

OMI Japan workshop with Bishop Abella: October 14, 2020

Passionist Retreat House, Munakata, Fukuoka

Bishop Abella (morning session)

Coronavirus situation:

- You have to be careful, but do not blame Corona for everything!
- Don't want to get used to the You Tube mass.
- Large numbers of people getting together may not be possible, but look for something that can be done with a small number.

Religious community:

- Evaluate and share what is possible according to the charism of the Oblates.
- It is important to witness a joyful community life that can touch others.
- Make use of what makes you think and ask questions through the documents at the general meeting.

Ministry to foreigners: *Japanese church and abroad*

- Encourage foreigners and make them feel part of the Japanese church and also become part of the parish council.
- Japanese churches value regulations, manuals and organizations but foreigners feel uncomfortable with them.
- Japanese believers need to understand the liturgy, church maintenance fee, funerals etc. of a church in a foreign country.
- Maintain harmony between the church traditions of foreign countries and the traditions of Japan.
- A balance between foreign language masses in the diocese and in a parish.
- One leader from each country is required.
- The characteristic of the Catholic church is unity in diversity. It is important to

balance this.

Catechesis for foreigners:

- The Vietnamese have Eucharist and Confession as a “set”. Catechesis on this is important. However, we have to think about their lives after returning to their country.
- Foreigners are missionaries, and we help them share their faith with others.

Support foreigners:

- Technical intern trainees receive a provincial release when their contract with the company ends, but they cannot work under Japanese law. It is necessary to take measures to address this to the government.
- At the same time, think about ways to help people in financial difficulty.

Bishop Abella (afternoon session)

Mark 2:1-12 - Jesus cures a paralytic

- It is important for us to allow the Word of God to guide us and not only our thoughts.
- Sometimes we get “hints” from the Word of God when we think about the present church.
- Do we communicate a message not only through words but also through our relationship with others, way of life and the way church should be?
- Do we live a prophetic way of life that inspires, shakes the hearts of people and makes them ask questions?
- Isn't our way of thinking and rule management prevent people from going to Jesus?
- Isn't it necessary at times for someone to ‘remove the roof’ from time to time? By doing so, people who could not approach Jesus can get closer to him.
- The main actor is not me, but the one who draws the attention (in need of help) of Jesus.

- It is necessary to work eliminate evil that causes various problems and release them.
- Instead of getting hold of visitors, it is important to help and guide them walk their own way free of charge.
- We are too protected by the roof and everything is in place.
- “Don’t touch it, if you want to enter, follow the rules” – Isn’t this our attitude?
- Even if people come to talk to us, are we not applying brakes?

Japanese church: now and future

- The mood of the current Japanese church is to “give up”. This is not good, must get over it.
- Need vision. From now on where the focus should be and the aim for the future.
- In the process of creating a vision, all, including foreigners be involved.
- Committees and councils are to support people and not to apply brake.
- The Church is centered on Christ, neither the priest nor the Catholics.
- Accept humbly each one’s vocation, cooperate with each other and walk.
- Leadership based on the gospel, not power or force but discernment (based on the Scriptures) is to be used.
- Decide not by majority vote, but by discernment. Formation of leadership based on the gospel is important.

Deepen spirituality:

- Without spirituality we cannot overcome the mood of “giving up”. It is important to rejoice that we were able to respond to our vocation.
- Accompany believers so that they may be convinced of receiving faith and wanting to deepen it.
- Catechesis is an instrument and a means to look back at life and to make an evaluation, taste the experience of faith and to deepen it. Catechesis is important.
- Make use of the visit of Pope.
- Not lectures and classes, but give importance to sharing the Word of God in small

groups, introductory course, Legion of Mary.

- When you touch on the teachings of Jesus, it will be a driving force for living life in the place where you are. The most basic exercise is to confirm in words what you share.
- Compare the parish council in the light of the Word of God. And discuss the steps you want to take. If you don't do that our gathering will be a "neighborhood association". What becomes the guide for us is the Word of God.
- If the group study is only in the afternoon it will be limited to some, there is need for evening group study also.
- There might be people who do not want to spend some quiet time other than mass, but take a step to guide those who want to proceed further.
- Preparation for mass is not only connected to liturgy, but also to help a person see what he/she seeks when it comes to forgiveness (one's sins or sins of the world), what a person wants to offer, thank God for, and help prepare them for that.
- Society will be evangelized by those that have already been evangelized.
- Ask believers whether they really feel the hope of taking the gospel to the Japanese society, and also whether they themselves are being evangelized by the gospel.

Decisions by the Japanese Church:

- In 1984 the Japanese church and the Bishops issued two basic policies.
 1. Invite people who have not yet had access to Jesus' table.
 2. Bring the Japanese society closer to the society God wishes to have.
- When this (the above two) was tried, the separation of faith and life, and, faith and society was noticed.
- To help overcome the separation, NICE 1 (National Incentive Convention for Evangelization) was introduced. From there came the 3 pillars.
 1. Church that walks with society
 2. Faith nurtured through life

3. Evangelization through believers

- When life and faith are connected, the joy of having faith is born.
- There are many things in life, but I want to tell others that I am saved by faith.

Youth ministry:

- I know it is important, but do not know how to proceed.
- It is difficult for someone to take the time to actually try it.
- Currently the youth association has turned into alumni (old boys) association, therefore, it might be better to set an age limit (up to 30 years of age).
- Put into practice what is meaningful. It will get bored if just play only.

Interest and involvement in social issues:

- Bring the society that God wishes at least closer to the present society.
- You want the society to change, if so, ask whether your life style contributes to that.
- I can see the activities and movements of social issues, but cannot see the spirituality in them as a Christian.
- To be involved in social issues, motivation and spirituality are important.
- You can grow when you engage in various activities.
- It is not only to think, but also to actually meet and touch the oppressed.
- Networking with welfare, education and medical care facilities and NGOs, NPOs, lawyers, volunteer groups etc. is needed.

Present reality (Church, Congregation) & future:

- Avoid burdening yourself.
- When it's time to close something, close it. Cannot help.
- Creativity is required, so do it creatively.
- Take care of persons, not organizations and regulations.
- Congregation is a family, therefore, to remain connected with the members and the Congregation, is important.
- Deep trust in God is important.
- Church belongs to the Holy Spirit and not ours. Therefore, have hope and carryout the mission that is given to you.
- The future is beyond our reach, so have trust, it is not in our hands.
- Walk where you are placed while supporting people.

Bradly (summary of the day):

- Picked up two words from Bishop's talk – to look back & to discern
- Given the situation of the pandemic and the dwindling numbers, look back at our seventy years of presence in Japan, and make a discernment.
- Our vision as Oblates is to focus on migrants and refugees and choose a place. Example: Toyohashi, Therefore, create a community there, in the future.
- Try to support those in charge of kindergartens and parishes.
- Pick up a few points from this workshop for future consideration.

Pickups from the gathering

As we look back...

From the origin of mission:

- Did we bring the Word of God to places where it has not been heard?
- Did we go to places where other Congregations did not want to go?
- Did we sincerely hope from our hearts for the birth of Oblate vocations?

From the Word of God:

- Did we send across a message not only through words but also through our way of life, involvement?
- Did we inspire people to live a prophetic way of life?
- Did not we prevent people from getting closer to the Lord through our thinking, way of doing things and rule management?
- Did not we apply brake when people came to us with some expectation?

Deepening spirituality:

- Did we feel the joy of being able to respond to our vocation?
- Did we really feel the desire and need to communicate the gospel in today's Japanese society?
- Did I allow myself to be evangelized?

Interest and involvement in social issues:

- Did my life express the real change I expect in the society?

As we make a discernment...

Parish:

- Church is Christ centered. It is neither priest nor faithful centered.
- A meeting place of people. Accept different vocations, cooperate with each other and walk.
- Formation of leadership based on the gospel.
- In creating a vision, include the involvement of foreigners.
- Refer to the statement issued in NICE 1.
- From now on narrow down the churches we run.

Foreigners:

- Efforts to integrate foreigners into Japanese church (see above).

- Catechesis of foreigners.
- Oblate vocation.

Kindergarten:

- It is a place to connect with various people and society. Also, a place for mission.
- In the future we need to narrow down the OMI run kindergartens. Think about the appointment of Principal.

Youth:

- Organize meaningful activities.

Common to above & what remains the foundation:

Deepen spirituality:

- The target is not only the faithful but also myself.
- Enrichment in sharing of the Word of God.

In the midst of the pandemic:

- Support system for foreigners and those that have lost jobs.
- Turn “pinch” into an opportunity. (ピンチはチャンス)

Towards society:

- Take a step forward and meet people.
- Utilize networking.

How community should be:

- Witness through community life to outside world.
- Under the same charism evaluate life and share.

Vision:

- By looking back on our past, and by making a good discernment, take what comes as an outcome for vision.
- For various possibilities, create a community in Toyohashi.
- Since the social conditions and the surrounding environment change rapidly (including the influence of Coronavirus), think about short term and long term vision.
- When it is time to quit or to close, without making it as a burden, make a decision.
- Trust that the future is in the hands of God and not in ours, and have hope.