



OBLATES OF THE VIRGIN MARY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROVINCIAL

This summer, I went to Paris to attend a gathering of leaders from our religious order around the world, which we call the “Council of the Congregation.”

While in Paris, we were asked to reflect on a letter our Rector Major, Fr. Luis Costantino, wrote to the Congregation as we continue our bicentennial celebration. Fr. Luis pointed out that you cannot celebrate fully in the present if you are holding on to hurts from the past. The truth of this hit me like a ton of bricks.

In Jesus’ prayer, the “Our Father,” he reminds us that the forgiveness we seek from God is conditional upon our willingness to forgive others. **Forgiveness is the key to joy.**

That very day, as I was about to say the Our Father, I paused. I quieted myself before God and asked, “Who do I need to forgive today?”

There were no major offenses that came to mind, but when I really thought about it, there were minor offenses that I had readily dismissed. The fact that I could remember them proved that I was holding on to them to some extent and needed to forgive. I whispered, “I forgive you.”

Then it occurred to me that perhaps there were times during the day when I had hurt others without knowing it. I asked Jesus to show me. When I was finished, I whispered, “Please forgive me.”

That day, I prayed the Our Father in a way I had never prayed it before. I was left with a smile.

I offer all of you this reflection: if you are planning a celebration or special occasion this year, please remember what Jesus taught me: “Forgiveness is the key to joy!”

Fr. Jim Walther, Provincial