

Province of The Most Holy Name

Franciscan Fathers

135 WEST 31ST STREET

NEW YORK CITY 1

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL

June, 1953

My dear Confrere:

I take this means of congratulating our newly ordained priests; our Silver Jubilarians; our Golden Jubilarians, Fathers Benvenutus Rudolph and Berard Vogt; and St. Bonaventure University on the acquisition of its new alumnus, His Excellency Archbishop Cushing.

Some notes on my recent trip to Japan:

The journey: The New York-Tokyo trip was made by airline with stops at Detroit, Minneapolis, Spokane, Seattle, Anchorage, Shemya (in the Aleutians, once a B-29 base, now an air service stop), Tokyo. Departure time from New York was 9 A. M., Wednesday, April 29. As the flight crosses the International Date Line, arrival in Tokyo was Friday, May 1, at 11:30 A. M.; total flying time, 30 hours, 10 minutes.

The second leg of the trip, from Tokyo to Seoul, the Korean capital (7½ hours by air, with a stop at Taegu), was made Tuesday, May 5. The return took place two days later, 6½ hours along the same route.

The third leg of the journey was the round trip to Hong Kong. The airliner stopped at Okinawa and Taipei, Formosa. Time each way, about 12 hours.

The fourth leg of the trip was the flight home. The plane left Tokyo at 10 A. M., Monday, May 25, with one stop at Shemya; arrived at Seattle at noon on Monday, May 25 (International Date Line once more). Left Seattle again at midnight, stopped at Spokane, Minneapolis, Detroit; arrived in New York at 4 P. M., Tuesday, May 26.

Total mileage, four legs: 19,314 miles. Total flying time: 90 hrs.

Some facts concerning the places visited:

Japan consists of a series of islands stretching out from southwest to northeast, their range of latitude is like that between Jacksonville, Fla., and the State of Maine. The largest island, on which Tokyo and the Prefecture of Gumma are located, is Honshu. The latitude of Honshu is comparable to that between Columbia, S. C., and New York City, and its terrain is one-third plain, two-thirds mountains.

Time: Add fourteen hours to New York time to get the time in Tokyo. Add twelve hours to New York time to get Hong Kong time.

Some facts about Japan:

Transportation: Basic transportation is by railroad and bus. Railroads are part electric and part steam. This means curtailment of schedules during dry spells, because the electricity is hydro-generated. However, there is adequate train service. People are travel-minded. Trains and buses, although they run frequently and on time, are very crowded. Travel is inexpensive, something like a cent and a half a mile. There are second- and third-class accommodations. Getting a seat in third class is almost impossible unless you get on at the starting point and get there early. The trip to Maebashi (capital of Gumma) from Tokyo is 83 miles--about two hours by express. In the plains area of Gumma, about half of the roads are hard, the rest gravel. Narrow, crowded streets in many towns through which one must pass make driving very difficult. There are many bicycles and small cars which make the driving of vehicles something of a contest.

Communications: A cable from the United States takes one day to reach Japan; air mail takes five days; regular mail, one month. There are telephone arrangements whereby you can call the United States from Tokyo at the rate of twelve dollars for three minutes. The telephone system in the city of Tokyo is a dial system, and fairly easy even for foreigners to operate. In the smaller cities, you work through an operator, and this too is usually simple. However, long distance is difficult with waiting periods sometimes up to an hour.

Weather: The weather on the plain is comparable to that in the territory between Washington and New York. In the mountain areas it is cooler. The rainy season extends for about six weeks in June and July.

The educational system: The organized educational system in Japan dates back to 1872. At that time it was under one man in the Federal Government, a Commissioner of Education. The system is now administered more fully at the prefecture and local levels. However, there is still a liaison between the local administration, the Federal Government, and the Commissioner of Education. The curricula and standards are set and administered by local authority in collaboration with the Federal Commissioner.

The educational system in Japan starts with the elementary schools. (They do have a kindergarten which takes children from three to six, but this is rare.) The elementary setup covers six years. Following this are three years of the lower-grade secondary school. This combination is compulsory and free. When the child finishes it, he has an education comparable to a child finishing junior high school. Following this nine-year course is the upper grade secondary, another free three-year course comparable to the completion of high school. Then they have a special higher school, gauged to prepare the student for the university or industrial college. However, a student need not necessarily have gone through the higher school, for if he passes a qualifying examination he may register at the university. The university has a four-year under-graduate course leading to a bachelor's degree; and at least two years of post-graduate work are needed for a Ph.D. There is also the Junior College, a two- to three-year project on the curricular level of the higher school but with a lower standard. Added to this are teacher-training programs.

The missionaries are somewhat reluctant, at the beginning, to get into the educational system. The reason is that the Japanese themselves have a very adequate system, their standards are high, and it is not easy for those who do not speak the language fluently to conduct high schools and colleges. However, those missionaries who have been in Japan for a long time and have gotten into the school work find that they have no trouble at all with registration. There are many students who are anxious to go to these private schools, and can afford to do so.

Some of the missionaries have set up kindergartens, which become fairly good, although indirect, contacting agencies. Parents are glad to get their children into the kindergartens. Parents also show interest in parent-teachers' meetings, thus giving the pastor an opportunity to talk about the Faith. Teaching is done by Japanese civilians, Catholics if they are available.

Other items of interest that affect our work:

The Japanese home is usually a frame building, so made that it can easily be taken down and moved. The divisions inside the home, taking the place of our walls, are in the form of sliding doors. These are removable, so that practically the whole floor of the house can be opened up into one room. Floor mats (which serve for sleeping), and perhaps a small table, are usually the only visible furnishings. All other household effects, dishes, and so forth, are hidden away in cupboards. Chairs are rare, as the Japanese sit on their haunches to eat. The houses are spotlessly clean, and shoes are removed before one enters.

Most of the buildings used in our work will be the combination type. This is made easy by the sliding door type of room division.

The work: The approach to the mission problem is twofold. The priest may move into town, advertise his presence, and wait for contacts. Ordinarily, because of his inadequate grasp of the language, it will be necessary for him to hire a catechist. This is the direct approach. The Father using this method makes it a point to get acquainted with the townsfolk, and makes sure that people know that he is willing to answer questions about the Church.

There are other missionaries who, as I have mentioned before, set up a kindergarten, to which the Japanese parent sends his child. The parent can then be expected to attend meetings concerning the school. It is when arrangements are made for the child's entrance into the school, and at the subsequent parent-teacher meetings, that the priest has an opportunity to make his contacts. This is the indirect approach.

Information concerning our missions:

Our mission territory in Japan is the Prefecture of Gumma. The distance from the northernmost to the southernmost cities in the part of Gumma where we are now located is about thirty-five miles. There are six cities being taken care of. We have foundations in four, and two are handled as missions. Working from north to south in this area, the cities are:

Maebashi: This is the capital of Gumma. The principal industry is weaving. Out of a population of 94,000 there are 253 Catholics and 40 catechumens. The pastor is Fr. Raphael Makino, a Japanese secular priest. His assistant is our Fr. Robert E. Frawley. The missionary unit consists of one acre of ground on which are a church, a rectory, and a home for the help. The mission of Izesaki is handled from Maebashi. Izesaki has 32 Catholics in a population of 47,000.

Takasaki: This is the railroad center of the prefecture, and is a machinery manufacturing center. There are 44 Catholics in Takasaki, out of a population of 91,000. Here we have two pieces of property. On one of these there is a combination church and rectory. The second piece of property, on which nothing has been built as yet, covers about two acres. A combination building will be erected here. It will be usable first as a central home for the Fathers; then, as a church and assembly hall or a kindergarten. Later, it could be a six- or seven-classroom school. Frs. Louis Joyce and Ralph Reilly will be stationed at Takasaki. This second piece of property is interesting from the point of view of Japanese procedure. It is to be purchased from the government and because of this, the Fathers must begin to build before they can purchase. This plan or regulation dates back to a squatters' rights setup.

Kiryu: This is a silk manufacturing center, with 282 Catholics and 65 catechumens out of a population of 94,000. Fr. Flavian Moeninger, a French Franciscan, is pastor, assisted by our Fr. Harold Finn. The mission at Ota is covered from Kiryu. Population of Ota: 50,000; Catholics: 22. The building at Kiryu is on an acre of land, and consists of a combination church hall and rectory.

Tatebayashi: This is the center of the flour industry. Population here is 23,000; Catholics 51, catechumens 65. Our Frs. Solanus Gallagher and Stanislaus Blackowski will conduct the business of this parish. There is a combination church and rectory at Tatebayashi.

The Language School:

In 1950, Fr. Alphonse Schnusenburg, O. F. M., General Delegate to the Orient, purchased property in Tokyo. This property is now known as St. Joseph's Friary. It was originally used as a home for Friars studying at a language school in Japan. Fr. Louis Joyce engaged two Japanese to teach the Friars at St. Joseph's. This was the beginning of the school, which opened officially in September, 1951, with Fr. Louis as its director. Later, in the fall of 1952, he went to found the mission in Gumma, and Fr. Beatus took over. The school has continued to grow in worth, reputation and registration. It now has 76 students from 24 religious communities of men and women. All missionaries in the area, with the exception of the Jesuits, go to this language school. The direct method of teaching developed by the U. S. Army is used. Added to this is the study

of written Japanese. Sermon, confessional and catechetical needs are taken into consideration in the classroom. A new course will continue the basic direct method and will from the beginning work in materials that have to do with the needs of the missionaries, as well as with written Japanese. This new course will be of two years' duration, after which study plans will be sent to the graduates to help them to continue the mastery of Japanese. This is one of our real contributions to the mission of Japan. Another one, also instituted by Fr. Alphonse, is the Biblical Institute, at which the New Testament is now being translated into Japanese.

The work in Hong Kong:

Frs. Victorin Rosboschil and Seraphin Priestly are stationed at the house of the Franciscan Procuration in Kowloon. The Superior at this house is a Friar from the Irish Province, Fr. Virgil Mannion. Fr. Virgil is procurator, Fr. Seraphin Priestly is co-procurator, and Fr. Victorin Rosboschil works in the Colony, mostly with the Legion of Mary. The Procuration is the business office for the missions. It is an institution of long standing. It serves the mission by handling all of its secular business, such as purchasing, finances, Mass stipends, and making various types of arrangements. The procurator must be a jack-of-all-trades, and he must have contacts. Since the war, a very important duty has been added, that of helping the missionaries from Red China back to health and homeland. Each day of the week, a member of some one of the Procurations in Hong Kong goes up to the border. If a priest comes over that day, the Father assumes the task of getting him to the procuration of his own community in Hong Kong, where he is taken care of by his brethren. This may involve such services as getting him to a doctor, procuring glasses for him, having his teeth fixed, arranging for an operation that is long overdue, getting him clothed and fed, through the immigration authorities, and on his way back to his native land. Fr. Seraphin told me that there are still 46 Franciscan Fathers in China, and also a number of secular priests. The Procuration does what it can to handle the business of these men still in China. This is the work of Fr. Seraphin.

Fr. Victorin Rosboschil is director of two groups of the Legion of Mary: the Immaculate Heart of Mary group, which is comprised of men and women of Hong Kong, and Our Lady of Lourdes group, which is comprised of British soldiers stationed in Hong Kong. These Legion of Mary groups interest themselves in, and really accomplish, the Works of Mercy, with special emphasis on the instruction of the ignorant, the visitation of the sick, and the visitation of refugees in and around Hong Kong. As director of these activities, it is Fr. Victorin's task to instruct and to check the work of those giving instruction. He is now in the process of forming another group among the Army nurses in Hong Kong and other British female personnel. Added to this, he does his usual priestly labors, teaches English, and studies Cantonese.

Korea: In Korea, it was my privilege to attend a meeting of Catholic chaplains at the house of the Columban Fathers. There were 56 priests present. One of the Columban Fathers, a chaplain, gave the Day of Recollection. It was very interesting and informative. I met there two of our Fathers-- Timothy Quinn and Cormac Walsh. Both are happy and extremely interested in their work.

While in the Orient, it was my good fortune to have the opportunity to meet the following chaplains: Frs. Gordian Ehlacher, Giles Webster, Raymond Govern and Urban Cain. Fr. Urban took some time off when I arrived in Tokyo, and was very helpful in working out the details of the arrangements, made in New York by Fr. Damian Blaher, for getting me to Korea.

With kind regards to all the Friars, and asking continued prayers for the Definitorium and myself for the successful administration of the Province,

Sincerely and fraternally,

Celsus E. White, ofm

Minister Provincial