



Message of the Provincial Superior

HE IS RISEN - ALLELUIA!

***GREETINGS FOR A VERY HAPPY
EASTER TO YOU ALL!***

The Coronavirus or the COVID-19 has shaken the whole world. Hundreds of people are dying daily; thousands of people are contracting the virus daily, making millions of people helpless, desperate, and frustrated. It has gone beyond the control of man. The well-developed medical sciences are still not in a position to find a solution.

It is in this context of desperation, the joyful and glorious resurrection of Our Lord Jesus is celebrated this year. The resurrection of our Lord brings us hope, but the current situation seems to be hopeless. It looks somewhat ironical. Even though it looks ironical, in this context of helplessness the Resurrection of Jesus has become more meaningful.

In our helplessness, we plead for the intervention of God, we also speak with God to perform a miracle and make us free from this disaster. Truly, God does miracles. The greatest miracle that God the Father performed was the raising of His Son from the dead and giving Christ to us, as the Living Saviour, in order to perform miracles for us in and through Him. The Risen Lord is our strength; the Risen Lord is our Hope; and the Risen Lord is our joy.

Today, we are frightened. Everything seems to be very uncertain. There is continuous prolonged curfew. We are unable to move as we want. We are unable to do our work. Nothing can be planned. We are unable to get closer to one another even to greet. We are in fear. Then, the angel in the empty tomb says to us, "Do not be afraid. He is Risen" (Mt 28:5).

By raising the Son from the dead, God the Father has defeated all the powers of evil and

made Him all-powerful. “In the world, you face tribulations, but take courage, I have conquered the world” (John 16:33). By raising the Son from the dead, the Father gave Him every power to defeat the powers of evil and sickness. Risen Christ says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). He gives us a word of consolation, joy and peace. He is all-powerful and ever living. He tells us, “Believe in me, I will make you free” (John 8:32).

Let us turn to Him, in this moment of distress, in order to be free of all our pains and sorrows. “Come to me, all who that are weary, I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

Let us also commend all those who have died, all over the world, into the mercy of God. We pray that God will bless with His healing hand all the sick. May God bless the countries including ours, so that there will be normalcy soon, for the people to live without fear.

MANGROVES, ECO-CARE AND HUMAN SURVIVAL



At a meeting on February 10, 2020 between Gampaha District Forest Officer, **Devani Jayatilake** and the Fisheries and Inland Fisheries Industry State Minister **Sanath Nishantha Perera**, Devani Jayatilake, an educated person, had spoken of the importance of mangroves in the preservation of the eco-system when the whole world is threatened by global warming and climate change. Her daring speech has saved the natural beauty of the environment of the lagoon and the survival and livelihood of many families in Negombo. She had pointed out that the District of Gampaha has the least forest cover (1.6 %) in Sri Lanka. **She bravely pointed out that the removal of the mangroves would cause the depletion of oxygen.** Some of the people at that meeting had failed to understand the importance of oxygen for the survival of human and infra-human beings.

Negombo lagoon which provides livelihood and employment to people living in more than eleven villages- mainly Catholic fisher folk- is also getting polluted. Unwanted and unauthorized structures are also coming up disturbing the scenic beauty of the Negombo lagoon. Ignorance of what is good and beautiful is also a cause for evil today. Therefore people need to understand the connectedness between creation and human survival. They need to be educated to care for the environment which sustains them. Catholics in Negombo also need ecological catechesis and ecological spirituality to care for Mother Earth which provides the resources for the sacramental life of the Catholics. **Ecological catechesis must include** besides homicide, suicide and genocide, **lessons on biocide** (death of the species – living organisms), **geocide** (death of soil) **and ecocide** (death of the environment).

Gampaha District Forest Officer Devani’s daring speech on February 10, 2020 and the ignorance manifested by people, especially by the Catholics on that occasion, should challenge the Catholic clergy and the Consecrated Men and Women in and around Negombo, to imitate Jesus of Nazareth, who taught people about the sacredness of creation. Creation is our new neighbour. Therefore we must love creation.

Fr. Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

AORC 2020



The regional Conference of the Major Superiors of the Asia Oceania Region was held in Kopai, Jaffna, from the 2nd to the 6th of March 2020. All the Major Superiors of the region, except the Superior of the mission of Vietnam and the superior of the mission of Korea, were present. Besides the Major Superiors, Fr. Peter Stoll OMI, the Regional Councilor and Fr. Varam Anthony OMI, the AORC Secretary took part in the meeting.

In the inaugural day morning, the participants were welcomed with a beautiful traditional ceremony. The welcome ceremony brought out a very good image of the Tamil culture of Jaffna. The opening prayer service, which was very much appreciated, was conducted by

some young Oblate priests of the Province of Jaffna. As per the first item of the agenda of the meeting Rev. Fr. S. M. Selvaratnam OMI addressed the participants on the theme, “Contextual Formation”. In his address, Fr. Selvaratnam said that when one talks about contextual formation, one has to talk also about culture and inter-cultural contexts.

In his elaborations and analysis of the theme, Fr. Selvaratnam went on to highlight certain important observations. Today there is an influencing global culture with secularism, materialism, and consumerism as its prominent characteristics. It increasingly influences the elites and the growing youth of Asia, our region. In Asia, the cultural contexts cannot be

defined and demarcated easily because of their complex natures. Further, the word 'Asia' refers to a very large geographical region with its numerous cultures, languages, religions, and economic conditions. This demands the need to speak about inter-cultural context in Asia. In this situation, Church in Asia is called to make a "paradigm shift" from "baptizing mentality" (the old concept of evangelization) to some new ways of proclaiming the Gospel News (the liberating news in every sense of the word). This attitudinal change will affect our future formation. He also said that Oblates need to introduce the Eastern forms of meditation (Yoga, Zen, *Vipassana*) in our formation houses. We need to learn the Eastern Spirituality as part of our formation process, while not neglecting our rich mystical tradition of the Church.

In his second input address, Fr. Selvaratnam spoke about "Affective Maturity". The word, 'affective' refers to a strong mental or instinctive feeling such as love or fear. "Affect" - means a feeling, emotion, or desire which in a special manner leads to action. Emotional development is the ability to deal with the repressed negative emotions, like anger, guilt, fear, and lust; and then to become conscious of one's hidden motivations and take responsibility for the same. Emotional development helps a person to become a mature person. A mature person has a distinct, and yet adaptable identity. He is not rigid but flexible and open to growth, has a vision for the future. Of anger, mature person is slow to anger. According to Aristotle, anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and the right way – this is not easy.

Mature person relates himself/herself to others well. Commenting on the capacity of relating to others St. John Paul II writes, "This is truly

fundamental for a person, who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a man of communion. This demands that the priest not be arrogant or quarrelsome, affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others and quick to understand, forgive and console" (PDV No. 43).

"To admit a candidate to the diaconal ordination, the Church must verify, among other things, that the candidate for priesthood has attained affective maturity... In the case of serious doubt he must not admit him for ordination" Pope Benedict XVI. The greatest contribution a formator can make is to facilitate the process of affective maturity in the candidate so that he can find direction in his own life. Affective maturity and spiritual maturity go hand in hand. However, spiritual growth goes beyond just affective maturity. Talking about quality of life, Keith Egen writes, "The quality of our lives depends on our relationships with other human persons and with God". The quality of life of a religious/priest will define his mental as well as his affective maturity. Maturity is primarily understood as a manner of relationships.

The last days of the meeting were dedicated to the business matters.

- Since the incumbent president of the AORC, Fr. Edwin Wasantharajah OMI, the Provincial of Jaffna, has finished his two-year term of office as the President, it was necessary to elect a new President of AORC, for the next two years. Fr. Charlie Inzon OMI, the Provincial of Philippines, was elected the new President. In early April, Fr. Charlie was appointed as the Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Jolo, in

Philippines. Congratulations to Fr. Charlie. May God bless him and fill him with His Spirit.

- Since, Fr. Slawek OMI, the Superior of China-Hong Kong mission, was finishing his term as the treasurer of AORC Fr. Khan Paulus OMI, the Superior of the Delegation of Pakistan, was elected the treasurer of AORC.
- This was followed by the discussion regarding the forthcoming General Chapter in 2022, and the composition of Chapter delegates. There will be 79 delegates in the next General Chapter. Asia Oceania Region will have fifteen delegates, representing the region. Out of the fifteen delegates, there are five ex-officio provincials, namely - Provincial of Colombo, Sri Lanka; Provincial of Jaffna, Sri Lanka;

Provincial of India; Provincial of Philippines; and Superior of the Vietnam Delegation. Then, one Oblate Brother from the region will be elected. There will be also nine other elected members. They are distributed as follows - Colombo Province 1, Jaffna Province 1, Korea-Japan Delegation 1, Pakistan Delegation 1, India and Bangladesh 1, Indonesia and Turkmenistan 1, Australia and Vietnam 1, China-Hong Kong Mission 1, and Philippines, Thailand and Laos 1.

Accordingly, Colombo OMI Province will have, besides the Provincial as the ex-officio member, one more delegate, whom the Province will elect.

Fr. Irwin H. Morais, OMI

KOKILAI MISSION

At the request of his Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, the Bishop of Jaffna, the Oblate Province of Colombo undertook to serve at the parish of Kokilai. This is a joint venture between the Oblate Province of Colombo and the Oblate Province of Jaffna. Fr. Leslie Sujith Fernando OMI was appointed the co-pastor of the mission. Fr. Leslie has received the appointment from the Bishop of Jaffna. Fr. Leslie will reside with Fr. Beeshman OMI of the Province of Jaffna, and concentrate more on the Sinhala speaking community.

The Administration thanks Fr. Leslie for generously accepting to serve in this mission, and let us wish him God's blessings. You are welcome to visit the mission and extend your support to Fr. Leslie.

INSTALLATION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The installation ceremony of the new Provincial Administration will be held on the 21st May 2020, the Feast of our Saintly Founder, St. Eugene. The Holy Mass will be at 9.30 a.m. at De Mazenod House, Mattakkuliya. Please, keep this day free. Your presence is very much appreciated.

DAYS TO REMEMBER

- 21st May: Installation of the New Administration

- Annual Retreats:
 - 1st Retreat: 02nd to the 08th of August at the Scholasticate in Kandy
 - 2nd Retreat: 09th to the 16th of August at St. Vincent's Home, Maggona
 - 3rd Retreat: 15th to the 21st of November at St. Vincent's Home, Maggona

- 12th of October: Provincial Jubilee Celebrations at De Mazenod House, Mattakkuliya

- 09th of November: Mass for the deceased Oblates at 4.00 pm at Kanatta, Borella.

