



## Florence: For a week, the capital of Oblate Europe

*Oblate Communication Service was happy to receive the following report about the recent joint session of the General Council with the European Region.*

The setting: a vacation villa, established by the Italian Province at the former juniorate in Florence. But the work was intense, from April 27 until May 5, during the the 2006 Assembly of the Oblate Interprovincial Conference of Europe (CIE). It became a "Joint Session" when the Superior General and the General Council joined the assembly for three days.

According to the statistics published last January, there are 1,290 Oblates in the European Region, making it the largest in the Congregation. But its geography is complex: it goes from Southern Spain to Sweden and from Ireland to Romania and Ukraine. Because of its long history, someone called it an old tree, planted in Provence in 1816, which branched out in many promising directions. It's a mosaic of languages: Norwegian, Romanian, Byelorussian... There is an enormous diversity of cultures and ecclesial/missionary situations: secularization, ecumenism with the Orthodox, Islam (Muslims from North Africa, Pakistan, Indonesia, and elsewhere in Africa are often our neighbors). The age differences are enormous. There is still a significant number of Oblates of European origin in other Oblate Regions. And one must not forget that the Provinces of Europe are responsible for delegations and missions in Latin America (Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Surinam, French Guiana); in Aisa (Turkmenistan and Vietnam); and especially in Africa (Madagascar, Senegal, Western Sahara). Many branches have grown from that old trunk and have sometimes stretched out a long way.

At any meeting of the CIE, there are the usual questions: the aging and care of our elders, missionaries returning to their country of origin, vocations, first formation, formation of superiors, finding financial resources, including what is needed by the foreign missions who are counting on help from the Region. The Oblates of Europe are more and more choosing to deal with these questions collaboratively and with a focus on internationality. In point of fact, the four scholasticates in Europe have all become international: Obra in Poland, Vermicino in Italy, Lahnstein in German, and Lyon in France. All of them welcome scholastics from other European Units and even from other Regions. The European Formation Office is working toward establishing some common settings for learning languages (especially English and French), in order to facilitate meetings among the scholastics of Europe. Furthermore, they have accepted the principle of shared finances for first formation in Europe.

As a result of the impetus coming from the Chapter and the General Administration, restructuring is in sight and should happen. There are also some common projects to achieve: care for immigrants, the mission toward secularity, youth ministry, Aix-en-Provence, a common mission in Eastern Europe... The international community at Lourdes, already in existence for 20 years, and the more recent Birmingham project are showing the way.

Europe is an old tree, concluded Fr. General, with strong roots, but a tree that is alive. The common mission takes time. All the more reason to continue moving forward... moving forward together.

--Michel COURVOISIER

*We decided to go a step further by posing some questions to Jean-Pierre CALOZ, who was one of the translators for the session.*

### **Who was there?**

The meeting in Florence was an official meeting which the provincials, the delegation superiors and superiors of missions of the Region of Europe, and only those, are required to attend. Therefore, present were the provincials of France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, the Anglo-Irish Province, and Poland. There were the delegation superiors from Ukraine, Scandinavia, France-Benelux (for Polish immigrants), and Austria-Czech Republic, as well as the superiors of the missions of Byelorussia and Romania.

### **And why this sort of meeting?**

Nino, can you imagine such a meeting not taking place? What a shame that would be! Europe is becoming one, little by little. The uninhibited movement of people is making things really open, especially between the East and the West, something that was unimaginable just 20 years ago! But have mentalities, cultures and languages made the necessary adjustments? As Oblates, we have the opportunity to be present in most of these countries, in the East where we are developing, and in the West where we are diminishing. It's therefore urgent that we work together.

### **What were the subjects discussed?**

According to the Statutes, the conference manages the work of the Region. Therefore, there are nominations to make, finances to oversee, directions to give to the various committees: Youth and Vocations, Mission, Treasurers, Formation. These are the regional "housekeeping" topics. But the conference also tries to reflect upon and understand better the total reality of the Region. This year, that piece was provided by the General Council which reported its view of the Region after its visits to the different Units.

### **What were your impressions as translator?**

The ideal translator is one who serves as a simple

conduit that communicates but retains nothing. But like Pascal's "thinking reed," it's possible to be a "thinking conduit" and to have some ideas.

—The crucial issue for the Region is the reorganization of its administrative structures. Several Provinces have fewer and fewer human resources to maintain a level of autonomy; they are, therefore, going to have to revamp the structure of the Units.

—Given the limited number of vocations in Western Europe, it is necessary to bring together the formation houses....a single scholasticate for the West....but where? when? and in what language?

—As a Region, Europe feels that it does not have a decision-making center and therefore, it is asking the General Council to give directions and even take initiatives to help in the restructuring.

—Move toward more international communities that are pastorally creative in order to respond to secularity and to immigration issues... moving therefore toward unstable populations that are also the shapers of tomorrow's world. The Oblates have not been waiting to begin; many things are happening already. They need to consolidate and channel toward these nerve centers the new energy coming from elsewhere in the Congregation.

—It's the decisive moment. The Units that are willing to open themselves to the demands, the challenges – that's the word repeated again and again – the risks, the daring, the international...these will live on and develop while the others will disappear!

This is especially the case for Western Europe. Thank God, in the East, it's a question of accompanying the growth, of being generously daring, of avoiding the allure of power, but also of discerning the changes. The vitality of the East and the experience of the West are made to enrich one another mutually.

*--Interview by Nino BUCCA*



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## Latin America

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### GUATEMALA

#### Youth living and experiencing Oblate mission

Greetings from the land of the Quetzal. Last December 6-8, we had our vocation retreat that takes place every year at the end of the Mission Experience. The retreat was led by Brothers Héctor COC, Rolando ALFARO, Edgar JEREZ, Isidro SALVADOR, Fathers Gerardo LE STRAT, Erasmo VÁSQUEZ, Sergio ÁVILA, Oblate Associates, catechists and youth from the community of El Pinal in the parish of Chicamán.

Thirty-two young candidates from different parts of the country came with a team of Oblates for a month-long experience of living the Oblate mission in Guatemala, especially in the warm area of Playa Grande, Ixcán, and the rainy and muddy locale of Chicamán, both of them parishes in Quiché. For this experience of mission, they were divided into four groups, accompanied by an Oblate. They went into different villages, sharing with the people, visiting homes, and especially opening themselves to the reality of our Mayan people.

One of them commented: "By the third day of the mission, I wanted to go back since a lot of rain and mud had destroyed my shoes, but upon seeing the reality of the people, their simplicity, their poverty, I recovered my enthusiasm, bought some rubber boots, and put them on. And so I survived the whole mission. I felt like one of them since they all use rubber boots; now I know how the Lord is calling me." During the retreat, everyone could share his mission experience, his difficulties and his joys; there was also time for reflection, meditation and fun.

For the Oblate vocation team, it was a challenge since, for the first time, the retreat took place in a community and not in an Oblate house as was the custom. The results were positive. Spending the night in different homes, the young men could share with the people and know their reality. Furthermore, many youth from the community itself felt the attraction and decided to consider their vocation. The retreat ended with the perpetual vows of our brother,

Cruz Agustín CANO, in the town of Las Pacayas, Uspantán; Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN presided at the Mass.

The youth who decided to begin the formation process with the Oblates came together at the different formation houses in mid-January to begin the school year. (*OMINFORMA enero-febrero 2006*)

### ARGENTINA-CHILE

#### Human Development Project

*Fr. Luis SABARRE, along with his collaborators, Norma Lucero and Paula Correa, from the Shrine of Our Lady of Carrodilla in Mendoza, Argentina, tell us about a very important project for the training of the faithful of the parish.*

The projects described in this report have been conceived and developed exclusively to help give new value to the manual labor of the people of our community. For several years now, work, considered as a source of income for the economic sustenance of families, has ceased to be seen as a right. Consequently, many needy people with limited resources feel left out by the system. For that reason, through their own generous contribution, specialists belonging to the Caritas organization are working hard to establish various training opportunities in order to give to the disadvantaged a place in society where they can grow through their daily work and be able to help their families get the bare necessities of life. This project has been designed to offer help to everyone who approaches our community. Therefore, we hope to continue what we began five years ago, but the present economic situation makes it very difficult for us to carry through with the plan.

*Light footwear:* They work for four hours once a week under the supervision of people who have had previous training in shops belonging to the diocesan Caritas office. They produce thongs, slippers and sandals.

*Weaving:* They are taught to weave by hand and by

machine and to crochet. The idea is to get an industrial weaver to make the work easier and to give the possibility of marketing the products, either by individuals or through trade fairs and sales in the community.

*Embroidery and Painting on Cloth, Wood and Glass:* For the development of this training project, they use different types of cloth, ribbons, needles, woods, glass and different types of paint and brushes.

*Food Project:* For ten years now, we have been giving a box of milk and other goods to needy families, but beginning this year, the principal goal is to teach the families and make them aware of the benefit of milk, not only for the children but for the whole family. The plan is to teach them to prepare substantial and nutritious meals as part of their ordinary diet. This work will take place under the strict supervision of a health-care professional such as a nutritionist.

Some years back, we used to give lunch three times a week to 60 children, but because of insufficient physical space and because of some construction in our community, which is still unfinished because of a lack of funds, we had to suspend that project. Our goal is to continue this project in a short time, even though every month we are helping 30 families and 50 children with milk and other goods.

## MEXICO

### Missionary Holy Week 2006

*A young Oblate, Roberto TOLENTINO, a Mexican scholastic, writes about the Missionary Holy Week that he and his companions experienced in various places in Mexico.*

Allow me to share with you some details about our

Holy Week mission. Fathers Ariel and Francisco MARTÍNEZ were the organizers of the mission as they set out from Mexico City, along with members of the scholastic community.

The theme to be shared in the villages was that of *The Family*, quite a plateful to offer these good people. The locations where we served in mission this year were Huamelula, Quiechapa, Cuajinicuilapa, and San Mateo de Mar (Oblate parishes). Furthermore, we were able to share our missionary presence in other places such as Vera Cruz and Querétaro.

About a hundred youth, not only from *Colegio Vista Hermosa*, but also enthusiastic teenagers from various other places in the country joined us in sharing our life with the simple folk who also evangelized us. Scholastics were sent into each of the places to experience the fervor of a lively faith.

As for myself, I was able to go to Querétaro with Fr. Paco Martínez, where we worked in a community called “Ex-hacienda el Castillo”, a beautiful place, but generally uncared for pastorally. There we noticed the interest of the people who filled the church and took part in the presentations, the Easter celebrations for the youth, the rosary at dawn, and other events with which the Spirit inspired us. The marriage and catechist groups were in fact a great support in our mission.

These poor and simple people renewed our own missionary zeal. We shared our lives and we helped them to live the values of the Kingdom that are already within them. “*Lord, bless all families, Amen. Lord, bless mine too!*” – that was the song the people joyfully sang as they shared the theme we suggested.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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## SENEGAL

### The World Youth Day Cross arrives in Senegal

“It was an exceptional event that involved the whole Christian community,” said Oblate Fr. Giuseppe

GIORDANO, the Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works in Senegal, as he described the arrival in Dakar of the Youth Cross, which began its African pilgrimage during Holy Week. “The cross arrived at the parish near Dakar’s airport on Holy Tuesday. On Good Friday, it was brought to Saint

Paul's, accompanied by a large procession," said Fr. Giordano. "The visit of the Youth Cross in Senegal has re-energized the faith of Catholics, who are in the minority in contrast to the biggest part of the population which is Muslim," stated the PMW Director, who added: "We have to be careful to explain the real meaning of the Cross in order to avoid any semblance of superstition."

"The arrival of the Cross during Holy Week, the time of greatest devotion for Senegalese Catholics, gave a real boost to our community," continued Fr. Giordano. "Generally here in Dakar, the parishes work hard to welcome the faithful who come for confession and the Easter ceremonies. Even some Muslim faithful follow the religious ceremonies of Holy Week, as a sign of esteem for their Christian brethren."

After leaving the capital, Dakar, the Youth Cross arrived in other areas of Senegal. During one of its journeys, there was a slight accident. "The Cross was coming back to Dakar from Saint Louis, in the northern part of Senegal. The small truck that was bringing it overturned when the driver lost control in an effort to avoid an animal on the road. The truck rolled over. Luckily any injuries were slight, but the Cross was broken. Fortunately, a very talented artist was able to repair it perfectly," said Fr. Giordano.

"You can't even notice the repairs," said Fr. Tonino MAZZEO, whose mission at Koumpountum received the Cross immediately after the accident. "Differently from Dakar, my mission is in a region where the Catholics are very much in the minority. The arrival of the Cross was an exceptional opportunity to reawaken a sense of belonging and the faith of our Catholics. The local Muslims also approached it with respect, thanks to an appeal from the local sub-prefect on the radio, a Muslim who reminded them that in the Islamic religion too, Jesus is respected as a prophet."

After Senegal, the Youth Cross will visit these other African countries: Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Madagascar, Botswana, Swaziland, and South Africa. (Fides Agency 27/4/2006)

## **NATAL St. Joseph's Theological Institute awards its first degrees**

The Catholic Church in Southern Africa passed a major milestone on Monday 10th April with the celebration of the first graduation ceremony of degrees awarded by St. Joseph's Theological Institute (SJTI) as an accredited tertiary education institution. For a number of years our students have had the possibility of studying for degrees awarded through the Pontifical Urban University in Rome or through the association of SJTI with the University of KwaZulu Natal. That SJTI now awards its own degrees is a significant step towards the development in the Catholic Church in South Africa of its own "intellectual property", to quote Fr. Stuart BATE, Provincial of the Natal Province.

At the graduation ceremony 16 students graduated with the Bachelor of Theology. This is a four-year professional degree which qualifies students for ordination. Eight students graduated with the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. This degree is intended for persons working in Catholic education or related fields. Several of those who graduated in Religious Studies are sisters who began their degrees several years ago as students of what was known as the Catholic Studies program. Thirty-eight students received the diploma in Philosophy. Eight of these are doing a third year, hoping to receive the Bachelors Degree in Philosophy.

As Fr. Stuart pointed out in his homily at the Mass that morning, what this is all about is knowledge, truth, which is not something to be taken for granted. It is of the Spirit; it comes from above and is precious, and it is not the same as opinion.

The guest speaker at the graduation in the afternoon was Prof. Ron Nicholson, Professor Emeritus of Theology at the University of KwaZulu Natal. He was equally eloquent around a similar theme. He quoted GK Chesterton's biography of Thomas Aquinas, which alleges that St. Thomas at the end of his life looked back at all he had written and found it inadequate in comparison with the majesty and incomprehensibility of the divine. He then closed his books, and never wrote again. Most of us do not have that

privilege. We inevitably use the word to communicate the Word. We base ourselves on our prayer and on what we learn from the liturgy. But we also have to read. We admire and respect the faith of many of our parishioners, who often comprehend

things we do not. We are nevertheless practitioners of the word, which we are compelled to study if we are to talk about the Word. (Reported by Peter GALLOWAY in the *Northern Province Newsletter*, April 2006)

## Canada-United States

### UNITED STATES/ASSUMPTION Awakening Enthusiasm for Vocations

Eighteen Oblates from the provinces of Assumption and the United States took part in the 13<sup>th</sup> Vocational Conference at Ferdinand, Indiana, in the U.S., April 4-9, 2006.

The conference, organized by the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand, had as its theme, "Awakening: A Rebirth of Enthusiasm in Vocations." Its purpose was to help religious communities strengthen and revitalize their vocation program and their efforts to gain new members. Representatives from 28 religious communities who live and work in 9 countries and 20 states came to hear practical ideas and a message of hope for religious life in the future.

The Benedictine Sisters have been organizing this conference for 13 years in order to share their experiences and successes in vocation ministry. Their own community has experienced plentiful vocations for many years. There are currently 195 religious Sisters at the convent. Since the foundation of the convent in 1867, over 1,000 women have desired to live according to the rule of St. Benedict.

During the six-day conference, the Sisters spoke not only about the spiritual life but pointed to a contemporary model of the Church community which must be united in a common prayer life, while making wise use of modern technology and professionalism in seeking new members.

Some of the conference topics were the following:  
 Were Our Hearts Not Burning?  
 Why Not Be Turned Into Fire?  
 Advancing the Mission Together  
 Telling the Story! Communications  
 Nurturing and Relating in Vocation Ministry!  
 Translating the Dream into Your Reality!

### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Chaplaincy at St. Paul University

*Daniel RENAUD states that "For an Oblate working in youth ministry, the university is a place of numerous choices."*

I have been the chaplain at St. Paul University in Ottawa for nearly two years and this ministry has proven to be very enriching for me personally. As chaplain, I am responsible for coordinating liturgies and prayer events, as well as organizing social and pastoral activities, in collaboration with the Student Association of the University.

I work in a context that is not only Catholic, ecumenical and inter-religious, but it also takes place in both French and English. Besides being a member on different committees, I offer services of spiritual and psychological guidance for the whole university community.

Actually, a good deal of my ministry is shared with a team of four students, men and women. Three of them are in the first cycle of theology and the fourth is in the second cycle, in the Conflict Resolution program. These students have been hired through the work-study program of the Ontario government. Far from working alone and isolated, I carry on my ministry as chaplain in partnership with many other groups: the French and English sectors of Youth Ministry in the Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur, "101 Parent," a Christian community at Sacred Heart Parish in Ottawa, and finally, the Development and Peace group.

The construction and opening of a new student residence on the campus of St. Paul University seems to me to be an important step for our pastoral service. Actually, the presence of men and women students on the campus encourages a lively community

life. All that remains is to create a sense of belonging; that is the biggest challenge for our pastoral team. A group of various ages, an assortment of religious denominations, and finally the great diversity of cultures present on our campus make for great creative possibilities.

Among activities that bring the university community together, I look after these: the solemn opening Mass presided by Archbishop Marcel Gervais, the monthly chaplain's coffee bar, and the annual week-end of Taizé-style prayer.

For an Oblate working in youth ministry, the university is a place of numerous choices. Together with teaching in the theology faculty, the role of chaplain has allowed me to forge links with other involved persons so as to offer a new formation program for those interested in youth ministry. I offer this program as workshops and conferences with a team of competent and enthusiastic laity. We have already offered some workshops to pastoral ministers in the schools of Ottawa and Timmins as well two conferences, one during a day of formation offered by the Archdiocese of Quebec and the other by the Canadian Conference of youth ministers in Hamilton.

## UNITED STATES

### An example of forgiveness

In the early morning hours of September 21, 2005, an arsonist started a fire in the altar server's sacristy of St. Peter's Church in Sisseton, South Dakota. The fire travelled along a wall to the sacristy on the opposite side of the church. The church suffered major damage before the fire was brought under control. In early 2006, the parish learned that they would be able to repair the present structure without having to build a completely new church.

A 17 year old youth confessed that he first broke into the Boys' and Girls' Club and stole candy. He left a trail of candy wrappers. Then he broke into St. Peter's where he not only started a fire but managed to dislodge the tabernacle from its base and throw it to the floor; he also overturned flower vases and the Paschal Candle.

The Oblates have served several parishes in the Sisseton area for many years. The current Oblates there are the pastor, Fr. Norman VOLK, and his

associate, Fr. Walter BUTOR.

The people of St. Peter's are now experiencing the challenge of Jesus to forgive those who hurt us.

Thomas Bates, a parishioner, is a candidate for ordination to the diaconate. His wife, Lois, works in the pastoral care department of the Tekakwitha Living Center, a nursing home originally founded by the Oblates. Tom had jail visitation as part of his pastoral experience training. In a follow-up reflection he wrote: "As I was visiting the prisoners, I met the young man who set fire to St. Peter's Church. When I asked him if he would like to talk with Father Norman, the answer was yes.... Losing the building where you worship God is a hard thing. For most of the people, that building was the place where they were baptized, were married, and had their children baptized. That building was where they came to bury their parents. ... Forgiving the person who burned their church would not be an easy thing, but when Father said that he was going to the jail in order to forgive the young man who had burned the church, he was able to lead his parish by example. ... Later, when the young man wrote Father a letter asking forgiveness from the people at St. Peter's, Father put the letter in the parish bulletin....(they) are beginning to forgive him." (OMIUSA, May 2006)

## NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

### *L'HumaniTerre*: new JPIC newsletter

The Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee of Notre-Dame-du-Cap Oblate Province has recently published the first edition of a newsletter dedicated to two of the great challenges of our times: humankind and the planet, both of which are endangered by injustice, over-development, and the exclusion of the powerless of every sort. This newsletter, which they have named *L'HumaniTerre*, echoes the Oblate mission to the "most abandoned," a fundamental option for us. It's a one-page newsletter that carries, at regular intervals, short news flashes about happenings, meetings, publications... including a supplement: one or two documents that can be consulted according to one's interests. This newsletter is being sent by e-mail to members of the province who have an e-address. If others wish to receive it, they should send an e-mail to Bernard MENARD: bmenard@ustpaul.ca.



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## Asia-Oceania

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### PAKISTAN

#### Study Seminars in the formation houses

In Lahore, the philosophy students have begun gathering for a monthly informal exchange on philosophical questions. They call it *Philosophy Chowk*. For those not initiated in the Urdu or Punjabi languages, a *chowk* designates a round-about for city traffic. The philosophy students use this word to describe their gatherings much as French speaking communities speak of “un carrefour” and English-speaking, a “round-table.”

At the theology house in Karachi, the scholastics are still looking for a name for their seminars combining Oblate studies and social analysis. They began by calling the seminars: “Oblate Integration: Study and Action.” However, the name is cumbersome in its attempt to capture the various elements of the goal. The seminars will meet about three times each year. The first one was launched in April; its subject was the Oblate Mission for Christian-Islamic Dialogue.

Presentations were offered relating to: 1) recent Oblate Chapter documents on Evangelization and Inculturation, 2) the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference’s perspectives on dialogue with Islam, and 3) the present Muslim reality in Pakistan and in the world and its challenge to the mission of interfaith dialogue.

In a first phase of discussion, the participants shared their own experience of the Islamic world and their genuine feelings on the prospect of dialogue with such an imposing giant. From the sharing, it was obvious that Christians in Pakistan have not entered the first step of dialogue, understandably, because of the abuses experienced in a minority-oppressive context.

In a second meeting Father Vernon DERRICK led the search for interpretation and directions for action. He highlighted important values and indicated some areas where relevant action may be taken.

Future Oblate mission seminars will adopt a methodology that includes study, analysis, personal awareness, and decisions for action. The conver-

sations will follow four phases: 1) gathering of data (information), 2) sharing of personal reactions and feelings, 3) interpretation: reflections on theological meaning and values, 4) practical applications: decisions and action.

### PHILIPPINES

#### Double celebration at Our Lady of Grace Parish

There was great jubilation and excitement in the faces of Our Lady of Grace parishioners on February 18 as they marked two great events: the public proclamation of the new Vision Statement of the parish in Caloocan City, and the blessing of the St. Eugene de Mazenod Community Center. The celebration started with the Eucharist presided by Bishop Deogracias Iniguez, with Oblates concelebrating. The Filipino Oblate Provincial, Fr. Ramon BERNABE highlighted the significance of the twin events in his homily.

After the homily, the chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council, Mr. Danny Sanchez, led the parishioners in the ritual proclamation of the Vision Statement. The forward-looking and daring vision was ratified by the 430-strong Parish General Assembly just the night before. The assembly was preceded by four months of intensive consultation among the parishioners.

At the end of the Mass, the people went in procession to the front of the new building for the blessing. The inspiring statue of St. Eugene de Mazenod was unveiled by Mayor Enrico Echiverri of Caloocan City. He later spoke of the new building as a new landmark in the city.

The new building has eight mortuary chapels to serve the needs of the community. The chapels have been named after deceased Oblates—Bishops Ben DE JESUS and Antonino NEPOMUCENO, Fathers Benjamin INOCENCIO, Primo HAGAD, Enrique GONZALES, Edward GORDON, Joseph MILFORD, and William MCGRATH. The building also houses the MAMI office, 5 medical-dental clinics, the Kiddie Learning Center, the Vocational Training School, and conference rooms for the parish. (Taddy CASTILLO, [www.omiphil.org](http://www.omiphil.org))



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## Europe

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**ITALY****Another doctoral thesis on St. Eugene**

While several Oblates have written their doctoral thesis on the life and spirituality of the Oblate Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, recently a member of a lay organization for youth in Italy has focused on him for her dissertation. Adriana Rullo of the “Costruire” movement in Calabria defended her thesis on March 23 at the University of Messina. “S. Eugenio De Mazenod e la fondazione della Congregazione dei Missionari oblato di Maria Immacolata” was the topic of her research (*St. Eugene de Mazenod and the Founding of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*).

Adriana received her degree in the Science of Education and Formation. In her study of the Oblate founder, she focused first of all on his moral and spiritual formation from the time of his exile in Italy until his Good Friday conversion in 1807. She then goes on to tell about the founding of the Oblates and their work with the poor. In the course of her studies, she was able to consult the Oblate Postulator General, Frank SANTUCCI. Her bibliography includes many of the well-known experts on St. Eugene.

**ANGLO-IRISH****150 years ago: a chapel built in 16 hours**

Bishop Eugene DE MAZENOD met many Irish bishops in Rome for the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception, in 1854. He noted that they seemed to welcome the idea of the Oblates setting up a foundation in Ireland. On that basis he sent Fr Casimir AUBERT to Dublin in 1855, but it was only when he was joined by Waterford born Fr. Robert COOKE that things began to move.

Fr. Cooke was fortunate to receive outstanding support from the Augustinian Community at St John’s Lane. They invited these first Oblates to give a one-month long mission at St John’s Lane, and it was the success of that mission that led Archbishop Cullen to agree to an Oblate foundation in Dublin. He sug-

gested “a spiritually deprived area in the direction of Kilmainham.”

A 25-acre farm, including a farmhouse, adjacent to the workshops of the Great Southern and Western Railway, was judged suitable and purchased for £2,150. Fr Cooke took possession of the property on 21 June 1856—150 years ago this year.

He celebrated the first Mass in the farmhouse the next day, but what of the following Sunday when crowds were expected?

A young carpenter promised, astonishingly, to have a large wooden chapel built by the following Sunday, provided the men of the Railway Works helped. Help they did. On Tuesday, the materials were on the ground and that evening seven hundred skilled workmen started work—after their own full day’s work. From six to nine each night they labored to finish it all by ten on Saturday night. In sixteen hours they had built a chapel which continued in use as a church until the present church was ready.

There are so many questions: who drew the plans? Who knew how much and what sort of timber? Who got it there in time? How did they recruit that small army of 700 each evening and who marshaled that army?

One hundred and fifty years later we can only speculate on such questions. What is beyond doubt is the extraordinary bond that developed between the Oblates and the Inchicore community.

On Sunday June 25th, President Mary McAleese, Councillor Catherine Byrne, Lord Mayor of Dublin, and the Oblate Superior General, Fr Wilhelm STECKLING will join the local community for a Mass to mark the anniversary of this first Oblate foundation in Ireland.



**FRANCE****Aix en Provence - « Pause-Midi » celebrates 10 years**

On March 28 and 30, it was party time in the courtyard of the Missionary Oblates of Aix for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “Pause-Midi” (*Noontime Break*).

We must not forget that in 1815, even before founding the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Eugene de Mazenod bought part of the former Carmelite monastery in Aix as a gathering place for the “Congregation of the Youth of Aix.” If this Youth Association counted more than 300 youngsters, from every social class—from the son of the imperial procurator for Aix to the children of the street—it was because he loved them, he respected them, and he believed in each one of them.

With the passing of the years, other youth apostolates gathered at the Oblates’ house in Aix: ministries in conjunction with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and a night school for young workers.

In 1990, the spiritual heirs of Eugene de Mazenod reclaimed an area that had been rented to a business. Its location at the end of Cours Mirabeau made it an ideal setting. They decided to establish a new missionary venture with youth. The Apostolic Sisters of Mary Immaculate joined the Oblates in this project. After consulting the diocese of Aix, they were able to begin planning in 1994. Pause-Midi was born and the work began. In February 1996, Pause-Midi officially began operation.

Today, “*Pause-Midi... opens its doors and warmly welcomes us right in the heart of Aix-en-Provence on Cours Mirabeau... In this little corner surrounded by trees, in this place teeming with life and with openness to our ideas, each of us finds a place far from the hassles of the city...*” (Virginie)

Pause-Midi is a place for recreation and relaxation. It’s a place for “*re-creation*,” a place for listening and for dialogue and for sharing the meaning of life.

The anniversary celebrations were prepared by the youth of the Association. March 28 was especially set aside for the hundreds of members and partners

of the Association. The “*Pausemidians*” and their partners gathered around a buffet style meal and everyone was invited to leave a personal mark on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary tree. The presence of the Archbishop of Aix, the Vice-Mayor, and the local Councilor for Youth showed the interest that the Church and the city of Aix have in Pause-Midi.

During the two days, some students of Tourism, members of the Association, guided visitors through history: from the origin of the Carmelite monastery in Aix, through the daring of Eugene de Mazenod, up to the present day Mission. The involvement of the youth showed us that without the investment of themselves, Pause-Midi would have no reason to exist.

Therefore, I close, leaving the last word to the youth:

*“Once you have experienced Pause-Midi, you cannot forget that it is part of who you are; it’s our warm and beautiful family without which I would not be the person I am today.”* (Géraldine)

*“At Pause-Midi, for the past two years, I’ve discovered Christians who welcome us in the name of their faith, respecting us for who we are. Here, I have discovered a welcoming Church, one that shares and that accompanies us as we are, that respects our differences, that puts itself at the service of others by giving us a welcoming place to meet that doesn’t exist anywhere else. Otherwise, we would be on the street. That heals me little by little.”* (Aurélie)

Yves CHALVET, OMI

**ITALY****“Looking for you!” A youth mission**

*“At the beginning, I wasn’t very willing to take part in this mission, maybe because I didn’t believe so much any more, but after these ten days, I have to believe once more. I appreciated the enthusiasm of these missionaries and especially the turnout of the youth of Belevedere for the mission. Even youth that don’t go to church. All of that led me to believe in the Mission and be part of it. I especially like the idea of being able to approach God through our ordinary hobbies such as singing and the computer, and in my case, through workshops. I think a mission such as*

*this should never end.” (Filippo)*

*“The joy, the simplicity, the humor, the resolve of the missionaries were essential to the success of these days. Being able to approach and to be with others, even with those who are apparently so different and unknown, but united in the name of one Person...these are things that struck me. It’s something that will be difficult to forget. I’ve come to understand that it is not necessary to do extraordinary things to give witness; it’s enough to listen to one’s neighbor: the persons we don’t know; the persons we love; the ones with whom we would never have spoken. I thank the Lord for this breath of fresh air and for having given to the youth of Belvedere the opportunity to meet the ‘nurses of our souls,’ the missionaries.” (Simona)*

These words give testimony to the way the Lord touched the hearts of the young people of Belved-

ere Marittimo during a Youth Mission conducted by the Oblates in their town in Southern Italy (Province of Cosenza) from March 15-27. All four parishes in this town of ten thousand were involved. Twelve youth from the town joined the four pastors and a nun to prepare the mission along with the team of Oblates and members of the youth movement “Costruire.”

At the Mass to commission the missionary team, Bishop Domenico Crusco, of the Diocese of San Marco Argentano-Scala, spoke of the need to walk side by side with the young generations to teach them values and the faith. He mentioned the confidence the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, placed in young people.

One of the highlights of the mission was the penitential service that took place on Friday, March 24. The service was preceded by a penitential procession that focused on various martyred missionaries.

## General Administration

### Oblate Communications Service

For the past few months, there has been the gradual development of a new service at the General House in Rome. At the Plenary Session of the Central Government in September 2005, Oblate Communications and Media Service and Oblate Information Service were combined to become Oblate Communications Service. At the Plenary Session of January 2006, Nino BUCCA was named Director of the new service. James ALLEN serves as Associate Director.

The 2004 General Chapter directed the General Administration to seek ways to “foster Media Ministry within the Congregation.” This merger of services and future plans for the new service are responses to that mandate.

The main role of the former Information Service was to gather Oblate news and documentation and disseminate it throughout the Oblate world. It seemed clear to those responsible for it that this task is simply one use of media (print, internet) to

communicate our message. The next logical step was to merge the two services.

The “Information Office” of the new Oblate Communications Service continues to act as a “news service,” primarily for worldwide Oblates, through the publication of *OMI Information* and *OMI Documentation*. It also publishes *OMI Communiqué* as prepared by the Central Government after each Plenary Session. Jim Allen serves as Editor of the publications, gathering items from various sources, editing them as needed, and sending them off to be translated. He then passes the finished products on to the Webmaster of [omiworld.org](http://omiworld.org), Nino Bucca.

Nino continues to develop the Oblate web site as one of our most important means of communication. Those who go to the site will have noticed the expanding list of resources available to Oblates on this site: current news, past editions of publications, and an ever-growing Oblate library that includes such items as Oblate History, writings of various Superiors General, interviews, and stories of Oblate heroes and saints. The Oblate Necrology is now com-

pletely on-line in a format that allows the browser to search for names and dates of our deceased members from the very beginning of the Congregation. It is also possible to download the complete Oblate Personnel, as updated on a regular basis by the General Secretariat, according to the information provided by the Units.

Nino is also responsible for developing some special projects in the area of communications. He is studying the possibility of producing a DVD in several languages on Saint Eugene and the Oblates,

as well as the development of sessions on communications and media, especially for Oblates in first formation.

Another project he is considering is the creation of a network among Oblates working in the field of communications. In order to do this, he needs information about what is happening in our Oblate Units. A questionnaire was sent to all Units of the Congregation in May 2005 to gather this data. At this time, there are still some Oblate Units that have not responded to the survey.

## Anniversaries for July 2006

### 75 Years of Religious Profession

1931.07.04	05068	Fr. Alcide Cossette	Lacombe
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### 70 Years of Religious Profession

1936.07.21	06370	Fr. Louis-Paul Lachance	Grandin
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### 70 Years of Priesthood

1936.07.05	05221	Fr. Jean-Marie Quéffelec	France
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### 65 Years of Religious Profession

1941.07.01	07807	Bro. Jean Kanzler	France
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### 65 Years of Priesthood

1941.07.06	06286	Fr. Arsène Caby	France
1941.07.06	06253	Fr. Guillaume Mathieu	France
1941.07.06	06480	Fr. Wiktor Maria Mendrella	Poland
1941.07.06	06250	Fr. Albert Schneider	France

### 60 Years of Religious Profession

1946.07.16	08164	Fr. Paul-Émile Charland	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1946.07.16	08161	Fr. Roland Gagnon	Haiti
1946.07.16	08165	Fr. Aurélien Giguère	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1946.07.16	08166	Fr. André Houle	United States
1946.07.16	08163	Fr. Jean Morin	United States
1946.07.16	08139	Fr. Laurent Roy	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1946.07.16	08167	Fr. Roland Saint Pierre	United States
1946.07.25	08168	Fr. Ernesto del Blanco	Spain
1946.07.25	08305	Fr. Germán Fernández	Argentina-Chile
1946.07.25	08170	Fr. José María Garmón	Argentina-Chile
1946.07.25	08644	Bro. Vicente Magaña	Spain

**60 Years of Priesthood**

1946.07.06	07400	Fr. Pierre Rigaud	Saint Paul's
1946.07.07	07377	Fr. Jean Loiseau	Belgium/Netherlands
1946.07.14	07513	Fr. Floor de Grauw	Belgium/Netherlands
1946.07.14	07613	Fr. Jean Maboge	Poland
1946.07.21	06689	Fr. August Trapp	Germany

**50 Years of Religious Profession**

1956.07.25	10254	Fr. Angel Fernández	Argentina-Chile
1956.07.25	10649	Bro. Juan Ramón	Spain
1956.07.25	10110	Fr. Santiago Rebordinos	Argentina-Chile
1956.07.26	10154	Fr. Andre Dubois	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1956.07.26	10150	Fr. Fernand Dufour	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1956.07.26	10151	Fr. Laval Tremblay	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**50 Years of Priesthood**

1956.07.01	09158	Fr. Louis-Marie Chrétien	Haiti
1956.07.01	09155	Fr. Lucien Jolly	France
1956.07.01	09187	Fr. Francis Plantin	France
1956.07.01	09212	Fr. Marcel Rouyer	France
1956.07.08	08890	Fr. Thomas Bilodeau	Lacombe
1956.07.08	08827	Fr. Normand Harvey	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1956.07.08	09151	Fr. Mieczyslaw Kuchcinski	Poland
1956.07.08	09152	Fr. Piotr Puzynski	Poland
1956.07.08	08841	Fr. William Woestman	United States
1956.07.22	09130	Fr. Jerry Talarski	Assumption

**25 Years of Priesthood**

1981.07.11	11941	Fr. Oliver Rich	Lacombe
1981.07.18	12408	Fr. Réjean Vigneault	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1981.07.24	11644	Fr. Juan de la Cruz Martín	Spain

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## Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 32-41

<i>NAME</i>	<i>PROVINCE</i>	<i>BIRTH</i>	<i>DIED AT</i>	<i>DATE</i>
Fr. Charles Bérubé	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	31/10/1917	Richelieu	16/04/2006
Fr. Jozef Kerstens	Belgium/Netherlands	04/02/1926	Kapellen	16/04/2006
Fr. Henri Ladrière	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	31/01/1916	Richelieu	24/04/06
Fr. François Péron	Thailand	17/03/1929	Loei	25/04/2006
Bishop Dominic Khumalo	Natal	05/02/1918	Durban	27/04/2006
Fr. Gerald Fogarty	United States	26/05/1933	San Antonio	28/04/2006
Fr. Emil Helfrich	United States	20/12/1923	Belleville	02/05/2006
Bro. Richard Schultz	United States	27/04/1927	Tewksbury	04/05/2006
Fr. Azael Katiba Lesako	Lesotho	02/08/1969	Maseru	07/05/2006
Fr. Camille Losson	Cameroon	11/02/1915	Ngaoundéré	09/05/2006

*“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)*