

OMI Japan workshop with Bishop Abella: October 14, 2020

Passionist Retreat House, Munakata, Fukuoka

Oblate Mission in Japan: (OMI arrival – 1948; mission began the following year)

- The mission is to bring the Word of God to places where it has not been heard.
- If no other religious congregation is willing to go, then we should, thereby, we might have vocation in Japan.

Summary of Panel discussion:

Sharing of 5 Oblates – Jude (Toyohashi), Iru (Kochi), Hiran (Itami), Bernard (Koga) & Steve (Naruto)

As an Oblate, what is parish ministry for you today?

- Through parish ministry, you have the opportunity to meet different people in the society. It also gives a chance to get connected with them.
- Parish is a window where you meet the “little people” and the poor.
- Even within a parish there is discrimination because of economic conditions, social status, education background, etc. These are the poor and the marginalized. You serve them.
- Isn't the work of the parish to properly guide the believers to society?

Has your mission-parish made any efforts to integrate migrants into the Japanese church? if so, what are they? if not, why?

- At international masses and gatherings the liturgy (reading, songs, etc.) is in multiple languages followed by a get together.
- When there are main activities such as bazaars and festivals, all assemble as one church.
- Invite a priest (religious) who can speak the language of the people and have them engage in the liturgy and gatherings.
- Encourage people to go to a church where there is a priest who can speak their language.

- Choose a representative from each country (each community) and make them become coordinators and contact persons.
- Have representatives from each country to participate in the parish council meetings etc.
- Discuss not only what the foreigners can do for the parish, but also what the parish expects from them.
- The church instead of waiting for foreigners to come to her, goes to places where they are, and celebrate mass with them.
- Make available the church information, picture, map etc. on the internet and help foreigners have access to church.
- Contact foreigners through Facebook.
- Make available a prayer in Vietnamese and song books for their use.
- Japanese believers teach Japanese to foreigners.
- Have a “yukata party” and invite foreigners to wear yukata and join Bon festival dance and local festivals.
- Japanese and foreigners come together to make rice cakes on New Year's day, so make use of that opportunity for interaction and meeting.
- Foreigners also join Japanese in mountain climbing.
- Encourage and support Japanese believers to personally communicate with foreign believers.
- Offer mass in foreign languages in the diocese.
- Invite foreigners to various church events like coming-of-age ceremony, dinner etc.
- Make a list of foreigners for contact purpose.
- Small churches feel the needs of foreigners, and have a good fellowship.

What are some of the difficulties/obstacles in this process of integration?

- Japanese people think that it is their own church.
- It is difficult to ask foreigners to take care of church office, finances etc.
- In the parish there is this attitude that foreigners are visitors and customers.
- Since large parishes can still be covered by Japanese believers, it is difficult to

accept foreigners.

- Japanese and foreigners are still break apart and it is difficult to get them together.
- Japanese people seek a European church.
- There is a strong language barrier when dealing with foreigners.
- Since non-Japanese believers attend English masses in other churches, it is difficult to interact with the parishioners.

How can the Oblates be more involved in the pastoral care of migrants?

- We need many Oblates to work with foreigners.
- We need people who are ready, open-minded and willing to work.
- In the ministry to the Seafarers, a few Japanese also participate in the English mass on ship.
- In the rectory we have made room for the Vietnamese to pray the rosary.
- Organize an “Oblate day” with international mass and introduce the Oblates.
- Pray the rosary and prayer for Oblate vocations in Vietnamese.
- Make the rectory available to foreigners to have their meetings, meals and social time.
- Work with the committee for Migrants, Refugees and Peoples on the move.
- Organize events at the diocesan level for foreigners and get the involvement of the Bishop too.
- Be close to foreigners to feel their pain and difficulties and live with them.
- It is necessary to be creative in your thinking and try various things.
- Interaction with foreigners outside the church.
- Serve as interpreters and listen to foreigners at the Immigration Centers.

What impact is COVID-19 having on our churches/parishes? - hopes and challenges.

Challenges:

- The usual activities in the church have been discontinued, and the number of participants attending liturgy has dropped for about 50 – 60%.
- Due to unemployment and reduced working hours people seek food and

financial assistance from the church.

- Many Vietnamese trainees lost jobs and had to get back to their country.
- How to deal with stress caused by Covid-19?
- We are in a position to determine as to how to help and support people in this new situation.
- It is necessary to pay attention to foreigners who are not believers.
- Since there is no contact information of foreigners it is difficult to communicate with them and give an update on changes created by Covid-19.
- Not thought about the post-pandemic situation.

Hopes:

- Launched a program to collect food and distribute to the poor.
- When faced with problems Brazilians seek God.
- During the lockdown, since the places to visit were limited, many visited the church because the church doors were opened.
- Time to talk about life and how one feels about it.
- Compassion, affection and listening have made changes and brought hope in life.
- Pandemic has brought about a change in the consciousness of active believers.
- Covid-19 has given an opportunity to know one's actual situation more deeply and to get involved in it.
- Pandemic created a situation only for priests to celebrate the Holy Week liturgy and mass.
- Coronavirus did not affect foreign believers.
- Mass was offered through Facebook and LINE.
- From "festival mode church"(eating and drinking) to the challenge of practicing the message of Jesus Christ.
- Pandemic created an opportunity to convey the hope of resurrection to people experiencing pain, difficulty and loneliness.
- Covid-19 is not really a challenge, but a blessing and an opportunity to shape one's future. (blessing in disguise).

- Time to realize the road we should really take.
- In this disaster it is a great hope that the church will become an oasis for everyone.

Other Oblate engagements

- Kindergarten ministry continues to have a catholic climate and serves children.
- Engagement with staff, parents and children is a great opportunity for evangelization.
- Through the volunteer bureau we continue to connect with society and volunteer groups.
- Work at the prison with people of various religions and Protestants has created an ecumenical atmosphere.
- Going out from the community to different places for ministry makes one feel a missionary.

Looking into the future

Attention: for consideration

- Working alone, and not having a community.
- Ageing of members has made the number decrease, and as a result, the various activities that they have been involved in will not be continued.

Hope:

- There are people who want to serve and those that have been trained to serve.
- Glad we could talk about our ministry at this October meeting.
- There are possibilities of carrying out different ministries through various involvements.
- Through connection with the diocese you get to know some social issues and try to do what is possible.