

NEWS LETTER

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Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Colombo Province, Sri Lanka



Message of Fr. Provincial Superior

GOING BEYOND THE PANDEMIC...

The global coronavirus disease or COVID-19 pandemic has already had an enormous impact and will surely have profound consequences for many years to come. Over 800,000 deaths have been reported globally. Irrespective of the caste, creed, and nationality our lives have been affected in so many ways by this coronavirus pandemic. In a way it has turned our lives upside down.

Corona virus taught us the lesson that we can make our little home a church, a Kingdom.

During the high tide of the pandemic I really felt how small, and helpless we were in the midst of a tiny little virus. At the same time, I felt that this is a blessing in disguise. It is a blessing if and only if we are ready to learn from

that experience; if and only if we are ready to learn few lessons that this pandemic is trying to teach us. Generally, we all forget the past quickly, and we are very slow in learning from the past. Let us try to reflect a bit on some of the good things we could learn from this pandemic.

During the course of the outgrowth of the virus, we have witnessed a tremendous rise in charitable acts and volunteerism within our societies and communities: everything from making protective masks, preparing food for hospital and nursing home workers, offering a cup of coriander to the soldiers and guards and to fund raising for many people who needed help due to the damage done by COVID-19. But is everything going to be over? It looks that way. Where are those who came forward to help? Have they submerged with the disappearance of the heat of virus? We need to continue to live with the blossomed message of concern, love, and other centeredness.

We so often come to discover that during and after a crisis, there are silver linings and beautiful byproducts that would emerge through sorrow and pain. The corona pandemic and the subsequent crisis situations should be no different. There is something that we all can learn and carry with us through and beyond this experience. We, of all ages, have now come to know pain and sorrow better as well as the meaning of heartbreak, of true isolation, and of the pain of one another. We have experienced the frustration that comes from being stuck in our homes, from doing the same thing over and over again, from meeting the same people in our homes and communities over and over again. Perhaps, we felt fed up.

We have home work now. We need to rest a while. Then, we need to reflect a bit and find out the purpose beneath this dark cloud that can bring new life to everyone. That is why I said that this situation is a blessing in disguise. We all

have experienced the futility of money and power. Look at some of the rich countries. Look at some of the powerful countries. Were they able to stop the pandemic by their money? Were they able to overcome the virus by their power? So, coronavirus taught the world a lesson, that the authority of money and power are limited and temporal. "Why spend money on what are not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?" (Is. 55:2)

Those who have and do not have money, and those who have and do not have power, all asked the same questions; To whom do we tell our fears?; In what do we place our hopes?; Where do we find true refuge? We need to learn these lessons. Now, we all are equal. Why do we divide ourselves into categories of caste, creed, nationality, rich, poor, etc. We all are equal before the creator. We are children of God. Whether poor or rich, powerful or powerless, we all have to learn the lesson from Psalm 46: 1-2, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea..."

I am sure this pandemic helped all of us to pray more. We had ample time to be in the presence of God. Usually we human beings tend to turn to prayer in a time of crisis. Though religious places such as mosques, churches, and temples were closed, the weekly Friday prayers banned, Sunday Masses suspended, and the rituals curtailed we never stopped praying, or asking the Lord to intervene on our behalf. We felt hopeless and powerless when we heard or see in mass media that the number of deaths was increasing, and the number of those who have infected getting increased. We may have asked the question: "Oh God! Where do we go now".

Corona virus taught us the lesson that we can make our little home a church, a Kingdom. When there was no possibility of going to the church for worship and prayer, family members praying together in their homes became a real Church (Body of Christ) in spiritual sense. The call to pray from home equally assures God's presence in line with what Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

This pandemic also taught us the lesson that we are spiritual beings with a lot of faith in the Lord who created us. I just invite you to count the number of emails you received or you wrote. How many times you said "stay safe, I pray for you, we are united with you, let us keep one another in our prayers." Aren't they good examples to show that we are really spiritual beings. Though the COVID-19 crisis has brought the world to a halt with disastrous health and economic impact, I feel that from a spiritual angle, the pros will outweigh the cons, making us a global community with spiritual connectivity where we really feel we are brothers and sisters irrespective of our caste, creed, and nationality. Let us continue to live these messages even when we bid farewell to corona virus.

Fr. Roshan J. L. Silva OMI
Provincial Superior
Colombo Province.

New Provincial Treasurer

Fr. Anton Gration OMI was appointed as the Provincial Treasurer and he was installed in the office on the 04th of August. We are very much thankful to the outgoing Treasurer, Fr. Christy Silva OMI for his services to the Province during the last 3 years.



Proceeds from the Provincial Council

1 The members of the Provincial Council had few days of sessions to articulate and formulate ‘The Vision and the Mission of the Provincial Administration’. The Administration is really appreciative of Frs. Suranga Indrajith OMI and Shalinda Jude OMI who conducted these sessions for them. In near future, with the help of the mechanism of the Oblate Districts and the communities, the Administration will conduct this programme in such a way that it will help every individual member and every community.

Keeping with the resolution of the 2018 Congress, the Provincial Administration is working on appointing a Vicar Provincial, and they are formulating the statute for the Vicar Provincial in the Province of Colombo. For better governance of the Province, Constitutions and Rules recommends that we have one or more Vicar Provincials who have the same powers as the Provincial Superior for the ordinary affairs, either of the province or of the special sector, entrusted to him/them. (C 107)

2 As it was mentioned in our last News Letter Oblate Institute of Higher Learning is to be shifted to ‘Dev Arana’, Polwatte. It was a recommendation of the 2018 Congress. With this view Fr. Asanga Viraj OMI is appointed as the Administrative Bursar of OIHL and of the community and he has already been transferred to Dev Arana, and some necessary renovations are being done to facilitate the programs of the Institute.

Apart from the members appointed to the Finance Committee of the Province, whose names were published in the last News Letter, the Provincial Council, having considered the recommendation of the Finance Committee itself, appointed Fr. Eric Lakman OMI as a member of the Finance Committee. Provincial Council also appointed Mr. Roshan Perera to the Finance Committee as a lay member.

4 Provincial Council is of the opinion that a Province like ours must organize, celebrate, and conduct our Provincial celebrations such as jubilees, ordinations, and even the funerals with a little more organized and glamorous way. Having that intention, the Council appointed a permanent committee to organize and conduct such events in the Province. The members of the committee are Frs. Randil Fernando OMI (Convener), Anton Grecian OMI, Anton Niroshan OMI, Shivantha Wass OMI and Sumith Assisi OMI.

5 The Council decided to form a Media Unit for the Province. The appointees of the media unit are Frs. Lal Pushpadeva OMI (Convener), Shivantha Waas OMI, Dhanuska Fernando OMI, and Sameera Fonseka OMI.

6 The Council decided to hold an “Oblate Day” on the 13th and the 14th of December. It will be held at St. Vincent’s Home, Maggona. The Oblates are invited to come on the 13th evening and the events continue till lunch on the 14th. This is a time for rest, relaxation, chit-chat, and to have more laughter and fun. Please come without fail.

August 13, 2020 was a day of special divine blessings for 180 resident Sinhala Catholic fisher families living at Mohotuwaram, Kokkali, and for several Sinhala Catholic migrant fisher families visiting Kokilai for their livelihood. On that day, in the presence of Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI, the Provincial Superior, several priests, religious and lay faithful, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, the Bishop of the Diocese of Jaffna, blessed and opened the newly constructed mission house at Mohotuwaram, Kokilai.

Presiding at the Eucharistic concelebration on that day, Fr. Roshan Silva in his homily spoke of Jesus who was born to be the Good Shepherd in order to care and guide the scattered people and he added that the newly appointed Oblate Fr. Leslie Fernando OMI, likewise imitating Jesus, will reside and care for the fisher folk at Mohotuwaram, Kokilai. He requested the fisher folk to collaborate with Fr. Leslie Fernando to build also a lively Christian community.

Bishop Justin Gnanapragasam, speaking at the end of the Eucharistic concelebration,

pointed out that the Diocese of Anuradhapura had taken care of the Sinhala Catholic fisher folk at Kokilai for many years and that they are now under the Diocese of Jaffna. He further said: "I, for one, could not understand why these Sinhala Catholic fisher-folk at Kokilai should be deprived of a resident Sinhala priest in close proximity to them in order to guide them..." Bishop Justin also thanked Fr. Roshan Silva OMI for readily responding to permit Fr. Leslie Fernando OMI to reside at Mohotuwaram, Kokilai and to guide the fisherfolk. He thanked Fr. Leslie for his prompt response to that missionary request.

A DAY OF SPECIAL BLESSINGS FOR SINHALA CATHOLIC FISHER FOLK AT KOKILAI



ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD



Deacon Janaith Aravinda OMI was approved for the Sacerdotal Ordination. It will be held on the 19th of September at Fatima Church, Maradana at 9.00a.m. The ordaining Prelate will be Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston J. Fernando SSS, Chairman of the Bishop's Conference of Sri Lanka and the Bishop of the Diocese of Badulla. Please be present for the ordination Mass and thereafter the lunch at De Maze nod House, Colombo 15 without fail to show our love and solidarity.

Congrats!

Rev. Fr. Ruwan Prasanna Perera OMI

The members of the OMI Province of Colombo, Sri Lanka, extend their hearty Congratulations to Rev. Fr. Ruwan Prasanna Perera OMI, for his excellent performance at the Examination of MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN BUDDHIST STUDIES.



Committees' Activity

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee of the Province met number times together with some experts in the financial field to discuss further on the investment of the funds, received after the lease of the two OMI estates.

On-going Formation Committee

Ongoing Formation Committee met once to discuss further about the ongoing formation programmes that they intend to initiate in the Province. They shall visit your districts, communities, and centers in due course of time.

Initial Formation Committee

A meeting of the Initial Formation Committee was held at the Oblate Scholasticate, Ampitiya. Fr. Andreas Fernando OMI was appointed as the new chairperson and Fr. Danushka Fernando OMI was appointed as the secretary.

VISITS OF FR. PROVINCIAL

Fr. Provincial together with Fr. Anton Niroshan OMI, visited Kuchchaveli Parish and installed Fr. Newman Muthuthamby OMI as the Parish Priest of Kuchchaveli on the 21st of June 2020. Fr. Provincial took time to visit all the substations of the mission at Kuchchaveli and had the opportunity to celebrate Mass in two places. He had a meeting with Rt. Rev. Dr. Noel Emmanuel Fernando, the Bishop of Trincomalee. The Bishop was very happy about the services done by Fr. Subash Fernando OMI and assured that he would continue to collaborate with Fr. Newman, the new parish priest.

Fr. Provincial visited Embilipitiya Parish and spent the day with Fr. Chamika Sudarshana OMI, the parish priest.

Fr. Provincial visited Tissa Balasuriya Daham Ketha, and had a meeting with Fr. Dennis Iddamalgoda OMI. Fr. Provincial was happy to see the parapet wall constructed and the fence being renovated at the estate.

OMI COLOMBO

Paving the Way to New

A 'Farewell' as well as an 'Installation' took place on June 21, at 9.00 a.m. at Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee, at the Eucharistic con-celebration, presided over by Rev. Fr. Kingsley Robert, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Trincomalee. The concelebrants were Frs. Subash Fernando, OMI, Newman Muthuthamby, OMI, and Roshan Silva, OMI, the Provincial Superior of the Oblate Province of Colombo.

Rev. Fr. Roshan, the homilist for the con-celebration, spoke about the commitment of the Oblates to God's people under difficult circumstances in that missionary area and thanked Fr. Subash Fernando for the services he had rendered to the people since March 03rd, 2019. He thanked and appreciated the people of Kuchchaveli for their cooperation. Fr. Provincial too thanked Fr. Newman Muthuthamby for readily accepting his new assignment. He was then installed as the pastoral animator of the people belonging to the parish of Kuchchaveli.

A NEW SUPERIOR AT ST. VINCENT'S HOME, MAGGONA

With the appointment of Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI as the new Provincial Superior, the office of the Superior at St. Vincent's Home, Maggona, became vacant. The need of appointing a new Superior to SVH was an immediate necessity. At the meeting of the Provincial in Council Rev. Fr. Subash Fernando, OMI was appointed to that post.

Fr. Subash was installed as the Superior on the 23rd of June at the Eucharistic celebration officiated by the Provincial Superior, Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI. Prior to that he was welcomed to St. Vincent's Home by the children, the staff, and the Oblate Fathers and Brothers of the community on 22nd of June.



It had been a dutiful desire in Fr. Ruwan Perera OMI, the Chaplain of the University of Peradeniya to know the background of the university students and their parents. He made every effort possible to visit the families of the students at the beginning of the year, since January till March, before the deadly Coronavirus hit our country in the second week of March.



However, he could manage to visit a good number of the families of students in Colombo, Gampaha, and Badulla Districts. Visiting their families, interacting and conversing with their parents, blessing their homes, and praying with family members has been a rich experience as well as a great personal exposure. This great experience has brought him much closer to the real-life situation of their parents.

University Chaplaincy: Welcoming Freshers at the University of Peradeniya Chaplaincy

"Despite the difficulties in arranging a grand scale event due to pre-arranged programs in their respective faculties as well as the language barrier, we were able to have the welcome ceremony of the freshers on 11th March 2020 at the Catholic Chaplaincy," says Fr. Ruwan Perera OMI, the Catholic chaplain at the Peradeniya University. The ceremony had begun with the Benediction service and with a session of silent prayer. After the Holy Mass the new comers, with lighted candles in their hands, took oaths before the statue of Our Lady of the Seat of Wisdom to live an exemplary life during their stay in the university. Many participated in this program organized by the President and Committee Members of the Newman Society under the guidance of their Chaplain, Fr. Ruwan. The president of the Newman Society Mr. Sumudu Tissera welcomed the freshers, all the other students, and the distinguished members gathered at the Newman Hall. Dr. Manil Fonseka, who is the current treasurer of Newman Society, too addressing the gathering gave an inspiring talk with his rich experiences of living and teaching at the University. At the end of the function, the refreshments were served for all.





Creative Pastoral Care

In order to use creatively the occasion of the first Holy Communion for the children of the Parish of Medawachchiya Fr. Philip Bandara OMI, the Pastoral Animator, made arrangements for the parents of the children to approach the Sacrament

of Reconciliation with inner freedom and peace. No doubt, it would be a beautiful sight to see that the parents receiving Holy Communion along with their children who for the first time receive the precious Body of Christ.

The Catholic faithful of the Parish of Medawachchiya had invited Fr. Shane Winston De Rosayro, OMI of the Parish of Pothanegama to administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation on July 12.

Oblate Jubilee Celebrations

The Annual Jubilee Celebration of the OMI Colombo Province will be held on the 12th of October 2020 at De Mazenod House, Mattakkuliya.

This year the jubilarians are Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam, Frs. Anton Rex Kulas, Mervyn Noel Fernando, Ananda Claude Fernando, Reginald Jayamaha, Dilan Niroshan Perera and Christy Joseph Silva of their religious life.

Frs. J. J. Edward, Thuraisingham, Herman Paul Fernando, Edmund Murugupillai, Christy Manelpillai, Jacob Thiruchelvam, and Eric Wasalathanthrige of their Priesthood.

The members of the Jubilee Committee formed are Frs. Anton Gration (Convener), Randil Fernando, Maximus Fernando, Anton Niroshan, Christopher Madurawela, and Shalinda Jude.

The Sacred Heart Oblate Novitiate in Bandarawela has been a place of continuous harvest, and this year too it has brought forth 13 young men to the Congregation. On the 8th of August, 2020 two novices from the OMI Delegation of Bangladesh namely Bros. Sonaram Thripura and Bikas Marandi made their First Profession of Religious Vows in the presence of Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI, the Provincial Superior of the Province of Colombo.



Then, on the 22nd of August, 2020 the other eleven novices - namely Bros. Romanson and Jenistan of the OMI Province of Jaffna; Bro. Irshad of the OMI Delegation of Pakistan; and Bros. Sineth, Avishka, Menaka, Bashith, Ashan, Dilshan, Prasanna and Dhanuka of the OMI Province of Colombo - made their First

Profession of Religious Vows in front of Very Rev. Fr. Eugene Benedict OMI, the Provincial Superior elect of the OMI Province of Jaffna, and Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI, the Provincial Superior of Colombo, the leaders of their respective Oblate units.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston Fernando SSS, the Bishop of Badulla, presided over

the ceremony. In his homily, referring to the call of Samuel to be a prophet, the Bishop emphasized on the importance of acquaintance oneself with God in responding to His call. A large gathering of priests, religious, parents, family members, and friends were present at the occasion. We wish them God's all abundant blessings.



Meeting with His Eminence Malcom Cardinal Ranjith

During the tenure of previous administration His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had expressed his willingness to offer 5 parishes of the Archdiocese of Colombo to the Oblates. The new Provincial Superior, Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI, in consultation with his Council was ready with personnel to man those parishes. In his meeting with the Cardinal, Fr. Provincial expressed his desire to accept the parishes. However, the Cardinal has told him that he would look into the possibility of the offer next year.

Transfers

After having served in the leadership ministry as the Provincial Superior of the OMI Colombo Province for last three years, Rev. Fr. Irwin Morais OMI left De Mazenod House and took residence at Fatima Church, Colombo 10. He will be there for a few months till he finishes his studies.

A Requiem Mass

The Covid-19 situation, that was prevalent in the country during the time of the demise of Rev. Fr. Hillary Peiris OMI, did not allow us as a Province to organize the funeral as usual. As the Oblate family of late Fr. Hilary, let us come together with the family members of Fr. Hillary to pray for the repose of his soul. The Requiem Mass will be on the 30th of September, 2020 at 5.00 p.m. at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Maradana. Fr. Provincial invites all of you to join this event as a mark of our respect and solidarity to dear Fr. Hilary.

Marian Grove

The much-needed repairs for the Marian Grove have been already done giving more facilities to the residents.

The new arrivals to the Marian Grove are - Frs. Felician Ferdinando OMI, Anthony Jayamanna OMI and Lucian Perera OMI. We wish them good health and joy.

Our Condolences...

As a Province we sympathize with Frs. Justin Silva OMI and Angelo Wijewickrama OMI as they lost their beloved sisters and Fr. Romesh Lowe OMI as he lost his mother. Our heartfelt sympathies also go to Frs. Chryshantha Jayalath OMI and Assisi Fernando OMI as they lost their beloved fathers. May they rest in peace! We thank all those who took part in the funerals. Let us as Oblates try our best to be at the funeral services of the family members of our Oblate brethren - at home, at the church and at the cemetery. These are values that we need to uphold.