospel.



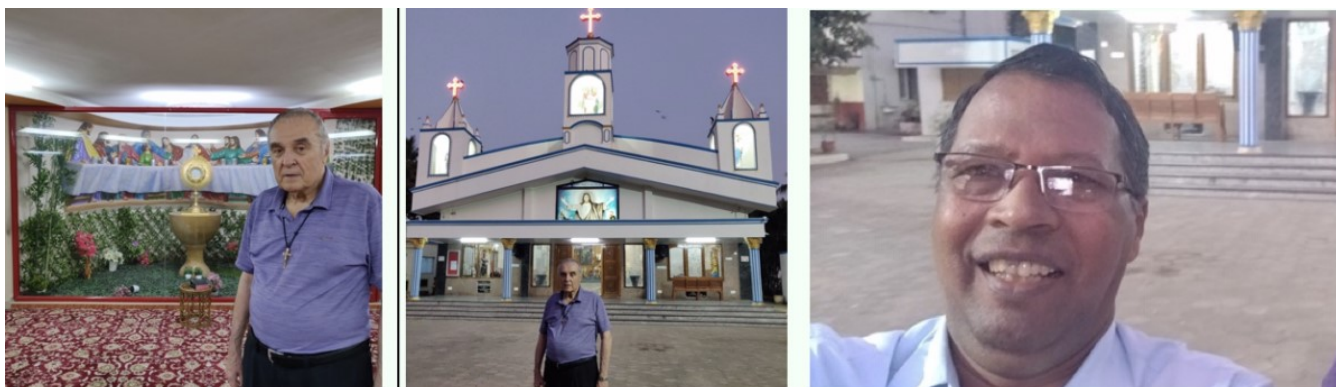
left to right: **Christ the Guru, Fr. Susaik and founder, Shrine, Entrance**

The name given to the Ashram is "Anmodaya", meaning "Self-Awakening". The Oblates, along with other "Seekers" both men and women, live a life characterized by deep interiority and simplicity which reflects the Ashram life of India. Fr. Swami Joseph Samarkone, OMI, the Guru from 1995-2016, stated, that through Ashram "Aanmodaya" we radiate God's Light, Life and Love to

all; therefore, "Our life in all its dimension is a prayer that, in us, and through us, God's Kingdom Come!" (OMI C32).

On Jan 27th, Fr. Benedict accompanied me to St. Paul's Institute, OMI Scholasticate in Poonamalle, Chennai. The lecture here was organized by the rector Fr. Tomy Thomas, OMI and his team. Attending the lecture were OMI Scholastics and Religious living in the area.

Following the lecture, we visited St. John the Baptist Church, the largest Oblate Parish in India. A perpetual adoration chapel near the Church is opened to both Hindu and Catholic visitors 24 /7. The parish of 1200 families are migrants from the countryside in search of work in the big city. Due to the strong Hindu culture, converting people to Catholicism is extremely difficult. Permission from the local authorities and much paperwork is involved, taking a minimum of six months or longer. Fr. Cyril Joseph Augustin, OMI, a very energetic and dynamic Pastor, has only one assistant. True missionaries in a difficult situation.



left to right: **Perpetual Adoration Chapel, Parish, Fr. Cyril Joseph Augustin, OMI**

Early the next morning on the 28th, Fr. Varam and I boarded a train for Bengaluru. We arrived just in time for lunch. The talk was held in the evening at the Indian Oblate Juniorate, situated in the heart of the city. Fr. Arockiasamy Rayappan, OMI, the Rector, organized the program. There was an excellent turnout including Doctors, Nurses, Priests, Sisters and married couples. After the question/answer period, the students presented a traditional war dance, taken from one of their villages.

The Juniorate is a 2-year pre-seminary school where the students study a variety of courses, including special classes on Eugene de Mazenod, the Oblate Congregation and Indian Christian forms of Prayer and Mediation. In brief, the school offers an "Oblate Come and See Programme". On completion, they decide their vocation to Oblate way of life...



left to right: **Traditional Dance, Evening Lecture, Informal Student Gathering**

On the following morning (29th), Fr. Rayappan asked me to say Mass. After breakfast, an informal gathering was arranged with the students and he asked me to speak on Oblate life. I introduced them to the Oblates working in Japan and Korea using a PowerPoint presentation. The atmosphere was relaxing and the students asked a ton of questions. After lunch, Fr. Varam and I boarded the train for the 6-hour trip back to Chennai.

Friday (31st). Most of the day was preparing for the evening lecture at the Provincial House. A tremendous turnout had people standing outside of the hall. After a welcoming speech by Fr. Chinnappan, Fr. Varam introduced me as the Apostle of Unborn Babies. I never looked at it that way, yet thinking about it, all Oblates are Apostles of the poor, the voiceless, the unwanted, the unimportant individuals in the world.

The final day in India had finally arrived on Feb 1st and my last PowerPoint presentation. The lecture took place at a convent for the Sisters of Maria Auxilium (SMA). Later that evening, I was on a plane heading back for Japan.



left to right: **Fr. Chinna's Welcome, Presentation, Final Morning**

After three weeks in India, I brought back fond memories of the Oblate hospitality and kindness extended to me, not only at the Provincial House but also by other Oblates I encountered while traveling. My heartfelt gratitude especially to Fr. Chinnappan, Fr. Varam and Fr. Benedict who rotated being drivers, some trips taking 4 hours one way due to the heavy traffic. I am also indebted to the many Oblates who organized the talks. All were very generous with their time. Rather than a stranger passing through, I genuinely felt part of the Oblate communities I encountered. To be part of the global Oblate family was a good feeling. Thank you, India!

Inculturation and Ministry to Migrants

Shitol Nokrek OMI

The incarnation of Jesus that God assumed a human nature and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, was to adapt and emerge himself into the cultures, societies and situations of this world and people. In other words, Jesus inculturated himself into the form of a man.

How wonderful it is that God incarnated and fully inculturated himself into the cultures of this world, and through his incarnation we are also inculturated with the divine culture!

What does this mean to me as I work with migrants and multi-cultural families in Korea?

I believe that inculturation demands from me the mutual respect for different cultures. When I cannot accept and respect the culture of the other, I think inculturation is impossible.



As a seminarian, I was in Korea for one year and nine months, and that gave me a chance to explore myself into the Korean culture and educate myself through learning the language and living with the Korean people. It was a great opportunity for me to see whether I was capable of becoming a missionary in the future.

Looking back at my past experience in Korea, now I appreciate those cherished moments as a great privilege because I could gradually emerge into the Korean culture, understand the society, the mind-set of people etc. According to my experience I would say that it is good to have an exposure in a foreign land before becoming a priest or religious. As a seminarian, I found that it was easier for me to emerge into a culture because I was free of priestly duties and responsibilities. I was given plenty of time by my formators to concentrate more on learning something completely new that would shape my future as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Therefore, one of my learnings has been that before you hold the identity as “religious priest” it would be good to have an exposure in a foreign land that would help you shape your future.

After the ordination, I received obedience to Korea and started to work with migrants. When I began this ministry, I came across for about sixteen to seventeen nationalities and cultures! This I felt was very demanding compared to what I had experienced with Korean culture. Most of these people are from Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was not easy for me to get to know their names, nationalities, their cultures and people with different mindsets. But a few programs that were organized to learn and experience various cultures helped me and my team understand people of different nationalities. Besides that, once in two years visiting the countries that migrants come from has also helped us understand their background etc.

When I look back at the way I have been dealing with migrants, I must say that at the very beginning when I started this ministry, I thought that they should work according to my expectations. For example, I expected the migrants to come and see me during office hours from 10 am ~ 4 pm, but I found none! This made me question whether I was doing the right thing. I was wrong. I learnt that they will not be able to come and see me during the day because they have to work for their living. This experience made me reflect and understand the reality of the migrants and my way of approach towards them. Later as I tried to be more open and flexible, gradually people were coming to me to talk, discuss and suggest matters concerning their life and ministry. They

also came for labour counselling. As I continue to minister to the migrants, I feel that the experience and knowledge I have about different cultures, helps me understand them better.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has put it very nicely in his 2018 message for the world day of migrants and refugees by saying that, “*migrants to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated.*” Migrants do not always ask for help, but would like to see the lovely face of Jesus who can welcome them and listen to them. Let me end by requesting your prayers for me, so that I may enter into the reality of migrants and continue to support them in their needs.



We invite you to **PROTECT ALL LIFE**
during this “**SEASON OF CREATION**”

SEPTEMBER 1 - OCTOBER 4, 2020



O Lord, seize us with your power
and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love
and beauty.
Praise be to you!
(*Laudato si'*)
Amen.

Taken from A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation. 17