The Mystery of Being Present and Absent in Love:

I think someone needs to write a book with one of the following titles: "The Metaphysics of a Goodbye", "The Anatomy of a Farewell", "The Pain of Moving On", or better still, "A Spirituality of the Absence".

Why such a book? We experience many painful goodbyes in life and at times we do not know how to handle them.

There are so many times when someone we love has to go away or times when we have to go away and yet there are no books which could help or suggest to us how to handle this emotional, psychological and spiritual pain. *(I wonder how the apostles handled the Spiritual pain of the Ascension of Christ?)* I am sure most of you would agree with me that we often find it difficult to settle comfortably into a new place or environment. We live through the experience and this often becomes a life-altering experience for many. The experience can be a painful one, leaving us feeling restless and empty, as if all the colour of life, the energy and joy inside of us has dissipated.
Life is ever changing and change can lead to confusion, restless, dark heartaches caused by the painful goodbyes even though at times Change can also lead us to a deep sense of joy in knowing that our loved ones are ever present in a different form and mysterious way.

Parents, for example, experience this mystery of presence and absence in love when their children grow up and leave home to start lives of their own. The experience of children leaving to build their own lives away from home leaves many parents with restless heartaches and feelings of emptiness.

Most parents would confess that the home coming of their children to visit after being away for a while or longer period brings with it a sense of joy and pride. Their loved ones are now coming back more confident and with a better understanding of how the world works. They look at life through a different lens. Their relationship takes on a new meaning with a richer love and appreciation for each other.

When Jesus was preparing his disciples for his ascension, he told them: “It is better for you that I go away! You won’t understand this now. You will grieve and have heavy hearts, but later, this will turn to joy and you will understand why I have to do this because, unless I go away, I can’t send you the Advocate.”

These are unspoken words when one says goodbye to friends or family when deciding to move on in life. Some of you may have experienced this when you moved away from home for a while, or for a longer period.

Absence is sometimes the only thing that can purify presence and make us understand that we can forever be present in one another’s hearts and memories even if physically we are far away. Physical presence often leads to tensions, irritations, disappointments, flaws in our bodies and faults in our character and relationships which partially block full love and blessing.

Absence can help wash us and our relationships clean. The pain of absence stretches our hearts so that the absence, the beauty, the love, and the gift of the one who is absent can flow to us without being coloured by the tensions, anger, disappointments, and the flaws of everyday life. That is why there is a need to go away from our families or friends. Unless we go, we cannot accept that we are no longer children, but adults with lives of our own. Unless we go we cannot realize how
rooted and attached we are to each other and accept the reality of the deep love we have for one another.

The mystery of saying goodbye is really the mystery of the Ascension. The Ascension is about going and at the same time being present in a mysterious away so that those who love us can fully receive our spirit.

I am leaving St Benedict’s to embark on a new journey. As I begin with this mission of Christ, the Church and the Congregation, I ask you to keep me in your thoughts and prayers. Formation is one of the difficult and challenging ministries because one is entrusted not only with the lives of the young men but also with their vocations and their future. To go through it one needs God`s grace and perseverance.

Thank you for the time we have spent together and thank you for who you have been in my life. It is an emotional and painful experience to say goodbye and I feel empty! But I know that at the appointed time and within no space of time God will fill that empty space with his immeasurable love and grace.

Keep on going and the same time smiling!

Fr. Marole OMI (06/02/2015)