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Information No. 450 (English)

January 2006

Canada -- Indian Residential Schools: “Agreement in Principle”

For many years, the missionary focus of some Oblate Provinces in Canada has been sidetracked by thousands of lawsuits related to claims of abuse by former students of Indian Residential Schools that had been directed by the Oblates since the 19th century. The Oblates were in charge of 57 of these schools. Even in the midst of the painstaking restructuring process that led to the creation of Lacombe Province, the lawsuits were present in the discussions, like a storm cloud that would not disappear. It was with cautious optimism, therefore, that the Lacombe Province has communicated the latest news to their membership.

On November 23, a press conference took place in Ottawa where it was announced that an agreement in principle had been reached between the Government of Canada, legal counsels for former students of Indian Residential Schools, legal counsels for Church entities (including 41 Catholic entities) and other representatives of former students, including the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations.

The agreement in principle includes monetary compensation (labelled a common experience payment) for every former student of an Indian Residential School in addition to funds committed to improving the current ADR process for claims of serious abuse, support for healing and reconciliation, support for a Truth and Reconciliation process and commemorative activities. The total dollar value of this agreement is \$1.9 billion.

This agreement in principle is awaiting court approval, although its announcement is very good news indeed.

The group of 41 Catholic organizations engaged in

these discussions expressed their satisfaction that the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Government of Canada have announced their acceptance of its proposal for healing and reconciliation submitted earlier this year.

Sr. Gloria Keylor, a spokesperson for the group of Catholic entities, said “instead of being continuously involved in litigation, we can now return to the very fundamental reasons for the existence of our organizations, which is the use of our resources and people to promote and foster right relationships, built on mutual respect and integrity, with Canada’s Aboriginal community and all peoples.”

The proposal from the Catholic entities is part of the overall agreement reached by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Frank Iacobucci, who was leading discussions on behalf of the federal government with groups involved in Indian Residential Schools issues.

“This historic agreement would not have been possible without the ongoing efforts of AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine, and Indian Residential Schools Resolution Deputy Minister Mario Dion,” Sr. Keylor said. “It is a major milestone on the path to righting some of the wrongs of the past, and will facilitate closure and the ability for all stakeholders to move forward in harmony.

For the 41 Catholic entities, many of which are congregations of men and women religious, the serious and significant commitment to the negotiation process and the willingness to participate in healing and reconciliation activities indicate their dedication to just and lasting resolution of this part of Canada’s history, especially since thousands of their members dedicated their lives to assisting First Nations people.”

LACOMBE Settlement Agreement

On December 7, the following report was sent to the members of Lacombe Province:

The purpose of this report is to let you know that on Tuesday, December 06, 2005 the 41 Catholic Entities met in Calgary. As you will recall in March of 2005 they presented to the Government of Canada a proposal which would see a resolution to the various litigation issues that have preoccupied several dioceses and religious communities. Within the last month a series of meetings has led to the Government of Canada and the 41 Catholic Entities signing a Memorandum of Understanding. On Tuesday, the 41 Entities voted to ratify the Memorandum of Understanding which was part of the larger Agreement in Principle between the Federal Government, the various Churches and the Legal Counsels representing the former students of the Indian Residential Schools. The Entities also gave the Negotiating Team permission to finalize a Settlement Agreement between Canada and the 41 Catholic Entities which would eventually require the signatures of representatives of the 41 Entities. Without going into great detail the Settlement Agreement will see the Catholic Entities committing to three things:

- 1) To contribute 29 million dollars in cash to a Healing Fund which would fund ongoing efforts at healing and reconciliation;
- 2) To contribute 25 million dollars over the next 10 years in Ministry in Kind (this means that various accepted ministry initiatives taken on by the various; religious communities and dioceses in regard to healing and reconciliation)
- 3) To provide leadership and support to a national campaign to raise 25 million.

In return the Government of Canada will give us full indemnity for all claims arising from our involvement in Indian Residential Schools and will be responsible for paying 100% of the compensation costs arising from litigation. The current plan is for the Settlement Agreement to be signed by March 31, 2006. As we receive information and are able to disclose it we will keep you informed.

The various Oblate units (St. Paul's, Grandin, Manitoba, St. Peter's and OMI Lacombe Canada) are full participants in this Settlement Agreement. What it means for us is that once we honour our obligations to contribute resources to the Healing Fund, what remains of our resources and energy can be devoted fully to our ministry and community life. A major part of our ministry is with the Aboriginal Peoples and this commitment will continue with a focus on Healing and Reconciliation.

This moment is a moment of celebration for us as a Province. It is an occasion for us to give thanks to the many people – Oblates and others who have made this day possible. It is an occasion for us to give thanks to God and to ask God to continue to bless our efforts at being Good News in our community life and ministry. It is also an opportunity for us to once again invite others to share in our charism – in our community life and our mission and ministry.

UNITED STATES Papal Honour for Italian missionary in Texas

One of the highest honours the pope can grant to an individual was received recently by an Oblate in Brownsville, Texas. In the pope's name, Bishop Raymundo J. Peña awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross to Fr. Pasquale LANESE, OMI. A year before he finished his seminary studies, Fr. Lanese was ordained in his hometown of Ripalimosani, Italy. A week later he went to Texas to finish his studies and prepare for ministry to the Hispanic population. Over the years he has served in many Texas parishes. In 1995 he was appointed rector of Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Brownsville. This Gothic-revival structure was originally designed by Oblate legend, Fr. Peter KERALUM. In 2001 it was placed on the 2001 list of the country's protected historic places.

LACOMBE The Jubilee Fund continues to empower the poor

On November 27, 2005, the Jubilee Fund of Manitoba held its first annual Art and Antique Sale and Silent Auction to raise funds for its projects.

The Jubilee Fund was founded in 1997 by the Oblates of Manitoba and several other religious communities and Church groups. The Fund was a project for the Jubilee Year; it was intended as a positive step that Christian communities and other faith groups could take in order to put their investments at the service of the people we were founded to serve: inner city people, immigrants and refugees, aboriginals, people with disabilities, others who survive on low incomes – those who have difficulty getting loans from normal financial institutions for a lack of capital.

Since its official launch in the year 2000, the Oblate investment in the Jubilee Fund has supported projects as diverse as inner city housing, Manitoba's only bilingual day-care, a co-operative for Aboriginal women who make star-blankets, and training programs for Aboriginal and inner city residents. The Jubilee Fund is a new way of extending the Oblate mission to the economically and socially marginalized – “The poor with their many faces”.

LACOMBE Mission within Secularity

A “first of its kind” Province gathering took place at Queen's House, Saskatoon on November 25 – 26. For the first time ever, a total of 18 persons from various parts of OMI Lacombe Canada met to envision, to challenge and to be challenged, and above all, to further discern a common mission commitment rooted within the Province community. The meeting had its first beginnings over a year ago at the General Chapter in 2004 when encouragement was given to the Lacombe province to consider some new possibilities for mission work(s) within Canada as a highly secularized society. From the outset, consideration was given to the opportunity for this effort to be Congregational in scope and also to give flesh to the core values of Lacombe's Mission Statement and Immense Hope directions.

After consultation with several over a period of many months, the Province's Executive Team took the initiative for this first gathering, extending an open invitation to all Oblates and associates through the local communities. Those attending included Nicanor SARMIENTO, Robert SMITH, Roy BOUCHER, Pablo FEELEY, Margot Lavoie, Dominique Kerbrat, Jesunesan PHILIPPIAH, Karen and David Sax, Joanne Chrones, Brian Zimmer, Diane Lepage,

Syl LEWANS, Nestor GREGOIRE, Glenn ZIMMER, Otto ROLLHEISER, Jim FIORI and Doug JEFFREY.

There would be many ways to summarize the spirit of this unique gathering. One such expression comes from the last General Chapter: “*Like Jesus walking along the borders of Samaria, we too are standing before different understandings of culture, ethnicity, religion and gender ... Our task is to be missionaries in this new, pluralistic, sensitive and complex reality ... to enter more fully into ... the lives of the poor.*” Accordingly, participants spoke frankly, insightfully and hopefully about a specifically Oblate (both prophetic and missionary) response to needs within society and where the Church expects us to be, but doesn't always want us to be.

Among the many, many perspectives which were discussed, perhaps three themes stood out. First of all, the so-called “mission project” is primarily about a way of thinking, even a changing of one's way of seeing and conversion of our personal attitudes, which happens especially through our interaction. Secondly, this effort can be at the service of animation, both within Lacombe and beyond. Thirdly, “*Mission within Secularity*” as common ground might take on very diverse forms throughout the different parts of the Province. Although the shared imagination for mission within Canada might be quite similar, the actual response could vary greatly.

Although the responsibility at this time for furthering the conversation rests among those who met recently, above all “*Mission within Secularity*” is, and must be, a Province-wide effort. The participants saw it as urgent to invite more of the membership into the continuing discernment and the eventual creation of specific ministries; and at the same time, to ensure that further action steps are taken during the interim. To this end, two Oblates, Jesunesan Philippiah and Pablo Feeley, offered to work together as coordinators. A full report of the two days of intensive discussions is being prepared and will be available to all.

The meeting ended with enthusiasm, renewed hope, several personal commitments and perhaps most noticeably, deepened gratitude for belonging to OMI Lacombe Canada in its missionary and community life.

Africa-Madagascar

ZAMBIA

Immigration officials harass Bishop Paul Duffy, OMI

On October 26, 2005, Archbishop Telesphore Mpundu, the Co-Adjutor Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, issued the following statement:

We have noted with dismay the continued harassment and embarrassment of Bishop Paul DUFFY, OMI, the Bishop of Mongu, by the Zambian immigration officials. A pattern has now clearly emerged in the way these government officials have maltreated Bishop Duffy. Each time Bishop Duffy has spoken out on one or another topical issue affecting the nation, especially on the Constitution Review process, he has been subjected to unfair and rude treatment by Immigration officials at the International Airport when he returned to Zambia. These occasions have been recorded and we can therefore substantiate our claim.

Recently, however, the same immigration officials did not wait until the bishop left Zambia in order to harass him on his return. They did their work, obviously on orders from above, right in Mongu and demanded to see his papers.

Bishop Duffy has spoken out on several occasions on behalf of Zambians, particularly the poor of Mongu Diocese and the Western Province, the poorest in the country. Though an American Missionary Oblate, Bishop Duffy has chosen to live and work among the people of the Western province and, God willing to die there. He holds a resident's permit, which obviously the Immigration officials don't have much regard for. It is shameful that our government should treat this gallant missionary in such a cowardly and unseemly manner, so obviously intended to silence and intimidate him and the leadership of the Catholic Church in Zambia.

The Catholic Bishops in this country are interested only in the greatest and common good of this great nation and its citizens not in political power or their personal aggrandizement. In their search and service of the common good ZEC (the Zambian Episcopal Conference) has cooperated and

continues to cooperate with the Government of the day regardless of who is there. ZEC will also continue, whenever necessary, to raise our voices in defence of the voiceless and the poor as Bishop Duffy has done in the recent past.

In this prophetic role let nobody make the mistake of thinking that we shall be cowed by strong-arm tactics and driven into silence by actions such as those used on Bishop Duffy by the Immigration Department.

We challenge and urge the Ministry of Home Affairs to get to the bottom of this matter and bring to book the officers responsible for harassing Bishop Duffy as well as other officials who violate people's rights with impunity. It is impunity that fuels the cycle of human rights violations and this must stop if Zambia is to take its place among civilised nations. Government and politicians should be in the forefront of defending people's fundamental human rights, liberties and freedoms otherwise we revert to the law of the jungle where might is right and only the fittest survive. The Government and politicians must also defend the citizens' right to criticise even the Government. ZEC's criticism of the Government's handling of the constitutional review process should not be construed as "anti-government." By the same token it is the right of ZEC to contribute to the national debate on the constitution, as it is the right of Bishop Duffy to express his opinion on the Government's performance in alleviating poverty in the country in general and Western province in particular.

NATAL

New beginnings in youth ministry

Twenty-six Oblates came together on July 13, 2005, to discuss the establishment of an Oblate Youth Ministry in the Natal Province. All were involved in youth ministry in their parishes or institutions, and the morning was given over to a presentation of the various initiatives, successful and struggling, already underway. The Provincial, Fr. Stuart BATE, OMI, affirmed that "Youth are the signs of the most poor and abandoned in the society. Working with the youth is an area where Oblates are called to give particular attention in the light of the Oblate charism."

A number of suggestions were made regarding where our youth ministry could focus. They included:

- The comprehensive use of the media.
- Creating and establishing programmes that address the needs of the youth in South Africa which can be used within parishes and youth groups.
- A youth outreach that addresses those youth not in the parishes. The schooling environment provides an outlet for this and some Oblates are already involved in this kind of ministry.
- A youth ministry that provides a forum for healing, counselling and empowerment.
- Applying the missionary model of St Eugene: becoming more fully human, then Christian and then saints.
- Leading youth towards a deeper prayer life.
- Organising youth rallies and retreats.
- Developing one or more specific centres for Oblate youth ministry.

They also decided that a study will be conducted on “the needs of youth today”. Youth in different situations have different needs. In order to be relevant, the programme has to extend across the various situations.

The group was clearly aware that this initiative would need time, resources, planning and strategising in order to succeed. Three recommendations to the provincial Council were made in this regard:

- That a Youth Committee for the province be established to drive this initiative.
- That steps be taken to release two Oblates for this ministry as soon as possible.
- That steps be taken to look for finances for this important ministry.

The consensus of the group was that this initiative could be the mustard seeds that will grow into something great for the evangelisation of young people.

NATAL

Fr. Albert Danker's 50th Jubilee: a memorable occasion

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, OFM, the Archbishop of Durban, was among the guests who join Fr. Albert DANKER, OMI, celebrate his 50th jubilee of

priesthood at St. Anne's Church in Sydenham on December 9. On the following day, in honour of the jubilarian, a musical, *Forever Home*, had its premier performance. The original script and musical score were written by Fr. Danker's recently ordained Oblate assistant priest, Fr. Merlin INCE.

On November 29, Durban's *Daily News* published a long article about the Oblate priest who had touched so many lives in his priestly ministry. The article described Fr. Danker's surprise at being asked by his superiors, shortly after his ordination, to attend a conference in Rome of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement.

Following the meeting in Rome, he spent the next 18 months in Paris, Belgium and London, learning more about the movement for young workers. He carried that experience back to South Africa where he engaged in youth ministry in the 1950's and 60's.

On his return to Durban, he set up a YCW branch in Congella, where groups of young people would meet and “reflect on life in the light of the Gospel”. His Sunday night “folk masses” were very popular with young and old alike.

He also arranged social activities for the youth. His “discotheques” attracted as many as 400 young persons on any Saturday evening.

He continued this work for 15 years, assuming national responsibility for the YCW movement. He also encouraged boys to enter religious life and over the years, 36 entered the priesthood, with four becoming bishops. A fair number of girls joined various communities of nuns too.

The apartheid years brought new problems for Fr. Danker's ministry. He was harassed for having children of mixed races interacting socially. After taking part in anti-apartheid protests in Durban together with the late Archbishop Denis HURLEY, his passport was withdrawn and he was barred from leaving the country for six years.

In 1972, he was appointed parish priest at Assumption Parish in Umbilo. After four years at Assumption, he was appointed Provincial of the Natal Province.

Since 1983, he has been pastor at St. Anne's in Sydenham. In his 22 years there, he has experienced great changes in South African society. "When I came here, people of colour were still restricted in where they could live. Entertainment and recreation facilities were limited but a vibrant community spirit developed," he says. "Now, many have moved away to other areas, considerable numbers of especially young people have emigrated and mores have changed. Almost one in two babies I baptise is born out of wedlock."

Other serious problems he mentions are the

increase of drug use and domestic problems. Nevertheless, he feels the parish community is still very much alive with a generous, deep-seated faith. Large numbers of children and teenagers are involved in many kinds of parish activities.

Required to resign as pastor when he turned 75, Fr. Danker now awaits the appointment of his replacement. As for himself, he does not see himself wasting the time he has left. He states that he will enjoy gardening and caring for his pet dog. "The church may want to use me in some other way when I leave St Anne's."

Latin America

MEXICO

Missionary month for the candidates

October, the month of the missions, was extremely busy at the Candidates' Community in Puebla. The activities began in the last weeks of September when they invited other youth to the house to join their missionary apostolate. These youth took part, with the aspirants, in ministries and vocation meetings; they totally immersed themselves in the work of the aspirants.

With its focus on establishing, organizing and animating for the long term, the Pastoral Team for Youth and Vocations of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Puebla decided to make its first moves by putting together an EXPOMI during October, the month dedicated to the missions.

After a couple of meetings, the work teams were organized. Concretely, there were three teams working in three sections: the Mission of the Universal Church, the Mission of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Mexico and in the world, and the Mission of the Laity. This required much research and consultation of documents. Here the Internet was very useful – for consulting the Sacred Scriptures, for questions and discussions, but above all, for fostering the imagination to find ways of creatively and graphically presenting their subject matter in posters.

Besides the investment of time and a bit of economic

resources, there was the challenge of coordinating and working together as a team. During this time, they learned much, not only to tolerate and accept the opinion of others – the community is made up of adolescents, although there are a few a bit older – but also to place themselves within the Mission of the Church, especially with the work of the Oblates. It served to build their enthusiasm for the missions.

Besides actually putting together the EXPOMI, three members of each team prepared themselves to share with the chapel folks the fruit of their work. One shared about the Church; another, about the Oblates; and the third shared about his experience in the missions and in the work of the Congregation. This group of enthusiastic and restless youth showed what can be done through a coordinated effort. (OMINFORMA, November 2005)

CHILE

Congratulations "Colegio San José"

In 1948, the Great North was the gateway to Chile for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. There, they would bring the good news of salvation to the daring workers in the saltpeter mines. From this desert, their missionary activity reached the city of Antofagasta where they founded the San José English School (Colegio Inglés San José) in order to share faith and culture with youth.

The school has as its goal the fundamental values of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary

Immaculate — the preferential option for the poor — drawn from the motto of the Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod.

In 2005, the school celebrated 50 years in the service of evangelization and education. It celebrated the occasion with great rejoicing among the former students, teachers, and workers who make possible this work.

The Oblates remain present in the school in the persons of Fathers Alejandro OSORIO and Arturo SMITH.

MEXICO

Retreat ministry finds a home

On September 8, Oblates of the Province of Mexico dedicated their first Retreat House, Villa Maria Inmaculada, in the small pre-Columbian village of Tepozlan, an hour south of Mexico City. The provincial, **Fr. Gilberto Piñon Gaytan**, blessed the modern complex which stands in a lush tropical valley at the foot of majestic volcanic mountains. The centre's layout makes the most of its stunning location and climate. Its 45 private rooms are built around gracious double courtyards. A youth dormitory for 45 students, several presentation halls and offices are spread across its ample lawns, while its central dining room has a magnificent view of the mountains from its broad glass facade. Plans for the chapel

and another dormitory building are being completed. There are also plans to construct an Oblate retirement home on property adjacent to the new centre. In addition to serving the province and its developing retreat ministry, the facility will serve the parents and students of Colegio Vista Hermosa, an educational ministry run by the Mexican Province.

HAITI

Oblate released unharmed after kidnapping

On the evening of November 22, Fr. Quesnel MAZILE, OMI, a member of the staff at the novitiate in Haiti, was kidnapped as he was traveling along the road to the airport. A day later, his captors released him, unharmed, after the Oblates paid a large ransom for his release. Fortunately, he had not been tortured, as is often the case in kidnappings in Haiti.

This incident involving an Oblate of Mary Immaculate is just one abduction in a series of such crimes being carried out mostly by street gangs and others in an effort to destabilize the country ahead of elections. It is not unusual for the kidnappers to torture their captives while they wait for family members to pay a ransom for their release. Last April, at least 130 people were kidnapped in the capital city of Port au Prince. The kidnappers do not discriminate: they abduct both Haitians and foreigners.

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES

One man's commitment: Fr. Yves Caroff, OMI

Inspired and guided by words of Paul VI, "the new name for peace is from now on *development*," Fr. Yves CAROFF, OMI, has been offering his energy, his determination, and his toil for more than forty years to the most disadvantaged rural peoples of the world, very far from his native Brittany.

After working in fishing villages in Sri Lanka and plantations in Malasia, Fr. Caroff has developed in the Philippines, since 1981, numerous programs for the rehabilitation of devastated terrains on the Island

of Mindanao.

His abduction by Muslim rebels on the island in 1991 did not put a damper on his activity. As soon as he was freed, Fr. Caroff undertook, in 1993, the development of a 9 hectare zone in a savannah ravaged by bad weather in the province of North Cotabato.

Within five years, a pilot project undertaken at Bugwak in extremely difficult conditions led to the establishment of Galilee Farm, since then a place of work and enlightenment for the inhabitants of the region. In order to evaluate the needs and the obstacles, a major study was carried out in 1993.

In the radius of one kilometre, 105 families were visited and questioned. This research revealed the problem of a poverty maintained by a weak level of education; the exploitation of farmers by the powerful businessmen of the region; an almost non-existing network of roads, making it impossible to transport products to market; the erosion of the soil by bad weather and deforestation which saps the soil of its natural wealth.

To these problems, one can add inadequate state aid (neither sanitary services nor a budget for the improvement of the highways); insecurity because of bandits; the instability of laws protecting farmers who can, at any moment, be evicted by proprietors; the fluctuation of prices, and harsh, unpredictable weather. As far as health care is concerned, the inhabitants have access only to medical services that are far away from them. During the rainy season, their water is polluted and drinkable water is limited. Finally, there are all of the internal problems in the communities such as jealousy, competition, gambling, etc., which prevent the creation of solidarity in bad times.

Rather than setting up seminars on agricultural theory or continuing “to cry out in the desert” to get some help, Fr. Caroff decided to create a pilot farm, by way of example, a project that could freely be copied and reproduced by farmers who wanted to improve their lot.

The farm has 25 salaried employees under the guidance of 7 persons who have received special training. What they have in common is that they all come from disadvantaged families.

If self-sufficiency is a goal, another objective is the demonstration of farming methods. There are numerous visitors: neighbouring farmers and students from regional colleges (agricultural and otherwise).

Fr. Caroff hopes to restore nobility to the working of the land and to help lessen the rural exodus. Rather than diminish the number of “mouths to feed,” he simply asks this question: “Why not try to harvest as much as possible the wealth of the land by making it all the more productive?” (see <http://bugwak.free.fr/>)

PHILIPPINES

Archbishop Quevedo assumes new task

Archbishop Orlando QUEVEDO, OMI, Archbishop of Cotabato (Philippines) was elected as the new Secretary General for the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) for the coming three years. The Central Committee of the Federation elected him in their meeting in Hua Hin, Thailand on November 18, 2005. Archbishop Quevedo has a long affiliation with the FABC and was instrumental in writing the final document of the last General Assembly (2004) on Family. The General secretary is the highest position within the Federation which does not have a president. The General Secretariat of the FABC is based in Hong Kong where the Federation is also legally established.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences in South, Southeast, East and Central Asia, established with the approval of the Holy See. Its purpose is to foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of Church and society in Asia, and to promote and defend whatever is for the greater good.

Archbishop Quevedo's first major task will be to prepare for the Asian Mission Congress to be held in Thailand in October 2006. Organized in cooperation with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the event is expected to draw more than 1,000 delegates.

COLOMBO

A diocesan priest's love of the Oblates

Fr. Vincent Dep, a priest in the Sri Lankan Archdiocese of Colombo wrote this tribute of affection for the Oblates who have played a key role in his life.

My love, concern, respect and appreciation for the Oblates goes back to my baptism by an Oblate. All my parish priests at Wattala were Oblates. At St. Joseph's College, I was brought up by Oblates. I remember some of them with the highest regard: Fathers LEGOC, LEJEUNE, COORAY, Francis FERNANDO, etc.

I was taken by Fr. Thomas Cooray (*later Cardinal Archbishop of Colombo*), who was my spiritual director, to Archbishop MASSON, OMI, when I wanted to join the priesthood. Archbishop Masson wanted me to enter the Minor Seminary. I was not happy with that idea since I was an adult and had taught at St. John's College, Demtagoda. I had also served at a military camp at Diyatalawa. Archbishop Masson accepted on a certain condition, namely, if I knew enough Latin. I was examined by Fr. Cooray and was given a few passages from Caesar's *Gallic Wars* to be translated. I gave the free translation that I had studied in class.

I was accepted at St. Bernard's Seminary. Fr. GUEGUEN, OMI, was the Rector and Fr. Legoc was the acting Rector. They understood my situation as a late vocation. Then, after the diaconate, I had to tell Fr. FORTIN, OMI, that I might not be able to say Mass, as I had not drunk any wine all my life. So he instructed the sacristan to give me a

teaspoonful of wine until I qualified to take a tablespoonful of wine on an empty stomach.

I found that the Oblates with whom I had dealings were men of God with understanding hearts. I remember when I was in the seminary, my mother came to see me on a non-visitor's day. The Dean had to inform the Rector, who sent her word that it was not the time for visitors. My mother, who was very outspoken, asked the Brother to tell the Rector that she was not a visitor but a mother. Then the Rector allowed her to see me.

To me, the Oblates are my dear brothers in religion and I have the highest regard for them. They put the country before their Congregation, e.g., starting a Minor Seminary, even prior to having a novitiate for the Oblates. None of our other missionaries placed the country before their Congregation. (Colombo Province Newsletter, July-September, 2005)

Europe

ITALY

A former missionary encounters Laos...in France...

Father Angelo PELIS, an Italian Oblate, was a missionary in Laos between 1964 and 1975. After the expulsion of all missionaries from that country, he served in Uruguay (1976-1989). Then he worked in the missionary formation of Italian seminarians (1989-2000) and in the international community at Lourdes (2000-2003). For the past three years, he has been in charge of the beatification process of Fr. Mario BORZAGA, OMI, and of his catechist, Xyooj, killed in Laos in 1960. Recently, he was able to visit the Laotian diaspora in southern France. He made this brief summary for Oblate Communication Service.

In 1950, Fr. Yves BERTRAIS, OMI, arrived among the Hmong people on the "Mountain of the Wild Cow," in the village of Kiukiatiem (Luang Prabang, Laos). About eighty families, following the example of the shaman Zam Nob and of the village chief, Tsav Ntxaij, were asking to become Christians. In 1958, when Fr. Mario Borzaga took over the post, it was almost all Catholic. Two years later,

Mario and his catechist, Xyooj, disappeared in the forest. Their bodies have never been found.

These Hmong of Kiukiatiem have remained faithful, both during their resettlement within their country (1961-1972), as well as in the refugee camps in Thailand. Later, they were able to begin a new life in France, in French Guyana, and in the United States.

At Castres and Saïx, in southern France, about 70 km from Toulouse, I found about thirty families some thirty years later. My first visit was with the village chief, Tsav Ntxaij. I was touched by his reaction as he held in his hands the photo of *Tziv Plig Txiaj Tshaj* (the Father with the good and honest heart), that is to say, Mario Borzaga. He broke into sobs, his face in his hands. Then he spoke for two hours, along with his son, who at the end of May, 1960, had gone out to look for the two who had disappeared. He also remembered other Oblates who had evangelised northern Laos: Fathers Natalino SARTOR (+1966), Antonio ZANONI (+1972), and Luigi SION.

He also spoke of the sick persons whom Mario was

going to visit during his last trip. Today, one of their nephews is an Oblate scholastic in France: the blood of martyrs is the seed of vocations.

I was able to pray at the tombs of their deceased where, besides flowers, we placed rice, as a sort of viaticum for their journey.

In Nîmes, I met the parents of one of our former students at the seminary in Luang Prabang. They remembered Mario's generosity and his quiet and reserved personality, as well as his musical talents.

All of that restored my hope and gave me new confidence to continue my research. I pray to the Holy Spirit so that the witnesses who are still afraid to speak up will be able to do so and will give us the important information we are lacking, in order to confirm what we are thinking and hoping.

Visits to some Lameth and K'hmù families at Lacaune, about 50 km from Castres, was more than a detour. Here, we prayed and sang in Laotian. Since we were near the commemoration of the faithful departed, we also went to the cemetery. They greatly desired to organize the Laotian *basi* ceremony to honour their guest after these thirty years, but there was not enough time. Nevertheless, each one of them wanted to make a little donation.

Sunday, October 30 was the greatly anticipated moment. At 10 a.m., in the beautiful parish church of Castres, we celebrated the Eucharist in the Hmong language. More than 30 persons were there, having come for the occasion from Rennes, Avignon, Nîmes, and Toulouse. The strong wind that had been blowing for 5 days in the region did not deter them.

On the return flight from Toulouse to Rome, I renewed my promise to shed some light on the martyrdom and the sanctity of these two witnesses of the twentieth century in far-off Laos.

EUROPE

Oblate Units prepare for meeting with Central Government

All of the Major Superiors of the Region of Europe will meet with the Superior General and the General Council on May 1-3, 2006. As remote preparation for that important meeting, members of the Central Government have been visiting the various Units of the Region, in a sense, to "take the pulse" of Oblate life and ministry in Europe. Beginning in October, 2005, and continuing into January, 2006, the Units have acted as host, sometimes to one, sometimes to two, visitors from the General House.

The visits were organized by Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS, OMI, General Councillor for Europe. He hopes that these visits will help the members of the Central Government become acquainted with Oblate reality in Europe. At the same time, they are a unique opportunity for members of the Provinces and Delegations to have direct contact with some members of the General Administration.

Most of the Units have used the visits in order to show the concrete functioning of the Immense Hope Project on their local scene. At their January, 2006, meeting, the Central Government members will hear reports from each of the visits.

While every Region has its unique way of functioning as a Region, Europe offers a particular challenge, not only as the Units try to collaborate with each other, but also to the General Administration in their effort to serve them. Most General Councillors know that when they meet with Oblates in their Region, they can usually hold a conversation in English, Spanish, or French. In Europe, that is not necessarily the case. The General Councillor for Europe will find himself in many different language settings: German, Polish, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, Czech, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Rumanian. Often he has to have a translator travel with him.

Like the Apostle, to preach "Jesus Christ, and him crucified...not in loftiness of speech, but in the showing of the Spirit," that is to say, by making manifest that we have pondered in our hearts the words which we proclaim, and that we began to practice before setting out to teach. St. Eugene de Mazenod 1826

General Administration

omiworld.org Oblate Necrology “on line”

“We will keep alive the memory of our deceased and not fail to pray for them, faithfully offering the suffrages prescribed on their behalf.” (Const. 43)

Inspired by this article of the *Constitutions and Rules*, the *OMI Information* newsletter publishes every month a list of the names of Oblates who have died recently, while the General Administration has, on a regular basis, published an edition of the *Oblate Necrology*.

Today, Oblate Communication Service, in answer to requests from many members of the Congregation, is happy to announce the publication of the necrology on our website, www.omiworld.org, with the possibility of different computer-based searches.

By clicking on the “Deceased Oblates” link, one arrives at a page with the names of recently deceased Oblates. From this page then, with a click on the link “GO TO NECROLOGY” at the bottom of the page, it is possible to access the complete necrology. The first page will have the names of all the Oblates that died on the current date. From there, it is possible to use various criteria for further research: day, specific date, year, or name.

What we see so often in visiting Oblate communities — that is the names of Oblates to be remembered in prayer written in a book at the entry to the chapel — now becomes something which the whole Congregation can access at the same time, worldwide. Our hope is that this will help us grow in our communion with our brothers who have preceded us, our great family that has gone to heaven before us.

omiworld.org Oblate history on our web site

From 1979 until his death in September, 2000, Fr. André Dorval, OMI, opened up for us some

historical writings of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He informed us of certain details and activities of their ministry by publishing them in the magazine, *Apostolat*.

In the texts that he left us, he tells of things we would never otherwise have known, daily activities, often very humble, which reveal an extraordinary sense of humour, as well as the deep faith of the author; these “stories” always arouse one’s interest and sometimes leaves the reader astonished.

In spite of their brevity, these stories give the reader a missionary experience that has great spiritual depth. They open up for us some insight into styles of evangelisation of a period in history quite different from our own. We also discover there the passion for life of those men and the ideal that guided them.

With the proper permissions kindly granted us, we are beginning now to publish these stories in the three official languages of our web site: English, French, and Spanish.

Likewise, the AOSR (Association of Oblate Studies and Research) has invited us to publish the articles found in the first volume of *Dictionnaire Historique (Historical Dictionary)*, some 494 articles including biographies. It is people who make history. Among them, there are 331 Oblates who made their perpetual oblation before the death of the Founder. The publication of these articles will move ahead slowly, since, to put pages on the Internet, one needs to rework them and that takes time. At first, they will only be in French as we wait for the English and Spanish to be translated.

You are now able to visit the “Oblate History” section that has just been created, by clicking the corresponding link, at the right of the welcome page.

In the future, we would also like to receive articles from you, in order to enrich this great little history of God’s presence in our family.

Let us be one in spirit and in heart; then we will be strong in doing good. Fr. Joseph Fabre, OMI

God bless our elders!

Name	Unit	Birth	1st Vows	Ordination	Age
Fr. Kayser Alexandre	France	27/02/1904	07/07/1929	15/08/1923	101
Fr. Cossette Alcide	Manitoba	20/02/1905	28/06/1936	04/07/1931	100
Bro. Woryna Pawel	France-Blx	14/01/1907		13/11/1927	98
Fr. Ricaille Joseph	Belg.Pays Bas	24/10/1907	10/07/1932	08/09/1927	98
Fr. Gilbert Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	10/12/1907	21/05/1933	02/08/1928	98
Fr. Mock Alfred	Allemagne	17/05/1908	15/07/1934	25/04/1929	97
Bro. Pien Stanislaw	Pologne	15/10/1908		08/09/1936	97
Fr. Nottebaert André	Belg.Pays Bas	07/02/1909	15/07/1934	08/09/1929	96
Fr. Denner Otto	France	06/03/1909	08/07/1934	08/12/1931	96
Bro. Vien Firmin	N.D.-du-Cap	09/03/1909		15/08/1935	96
Fr. Jalbert Julien	Manitoba	14/04/1910	29/06/1935	15/08/1930	95
Fr. Delaney James	USA	16/04/1910	31/05/1936	27/11/1931	95
Fr. Parent Louis-Marie	N.D.-du-Cap	12/07/1910	23/05/1937	21/07/1932	95
Fr. Racette Norman	USA	10/11/1910	11/06/1939	21/07/1934	95
Fr. Quéffélec Jean-Marie	France	18/11/1910	05/07/1936	15/08/1930	95
Fr. Conti Guglia Carmelo	Italie	02/12/1910	23/12/1933	15/08/1927	95
Fr. Rozynek Alfred	Pologne	10/12/1910	21/06/1936	15/08/1931	95
Fr. Morissette Nazaire	N.D.-du-Cap	14/12/1910	11/06/1938	21/07/1932	95
Fr. Dubuc Denis	Grandin	18/01/1911	24/05/1937	21/07/1932	94
Fr. Barcet Henri	France	08/05/1911	23/12/1934	26/07/1932	94
Fr. Lanctôt Léopold	N.D.-du-Cap	30/05/1911	24/06/1935	02/08/1930	94
Bro. Bédard Charles	Manitoba	19/06/1911		29/08/1937	94
Msgr. Sanschagrin Albert	N.D.-du-Cap	05/08/1911	24/05/1936	02/08/1931	94
Fr. Boser John	Lacombe	26/09/1911	18/06/1936	02/08/1931	94
Bro. Thornton Francis	Australia	23/11/1911		15/09/1936	94
Fr. Mühr Johannes	Allemagne	15/01/1912	02/04/1939	25/04/1934	93
Fr. Robert Victor	France	17/02/1912	09/07/1939	15/08/1933	93
Fr. Schmitz Alfons	Allemagne	02/03/1912	02/04/1939	25/04/1934	93
Fr. Denis Jean	Grandin	23/03/1912	04/07/1937	29/09/1931	93
Fr. McMahon Patrick	Natal	23/04/1912	29/06/1944	15/09/1939	93
Fr. Rodríguez Julio	Argent.-Chili	27/05/1912	06/06/1936	15/08/1931	93
Fr. Colas Jean	Grandin	24/06/1912	18/12/1937	08/12/1935	93
Fr. Debryne Georges	Belg.Pays Bas	01/07/1912	21/04/1940	08/09/1934	93
Fr. Lazarsky John	USA	07/07/1912	25/05/1940	02/07/1934	93
Fr. Hammond Alphonse	N.D.-du-Cap	02/08/1912	11/06/1938	15/08/1934	93
Fr. Nicholapillai S.Arulnesan	Jaffna	18/09/1912	12/06/1941	01/08/1935	93
Msgr. Koppmann Rudolf	Namibia	18/01/1913	10/04/1938	25/04/1933	92
Fr. Lemieux Raymond	N.D.-du-Cap	05/03/1913	24/06/1937	21/07/1932	92
Fr. Peters John	Lacombe	25/03/1913	16/06/1942	15/08/1937	92
Fr. Leising William	USA	31/03/1913	27/05/1940	08/09/1934	92
Fr. Bazinet Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	19/05/1913	11/06/1938	21/07/1933	92
Fr. Tremblay Eugene A.	USA	26/07/1913	11/06/1938	15/08/1933	92
Fr. Niepieklo Mieczyslaw	Pologne	06/08/1913	20/12/1941	08/09/1935	92
Fr. Engel Leopold	Lacombe	05/09/1913	12/06/1938	15/08/1933	92
Fr. McCartin Francis	USA	15/09/1913	07/06/1938	08/09/1932	92
Fr. Villalba Angel	USA	24/09/1913	29/11/1939	14/09/1932	92
Fr. Haramburu Robert	France	03/10/1913	04/03/1939	13/12/1936	92
Fr. Machinia Engelbert	Allemagne	21/10/1913	18/06/1939	15/08/1934	92
Fr. Geneja Jan	Pologne	21/10/1913	10/07/1938	15/08/1932	92

Fr. Mathieu Guillaume	France	27/10/1913	06/07/1941	15/08/1934	92
Fr. Stolarek Konrad	France-Blx	31/10/1913	12/06/1938	15/08/1933	92
Fr. Caby Arsène	France	07/12/1913	06/07/1941	29/09/1934	92
Bro. Beaudoin Ernest	N.D.-du-Cap	20/12/1913		08/12/1936	92
Fr. Post Piet	Belg.-Pays Bas	22/12/1913	25/07/1945	25/10/1940	92
Fr. Bolduc Marcel	USA	31/12/1913	24/06/1939	28/08/1934	92
Fr. Salerno Raffaele	Italie	26/01/1914	25/06/1939	15/08/1933	91
Fr. Kilroy Robert	USA	25/02/1914	27/05/1940	08/09/1934	91
Fr. Pigeon Léo-Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	07/03/1914	15/06/1941	02/08/1935	91
Fr. Verspeek Kees	N.D.-du-Cap	29/04/1914	02/07/1939	08/09/1934	91
Fr. Fix Valentine	Lacombe	18/05/1914	10/06/1938	15/08/1933	91
Fr. Rzezniczek Alfons	France-Blx	20/05/1914	31/05/1942	08/09/1935	91
Fr. Ischler Paul	USA	29/06/1914	20/06/1939	15/08/1934	91
Fr. Wittenbrink Boniface	USA	30/06/1914	20/09/1941	15/08/1936	91
Fr. Gervais Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	04/07/1914	09/07/1939	02/08/1933	91
Fr. Colfer Robert	USA	14/07/1914	27/05/1940	08/09/1934	91
Fr. Bianchi Leonhard	Autriche-Tche.	13/08/1914	30/07/1960	15/08/1956	91
Fr. McCormick Gerard	USA	18/08/1914	02/06/1947	08/09/1941	91
Fr. Col Jean	France	25/08/1914	01/07/1951	15/09/1947	91
Fr. Arel Jean-Louis	N.D.-du-Cap	05/09/1914	17/06/1945	15/08/1939	91
Fr. Baillargeon Anatole	USA	20/09/1914	22/06/1941	08/09/1936	91
Fr. Nurit Marius	France	25/10/1914	29/06/1939	13/06/1947	91
Fr. Charbonneau Herménégilde	N.D.-du-Cap	03/12/1914	24/06/1939	02/08/1934	91
Fr. Schneider Albert	France	21/12/1914	06/07/1941	15/08/1933	91
Fr. Turcotte Germain	Lacombe	23/01/1915	17/06/1945	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Lapalme Fernand	Manitoba	10/02/1915	15/06/1941	21/07/1935	90
Fr. Losson Camille	Cameroun	11/02/1915	23/05/1943	15/08/1935	90
Fr. Guilbaud Joseph	Saint Paul's	13/03/1915	06/07/1947	29/09/1934	90
Fr. Levaque Yvon	Grandin	18/03/1915	23/06/1940	21/07/1935	90
Fr. Pouliquen André	Cameroun	26/03/1915	06/07/1947	29/09/1942	90
Fr. Schwider Juan	Mexico	04/04/1915	02/06/1940	15/08/1935	90
Fr. Dicaire Bruno	N.D.-du-Cap	29/04/1915	07/06/1942	21/07/1937	90
Fr. Lizé Jean-Marie	N.D.-du-Cap	03/05/1915	15/06/1941	20/09/1936	90
Fr. Piuze Guy	N.D.-du-Cap	06/05/1915	15/06/1941	21/07/1937	90
Fr. Gagnon Simon	USA	23/05/1915	29/06/1949	02/08/1944	90
Fr. Deery Lawrence	USA	29/05/1915	09/06/1941	08/09/1935	90
Fr. Payant Roma	N.D.-du-Cap	30/06/1915	15/06/1941	21/07/1937	90
Bro. Schaffrath Matthias	Allemagne	28/07/1915		19/03/1932	90
Bro. Rioux Louis	N.D.-du-Cap	09/08/1915		08/09/1937	90
Bro. Turcotte Mathias	N.D.-du-Cap	18/08/1915		19/03/1934	90
Fr. Riffel Timothy	Lacombe	06/10/1915	13/06/1941	15/08/1935	90
Fr. Marien Louis	Belg.-Pays Bas	04/11/1915	09/07/1939	08/09/1934	90
Fr. Ayrinhac Marcel	France	15/11/1915	06/07/1947	26/07/1935	90
Fr. Szymurski Kazimierz	France-Blx.	20/11/1915	11/06/1941	08/09/1935	90
Fr. Mroz Marian	France-Blx.	23/11/1915	21/02/1941	08/09/1935	90
Fr. Hennessy Francis	Saint Peter's	03/12/1915	21/06/1942	08/09/1936	90
Fr. Coughlan Noel	Natal	15/12/1915	23/06/1940	18/09/1935	90
Bro. Auclair Jules	N.D.-du-Cap	28/12/1915		15/08/1936	90

(Total: 97)

Anniversaries -- February 2006

65TH Anniversaries of Vows

1941.02.17	07235	Fr. Ignacio Escanciano	Espagne
1941.02.17	07232	Msgr. Dominic Khumalo	Natal
1941.02.17	07233	Fr. Jan Opiela	Pologne

65TH Anniversary of Ordination

1941.02.21	06212	Fr. Marian Mroz	Pologne
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60TH Anniversaries of Vows

1946.02.17	08607	Bro. Olivier Charpentier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1946.02.24	08118	Fr. Michel Lynde	Thailand

50TH Anniversaries of Vows

1956.02.17	10081	Fr. Augustine Makhokolo	Northern S. A.
1956.02.17	10082	Fr. Anselm Silva	Colombo

50TH Anniversary of Ordination

1956.02.12	08674	Fr. Paul Aymong	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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25TH Anniversaries of Vows

1981.02.17	12587	Fr. Mark S. Edwards	Australia
1981.02.17	12591	Fr. Edgar Garcia	United States
1981.02.17	12590	Fr. Ronald Gogin	Peru
1981.02.17	12592	Fr. Antonio Mariangeli	Argentine-Chile
1981.02.17	12647	Fr. Mariano Martínez	Saint Peter's
1981.02.17	12588	Fr. Luciano Murguia	Mexico
1981.02.17	12475	Fr. Erasmo Vasquez	Mexico

25TH Anniversaries of Ordination

1981.02.13	12381	Fr. Ronald Houeld	Northern S. A.
1981.02.17	12419	Fr. Vicente López	Mexico

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
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Printing: Rajapakse Francis Rabindra

Circulation: Théophile Le Page

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 84-85

NAME	PROVINCE	BIRTH	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Jacques René	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	11/09/1915	Québec	11/11/2005
Fr. Bernard Belley	USA	19/04/1929	Lowell	13/11/2005

“We will keep alive the memory of our deceased and not fail to pray for them, faithfully offering the suffrages prescribed on their behalf.” (const. 43)