**OFS AND YOUFRA OF ASIA AND OCEANIA**

**JOURNEYING IN FAITH**

4TH ASIA-OCEANIA CONGRESS

**MAY 3-8, 2013**

**SEJONG SELF-GOVERNING CITY, KOREA**

From 3rd to 8th May 2013 I had the privilege of representing Oceania at the 4th Asia-Oceania Congress which was indeed a rewarding experience. From CIOFS there were in attendance: Doug Clorey, Vice-Minister General, Lucy Almiranez, Councillor, Ana Fruk, Councillor for YouFra, Fr Amando Trujillo, TOR, General Spiritual Assistant, Fr Jose Antonio Duarte, OFM, General Spiritual Assistant and Fr Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv, General Spiritual Assistant. In addition to the CIOFS representatives there were participants from the following countries: Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, The Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand and, of course, the host nation South Korea. In all there were 56 participants which included 6 interpreters.

As well as sharing wonderful ‘fraternity’ - each National Fraternity and Emerging National Fraternity had to deliver a power-point presentation against certain criteria specified by the organising committee. Then there were lectures given by the CIOFS members on the following topics: *The OFS* *International Fraternity* – Doug Clorey; *The OFS: Challenged from Within and from Without* – Lucy Almiranez; *Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to OFS and the YouFra and Collegiality among the* *Spiritual Assistants* - Fr Martin Bitzer, OFMConv; *Faith –* Fr Jose Antonio Duarte OFM; *New Evangelization* – Fr Amando Trujillo TOR; *OFS and YouFra - Fostering Fraternal Bonds* – Ana Fruk. After each lecture we broke into groups for discussion with given questions to address and report back. Some examples of the questions for discussion were: *What are the main problems you find in your fraternity regarding the spiritual and pastoral care to the OFS and YouFra? What are your expectations of a spiritual assistant? How can you and your fraternity foster and enrich the work of the new evangelization based on the richness of the OFS and YouFra identity and mission?*

Each day we came together in the beautiful chapel for the Celebration of the Eucharist and the praying of Morning and Evening Prayer. One afternoon we went on a Cultural Outing to visit the site where many Korean Martyrs were murdered for the faith. In addition we visited the site where excavations in 1971 revealed the Tomb of King Muryeong who reigned AD501 -523. The Cultural outing concluded with a traditional Korean meal (eaten on the floor!) in a traditional restaurant.

Some memories which will remain with me of my attendance at the Congress are:

* The graciousness and hospitality of the Korean National Fraternity;
* The strong faith of the Korean people – those martyred for their faith in Korea;
* That one of the founding members of the OFS in Korea, John Jang Myon, was elected Prime Minister of South Korea 1951 and Vice President in 1956;
* The sighting of young Religious and Seminarians;
* The strength of the OFS in some countries – in South Korea there are over 12,000 professed members and in India over 15,000 professed members;
* The attendance of a good number of YouFra members adding the enthusiasm of youth to our gathering;
* The growth of the OFS and YouFra in China (where the Church is underground);
* The great need for Spiritual Assistants throughout Asia-Oceania;
* The fact that all local fraternities in Korea have a Spiritual Assistant;
* The encouragement by the CIOFS members to strive for a ‘Fraternity’ apostolate;
* The fact that last year for the celebration of the OFS’s 75th anniversary in Korea, there was a celebration in Seoul for 6,000 members;
* That in the centre of Seoul the OFS have their own National Centre.

Attached are the Conclusions of the Congress composed by CIOFS members and some participants.

Helen Britton ofs

International Councillor OFS – Oceania