



Far East Star

Spring 2022



From the Desk of the Delegation Superior...

Brad Rozairo OMI

Dear Brothers,

Let me wish you a joyous Easter and a delightful spring!

May the promise of Easter fill your hearts with peace and joy.

As we get ready for the 37th General Chapter, I would like to share with you my reflections on the theme of the Chapter in light of our Delegation.



PILGRIMS OF HOPE IN COMMUNION
37th General Chapter 2022

Pilgrims of Hope...

Our availability to be there for the people for example in our mission parishes, kindergartens and our involvement in limited social issues such as Pro-Life, prison and migrants is a sign of hope. This gives assurance to those around us to say that they are not alone.

Looking back on our past I would say that through our involvement in various ministries and by our presence, we have been giving hope to people for many years. But for the last 25 years I see us as a stagnant community within well-established structures, created by parish and kindergarten ministries. Today, there are so many out in the society who long for someone to journey with them. Therefore, to offer signs of hope to people, we must go beyond the walls that make life secure and comfortable.

As we move towards 75 years of Oblate presence in Japan, and prepare ourselves for the forthcoming General Chapter as a Congregation, it is good to ask ourselves whether we are ready to move forward and to take the risk of going beyond our comfort zones and make ourselves available to co-journey in society with the Japanese and migrants from foreign countries.

I think the reason for allowing most of the resolutions of our past congresses and meetings to remain on a piece of paper is the fear of change and a lack of commitment. In short, we avoid taking risks and refuse to put out into deep water and lower our nets for a catch. (Luke 5:4).

Contents:

From the Desk of Delegation Superior...	1
Foodbank at Catholic Koga Church	2
Oblate Kindergartens	3
Our Scholastics speak...	4
The Expanding War Against Children	6
Undocumented Illegal Foreign Workers!	8
May-Calendar	9

One of the questions that we who live in a highly secularized world should ask is, how do we enrich a spirituality that will enable us to take a bold step forward collectively to step into the unknown? Unless we are spiritually motivated and ready to leave behind our old self, we will not be able to really SEE the world outside and LISTEN to the cry of the poor. To walk as *Pilgrims of Hope* in this post-pandemic times, there is need for personal conversion of each one of us.

In Communion...

We know that communion in community is not very easy. In any Oblate unit, there will be always clash of ideas, different opinions and lack of commitment to community, mission etc. but at least we try to live under one roof! One of our challenges is to find our Oblate identity in the fast-changing society surrounding us.

Recently, looking at the Delegation personnel, it is clear that we have become more Asian in numbers, but it does not mean that we have been formed by a single crystal stone. We come from different Asian regions, bringing with us different cultures, formation programs, theologies etc. This can be a source of strength, but it can also be the source of many problems. We have already experienced this in our Delegation. But still, while being aware of our differences and respecting each other's cultures, how do we create a common vision that will help us move forward? This too remains a big challenge for us.

In John 15:16, Jesus clearly states that ***“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.”*** We have replied by sacrificing our lives for God and for the service of His people. Consequently, we have to be really committed to our mission and journey together while trusting in God's providence. As a Delegation, we have already begun a process of reflection and evaluation with the intention of planning our future mission in Japan. This is a living sign of our commitment to the people in Japan and our communion with God as a community to move forward in this changing period of history.

Foodbank at Catholic Koga Church

Bernard Ondap OMI



The Covid-19 pandemic has affected and caused many people's lives in great hardships. Young and old, men and women, migrants and locals alike were caught off-guard with the effects that COVID-19 has brought. Since the start of the pandemic, different organizations in the Diocese of Fukuoka have organized programs to address the needs of people who are greatly affected by the pandemic, especially the technical intern trainees and exchange students living in Fukuoka prefecture.

As a church located in the suburb of Fukuoka, we started a small-scale food bank or community pantry to address the pressing needs of these students in the area. I got the idea from a TV program when they featured an NGO in Fukuoka that facilitated a Food drive once a month in AEON mall. Since most of the foreign trainees and exchange students seldom go to the malls, they were not able to receive such aid. So, I thought why not try this food bank drive in the church on a small scale.

I presented the idea to the members of the parish council, and with their enthusiastic support, we were able to start the project by December of 2020. Some parishioners brought whatever goods or commodities they had at home and donated them to our food bank. Some also gave monetary donations. I asked the foreign students what their needs were, and did the shopping. Usually, after Mass, these students would visit the

parish hall where our food bank is located and take with them what they need, of course for free.

Though this is a very small scale project, I could feel the care and concern of the Japanese parishioners for foreigners. At first, the idea was to give it a try for a month or two, but even to this day, with the donations from the parishioners, the food bank continues to serve the needs of foreign students.



Oblate Kindergartens

Jun Ikeda OMI



I have been asked, as an elder, to write about what I think of our Kindergarten Apostolate.

First let me say, I'm not here to criticize this work.

When the Oblates came to Japan immediately after the war, the American bombard-

ments throughout Japan were the cause of schools, including kindergartens to have become non-existent. Fr. Robert Gill, founder of the mission, knew that along with building churches, which also were bombed out, and he decided with the advice of the Bishops, it would be good to build kindergartens. This was a mission to help out the country after the war. A good work. He also saw it as a means of income for the missionaries who depended on the USA for finances. It was good work for that time.

After a while Japan got back on its feet and was able to reopen schools as well as kindergartens. After a while I, as well as the then Vice-Provincial Fr. Ronald LaFramboise, thought we should get out of that work. We felt we had served a need when it was needed and that we should turn our eyes to other needs in this country. At that time, we were solid in finances because many of our men, me included, worked in Schools (Colleges, High Schools and Junior High Schools), teaching English, Religion and in my case Braille to the students who could help the blind. I know that that income is now '0' because the Japanese government wants only white, blond and blue-eyed teachers! Anyway, since then, we have joined the OIP and are doing well financially. So, no need to teach in schools for



income. We have over 500 units in the OIP right now for the expenses to run the Delegation.

The other item is that, though the founding Fathers, thought it would be a good way to get more Catholic faithful, as the kids would learn about religion and the parents as well. To my knowledge, we probably have had, at most, about 10 people, who have joined the Catholic faith through the kindergartens, over the 70 years plus that we have been in Japan. It's not a tool for evangelization. The kids are 6 years old when they graduate.

The age of reasoning is 7! When Dr. Montessori started her program in Italy, it was for 1st year kindergarten to 3rd High School. What we impart for 3 years in Japan, is way minimal to that of Italy. Montessori education would be OK if we had up to High School.



Therefore, I think it is time for us, as Ron agreed with me, to stop this work and emphasize other needs. There are so many Catholic foreigners in Japan. In most of our parishes, more than Japanese Catholics, like in Toyohashi. I think, with a few personnel in the Delegation, it is time for us to leave the kindergartens and cater to the foreigners. When 1/3 of our personnel is tied up with kindergarten work ... let's think of other needs. I was also a principal for 4 years in Aki and Kochi. I introduced Montessori to Aki, which was just a playground. It wasn't a place of learning. But I also saw, in those 4 years, that we were not influencing the children that much, as I said, because of the age ... and one big thing is that most of our teachers are non-Christian, so they do not have that in mind.



Of course, the present Principals should, if they want to, continue. They spent most of their lives in Japan doing this work, but I think we should not name new men after they retire. Japanese law states that we would have to pay heavy taxes if we quit the kindergartens, but if we gave them to the city which could keep the kindergartens open, we should not face that problem. That's why we should consider this with Aki soon. Keep the land in case we need it down the line.

Our Scholastics Speak...

From South Korea: **Bro. Justin**

I am Justin, studying at the Suwon Catholic University. I have finished my first year and am about to begin my second year.



First vows of Justin



Volunteer at Anna's House

Last year during the winter vacation I was working as a volunteer at Anna's house helping in the soup kitchen that feeds the homeless. Due to the pandemic, Anna's house stopped cooking meals inside the building but has made arrangements to dis-

tribute packed meals every day except on Sundays.

I was also involved in the apostolate to the street people helping them by distributing packed meals while keeping to the safety measures. It was not very easy to work in the winter weather, but after all, it was for the poor.

For me, it was a nice experience because it helped me learn the difficulties of the poor and the struggles of the volunteer workers at Anna's house as well as out in the streets. God helps the poor get a hot meal almost every day through the generosity of many donors and volunteers. As Oblates, we will continue to serve the poor. Thank you for your help and support. Hope to meet you in prayer.

From the Philippines: Bros. Paul, Pedro & Sabino

Hi everyone, I am Paul.

After my novitiate in Mindanao, I am currently studying philosophy in Manila. Before going to Mindanao, I was very much concerned about the unstable security situation, kidnapping incidents and robbery on that island. I also had some prejudice about the Muslim community. These things disturbed me and I was worried about my life in the novitiate. However, though I had to manage with some limited resources like the internet, food etc. it was a happy stay. The surrounding environment was beautiful and I was able to overcome prejudice against Muslims. I was there at the peak of the pandemic and it was not easy, but through the beautiful Filipino people, I learned that pain is not a punishment, rather a process of purification.



International Scholasticate, Manila



Paul with Cardinal Quevedo & friends



Now that I am in the capital city I feel that life here has given me stability. However, the pandemic is still not over. I'm studying philosophy at a considerable age and studying in English which is not my first language is not very easy. Nevertheless, I think I am doing my best. I am grateful to God and to my community.

Hello, I am Pedro.

After the novitiate, I started my philosophical studies at the Divine Word Mission Seminary last July. Since it was my first time studying the subjects in English, I was worried about the language. But my academic experience in the pre-novitiate and novitiate had helped me improve my English skills. Therefore, I was able to handle the subjects by writing articles in English for my assignments. Although I had difficulty memorizing some philosophical terms and ideas, I made efforts in my study and have been able to submit my term paper in Methodology before the end of the semester. Through this encounter, I was able to have the confidence to study in English and to approach more logical or philosophical issues.

Last December I attended the devotional, a nine-day series of novena masses known as Simbang Gabi with the Filipino Catholics in preparation for Christmas. Although I had experienced it the previous year, it was still a special moment to prepare for the coming of Jesus. As I attended these masses at different chapels or parishes each day, I could feel the devotion to the Little Jesus by the Filipino Christians. Early in the morning, people including children were willing to attend the masses for nine days and prayed to Jesus. In spite of the Covid-19 restrictions, people were happy to go to churches to attend the liturgy. I was happy to join



Pedro & Novitiate community

them and experience their hospitality. In the Philippines, many people go through hard times because of pandemic and natural disasters like typhoons and earthquakes. However, they do not lose hope because after many trials and difficulties Jesus comes into their lives bringing with him peace and joy.

Hello! I am Sabino.

Bros. Peter, Paul and I entered our Lady of the Perpetual Help Novitiate in the Philippines in 2020. We were twelve in the community: our Novice Master, nine novices (6 Filipinos and 3 Koreans), a brother in perpetual vows and a residential priest.

After spending a year in the novitiate, on 24th June 2021, eight of us professed First Vows in the Notre Dame University Chapel, after which we moved to Our Lady of the Assumption Scholasticate in Manila. We are twenty-five scholastics from 9 different countries: Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Congo and Korea. We have 3 formators (2 priests and 1 perpetually professed brother). Our community is international and intercultural, and here I experience interculturality.

I am studying in the Divine Word Mission Seminary for my bachelor's degree in philosophy. It is a four-year program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to attend online classes. Since it was my first time studying online, I had to make some adjustments and also communicate with my professors and classmates online. The present pandemic has changed our life in the scholasticate. Before the pandemic, we had weekend apostolates outside. We used to go to the slums to visit the people, pray with them, and stay in their homes. Some scholastics were going to the hospital to meet patients and pray with them. But after the pandemic, we had to cancel all our programs. Every day we pray for an end to this pandemic and also for the suffering people.



Sabino with Oblates

The Expanding War Against Children

Jerry Novotny, OMI

Brad asked me to write an article for our Spring Newsletter about the latest project the Pro-Life Apostolate has launched. Due to the tremendous number of dangerous attacks on children throughout the world, we have started writing a series of articles under the heading "War Against Children" centering on the theme: Why this adult obsession today in killing the preborn and/or permanently scarring the lives of the born?

Throughout the world, children, be they preborn or born, are facing unspeakable attacks by adults every day. These aggressions, listed below, can be classified as "crimes against humanity". Why? For the simple reason, they either kill or leave children permanently scarred for life. Children are in danger more today (2022) than at any time in the last 20 years.



Let me introduce two brief assaults by adults on children. First, instead of receiving care and protection from a parent, a baby is introduced into a dangerous world where its life-journey begins by facing a terrifying hurdle - death by abortion. According to the World Health Organization, roughly 73 million induced abortions occur worldwide each year, with 61% of all unintended pregnancies and 29% of all pregnancies in general ending with an abortion.

Linked to these intentional killings, the bodies of dead babies are looked upon as a commercial commodity. Major corporations like medical research centers, major universities, government labs and even cosmetic companies are waiting to buy preborn baby body parts. Selling/Buying aborted body parts is a billion-

dollar (a multi-billion-dollar?) industry. Scott Carney in his new book, *The Red Market*, figures one body is worth about \$250,000 if broken down into individual parts and sold on what he calls the "red market."

Second, if the pre-born child is lucky and survives the first obstacle, many more dangers are waiting for the born. One of these is pornography. Much study is being done on the effects of pornography especially on families and their children. Porn is known for its 4 A's: Accessibility, Affordability, Anonymity and Aggressiveness. It is Accessible because it is just a few keystrokes away on the Internet. It is Affordable because many online sites offer free pornography emails to lure viewers to their websites. It is Anonymous because it can be viewed in the privacy of a person's home. It is Aggressive because its aims and its interests are unduly forceful.

What harm does this cause to the lives of children? If you take a large glass of water and try to pour it into another glass one-fourth of its size, it is impossible. If you take an adult pornographic scene and show it to a small child, the result is the same. The small brain cannot comprehend the scene. As a result, try to imagine the psychologic impact and shock the child experiences. The corrosion of a child's mind and interior feelings begin at this early age and continue into adulthood.



No matter how you look at it, there are only two roads in life for adults: man's way and God's way. Does God not speak to us though Jeremiah when He says, "(Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings), who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. (Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD), whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit."

In the list, above, does God's presence stand out in any of the child-related assaults? Absolutely not! God is missing -> 100%. Our future as human beings depend on returning God to society and follow His Teachings. By refusing to do this, the war against millions of children will gradually develop into an average, acceptable way of doing things. To destroy the beginning is to destroy the future. I wonder why this is so difficult to understand? Even in the New Testament, Jesus teaches very clearly the importance of "creating a world" which guarantees survival, protection and hope for all children.



Saint Lawrence of Brindisi, a Capuchin, wrote that "The Word of the Lord is a light for the mind and a fire for the will, so that many may know and love God. It is a weapon against a heart stubbornly entrenched in vice. It is a sword against the flesh, the world, and the devil, to destroy every sin."

This thought brings forth three questions. First: Is the Catholic Church an active "living sign" in the world today? Second: Are our Shepherds actively protecting their sheep, including the children, preborn and born? Third: Am I a "living witness" of the Word protecting the lives of the little ones?

In Scripture that Jesus speaks to us as individuals. He clearly states that "He has chosen me to do a special task for Him in this world, to go out and bear fruit".

Once the disciples understood and believed these words of Jesus, they became different people. His Words developed into a hidden source of strength for them. They came to realize what it meant to be made in the image of God, what He wanted from them.

When I think about being "His image and likeness", I see a world today which is caught up in a selfish-kind of a self-gratifying culture. A culture focused on oneself rather than others. It no longer values the sacredness of human life. Does not value God. It has deposed of God and replaced Him with other human gods. The world is hurting because Christian identity has been silenced.

Is there a future? Jesus says YES but the final decision is ours to make. "All the apostles are in the boat and the Lord is asleep in the stern. They are starting to fear for their lives because the waters are getting violent and raging. They wake up Jesus and say 'Lord do you not care that we are perishing?' He turns to them, after rebuking and calming the winds, and says, why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

The point is that we are all afraid of something, but our Lord is in the boat with us, asleep in the stern and asking us to trust Him. The choice clearly points in only one direction. Do we trust or do we fear? Do we fight for children rights or are we part of the silent majority? Jesus is asking, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

Articles:

The series begins with an article entitled - War Against Children: Introduction - "Crimes Against Humanity" (Part 1). Each section introduces one insight into this chilling war. Consult the English OMI site (<https://www.omi-japankorea.net>) or Jerry's English blog. (<https://jerry789.wordpress.com>) for the first nine completed articles. Five of these have been translated into Japanese and are available on the Japanese OMI site (<https://oblates-japan.com>) or Jerry's Japanese blog (<https://frank9779789.wordpress.com>).

Undocumented Illegal Foreign Workers!

How Do We Look at Them?

Maurizio Giorgianni OMI



During this time of the pandemic, many people are interested in the situation of migrant workers in Korea. They ask me - how do the migrants survive in Korea? Were they able to get the vaccine? Are they going back to their country? Do they come to visit you, father? Are you still working with them? etc.

Of course, the migrants are still in Korea working very hard and they look for me especially when they have problems. Whenever I explain what we do for the migrants, some react by saying "father, our Korean workers also find life difficult, so why do we (Koreans) have to take care of the problems of foreigners? And why do you as a priest have to help them, even the "illegal" people. They are undocumented and work without a visa in Korea. Therefore, why the church has to take care of these people who do not follow the rules?"

These questions are not wrong, and to tell you the truth, in fact, I also have them in my mind and heart. Especially when I get disappointed because of some bad behaviour of the migrants, I also ask myself what I am doing is good or bad. But, I have found the answers to these questions in the Gospel. I am a disciple of Jesus and not a social activist working in a social welfare center. I am a shepherd trying to take care of the sheep and do pastoral work.

When Jesus saw the needs of so many people – rich, poor, men, women etc. and helped them, he did not look at their social status. He met sinners and righteous people, but did he look at their moral status? He came in contact with the sick and the suffering, but did he look at their physical status? When Jesus came across all sorts of people, he had a different look. He looked at them with the eyes of a shepherd and took

care of his sheep, especially those that went astray. Matthew 9:36 says, *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”*

Jesus’ heart moved for the lost and the abandoned, but sadly, many around him accused him of helping others by breaking the law.

According to the Pharisees and the Teachers of the law, Jesus was always breaking the rules by meeting lepers, adulterous women, sinners like Zacchaeus. But he loved them, healed their wounds and saved them. Did Jesus see in them a sinner, thief or foreigner? No, he saw only the people in need; sheep in need of a shepherd, and so, he helped them by fulfilling their needs.

This is the model I follow, and this has to be the model in caring for people without looking at their passports, skin colour, religion etc. I found the answers to the questions that were put to me by looking at the heart of Jesus. We are shepherds, and migrants are our sheep.



May - Calendar



2ND OBLATE LAY ASSOCIATIONS CONGRESS
27TH - 29TH MAY 2022

The Aim of this Congress is to share locally, and regionally, and at the congregational level, the depth and variety of ways of connecting with various groups of laity joined through the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod. We pray that the Spirit of God may grant us an increase in our love and unity as Oblate Associations as we prepare for the 2nd Lay Associations Congress.

Week of Prayer for Oblate Vocations: May 21 ~ 29, 2022



“ May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene; may they come to be part of his family and, with all the oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption. ”

175 YEARS OF OBLATE PRESENCE IN SRI LANKA!

CONGRATULATIONS...

The Delegation of Japan-Korea joins the Oblates in Sri Lanka in thanking the Lord for all the Blessings.



Oblates from both Provinces of Colombo & Jaffna came together to celebrate the jubilee at De Mazenod Chapel in Jaffna on February 14, 2022. Under the theme “*Let us write a new page of Gospel with Mazenodian creativity and commitment*” the Oblates have organized various activities to be held throughout the Jubilee Year.



Cherry Blossoms
Japan; Tokushima