

Spring Meeting
Acts of the 37th General Chapter
Chapter & implementation

April 18, 2023, Day 1 Morning Session

Morning Prayer and Mass at 9:00 AM led by Honshu-Tokushima district

Welcome and Introduction by Bradly.

Frs. Roshan (*facilitator*), Jude, Bill, Jerry and Sobuj joined the meeting via Zoom Meeting.

Session started at 10:30 AM

Fr. Roshan explained his reason why he could not join the meeting in person due to visa problems.

Fr. Taranga already got his visa. He will come to Japan together with Fr. Roshan once Fr. Roshan gets his visa.

Fr. Roshan emphasized the importance of transmitting the experience and the decisions of the general Chapter to the others.

Fr. Roshan shared that it was an inspiring and exciting experience since it was his first participation to the General Chapter.

The General Chapter was held at the Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Italy from September 14 to October 14, 2022.

Fr. Roshan and Fr. Jude, the representative of Japan-Korea delegation, were among the 79 capitulars from 70 countries.

The Capitulars were divided into language groups and translators were provided.

Pilgrims of Hope in Communion was the theme of the chapter.

Three main points: Pilgrim, Hope and Communion

The theme gives a certain Oblate identity in our mission both in Japan and Korea.

We are a pilgrim people who bring hope and we journey together. We are in communion with others. It is not a solitary pilgrimage but a journey with the people that are entrusted to us, the people we minister with...children in the kindergarten, parishioners in the parishes we work and migrants we encounter in our ministries.

As pilgrims we don't carry everything with us but only take the things that we need. We are to carry only the essential things for that journey.

With this, we are reminded of our vow of poverty.

Our life of poverty is also a sign that we are pilgrims. It is a part of our pilgrimage.

In this pilgrimage, there is a call for a conversion. A conversion of hearts, especially in light of the vow of poverty.

We are also called to conversion in the light of hope. We can only give hope to others if we have hope within us. We are a people of hope. The hope that we bear, in turn, brings hope into our own religious life and commitment.

A capitular from Europe shared that because there are no vocation in that part of the region, so they are just "waiting to die". This is a sign of no hope at all.

We are called to conversion in the area communion. Living within a community is a challenge. It might be good to ask ourselves, "Are you happy with the community you are now?"

Fr. Roshan asked Fr. Jude if he has something to add. Fr. Jude said that he has nothing to add.

Fr. Roshan shared that another important moment during the chapter was the so-called "Emmaus Experience". They had

a dyad sharing with other capitulars.

After knowing our identity as a pilgrim who is full of hope and journeys with a community we are called for Conversion.

PILGRIM

This pilgrimage began with Jesus. We, Oblates have our founder, our traditions, etc. We have a history. The pilgrimage begins from there and it goes on. We are not the ones who started it. We just participated/ joined in this Oblate pilgrimage at a certain point in our life.

In this pilgrimage, we find the charism of Eugene de Mazenod, the spirituality of the Oblates and the Oblate Constitution and rules.

During the chapter, there was a very important emphasis of the fact that we need to go back to the CC and RR of the Oblates. We need to go back to our CC and RR in order to go on with our pilgrimage. We are encouraged to go back to the roots and the foundation of our religious life. As Oblates it is our CC and RR. It is our book of life.

If we are talking about renewal and conversion then we have to go back to our book of life which is the CC and RR.

One of the decisions that was made during the chapter was that a year will be dedicated to the study of the Constitutions and Rules.

During the chapter, the capitulars had the chance to have an audience with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Pope Francis stressed some points which we can read in his address to the capitular dated October 3, 2022.

Fr. Roshan stressed that when we joined this pilgrimage, we don't know when it

will end. So with full of hope, faith and trust in God, we will do our part and give our best as we journey in this pilgrimage.

If we will not be able to finish it, then somebody will take over and continue the journey. The pilgrimage will continue also even without us.

Let us do our part and let God do His part and take care of the rest.

Fr. Roshan also cited the two discouraged disciples who after meeting Jesus have realized their new identities.

Our new identity is that we are evangelizers. Our task in this pilgrimage is to announce God's kingdom and his message to all.

Sometimes our identity could be distorted, that is why we need to convert.

Our CC and RR, is a way to follow Jesus. It is our root. Knowing it does not make us saints but living it does.

We have to reflect about the place of the CC and RR in our life. Do we read it? Do we follow it?

In our journey, we have to recognized the Oblate brothers in their equal and complementary responsibility in evangelizing. C. 7

In revisiting our roots, we carefully made changes in the CC and RR. One of the changes is recognizing that Oblate Brothers can be elected as superiors.

Another change is the removal of the word "residences". All should be a community under a superior.

In this journey, ongoing formation was also given emphasis. There has to be constant renewal.

Each Oblate should recognize and commit to his personal responsibility for his own ongoing formation.

We are not isolated Oblate units but are part of a larger intercultural family.

There is unity in diversity.

End of the morning talk.

Questions/Clarifications/ Sharing

-Bernard....community life is a problematic situation in Japan.

-Fr. Roshan said that in Japan there are no residence because even though the oblates they are alone but they are under a superior with regular meetings. It is more referred at certain community where there is no prayer together no being together etc. Each mission has a different situation but the life of community can be different but the elements of community life has to be there.

April 18, 2023, Day 1 Afternoon Session

HOPE

Pilgrims of Hope

Hope is our way of being in the church. When we have hope, we can carry on with our mission.

There may be difficulties that we encounter in our mission but what is taking us forward is Hope.

We are called to offer Hope to the broken world where there is war, poverty and degradation of creation.

It is important to reflect on the world where we live and see what message of hope can we offer and give to them. In Japan and Korea there are many migrants, it might be good to ask ourselves what message of hope can we offer to such people. We have to raise our head and see where we are needed. To give hope to others, we have to be man of hope.

It is also our identity as Oblates to be man of hope even though we could go through crisis.

Fr. Roshan stressed that our Hope is in Jesus Christ by citing *Evangelii Gaudium* 121. So, this is the work of the Oblates to give hope in any work we do. For us Oblates as stated in CC and RR 10 our model of hope is no other than Mother Mary.

Mary is a woman of hope.

Two outstanding issues of hope in these times are the call to care for our common home, the Earth and to grow in interdependence or communion. As pilgrims of home, we have the responsibility to take good care of the environment. The capitulars referred a lot to the encyclical *Laudato Si*.

We must not forget the very painful cry of the mother earth. It is also a cry of the poor whom we give our preference.

The chapter also emphasizes that another aspect of giving hope is recognizing the rights of the poor and it is necessity of protection.

The chapter calls for welcoming the local culture.

The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. We are called to work for justice and peace.

The chapter invited the capitulars to look back who are the poor? Four areas are particularly numerated namely: ***Indigenous people, Migrants, Young people and Urban city.***

Fr. Roshan cited that AORC has identified Bangladesh as a mission where we exert a lot of effort in our missionary work with the Indigenous peoples.

We cannot do everything but we need to have a listening heart for the poor and practice dialogue and proclamation. We are not to impose on them our culture but learn to listen and dialogue with their culture.

In our history as Oblates missionaries, we have hurt people as a consequence of not listening to the voices of the poor, just like what happened in the painful colonial history in residential Schools in Canada.

To give hope is also to work for Justice and Peace and integrity of Creation. Many of us are already getting their hands dirty in this ministry but still we are challenged to deepen our involvement in this ministry.

To give hope to the people we are called to work with the Laity.

What is important is to have a sense of responsibility with our fellow human beings.

There is a need to learn to trust others.

Interdependence means not to bulldoze but try to learn from the others.

The Oblates are encouraged to see that every mission in the congregation is my mission.

It is because of this new mentality that the chapter is calling for a restructuring the congregation.

If necessary reduce the number of regions, provinces delegations etc.

The restructuring is for the sake of the mission and for a mutual responsibility between growing units and diminishing units. We help each other by mutual sharing of the personnel and resources.

It is to ensure sustainability of the mission and the units. When we share personnel, we send the most suitable person. Everything begins during the first formation.

COMMUNION

The third word to reflect is Communion.

We are in a journey not as individual but as a community.

It is challenging to work and live in a community, because of different characters, cultures, background and so on.

We can be sign of hope ONLY IF we do mission in communion.

We don't live in a boarding house but we are a family, we live in a common home.

We should become a sign for others. Are the others happy with me?

The communion aspect was very much stressed in the chapter.

Do you see the Colombo province as your community?

Does the Korean mission see Japan as its community?

We feel that we are brothers. We are not alien. We respect each other.

Diversity among us but it should not be a barrier.

Having an international staff in the formation help in inculcating the internationality of the Oblates.

We must uphold the sacredness of the other person.

We feel we are brothers despite the different languages that we speak.

We are a community not only of professed Oblates but with the lay associates who share the same charism of St. Eugene. His charism is not a monopoly of the OMIs but must be shared with the laity. The laity must also feel the sense of belonging.

We are close to the people.
Diverse cultures enhance our congregation.

Questions/Sharings

Fr. Wency

Based on his experience with attending the general chapter and other meetings, mostly the chapter ends by coming up with beautiful words but sometimes what is written doesn't correspond with what was said. For instance, ***Restructuring*** in Japan is not a positive word. It means losing one's job.

Fr. Jude

The number of Oblates in many places are declining. There is a need to "restructure" to suit to the needs of the mission.

Fr. Brad

We should not restructure just for the sake of survival. Restructuring must also challenge us for spiritual renewal to towards mission as an Oblate missionary. If restructuring is just for the sake of survival of the delegation of Japan-Korea, then he is not in favor of it.

Fr. Roshan agrees with restructuring in the sense of changing a lifestyle and formation style in our units. The way of life of the oblates is this.