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Meeting of the Oblate Youth of Europe

About 140 young people gathered to carry a huge Oblate Cross and wave the flags of numerous European Nations adding wonderful colour and spectacle to the torch-light procession at Lourdes, this evening. The Oblates responsible for the international ministry of the Lourdes Sanctuary, were there to welcome all the pilgrims and especially a group of young lay people with Oblate Candidates, assembled for a meeting of the European Oblate Youth, who lead the procession. At the end, many pilgrims approached to venerate the Oblate cross and of course also asked many questions : Who are you ? What are you doing at Lourdes ? Why have you carried this cross ?

As a follow-up to World Youth Day in Hünfeld last year, The European Youth Pastoral Commission, in collaboration with the BEF (European Office for Formation) organised this regional meeting for the 3rd to 9th of August with two distinct programs : one for the youth (about 80 Germans with smaller groups from Italy, Spain, France and Ireland) and another for the Oblate Candidates from Italy, Germany and Spain who had already started their program at Aix en Provence, a very mixed group ranging from those who had only just begun to consider a vocation to those who had already spent two years in the pre-novitiate. It had been organised that the two groups should rejoin at specific times.

Many of the events offered to the average pilgrim at Lourdes integrated perfectly with the Oblate program : The story of the life experiences of Saint Bernadette told the youth of the Christian life and the how clear the call to conversion can be ; the celebration of many creative liturgies, especially the International Youth Mass ; reliving the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ in the 'Way of the Cross' and in the 'Way of Light' and the celebration of the sacra-

ments ; solidarity with the suffering in the services for the sick and the stories told by members of the Cenacle Community who work with many young people struggling with dependencies, especially drugs ; the international flavour of the place particularly evident in those visiting the Sanctuary and amongst the youth themselves as they shared their lives and faith ; the meals and the recreation time which spoke of joy and hope ; the Oblate charism which continues to call the young and those specifically with vocations, to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ ; the presence of Mary in the Grotto who is a model of all we would like to teach and give to the youth of today.

The community of Oblates at Lourdes and in particular those involved in youth ministry, facilitated the program and in so doing have given us a good example of international community at the service of the Oblate mission. Many Oblates from different parts of Europe accompanied the young people. This gathering gave them a chance to discuss the underlying issues of the future of the Oblates in Europe and the best ways to collaborate in their ministries.

A message of welcome from Father General to all the participants was received as a true challenge. He wrote : *"It inspires me to see young people gather and unite from all over to work to shape the very substance of Europe. There is a mission to re-Christianize our continent. Europe must hear a message of hope of a future filled with the presence of God. You may think that you are small in number but let us remember the parable of the mustard seed; "from little things, big things grow!"*

Lourdes, the place where you are meeting has always been a source of inspiration and hope to

all who visit it. I am convinced that you are in the right place!"

A real and tangible response to this challenge would

also be a great response to the questions posed by the visitors as to why we were at Lourdes!

*Luis Ignacio ROIS, OMI
General Councilor for Europe*

Europe

ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCE Celebrating 150 Years

June 19th to 25th was a great week to be in Inchicore as the community celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Oblates coming to Ireland, and of the building of the first church, itself a testimony to what can be done by a community working together. There was a full week of events, planned in conjunction with the Inchicore Festival Committee – lectures, steam train excursions, photographic exhibitions and plays. Colourful bunting and flowers added to the festive air.

The Oblate Superior General, Fr Wilhelm STECKLING, who came from Rome for the celebrations, opened a new drugs rehabilitation centre in the Oblate Sports Centre complex on Friday and officiated at a Mass for the sick on Saturday. Sunday saw the highlight of the week – the anniversary Mass. The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese came, as did the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Catherine Byrne, and other dignitaries. But so too did the people of Inchicore and many friends of the Oblates from farther away. The presence of missionaries from around the world (Brazil, the Philippines, Australia, United States and more) reflected the worldwide Oblate family. Choirs from all the four Dublin parishes combined in a feast of music; the Darndale children danced joyfully and the Eucharist was truly a celebration of Thanksgiving.

Later, in a virtual ‘miracle of the loaves and fishes’, crowds and crowds were fed, and the food did not run out.

All afternoon on this perfect summer day the children enjoyed a fun day in the field beside the Grotto. The Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin attended it for a time. Finally and very beauti-

fully, in the late dusk, the Lord Mayor pressed a switch and new flood lighting lit up the twin spires of Mary Immaculate Church, making it a welcoming gateway to the city at night and a reminder of the world of the spirit. This was her last public act as Lord Mayor before relinquishing office next day. It was a fitting end to a great day and a great week.

UKRAINE A special guest

Father Pawel VYSHKOVSKYY has been rather busy lately speaking about his new book *Christian Ethics in the Communications Media. Dangers of an irresponsible use*. One of these speaking engagements was at the Church of St. Alexander in Kiev, with the participation of many journalists and parishioners from various parishes in the city.

From June 1-4, Father Pawel had also invited Laura Molla, the third daughter of Saint Giovanna Berretti Molla, canonized for having sacrificed her own life in order to give birth to her fourth child. Laura visited orphanages in Ukraine and she took part in press conferences before large crowds, with the participation of the press, radio, and television. There were meetings arranged for her in the parishes of Zytomir and Winnitza, as well as in the two parishes in Kiev: St. Alexander and St. Nicholas.

Her presence in Ukraine was all the more important because it coincided with the “Year for the defense of the spiritual values of the child,” called by the Pan-Ukrainian Council of Churches. Laura Molla spoke about the defense of and the value of life in Ukraine which is the second country in Central Europe to see its population diminish by five million persons in the past 12 years. The number of abortions is astounding. Since 2005, 264,000 abortions have been registered, but that number should be multiplied by two or three, since not all the doctors report the exact number of abortions they perform.

Asia-Oceania

INDONESIA**Tsunami 2006: another cross to carry**

TSUNAMI, TSUNAMI!! More than a year ago this would have been a foreign word to many people in Indonesia, but not now. First of all, a rather large earthquake was felt just after 3 p.m. on the afternoon of July 17 in Cilacap, a coastal town where the Oblates minister. A scheduled mass for the members of AMMI proceeded as planned at 5 p.m. Then just after the mass concluded the cry of *tsunami!* was heard and there was panic everywhere.

The roads were blocked with people trying to get out of town to safety. Since the parish house is two stories high, many people were coming there to seek shelter. There is also a nearby high school run by the Oblates, with a big assembly room on the second story. This too became a place of refuge, together with the eight-level Maritime School, another one of the projects of Fr Charlie BURROWS.

The incoming rush of water from the 2-3 meter wave eventually stopped 200 meters short of the church. There is the big island of Nusakambangan, just off Cilacap, which fortunately formed a buffer for the big waves, thus protecting the town from the full force of the tsunami. On the previous night, two of the Oblates, together with a visitor from Australia, were savoring the cool breeze and enjoying a nice fish dinner at a café on the beach. Now it is a disaster area, with small fishing boats and debris thrown up onto the beach and into nearby houses. A small power plant was damaged, causing some loss of power.

There were nine people killed in the town, and in the wider Cilacap area, 103 deaths. But like the previous earthquake near Yogyakarta, these figures keep changing as more information becomes known. In the newspaper of July 20, the reported deaths had risen to 549.

Along a coastline of more than 200 kms, the tsunami caused great damage, including the favorite beach resort area of Pangandaran, where the Ob-

lates have a house for recreation which is also rented out for visitors. The young family who take care of it are safe, but the wife of the caretaker suffered a broken leg. The house was badly damaged, but it is not beyond repair. It too ended up with a fishing boat in the front room of the house. There are many hotels along the beach and they all suffered damage, some quite serious.

The following day, the Canadian Embassy contacted Fr Burrows offering their help. Someone in the Embassy knew about the work that Fr Charlie does with the people. This is one effect of giving witness. Fr Charlie then got busy making out a proposal. They will offer immediate help for the basic needs of 500 families for six weeks, during which time the people will be able to organize themselves to repair the damage. A great feature of the Javanese people is what is called "*Gotong Royang*", which means everyone digging in and helping one another.

The poor people! They were just picking themselves up from the earthquake at the end of May and now this! The Oblates in the area are all safe and once again busy helping the people to survive this latest disaster. The people may be able to rebuild their houses, but the prospects for the future of Pangandaran as a place to earn a livelihood is perhaps rather dismal. But they have a resilience that will hopefully help them to survive. (John O'DOHERTY)

COLOMBO**A difficult new mission**

When the bishop of Galle, on the southern tip of Sri Lanka, was looking for missionaries to care for an area severely ravaged by the 2004 tsunami, he addressed his invitation to the provincial of the Colombo Province, Fr. Clement WAIDYASEKERA. Bishop Harold Anthony Perera stated that he was impressed by the fact that "the Oblates' missionary thrust is to build small communities and promote lay leadership. For this alone I invited the Oblates to my diocese and this should be one of the priorities of my Diocese of Galle."

While early Oblate missionaries of the 19th century had some contact with Catholic families in that part of the island, they had not worked there since Galle became a diocese in 1893.

The Oblates of the Colombo Province have agreed to assume responsibility of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Hambantota, the last parish at the southern end of the diocese of Galle. There are 83 families in the parish that also has six mission stations. There are no chapels in the mission stations and the people are very poor: farmers and producers of salt.

The first Oblate to be assigned there is Fr. Angelo WIJEWICKREMA. The province hopes to send other Oblates to work with him in the future. Besides his duties as parish priest, the pastor will also oversee the considerable amount of tsunami rehabilitation work being carried out in the area by the Diocese of Galle.

LAOS

First priestly ordination in many years

For the first time in over 30 years, an Oblate has been ordained to the priesthood in Laos. Somphone VILAVONGSY was ordained at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Vientiane, Laos, on June 18. More

than a thousand people joined the celebration of the first Oblate ordination in Laos in 30 years.

Ordaining the 32 year-old Laotian priest was Bishop Jean Khamsé Vithavong, Vicar Apostolic of Vientiane and the last Oblate to be ordained in Laos (January 1975). Also present were the Apostolic Nuncio from Thailand and the other Catholic bishops of Laos.

The Oblates have a long and close friendship with this Asian country. More than a hundred Oblates, mostly French and Italian, served there between 1935 and 1975.

The newly ordained priest was born in Laos in 1973. In 1988, Somphone moved into the Bishop's residence in Vientiane where he completed his secondary education in 1992. He then helped Bishop Khamsé in various ways for several years before asking about studying to be a priest. After another six years helping the bishop and learning English, Somphone came to Australia to study with the Oblates at St Mary's Seminary in Melbourne.

Father Somphone completed his Oblate formation and made his perpetual vows as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate in Australia in 2005.

Africa-Madagascar

ZAMBIA

Through sand and mud

A road is generally defined as a stretch of land, smoothed, paved, or other wise prepared to allow easy travel. It is meant to connect cities and villages and towns with one another. For the Oblates who minister in Zambia, especially in that country's Western Province, roads are also a major challenge. In that area, most of the roads are the simple pathways they were 50 years ago. Trucks transporting goods share the passage with pedestrians, ox-drawn carts, herds of goats or pigs, chickens and wild animals.

A journey from one district to another is always a nightmare. One has to make sure that the vehicle is thoroughly checked before departure. One needs

to carry containers of water in case the vehicle becomes stuck in the sand during the dry season, for the motor is likely to overheat. Shovels are vital equipment.

However, in spite of all the precautions one takes, a timely arrival at is not guaranteed. During the rainy season, long portions of the roads become lakes, and there is no way around. The vehicle has to find a way through the muddy water which poses a serious threat to the safety of the vehicle and its passengers.

A 4 X 4 vehicle is no guarantee for safety. No matter how strong a Land Cruiser may be, its life span is always reduced due to the rough and difficult terrains and the many obstacles it faces on these West-

ern Province roads.

Missionary Oblates, as experts in difficult missions, are serving some of the most challenging missions in the Diocese of Mongu. Last Palm Sunday, Fr Vincent SAKALA, after rehearsing his Lozi language for a week, well dressed and very enthusiastic to visit the communities of Namatindi and Lukona to share with them the message of Christ's Passion, found himself stuck in mud before reaching the first destination. He, the altar servers and pastoral team members worked many hours to dig around and free the tires from mud and move the vehicle.

Their efforts did not pay off. As hard as they tried, the thick mud continued to swallow the tires. They decided to send for help and before long, the mission tractor arrived at the scene. They tied a chain to the rear of the tractor to tow the Land Cruiser. They checked everything and the tractor driver started his maneuver. As he pressed the accelerator to give the engine all its power to tow the stuck vehicle, the unexpected happened. The chain broke in two pieces; the tractor slipped and rotated with incredible force, ending up facing the cruiser, still stuck in its bed of mud. The tractor was deep in the muddy pool. The rescuer needed to be rescued.

After an entire day, the missionaries eventually escaped their muddy trap and reached the first village. Fr. Vincent resembled a ghost, his face covered with the muddy "make up" and his clothes mud-covered, a true phantom. It was Palm Sunday well celebrated, in a very special way. On our Roads for evangelization, each trip has a story. It is a story about the vehicle; a story about the road; a story about the people visited. (Fr Cyril KEBA at www.omizambia.org.zm)

CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICA

Death of renowned artist, Frans Claerhout

Fr. Frans CLAERHOUT, known not only in South Africa but in many other parts of the world as an accomplished artist, died on July 4, 2006. Born in Belgium in 1919, he professed his first vows in 1939 and was ordained a priest in 1944. Two years later, he went to South Africa where most of his ministry was in the Archdiocese of Bloemfontein.

His work has been described as a "merging of post impressionism with post modernism." As he grew older, his paintings, mostly pastels, took on more vivid colors. When asked by an interviewer why that was so, he responded: "If you can catch the sun, you can never die." He loved to paint the people and animals he saw daily. His paintings of donkeys are internationally known. An internet search of *Frans Claerhout* will reveal many of his paintings.

KENYA

A new formation house: not an easy venture

The Kenya mission (OMI Lacombe) continues to grow and the formation program is expanding. Mariusz WILK (formerly from Poland), assisted by Normand and Shelia (lay missionaries from Labrador in Canada), has been asked to head up the new House of Philosophy in Nairobi where there are four students studying philosophy through the Consolata Missionaries' program.

The formation community in Nairobi was established to allow the candidates to stay for a longer time with the Oblates of Kenya and get to know them better. Presently, the formation program consists of the pre-novitiate in Meru, where for two years they take English, Oblatology, and faith development classes. The second step is to have them take philosophy in Nairobi before they go for their novitiate in either Namibia or South Africa. Should they be accepted for vows, they will study theology elsewhere in the region, most likely in either South Africa or in Cameroon. Even though the Kenya mission is attached to a province in far-off Canada, the members take an active role in the Region of Africa-Madagascar.

Nothing happens quickly in Kenya, especially when it involves deeds for land and building. Over a year ago the Oblates began the process of trying to acquire land and property for the formation house in Nairobi. After innumerable trips to see the lawyer and after a mountain of legal hurdles, ownership of the property was finalized just before Easter of this year. The Oblates must feel like a runner who thought he had entered a sprint but finds out part way it's actually a marathon! Now the real work begins, not only that of completing the building, but more importantly, the work of Oblate formation.

Latin America

GUATEMALA

Following the steps of the one who brings the good news...

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings the good news... (Is. 52: 7) Recently the Guadalupe community returned from a mission experience in the two Oblate parishes in Quiché (Chicamán and Playa Grande).

As always, it was a great joy to share “all that you have and are” with the simple folks in these communities, but especially to experience “all that they have and are.” At least for me, I don’t have the least doubt that they are the lucky ones because they are always willing to tell you about their experience of God in such a simple and spontaneous way that they help me keep my feet on the ground, without losing sight of the promised hope of heaven that we already begin to experience here.

At the beginning of this text are those words from the second book of Isaiah that we were really able to understand when we came into contact with these brothers of ours, since they were waiting for us with eagerness and were thrilled to hear the message of God that the missionary was bringing them at this time.

One of the things that I liked was that, in spite of the rain, the sun, the vast jungles, the hills, and the dis-

tances between the villages, they showed their openness and their appreciation for what we were offering them during the time we visited their community.

The Playa Grande parish has more than 110 villages and some of them are multiethnic. That makes for tremendous challenge for the Oblates who are there, but it is also a source of great hope.

As friends of Jesus, and following his example, the Oblates who are in this region draw upon the people’s poverty to bring out the best in these simple people, fulfilling in them the words that God has spoken to them. It is an invitation to us, his poor servants, to bring them his message, making real the words that began this text: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings the good news*, or to put it more appropriately for this place, it is even more beautiful to see coming down the mountain the boots of those who bring the good news.

There are many pairs of boots awaiting our brother Oblates here in Guatemala. (Héctor COC, Scholastic OMI)



Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Building bridges through prayer

Oblate Fr. Terry O’CONNELL, pastor of Holy Angels parish in Buffalo, New York, tells of his ministry with persons seeking political asylum.

Whenever we Oblates speak of Border Ministry, the map in our minds and the history of our congregation direct us to Texas and California. Holy Angels parish in Buffalo, New York - our oldest permanent foundation in the United States - is just three

blocks from the Peace Bridge, one of the busiest commercial crossings from the USA into Canada. The Peace Bridge is also a major crossing point for people from all over the world seeking political asylum in the United States or Canada. *Vive La Casa* is an organization in Buffalo that assists in the processing of those seeking political asylum. Last year alone, 5,000 refugees from 85 different countries were helped by *Vive* in their petition for asylum and resettlement in Canada.

Holy Angels parish became involved with *Vive* be-

cause of the large number of Latinos served by this organization. Many Latino Catholics at *Vive* expressed the desire to attend Mass and this became the occasion for our Spanish-speaking parishioners to organize transportation for them to our Sunday Liturgy. As people came to Sunday Mass, more and more of them wanted some time to speak with me but there was never enough time after Mass for all or even one person to share all the stories that needed to be shared. I began going to *Vive* on a weekly basis to be available for the Latinos who wished to speak with a priest.

There are clergy from many faiths who pass through the doors of *Vive* and for this reason, I always make it a point to wear a clerical collar and have my rosary at hand to confirm my identity as a Catholic priest. The rosary has not only encouraged the Latinos but has also established bridges with others. Tibetan Buddhists connected with me as the man who has prayer beads like theirs. An Indonesian woman was overjoyed to encounter a Catholic priest whose identity was confirmed for her by the sight of my rosary. She and I did not share a common language but we were united by our prayer of one decade of the rosary each in our own language.

My presence has opened conversations with people from all over the world who have heard that I am there for them to listen to them and remember their needs before God. Muslims ask for prayers. I recently spoke with a young Kurdish man from Turkey who, although he is a Muslim, had a rosary around his neck. He brought the rosary with him from Turkey because he loves Mary and was convinced that the Blessed Mother would assist him in his petition for political asylum.

The circumstances that make people exiles from their homelands are many and heartbreaking. Political agendas make it very difficult for those seeking refuge to find a host country that will give them a chance at a new life. The recent bitter public debates over Immigration Reform have threatened the future of agencies like *Vive* that seek to continue their ministries to those who have no country to call their own. Many refugees are more afraid than ever to connect themselves to agencies set up to help them for fear that this connection will only speed their deportation.

A young man from Afghanistan who has known only war for all of his life had been working as a translator for the American forces in his country. The Taliban put a price on his head and so he was forced to flee his country. He has many letters from American commanders in the field extolling him for his bravery in the face of danger and for his loyalty to the American troops. He has done all that he could, even at the risk of his own life, to aid the Americans in his homeland, but it remains doubtful that he will ever gain asylum in the United States. Our military presence in Afghanistan has officially made the country politically stable; therefore, the reasoning goes, there is no reason for anyone from there to need or seek asylum.

I am not able to advance more enlightened immigration policies nor am I able to influence either the United States or Canada in their political concerns about giving asylum, but I can share my faith and prayer with those who seek refuge. My ministry as a Catholic priest is to be an oasis of trust where stories can be shared and hopes and fears brought before God in prayer. How interesting that Our Blessed Mother is a sign of hope for a Kurdish Moslem and that my rosary beads connect me to Tibetans and are a source of comfort even when our language for prayer is not the same. Prayer does build bridges that bring healing comfort and envision a different world where all are sons and daughters of the same Heavenly Father.

LACOMBE

A tip of the hat

The Diocese of St. George's in Newfoundland is struggling with a serious financial problem as a result of a sentence handed down against a priest declared guilty of sexual misconduct. The diocese is obliged to pay 14 million dollars to the victims. Bishop Douglas CROSBY, OMI, had to find that sum or the diocese would have to declare bankruptcy. Buildings and lands have been put up for sale. But how can one sell assets that were built by the generous efforts of the parishioners?

A priest of the diocese came up with the idea of sending a letter to some 9,000 Canadian priests, asking them each to donate one thousand dollars to help

the Church of the Diocese of St. George's. The appeal was heard. The weekly broadcast on spirituality, "Second Look," on Radio-Canada, revealed in its program last March 26 that already 4 million dollars have been collected, thanks to this project. Bishop Crosby states that he is touched by the response of the priests as well as by the letters they write when they send their check. Often this sort of solidarity shows itself in difficult situations.

LACOMBE

The pallium for two Oblate archbishops

Oblate Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie describes his feelings upon receiving the sacred pallium from Pope Benedict XVI.

On June 29th, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, in the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI bestowed the pallium on twenty seven archbishops appointed to Metropolitan Sees during this last year from around the world, including two Oblates, Jabulani NXUMALO, Archbishop of Bloemfontein in South Africa, and Sylvain LAVOIE, Archbishop of Keewatin-The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

The pallium, worn by the pope, symbolizes the plenitude of pontifical office. Worn by archbishops, it symbolizes their participation in the supreme pastoral power of the pope, who grants it to them for their proper Metropolitan Sees. It also symbolizes their bond with St. Peter and St. Paul, first shepherds of the Church.

After the Pope's homily, the tray bearing the palliums was ceremoniously brought up the stairs from beneath the papal altar. They were blessed by the pope, and then each archbishop went up to kneel before the pope and receive his pallium.

The following day, Pope Benedict received in audience the archbishops and addressed them briefly. Each archbishop then had the opportunity to greet the pope and introduce four members of his family, or others he had chosen, to him.

Not having any family members present, I was able to introduce three of my Oblate family to the pope:

Fr. Daniel CORIJN (former Vicar General of the Oblate Congregation), Fr. Vicente LÓPEZ (Mexico), and Bro. Jean-Paul CORMIER (Manitoba).

After the audience, those archbishops whose Metropolitan Sees are under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (the former *Propaganda Fide*) were invited to lunch at the Pontifical Propaganda College with Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, the outgoing Prefect of that same Congregation. This included both Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo and me.

It is almost impossible to find words to describe the emotions involved in being part of this pallium celebration. To walk in procession into the great basilica packed with enthusiastic faithful, to venerate the papal altar, to receive the pallium from the pope, concelebrate with him and then receive communion from the papal altar above St. Peter's tomb on his feast day, was deeply moving and humbling. I can now appreciate how St. Eugene de Mazenod felt when he himself received the pallium from Bl. Pope Pius IX on April 3, 1851.

A highlight of the whole event for us as Oblate bishops was the hospitality extended to us by the community of the General House in Rome. To return from memorable events such as these to the warmth, support and fraternity of our Oblate brothers was a genuine blessing in itself, for which we are very grateful.

The celebration of the Eucharist during this event was a privileged moment for us to pray for our family, friends and relatives, our Oblate family, our diocesan family, the Church and the whole world. May God bless us all as we strive to build up the reign of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, as best we can with the gifts that God has given to each of us.

UNITED STATES

Cardinal George asks for prayers

The Oblate Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago, Francis GEORGE, has asked his friends and the faithful to pray for him as he confronts a serious health

problem. Doctors have determined that he suffers from cancer of the bladder. He underwent surgery to remove the cancerous bladder on July 27 at a Chicago hospital.

As he was leaving his home for the hospital, he remarked to the press: "You meet the Lord in prayer every day. The idea of meeting him is, while disquieting, not something I think I am afraid of," he said. "I'm more afraid of the operation and the complications of life without a bladder than I am of death itself at this point."

Cardinal George was Vicar General of the Oblates from 1974-1986. In 1990, Pope John Paul II named him the fifth Bishop of Yakima, Washington, an area where the very first Oblate missionaries in the United States had worked. In 1996, he became the Archbishop of Portland, Oregon. Less than one year later, he was named Archbishop of Chicago, the second largest diocese in the United States. In 1998, he became the fourth Oblate Cardinal when he received the title of Cardinal Priest of San Bartolomeo all'isola.

Before leaving his residence, Cardinal George received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Present for the sacrament were the auxiliary bishops who laid hands on him and called upon the Holy Spirit to give him strength to heal.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Panel on evangelization

On June 12, there was a panel discussion on evangelization at Saint Paul University, Ottawa. The panelists were Chantal Beauvais, dean of the Faculty of Philosophy; Françoise Lagacé, a pastoral worker in the Diocese of Gatineau; and none other than our own Superior General, Father Wilhelm STECKLING. The three speakers answered the following question: In the midst of different views on evangelization and the many challenges it presents, in your mind, what are the three most important aspects of this evangelization today?

We mention those named by Father General:

- *community (in a secularized world);
- *dialogue (in an inter-religious context);

*reconciliation (in situations of extreme poverty).

Luc TARDIF moderated the discussions among the panelists and the hundred or so participants.

UNITED STATES Chicago scholasticate to close

The Provincial Council of the United States Province has decided to close one of the province's two scholasticates. Oblate House of Theology in Chicago will cease to function as a formation house at the end of the 2006-07 school year.

The former Central Province established a scholasticate community in Chicago in 1985. At that time, the Oblates joined over 30 missionary communities whose students studied at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The late Fr. Robert MOOSBRUGGER was the first superior of the community that moved into a one hundred year-old apartment building in 1987, within walking distance to CTU.

When the Chicago formation program began, there were two other scholasticates in the United States: De Mazenod in Washington, DC, and Sexton House of Studies in San Antonio, Texas. Post-novitiate formation became a regional responsibility in 1995 and the Washington house closed in 1996.

The number of scholastics, as well as the availability of formators, made it obvious that the province needed to respond to the call of the 2004 General Chapter to consolidate small formation houses. Two different consultations of the province members took place prior to the final decision to leave Chicago. In the first consultation, the members were asked whether one scholasticate should be closed. In the second consultation, they were asked their preference concerning the location of the remaining house of post-novitiate formation.

Future scholastics will reside at the San Antonio scholasticate community and take their theology classes at Oblate School of Theology. The house in Chicago will continue for one more school year since there are two scholastics who, upon returning from regency, need to finish their final year of studies at

CTU. The province also has two scholastics at the International Scholasticate in Rome and three at the scholasticate in Mexico City.

The San Antonio scholasticate is truly international with students from the United States, Mexico, Haiti, and Zambia.

General Administration

HÜNFELD

What future for oblate studies and research?

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the ASSOCIATION FOR OBLATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH, a congress of members was held in Hünfeld from 7 – 12 August. Founded as a direct result of the international Congress of 1976 to define the elements of the Oblate charism, the AOSR has as its aim to be: “a free association of Oblates actively interested in undertaking, promoting and coordinating research, study and exchange on the history, spirituality, mission and present life of the Congregation.” The Association promotes projects of study and research, the publication/translation of relevant materials, the organization and upkeep of Oblate archives and meetings furthering its aims. At present it counts a membership of 50 Oblates and has a membership meeting approximately every 5 years.

The meeting wished to take stock of the situation of Oblate studies in the Congregation, and invited the participation of twenty seven Oblates who are involved in Oblate studies but are not members of the Association. Due to various commitments only thirteen guests were able to be present, and they joined the 13 AOSR members present for the meeting that unfolded in three steps.

1) Study of the theme “The Oblate, Co-operator of the Saviour.” It was stimulated by the presentation of papers by Wojciech POPIELEWSKI and Frank SANTUCCI. In addition to the theme, three books written since the last membership meeting were presented by their authors.

2) Reflection on the question of the future of Oblate studies and research. It was life-giving for the members of the Association to be put into dialogue with the many other initiatives of Oblatology in the Congregation. Dialoguing with each other, the desire was

expressed for a close collaboration between the AOSR, the review *Vie Oblate Life*, and the charism and Founder animation ministry of the International De Mazenod Centre (CIM) in Aix.

3) Election of a new executive committee: President: Frank SANTUCCI, Secretary-Treasurer: Wojciech KLUJ, Members: Thomas KLOSTERKAMP and Ronald YOUNG.

The Acts of this Congress will be published in a future issue of *Vie Oblate Life*.

OBLATE COMMUNICATION SERVICE Oblate “Blogs”

Sometimes, just when we think we understand how to use our computer and how to use e-mail, something new arrives. With the new arrival, often a new word must be invented. Even the word “e-mail” is relatively new: it began only in the 1960’s. One of the latest words that has found a way into our vocabulary is the “*blog*.”

A *blog*, the shortened form of another new word, “*weblog*,” is usually a personal web site where one can share ideas, opinions, personal news, images, and even on-line diaries. The variety of uses people make of blogs is practically infinite.

Some Oblates have begun to communicate through blogs as well. For example, one could consider the Superior General’s personal web page a blog since it contains his personal writings and his reflections on some current events (<http://www.omiworld.org/superior.asp?L=1&Linguaggio=1>).

In recent weeks, Assistant General, Fr. Oswald FIRTH, has made public his blog entitled “Mission-OMI.” His intention is that the blog be an instrument for information and animation on matters which have particular relevance to our Oblate mission. Oswald

is in charge of the General Administration's portfolio on the mission. The blog can be found at <http://mission-omi.blogspot.com>.

General Councillor, Fr. Jean-Bosco MUSUMBI maintains a blog with news of his experiences in the region of Africa-Madagascar at <http://membres.lycos.fr/ayaas/index.htm>.

Fr. Jun MERCADO, former director of the Oblate JPIC office, maintains a blog on interreligious dialogue; please visit <http://www.badaliyya.blogspot.com>.

If other Oblates have a blog address they would like to share with the rest of the Oblate family, they should send the blog address to webmaster@omiworld.org.

ROME

Religious Communities show concern for situation in Sri Lanka

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation commission of the USG-USIG (Unions of Superiors General of religious congregations of men and women) has set up a Sri Lanka Working Group to consider ways that religious communities might help in developing a peaceful solution to the violence that has been occurring in that island nation.

The Working Group has met twice at the Oblate General House in Rome, on June 13 and on July 11. Oblate Assistant General, Oswald FIRTH, serves as chair of the group.

As their mode of operating, the group sees the need to be "positively reflective" in finding ways to support the religious communities who are actually present in Sri Lanka as they seek to find a way to foster a peaceful, multi-cultural society. Given the complexity of the issues, it becomes immediately apparent that the first recourse must be prayer.

The group took note of a recent positive development. The Sri Lanka Catholic Bishops' Conference has set up a task force of four bishops and some lay persons to "speak out in the name of the Church against killings and violence." Also, the Sri Lanka

Ambassador to the Holy See is aware of the Working Group and has promised to give whatever support she can.

The group is also negotiating the proper protocols and invitations to permit a delegation from USG-USIG to go to Sri Lanka and report back.

GENERAL HOUSE

Arrivals and departures

As usually happens in the summer months, 290 via Aurelia welcomes new community members and says farewell to others. There are Oblates leaving Roman assignments to return to their provinces and Oblates arriving to take their place. Oblates who have completed a licentiate or a doctorate leave space to be occupied by new "student priests."

With a "magna cum laude" for his doctoral work, Fr. Leopold RATNASEKERA, has left his position as secretary to the Superior General, to return to the Colombo Province in Sri Lanka. During the four years that Leopold worked with Fr. General, he also took classes at the Pontifical Urbaniana University and wrote a dissertation entitled *Buddhist Understanding of Ethics: A Critical Appraisal of the Eightfold Path of Moral Perfection as taught in the Buddhist Dhamma*. He successfully defended his thesis on June 20.

Leopold's successor as secretary to Father General is Fr. Eric ALLEAUME from Australia. Fluent in English and French, Eric spent his first 14 years of ministry working in secondary education. For the past year, he was a parish priest.

The Vicar General also has a new Administrative Assistant in the person of Fr. Andrzej JASTRZEBSKI who began his duties on September 1. Until recently, he was the superior of the St. Thomas Aquinas community in Lublin.

Fr. Eliseo "Jun" MERCADO has also left Rome. For the past four years, Jun served as the Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation service at the General House in Rome. He finished that mandate in June and will return to his home province after a sabbatical.

Completing studies and returning home are Fr. Jean-Marie MBOUDANDI from Chad (Licentiate in Moral Theology, “magna cum laude”); Fr. Piero REGINATO from Assumption Province (sabbatical studies); and Fr. Joseph LABELLE from the United States (Doctorate in Spiritual Theology – defense in October).

Arriving for studies are Fathers Abelardo MONTIEL (Paraguay), Henry WALKER (USA), Habell NSOLO (DR Congo), Sebastian ANTHONYMUTHU (Jaffna) and Callistus KHATHALI (Natal).

Anniversaries for November 2006

75 years of religious profession

1931.11.27 05243 Fr. James Delaney United States

65 years of religious profession

1941.11.01 07400 Fr. Pierre Rigaud Saint Paul's
 1941.11.01 07445 Fr. Lucien Schmitt Germany
 1941.11.01 07428 Fr. Edouard Zilliox France

60 years of religious profession

1946.11.01 08421 Fr. Yvon Filippini Notre-Dame-du-Cap
 1946.11.21 08425 Fr. Bernard Crouvezier France

50 years of priesthood

1956.11.25 09147 Fr. Szczepan Brzezina Poland
 1956.11.25 09171 Fr. Henryk Tomys Poland

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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 49-72

| NAME | PROVINCE | BIRTH | DIED AT | DATE |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Fr. Antonio Gentile | Italy | 13/09/1922 | Santa Maria a Vico | 28/06/2006 |
| Fr. Ernesto Sartor | Italy | 06/06/1918 | San Giorgio Canavese | 30/06/2006 |
| Fr. Denis O'Callaghan | Lesotho | 01/03/1921 | Maseru | 01/07/2006 |
| Fr. Raymond Moncoeur | Haiti | 06/06/1960 | San Antonio | 02/07/2006 |
| Fr. Philippe Montjean | France | 24/11/1925 | Marseille | 03/07/2006 |
| Fr. Frans Claerhout | Central S.A. | 15/02/1919 | Bloemfontein | 04/07/2006 |
| Fr. Raymond Wilhelm | United States | 03/02/1932 | Midland | 05/07/2006 |
| Fr. Sean Crean | Anglo-Irish | 03/09/1918 | Inchicore | 08/07/2006 |
| Fr. Eugene Glaub | United States | 06/01/1927 | Belleville | 10/07/2006 |
| Fr. Robert Colfer | United States | 14/07/1914 | W.Palm Beach | 11/07/2006 |
| Fr. Léon Etienne | Belgium/ Netherlands | 02/05/1927 | Gemmenich | 13/07/2006 |
| Fr. Bruce Robert Heit | Brazil | 07/08/1937 | Recife | 12/07/2006 |
| Fr. James Kernan | United States | 09/06/1927 | San Diego | 14/07/2006 |
| Bro. Alojzy Kubiacyk | Poland | 22/06/1920 | Markowice | 16/07/2006 |
| Bro. Matthias Schaffrath | Germany | 28/07/1915 | Borken | 28/07/2006 |
| Fr. Louis Sondgeroth | United States | 30/04/1931 | Washington | 29/07/2006 |
| Fr. Hubert Knuf | Namibia | 25/05/1932 | Okatana | 06/08/2006 |
| Fr. Wiktor Maria Mendrella | France/Benelux | 14/04/1916 | Brancourt Le Grand | 11/08/2006 |
| Bro. Pawel Woryna | France/Benelux | 14/01/1907 | Vaudricourt | 22/08/2006 |
| Fr. Vincenzo Calcagno | Italy | 10/12/1926 | San Prisco | 24/08/2006 |
| Bro. Stefan Szymanski | France/Benelux | 30/08/1926 | Vaudricourt | 26/08/2006 |
| Bro. Edwin Birk | Germany | 06/09/1940 | Hünfeld | 29/08/2006 |
| Fr. Julio Rodríguez | Argentina/Chile | 27/05/1912 | Santa Fe | 31/08/2006 |
| Fr. Augustinus Selialia | Lesotho | 17/01/1952 | Maseru | 03/09/2006 |

“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)