



Seventy-Five Years of the Congregation of the Mission in Japan: Mission and Collaboration

based from the Notes of Fr. Ben Ortazon, CM

By Roed Desamparado, CM • Edited by Amado Caballero, CM

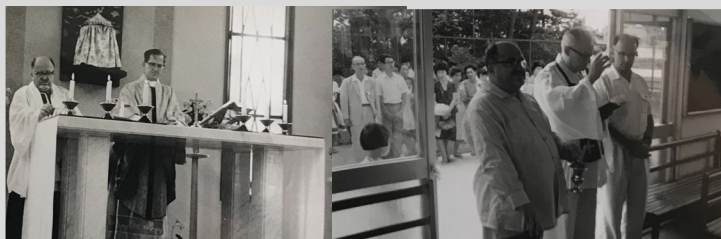
Seventy-five years after the first Vincentian missionary set foot in Japan in 1949. The Congregation of the Mission (CM) has continued to witness to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul through faithful service to the poor, assistance to local dioceses, and collaboration with the wider Vincentian Family.

The mission began quietly, as a humble service to the spiritual needs of the Daughters of Charity, guided by the vision of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. What started as simple care and accompaniment grew over time into a more structured missionary presence, extending into parish life and broader diocesan work. Through parish ministry, a deeper calling emerged: to reach out to migrants and foreign workers, walking alongside them as they navigate life in Japan, helping them feel welcomed, supported, and part of a local parish community.

Today, after seventy-five years, the CM mission in Japan looks to the future with hope and anticipation. It dreams of creating a truly Vincentian parish and community house—a place that serves the local Church, shares the spirit of St. Vincent with all, continues close collaboration and spiritual guidance with the Daughters of Charity, and fosters the growth of future vocations, preparing them to serve the Gospel with love and dedication in Japan.



Fr. Louis Reinprecht, CM
Japan Mission 1952/5 – 1963/4/18



Fr. Hyppolite Tichit, CM (French), 1958



Fr. Lucas, CM came to Japan in 1975 to assist Fr. Folley but decided to return to US in 1975

Humble Beginnings: Mission to the Daughters of Charity

According to the notes of Fr. Benjamin Ortazon, CM (The CM's in Japan, Section 2, p. 6), the General Curia initiated the project of sending missionaries to Japan. Evidence of this can be seen in the diversity of missionaries from various provinces and countries assigned between 1950 and 1977, before the Philippine Province assumed responsibility.

In chronological order, the CM missionaries were:

- 1949 – Fr. O'Hagen (Irish) and Fr. Jose Ignacio Oñate (Spain)
- 1952 – Fr. Louis Reinprecht (Austrian) – first Provincial Director of the DCs in Japan
- 1958 – Fr. Hyppolite Tichit (French)
- 1964 – Fr. Ignatius Foley (American) – second Provincial Director of the DCs
- 1967 – Fr. Davitt, CM (Irish)
- 1974 – Fr. Lucas, CM (American)



Fr. Ignatius Loyola Folley, CM
Japan Mission 1964/9/24 – 1983/6/18



Fr. Benjamin Ortazon, CM with friends

In the early years, missionaries' main responsibility was serving as Provincial Director for the Daughters of Charity in Japan—a role that required mastering Japanese language. For some, the unfamiliar language and culture proved overwhelming, and they were unable to complete their studies, eventually returning to their home Provinces.

The task of the Provincial Director is immense. The Director was expected to care for sisters scattered across numerous houses in Kansai (Kobe, Takarazuka, Osaka, Wakayama), Kyoto, Nagoya, Shizuoka, Tokyo, and even as far as Gunma. Distances were vast, and the growing number of DC communities made it nearly impossible for a single priest to minister to them all adequately. For years, the U.S. Midwest Province, which oversaw Japan Province at the time, repeatedly requested additional missionaries from the Superior General.

It was only after 27 long years that this request was granted. In 1977, Philippine Province sent Fr. Michael Gimarino, CM—the first Filipino missionary bringing renewed hope and support to a mission that had long been stretched thin but steadfast in faith and dedication.



Fr. Michael Gimarino, CM
Japan Mission 1981/9/29 - 1989



Fr. Victoriano Torres, CM
Japan Mission 1993-2005

Philippine Province Took Over

Fr. Michael Gimarino became the first Filipino Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity in 1981 and served until 1989. When he left, Fr. Mario Colina, CM, who had arrived in Japan that same year, was appointed interim director while awaiting Fr. Victoriano Torres, CM, the successor of Fr. Gimarino, CM, to finish his Japanese language studies. Fr. Torres arrived in 1991, he resided in Tokyo during his studies, and officially assumed the role of the Provincial Director of the DC Japan in May 31, 1993. He served for 12 years until 2005.

Fr. Amado Caballero, CM arrived in 2003 for Japanese studies and became Provincial Director in April 2005. His term ended on June 4, 2016, when several Provinces of the Daughters of Charity in Asia underwent reconfiguration. Thus, from 1949 to 2016, there were only a total of five CM missionaries who served as Provincial Directors of the DCs in Japan.

While spiritual accompaniment of the DC remained the core mission of the CM, confreres were at the same time deeply involved in the diocesan pastoral ministries, reflecting the Vincentian charism of adapting to the needs of the local Church.



2015 Local Community at the Kobe House sala

Saint Vincent de Paul House (Kobe): First *Domus Formata*

By 1991, with three CM priests from the Philippine Province in Japan (Frs. Torres, Colina, and Ortazon), the earnest desire of instituting a local CM community became feasible. The Saint Vincent de Paul House within the DC Provincial compound in Kobe, which is originally the residence of the Provincial Director, was chosen as the site for the future canonical community.

On October 6, 1993, Fr. Serafin Peralta, CM, then Provincial Superior of the Philippine Province, announced (CTR #13) that the Kobe residence, though not owned canonically by the Province, had been approved as a *domus formata* (formal religious house) for CM missionaries in Japan. The General Curia also acknowledged that approval in its October 1993 issue of *Nuntia*. Eventually, the first superior of the house was installed on May 31, 1994 during Fr. Peralta's visitation. The first superior of the local community was Fr. Benjamin Ortazon, CM.

The Kobe House holds a unique place in Japan CM history. It was the first *missio ad gentes* local house of the Philippine Province. Members live separately according to their apostolic assignments but gathered regularly for community life. As Fr. Ortazon noted: "Saint Vincent de Paul House or Kobe House symbolized the commitment of the CM to Japan."

However, the stability of the Kobe House was affected by the DC's reconfiguration on June 4, 2016 into the Province of St. Louise de Marillac-Asia (PSLM-A). With Fr. Amado Caballero transferred back to the Philippines as Regional Director, Kobe House lost the regular presence of CM priests and its role as anchor of the Japan mission weakened.

Spread of Vincentian Charism: Parish, Migrant, and Tribunal Ministries

The first major diocesan ministry began in Nakayamate Parish, Kobe. On April 1, 1981, Fr. Foley, CM, representing the Congregation, signed a contract with the Archbishop of Osaka, allowing CM missionaries to live in the parish and minister to foreigners who came to the parish. In practice, the ministry expanded to serve both Japanese locals and migrants.

In 1982, CM priests also began serving as chaplains to the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. And in 1983, they initiated late-afternoon Masses for Filipino workers in the nightlife and entertainment industries. This ministry led to the creation of Filipino "Sama-sama Group," which evolved into the Osaka International Cooperation Center, promoting intercultural pastoral and social outreach.

Another milestone was Fr. Benjamin Ortazon's appointment as a member of the Archdiocesan Tribunal of Osaka on June 9, 1992—evidence of the trust CM priests earned in the local Church. His term of service as member of the tribunal ended with his passing away in June 3, 2022.

In 1993, Fr. Mario Colina moved from Kobe House to the Osaka Catholic Seminary in Tamatsukuri, where he became Assistant Director of the Archdiocesan Office for Migrant Concerns, particularly overseeing the Osaka International Cooperation Center. Migrant ministry initiated in the 1980s has continued today with succeeding Filipino confreres, alongside their main role of spiritual accompaniment for the DC.

Fr. Constancio "Tans" Consulta, CM, arrived on April 1, 1998, at the request of then-Archbishop Yasuda and, later, Archbishop Ikenaga Jun to serve in a Collaborative Team Ministry. After completing his Japanese language studies, he served at Tamatsukuri Catholic Church in Osaka from 2000 to 2011. Since April 2011, he has been part of the Collaborative Ministry at Kobe Central Catholic Church and Sumiyoshi Catholic Church. Alongside sacramental ministry, Fr. Tans is active in outreach programs such as the 4th Sunday homeless feeding and migrant ministry.

Fr. Cesar Pormento, CM, the newest member of the mission, arrived in February 2020. He was initially assigned to Tamatsukuri Parish (Osaka Cathedral) while completing language studies until 2024. He now serves as parish priest of Koshien Parish in the Takamatsu/Osaka Archdiocese and, as of August 2025, also serves as Sub-Director of the Daughters of Charity in Japan.

Fr. Amado Caballero, CM, returned to Japan in 2023, as sub-Director of the Daughters of Charity, Japan Mission and at the same time, a missionary assigned to the Diocese of Takamatsu/Osaka Archdiocese. He currently serves as parish priest of Tarumi Catholic Church and as superior of the CM-Japan community.

Since Fr. Foley's 1981 agreement with the Osaka Archdiocese, there had been no formal contract directly between the Philippine Province of the Congregation of the Mission and the Archdiocese. The first draft of the official contract was prepared by Chancellor Fr. Kambayashi during the term of Provincial Fr. Venerando Agner, CM, and was finally signed several years later under Provincial Fr. Bienvenido Disu, CM in 2009.



The local community together with Provincial Fr. Ned Disu, CM, and the bishops of the diocese at the contract signing in November 2009



July 2019 Meeting with Fr. Thomas Mavric, CM in Kobe

Expansion to the Diocese of Yokohama

The Congregation of the Mission's presence in the Diocese of Yokohama can trace its beginnings to 2005, when Fr. Marcelo Manimtim, CM, then Provincial Superior, met with Bishop Raphael Masahiro Umemura. This meeting was made possible through the friendship nurtured by Fr. Victoriano Torres, CM during his years in Tokyo. It paved the way for the start of the Vincentian mission in the diocese of Yokohama.

Bishop Umemura over the years has expressed his openness to welcoming the Vincentians and promised to provide a CM community house, provided that three CM missionaries could be sent into his diocese. By 2017, the CM mission in Japan had grown to six priests—three serving in Osaka and three in Yokohama—laying the foundation for two stable communities.

The three missionaries who have served in the Diocese of Yokohama from 2009 are:

Fr. Rogelio Cardenas, CM

- Arrived in Japan on February 4, 2008
- began Japanese language studies in Osaka.
- 2009 -2011 - Assistant parish priest at Chigasaki Church
- 2011-2019 - Assistant parish priest at Kofu Church, Yamanashi Prefecture
- 2016-2025 - Parish priest of Iwata and Kakegawa churches
- 2016-2025 - Iwata and Kakegawa kindergarten chaplain
- 2025 - Took 1-year Sabbatical

Fr. Roed Desamparado, CM

- Arrived in Japan on September 12, 2011
- September 27, 2011 - April 2013 stayed in Sueyoshi Catholic Church, Yokohama for language studies.
- 2013-2016 - Assistant parish priest at Yamate Cathedral
- 2016 - 2017 - Assistant parish priest at Fujisawa Church
- 2017-2024 Parish priest of Fuji and Fujinomiya Church
- 2017-2024 chaplain at Yoshiwara and Fujinomiya kindergartens.
- 2018-2015 Appointed Diocese Moderator for Pastoral Concerns for Filipinos.
- 2025-Present -parish priest of Iwata and Kakegawa
- 2025-Present - Iwata and Kakegawa kindergarten chaplain

Fr. Darryl Diño, CM

- Arrived in Japan in September 2017;
- 2017-2020 - resided at Sueyoshi Catholic Church for language studies
- 2020- 2025 - Assistant parish priest at Yamate Cathedral
- 2020-2025 - Vincentian Family in Japan in-charge
- 2025 -Returned to the Philippines at the request of the Province to serve in formation of future CM missionaries.



April 19, 2024 – Meeting with Bishop Umemura of the Yokohama Diocese, together with Fr. Peter Solis, CM, the Provincial Superior.

Strategic Assignments in Shizuoka

To advance the goal of establishing a community house, Bishop Umemura assigned Fr. Rogelio Cardenas as parish priest of Iwata and Kakegawa, and Fr. Roed Desamparado to Fuji Church, all in Shizuoka Prefecture. Their mission was to discern and recommend the parish or area most aligned with CM's charism.

This strategic move was crucial since the Kobe House had become unstable due to the DC's restructuring. Establishing a foothold in Yokohama Diocese ensured the continuity of CM's mission in Japan.



Priests from the CM Philippine Province posing in front of Iwata Church (left) and Fuji Church (right) in Shizuoka Prefecture, January 2019.

Official Registration and Future Prospects

In 2017, the Diocese of Yokohama officially registered the Iwata priest residence as the CM's canonical address in Japan—a major milestone toward acquiring a permanent community house.

Progress had since been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and personnel changes. Fr. Darryl Diño was reassigned to seminary formation in the Philippines, reducing missionary manpower locally. Nonetheless, the CM in Japan remains steadfast in its mission.

A Vision for the Future

In the midst of challenges and changes, the Congregation of the Mission in Japan stands as a witness to the compassionate heart of St. Vincent de Paul. The presence of CM missionaries in both Osaka /Takamatsu and Yokohama is not just symbolic—it is relevant to the needs of our time. Among Filipino migrants searching for belonging, and an aging Catholic population quietly carrying the weight of faith and loneliness, the poverty of the people—material, spiritual, and emotional—is real and immediate. Surrounded by signs of wealth and progress, these struggles call us to respond with love, presence, and care.

CM missionaries walk alongside those in need, offering more than guidance or programs—they offer themselves, their time, and their hearts. They accompany the Daughters of Charity, members of the Vincentian Family, and migrant communities, sharing burdens, listening to stories, and bringing hope where despair might otherwise take root. Their presence is a living expression of the Vincentian charism: to be close to the poor, to serve with humility, and to bring light into lives often overlooked.

The effort to establish a permanent local community house is more than a building or a milestone; it is a promise of steadfast commitment—a home where missionaries can live, pray, and plan, so their service can continue faithfully and generously. This house is also a place of learning and growth: a formation station where members and candidates from the Philippine Province can witness life in mission, learn to serve with a heart, and understand the realities of pastoral work in Japan. It can also serve as a temporary shelter for missionaries as they journey toward international service, nurturing the Province's vision of a global mission.

The seventy-five-year journey of CM missionaries in Japan is a story of resilience, collaboration, and faithful service. In a land far from home but close to the mission, the Congregation continues to live out St. Vincent's charism—lifting lives, offering hope, and preparing future missionaries to serve with love, courage, and an unwavering commitment to the poor.



VINCENTIAN LAY PARTNERS-JAPAN(VLP-JAPAN): A NEW BRANCH OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY IN THE MAKING

As the Congregation of the Mission (CM) in Japan celebrates its 75th year of presence and service, a new chapter in the Vincentian story is about to unfold.

Preparations are underway to formally organize the Vincentian Lay Partners (VLP) Japan, a group of lay faithful—both Japanese and migrants—who have journeyed with and supported the works and ministries of Vincentian missionaries in Japan, and who now feel called to live out the charism of St. Vincent de Paul in their own daily lives.

The VLP-Japan hopes to become an integral part of the Vincentian Family in Japan. Inspired by the life and spirituality of St. Vincent, its members seek to:

- Deepen their faith through prayer, formation, and reflection on the Gospel in the Vincentian spirit.
- Serve Christ in the poor, responding to the needs of those on the margins of society: the elderly, migrants, the sick, and others in need.
- Collaborate with CM priests, Vincentian sisters, and other lay partners worldwide, creating a network of mutual support and shared mission.

Though still in its formative stage, VLP-Japan carries a hopeful and missionary vision: to witness to Christ's love through humble service and to share the Vincentian charism with the wider Church in Japan. The group is expected to be formally introduced and commissioned as part of the CM's 75th anniversary celebrations.

In the words of St. Vincent de Paul, "We must redouble our confidence in the Lord, seeing ourselves only as poor tools, which if not in the hands of an excellent workman would spoil everything." With this same spirit of trust and humility, the Vincentian Lay Partners Japan seek to take their first steps as a community of faith and service.

Note to Readers

"Vinsennetsui" is a combination of Japanese words meaning Vincentian zeal for the mission. This is our maiden issue, created to share information and news about the works and ministry of the CM priests in Japan. We aim to publish this newsletter two to three times each year.