



Italy: New canonization process

The diocesan phase of the Process of Canonization or the Declaration of Martyrdom for Father Mario BORZAGA, Missionary Oblate at Mary immaculate, and his lay catechist, Thoj Xyooj Paul, began in Trent, Italy, at St. Anthony Parish, on October 7, the feast of the Our Lady of the Rosary, during missionary month. Both of these candidates were killed in Laos at the end of April, 1960.

His Excellency, Archbishop Luigi Bressan, Archbishop of Trent, presided at the ceremony in the presence of the Judicial Tribunal composed of Fr. Ellerino Cozza, of the Murialdo Josephites, Episcopal Vicar for Religious Life and the Bishop's Delegate for the Cause; by Father Augustyn Babiak, a Ukrainian priest of the Greek-Catholic rite and Promoter of Justice; and by Mrs. Maria Luisa Miorelli who served as Notary Public.

The Postulator for the cause is Father Angelo PELIS, a theology classmate of Father Borzaga, and a missionary in Laos until his expulsion in 1975. Several years ago he was charged with beginning the long process in preparation for this first and important step, which the Italian province of the Oblates, along with the bishops of Laos and the Archdiocese of Trent, wanted to prepare and begin.

This event, taking place in the parish of St. Anthony, Father Mario Borzaga's parish in Bolghera, has a deep psychological effect, especially on the Archdiocese of Trent, for the whole Oblate Congregation and for the Church in Laos.

What took place in Trent represents an important juridical act through which the two candidates in the process can now be called "Servants of God." During this diocesan phase, which can last for months

or years, the Tribunal gathers all the documentation, studies the writings of the Servants of God, and listens to the testimony of those who knew them. Then, having completed this phase, the Acts are sent to Rome, to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and the Roman phase begins, possibly leading to a final positive decision by the pope.

Among those present for the Opening Session of the Process were Lucia and Emilio Borzaga, sister and brother of Father Mario, with other relatives and friends of the Borzaga family, the pastor, Father Vittorio Zanotelli, an enthusiastic supporter of the Cause, who, together with members of the association, *Friends of Father Mario Borzaga*, took care of the logistics of the celebration, along with many faithful of the parish and the city.

There were many diocesan and religious priests, among whom some seminary classmates of Father Borzaga, and a delegation of Oblates led by the Italian provincial, Father Marcello SGARBOSSA and the vicar provincial, Father Pino SORRENTINO. Also present was Oblate Bishop Alessandro STACCIOLI, a classmate and fellow missionary with Father Borzaga. Until 1975, he was the Vicar Apostolic of Louang Prabang, and now he is in charge of the Laotian diaspora throughout the world, some of whom celebrated with him the fiftieth anniversary of his priesthood the next day.

Other Oblates present were the General Postulator, Father Joaquín MARTINEZ; Father Nicola FERRARA, author of the historical biography; Father Fabio CIARDI, member of the Historical Commission for this Process and director of *Missioni OMI*, the Italian Oblates' magazine, along with Father Giuseppe CELLUCCI, editor of that magazine.

The ceremony took place during a Liturgy of the Word, accompanied by music from the parish choir, and it concluded with a spirited homily by the Archbishop, formerly Apostolic Nuncio for Thailand and Laos, who emphasized the poverty and the daring of that mission where the Oblates had poured out their sweat and blood.

Then the canonical procedure for the Opening of the Diocesan Phase of the Cause began.

Father Marcellino Sgarbossa, addressing himself to the Archbishop and those present, among other things said: *“With the passing of time, the interest, the admiration, and the inspiration of these two figures has been growing. The bishops of the Church in Laos, prevented from doing something because of the situation in which they live, urgently asked the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to help make these witnesses of the faith known and recognized. The competent authorities have listened to this request and we are here to enter, through this door, the process of discernment which the church requires to proclaim the sanctity of its*

children. I am certain that beyond the judgment of the church, familiarity with these witnesses will be for the glory of God, and will be beneficial for the Christian people, and especially those who live in Laos. We hope and pray for this, that the admiration which these young missionaries stirs up in youth will transform itself into the courage to imitate their example and to take their place in announcing the gospel.”

Then the Postulator of the Cause, Father Angelo Pelis, gave a brief but lively presentation on the biography of Father Borzaga and his catechist, Paul.

From this Cause for Canonization, a very special consequence emerges for the Archdiocese of Trent: it represents a solemn act of “missionary cooperation,” in as much as accepting the request of a sister Church in Laos, the Church in Trent, already very practiced in missionary spirit, has the opportunity to walk together with a younger sister Church, to know the reality of Christian life as present in other parts of the world, thus opening up all the more this local church to the mission of evangelization.

(Giuseppe Cellucci, OMI, Roma).

General Administration

ROME

Meeting of Committee of Oblate Brothers

In a letter to the capitulants at the 2004 General Chapter, the Oblate Brothers who were present wrote a letter to the capitulants asking for the “creation of a permanent committee of Brothers, representing the different regions and charged with the animation of the life and the mission of the Brothers.” (*Witnessing to Hope*, p. 47)

The first meeting of this new committee took place at the General House on October 16-20, 2006. Those appointed by the Central Government as committee members are Brothers Rex HARRISON (Africa-Madagascar), Edgar FRANCKEN (Latin America), Anton FERNANDOPULLE (Asia-Oceania), Charles GILBERT (Canada-United States) and Benoît DOSQUET (Europe). Other members of the committee are Brother Andrzej RUP (Poland) and Fa-

ther Frank SANTUCCI (Mazenod Centre, Aix).

Present at the meeting as resource personnel and to represent the Central Government were General Councillor Fr. Loudeger MAZILE and First Assistant General, Fr. Oswald FIRTH. Brother Rabindra RAJAPAKSE of the General House Community also took part.

The committee has proposed to the Superior General that there be a Central Secretariat for Brothers, located in Aix-en-Provence, with the Brother Representative for Europe serving as the Secretary for Brothers. His liaison on the Central Government would be Fr. Firth who presently holds the Mission Portfolio. As part of the proposal, each Regional Representative will act as the Regional Secretary for the Brothers in their respective Regions.

The role of the various Secretaries would be to animate the Brothers and provide communication within

the Region, educating the Regions and the Units about the identity of Brothers in today's world and providing them with up-to-date resources on the Brothers' vocation. He would also provide Vocation Directors and Formators with such resources.

The committee is also gathering information about the formation experiences of Brothers and will pass that information on to the General Formation Committee as they review the General Norms for Oblate Formation. The Brothers' Committee hopes to address the urgent need of ongoing formation and of growth programs to improve the Brothers' self-esteem in their vocation, their place, and their mission in the Congregation. They see the need of a common post-novitiate program for Brothers that would be applied in all Regions and Units of the Congregation. This common program would equip the Brothers with an appropriate and quality education that would provide them with the same level of confidence that their fellow Oblate priests experience upon completing their studies. One of the goals is that Brothers be ready for service in the mission of the Congregation and be capable of holding positions at all levels of service within the Oblate community.

The committee plans to meet again in Rome in late 2007.

GENERAL HOUSE

Cardinal George is grateful for Oblate prayers

Some two and a half months after major surgery to remove a cancerous bladder, Francis Cardinal GEORGE was well enough to travel to Rome to attend an October 15 canonization at St. Peter's Basilica, and then, in his role as Vice-President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, meet with Pope Benedict XVI and with various officers of the Roman Curia. On October 18, he also visited the Oblate General House to have supper with his brother Oblates and to thank them for their prayers of support during his recent illness.

Upon his release from the hospital some weeks ago, the Cardinal acknowledged that for several hours following the first surgery he believed he was dying - a thought that did not frighten him. "The important

thing when you die is to be ready to surrender your whole life to the Lord," he said. "When you've done that, when you've given the Lord your life, that brings a certain peace. After that, it's up to the Lord to take care of you, and he will." Referring to those who prayed for him, he said: "I knew I wasn't alone. I could sense that I was in people's prayers. I could also sense the presence of the Lord. The Lord was with me, and he brought his friends - and quite a few of my friends, too."

He voiced similar feelings during supper at the General House. He spoke of how difficult it is to pray when one is in great pain; thus he depended greatly on the prayers of others. He wrote in the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago that he was praying for the intercession of two great bishops: John Paul II and Eugène de Mazenod.

GENERAL HOUSE

The Missionary Musician

In July 2006, Brother Rabindra RAJAPAKSE, a member of the General House community from Sri Lanka (Colombo), celebrated twenty-five years in the Oblate Congregation. What has added colour to this memorable event is the release of a CD and cassette in which most of the lyrics and musical scores are compositions of Brother Rabindra. A significant feature in this collection of liturgical and devotional hymns is that the lyrics of one of the hymns has been composed by a Buddhist lady based on the 'Geethanjali', inspirational verses by the renowned poet and literary genius of Bengali origin, Rabindranath Tagore, that won him the Nobel prize for literature.

Music and poetry run in the veins of Brother Rabindra. From the time of his novitiate in Bandarawela, Sri Lanka, in 1981, and throughout his years as a mission preacher from 1991 to 1994, his ministry among the Buddhists at the Michael Rodrigo Encounter Centre at far flung Buttala from 1995 to 2001, followed by his six years service at the General House in Rome, Brother Rabi, as he is lovingly known among his confreres, has used his spare moments to compose religious chants with an oriental flavour. During the last Lenten season, Rabindra was featured on the Italian-Sinhala TV

channel with the chanting of 'Passan', a lengthy, melancholic chant which dramatizes the suffering of Jesus on Good Friday.

Brother Rabindra's religious musical medley consists of 14 hymns and two sets of chants for Eucharistic celebrations. Most of the hymns have a biblical base and the entire CD production has the approval of Sri Lanka's Catholic Liturgical Commission. Funds for the production were provided by the OMI Procure in Germany. The CD and cassette are available at the OMI General House in Rome. (rabindra@omigen.org)

GENERAL HOUSE

Fr. Joseph Labelle defends thesis on St. Eugene

At Rome's "Teresianum," the Pontifical Institute for

Spirituality, Fr. Joseph LABELLE successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on October 17 in the presence of the Superior General and about 25 of his fellow Oblates. The focus and title of his research was "Apostolic Life in the 1812-1826 Thought and Founding Charism of Eugene de Mazenod, OMI."

By tightly focusing his research on the earliest days of St. Eugene's priesthood and the founding of the Missionaries of Provence, the new Doctor of Theology was able to show various influences and trends in the Founder's spirituality as a priest, an apostle, and a missionary.

Upon his return to his United States Province, he will begin teaching courses in spiritual theology at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, in January, 2007.

Europe

France

Aix-en-Provence: Mission impossible?

On October 22, 2006, the mission in Aix-en-Provence began: the first one since Saint Eugène de Mazenod, in his native village and in the birthplace of our Congregation. Having been invited to take part, I went there, conscious of the importance of the event and a little curious as well.

On the 21st, I accompanied Fr. Vincent GRUBER as he went shopping. He is the one in charge of the mission and of the planning team made up of Fr. Maxime CHAIGNE, Brothers Dominique DESSOLIN and Benoît DOSQUET.

Saturday was market day; the streets were ablaze with color. Walking in the midst of the people, I wondered what good news we could bring them today. They seemed satisfied and maybe even happy. Further on, I even wondered if we still have some good news to tell them. The vibrant colors of the city seem to be in contrast with grey walls of our convent, undoubtedly reflecting the era of its construction. A radio station, broadcasting from a pavilion set up on the Cours Mirabeau, showed me that this world is well organized, almost technically per-

fect. I didn't have an answer.

In the afternoon, the Oblate team got together. Other Oblates joined them, arriving from Paris, from Lourdes, from Marseille. There were also two scholastics: Antonio from Spain and Aurelien from Chad. The theme prepared for the next three years, namely, to be born, to die, to arise, is like ray of light. We stand next to men and women of this world in all the important moments of their lives to speak about and tell them again about a different world that one cannot buy in a store and which no technology can give us.

On Sunday morning the 22nd, in a full cathedral, the mission began. The tone was set. The symbol of the mission is the poppy. This symbol was chosen by the Oblates because when a poppy dies, another always grows up in its place. The focus of Vincent's homily could not be the same as at the time of the Founder: the world is different. But with the help of a newspaper, Vincent showed that there is plenty of bad news out there, and that the world still needs hope, the hope of Jesus Christ.

Another great sign of hope were the many youth that came to the evening celebration and got together afterwards over a bowl of onion soup to show their

desire to take part in this adventure.

P.S. The mission will go on for three years. The plan is that at five different times of the year, it will touch different groups of people or different neighborhoods: the world of students in the fall; the “new neighborhoods” in December; groups of young professionals at the beginning of the year; Church organizations during Lent; and tourists and artists during the festival season.

(*Nino BUCCA, OMI*)

AUSTRIA-CZECH REPUBLIC

Who is it? Why, of course, it's Father Mathuni!

Whether it's in Vienna, Fatima, Cameroon, or even in India, everyone knows him: tall, thin, the Oblate cross into his cincture: you can't miss him. Who is it then? Father Joseph MATHUNI, an Oblate and the director of the MAMI of Austria for 50 years now.

Ever since he succeeded Father Siegfried HERTL in 1956, Father Mathuni has been in charge of the Missionary Works, with untiring dedication, in service of his confreres and their many requests, everywhere in the world, supported at this time by some 9500 benefactors and friends of the missions.

“Father Mathuni, can you help us build this church? Can you contribute to the formation of seminarians and catechists? Can you help take care of the street children? And now we need a new car to get to our distant stations. We need sewing machines for the women. And on and on.”

And so Father Mathuni does his math and pours over his books, often late into the night. He writes; he makes phone calls; and wonder of wonders, he pulls together the necessary money. “And now dear beneficiary, tell me exactly what the money will be used for; not one cent can be wasted!”

Sometimes the flow of water is weak; or the electricity is not working; or an old car won't run anymore; or the chapels in the forest have become too small for the number of faithful; or those who are sick with AIDS are dying on the streets. And

the letters come in from everywhere. Our brother missionaries who knew how to do everything are growing older, and little relief is found these days in Western Europe. The many benefactors from Europe and from America are very important for all that they donate.

“And now,” says Father Mathuni, “I'm going out to see where all this money has gone.” And at the age of 85, there he is, heading out onto all the highways of the world. Everywhere, he is welcomed with great joy and appreciation; the people are proud to show him their new chapels, their practical buildings, their schools and their workshops. When he comes back, his briefcase is again full of new needs and projects, but also with new hopes; and with God's help, the work goes on. (*Marianisches Missionswerk*)

GERMANY

Passing on the torch in Oberelchingen

On July 30, 2006, a festive celebration marked the departure of the Oblates from Oberelchingen after an 80 year presence. The provincial, Father Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, presided at the Eucharist. Msgr. Maier, Canon of the Cathedral of Augsburg and diocesan delegate for religious life, preached the homily. At the town hall, during the feast that followed, the Oblates were duly thanked. At the same time, the parishioners expressed their happiness because of the approaching arrival of Polish Oblates. Finally, in testimony of their great love for him, the people presented for the “Prussian,” Father Elmar THEISEN, the “Parade March,” a sort of Bavarian national anthem. It was a great celebration. One could also visit a small exhibit about the 80 years of the Oblate presence in Oberelchingen.

Here are some excerpts from the letter written by the Bishop of Augsburg, Dr. Walter Mixa:

Dear Father Provincial, I am greatly saddened by the fact that you have been obliged to close your Notre Dame residence at Oberelchingen on July 31, 2006. The diocese of Augsburg is grateful for the many years of fruitful labor, during which your Fathers spread out into the whole

area and well beyond these hills of Oberelchingen. The proverb that says, "When God closes a window, at the same time he opens a door," is accomplished at once. I very willingly grant you the authorization that you asked for, namely, to establish, as of September 1, 2006, an autonomous residence of the Polish Province of your Congregation. Once again, I thank you for all the trouble that you have taken to ensure the continuity of your Congregation in our diocese. May the passing of the torch have a successful outcome.

FRANCE

Father Albert Schneider: 65 years of priesthood is something to celebrate !

"You need the help of others in order to stand up straight and to grow." That was pretty much the recurring refrain in the remarks of Father Albert SCHNEIDER as he celebrated, on October 8th, the 65th jubilee of his priesthood and 73 years in vows.

The Oblate community of Lyon-Choulans welcomed his relatives, friends of the Oblates, and Oblates from the scholasticate and Sainte Foy communities, to give thanks, along with Albert Schneider, for his 65 years in service of the Church. With great emotion, he described his journey which he said "wasn't always the long, peaceful river that one might have imagined."

"I was lucky," he began, "because my family was deeply Christian. The graciousness and the Christian finesse of my mother affected me deeply. I was lucky also because I met a priest who drilled me in my study of the catechism. He prepared the terrain." Then Father Albert spoke of his novitiate, his scholasticate, his military service, and the war during which he was made a prisoner in June of 1940.

He was ordained a priest on July 6, 1941, at Notre Dame de Lumière, and a few days after his ordination, he celebrated the marriage of his sister. And then, the one who wanted to be a missionary, with "a heavy heart," and almost as if dragged there, left for Corsica where he became a professor at the minor seminary of Ajaccio!

When drafted into the military, he was "almost happy

to leave for the war" in order to get out of Corsica where he felt useless. As a military chaplain, he was sent to Algeria where he was close to the men whom the Lord had entrusted to him: "I knew almost all of them by their first name and family name," and there were almost 800 of them. It was on the back of tanks that he celebrated the Eucharist with and for his men. He adds that he was deeply marked by these wounded men whom he had pulled off the battlefield. Still today, 60 years later, he meets with some of these friends of his (the few remaining) for some days of camaraderie.

Upon his return from the war, he was asked to go back to Corsica. And it was again "with a heavy heart" that Father Schneider went back to the Island of Beauty. It was a difficult ordeal that he was able to sustain, thanks to prayer and the good advice of a brother Oblate. The deciding moment came in Vico, during a retreat: he would be a missionary in Corsica, like so many others, mindful that the Lord was calling him, choosing him, sending him and asking him to bear fruit that would last. This rediscovery of the text of St. John gave him deep peace and allowed him to give his very best. At the age of 32, he was named superior of the minor seminary at Ajaccio. Then they sent him to Rome to study psychology. Upon his return to Corsica, where he was greatly valued, he became Vicar General of the diocese, responsible for the formation of priests and in charge of the formation of catechists. He tells us how, a few years later, it was so difficult for him to leave Corsica, although he had once vowed never to go back there.

Sent to the community of Lyon-Trion to preach missions, he began by studying under Georges LAUDIN. He would go on to preach many retreats in Switzerland, in Savoy and in other places. He continued to be of service to his brothers: he became provincial, and then, after the General Chapter of 1972, he was elected General Councillor for Europe. It was during this experience that he became convinced that "by yourself, you can do nothing."

Like everybody else, he had some difficult moments, but what helped him to hold on was his absolute optimism, body and soul. "There is in every person

a bit of good earth. One needs to sow the seed and it will grow. The husk opens up and out comes the young shoot.”

Belief in humanity, belief in a God who is full of goodness, showing his faithfulness for all ages: that is the credo of Father Schneider, who adds, “One must always take the time to welcome people, no matter what their situation,” and he concludes, not without humor, “You know, to really know someone, you have to spend some time joking around with him.”

“I give thanks for all these wonderful people that I have met, for my family community, for my religious community. I am convinced that you need the help of others in order to stand up straight and to grow.”

ROMANIA

Missionary month 2006

Worldwide Mission Sunday on October 22 had as its theme “Charity, the soul of the mission.” The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, in his message for this Sunday, suggested that living and believing in the universal mission of the Church means starting at the source: “In fact, God’s love for every person constitutes the heart of the experience and proclamation of the Gospel, and those who welcome it in turn become its witnesses.” Consequently, every Christian who has received this gift is someone called to the mission.

The Oblates in Romania, in the diocese of Bucharest, developed some programs to study more deeply the ideas of the Holy Father and to make the Christians more aware of their duty to be missionaries.

Missionary Days in the parishes of the Bucharest diocese during the month of October were “a useful opportunity to understand ever better that the witness of love, the soul of the mission, concerns everyone. Indeed, serving the Gospel should not be considered a solitary adventure but a commitment to be shared by every community.” (Message of the Holy Father, 2006)

During this month, the Oblates addressed themselves to the children they visit in the Catholic nursery

schools to get them excited about the mission. They invited the help of the children by means of a very simple, practical and amusing approach, so that each one was encouraged to live the gift received in baptism.

Father Christian FINI came to Romania from Australia. In the three days of his sojourn, he preached in the parishes of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles in Bucharest and in Pitesti, sharing with those present the missionary experience that he lives in Australia. He is involved in Oblate youth ministry and is a member of the Central Committee preparing for World Youth Day in 2008. This gives him a good idea of religious reality in Australia which, in his homily, he described in these words: “In the center of Australia, not far from famous Ayers rock, there is a river called the Todd, which I have been able to cross without a bridge. The Todd is a dried-up river; nevertheless it never stops flowing, just below the surface. But when the rains arrive, they make the underground water level rise above the surface. The spirituality of young people is like this river: it exists, but it is hidden just below the surface. In Australia, we need missionaries that make God’s love rain down from above, so that the spirituality of others can flow into the open.”

POLAND

Meeting of European Treasurers

The treasurers of Europe held their annual meeting in Krakow from October 19-24, 2006.

After having studied the financial situation, they focused particularly on formation costs. The Units that have candidates to form often do not have money, while in others, there has been no one in formation for a long time. The treasurers therefore tackled the question and put together a project to be studied by the European Provincials’ Conference. They made some proposals for handling the rising costs of formation in a more cohesive manner. It seemed to them that this is part of our duty to support the Oblate Mission and promote its development.

Father Rufus WHITLEY, the General Treasurer, spoke of two already functioning programs whose goal is to create a solid financial structure for the whole Congregation. A third program is being pre-

pared; this should be an important step toward greater financial autonomy for newer Oblates units.

Father Luis Ignacio ROIS, General Councillor for Europe, explained how Oblate structures are being reorganized to correspond to reality. There has been the unification of three provinces in France; the creation of the Belgium-Netherlands province; the joining the former Polish vice-province of France-Benelux to Poland, as well as that of Scandinavia, which means that the province of Poland, which also has charge of Ukraine and Byelorussia, is the larg-

est Oblate province in Europe. Is the restructuring movement going to stop with the upcoming inauguration of what could become the Province of Central Europe, incorporating Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic?

A bit of free time gave them the opportunity to visit the old city of Krakow (majestic!), and to go to the former concentration camp of Auschwitz, which always leaves a deep impression. A visit to an ancient salt mine, now become a museum, completed the program. (P. Wolfgang BOEMER)

Latin America

PARAGUAY

Fifty years for a special church

Exactly fifty years after its consecration, the church of Saint Michael – former cathedral of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo – celebrated its anniversary: on September 29, 1956, it was consecrated in the presence of Bishop Walter VERVOORT, Bishop Ramón Bogarín, and the Nuncio, Bishop Luigi Punzolo.

Fifty years later, Father José SANDER, a witness to that event, was there to remember the intervening years. The present Bishop, Lucio ALFERT, presided at the Mass on the patron's feast, joined by a number of concelebrants: Oblates and the Vicar General of the Military Diocese, since the church is located in the military town of Mariscal Estigarribia. It was for that reason that since the year 2000 Jubilee, there is a new cathedral, Saint Mary's, in the civilian part of the city.

Nevertheless, not only soldiers, but also many others have much affection for this church, especially because in it is located the tomb of the beloved "Pa'í Puku", Bishop Pedro SHAW, the previous bishop.

In his homily, Bishop Lucio compared the tower of the church to an index finger, trying to remind us of something. Furthermore, he spoke about the heroes – not only of the war (the Chaco war which is always remembered on this date), but also of the many who have spent their best energies to serve the Lord of history.

PARAGUAY

Youth reflect on Saint Eugene

Youth get-togethers are a tradition in the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo. So too are youth congresses among the Oblates. This year, someone had the idea of combining both events and saving some energy.

From August 17th till the 19th, some 300 youth came together in the city of Mariscal Estigarribia. Half of them were from the Apostolic Vicariate and the rest from the east.

It was a fraternal and joyful gathering, under the leadership of Father Javier BAREIRO and the youth ministry team from the Vicariate, along with teams from the province. There were times for personal witnessing, celebration, and spirituality. The topic for reflection was primarily the life of Saint Eugene and what he has to teach the youth of today. The feeling among all the participants, including a good number of priests, especially Oblates, was that the experiment was worthwhile.

Preaching missions at home, mission to youth, and sending missionaries abroad have been traditionally central to our mission. (Rule 7b)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Texas youth gather at Oblate shrine in San Antonio

The last Saturday of October provided a beautiful sunny and warm welcome to 300 secondary school youth and adult supervisors to the Oblates' Lourdes Grotto/Tepeyac Shrine in San Antonio, Texas. With the exception of twenty-five participants from a local diocesan parish, the rest of the students came from Oblate parishes throughout Texas. Coordinating the day's activities were Fr. Gerard WEBER, Director of Ministries at the grotto, and Fr. Raul SALAS, Youth Ministry Coordinator of the United States Province. The day's theme was "Recapturing the Basics of Catholicism."

Scholastic Brother Bart ZAVALETTA served as Master of Ceremonies. Scholastic Brothers Ricardo LOPEZ and Porfirio GARCIA planned the liturgy. The Young Oblate Associates from Saint Anthony's High School were in charge of registration. Fr. Leo PEREZ is chaplain at the school. Throughout the day, music was provided by the youth group of San Juan de los Lagos Parish, San Antonio, where Fr. Arturo FLORES is pastor.

Titles of talks presented during the day were: "The ABC's of Liturgy and Prayer," "Sacraments – Who Needs Them?" "Was It 10, 11 or 12 Commandments?" "The Church: What/Who is it?" and "Vocations – The Road Less Traveled."

An end-of-the-day evaluation of the event indicated a resounding appeal for a "repeat performance" in the near future. Sharing the Christian faith and experiencing some of the richness of a Catholic identity left a positive impact on the young participants.

Bishop Michael PFEIFER, of the Diocese of San Angelo, presided and preached at the closing concelebrated Eucharist. During the liturgy, vocation director Fr. Charles BANKS called forth and presented to the assembly seven young participants who are discerning a vocation to the Oblates. Bishop Pfeifer blessed and presented to the young men medals crafted at the time of St. Eugene's canonization.

UNITED STATES

Newly canonized bishop had preached in an Oblate parish

Saint Rafael Guizar y Valencia, was canonized in Rome on Oct. 15 by Pope Benedict XVI. This new saint from the Church in Mexico served as bishop of Xalapa, Veracruz. Ministering at a time in 19th century history when Mexican politics persecuted the Church, Bishop Guizar y Valencia championed the needs of the poor. Despite to powers of anti-clericalism, he continued to preach the Gospel of Jesus with extraordinary zeal and simplicity.

For a time, the bishop lived in exile in San Antonio, TX. In October 1927, at the invitation of Fr. Gerard MONGEAU, pastor of Austin's oldest Spanish speaking parish, Oblate-staffed Our Lady of Guadalupe, he conducted a parish mission. The December 1927 issue of *Mary Immaculate* (published by Oblate Missions of Texas) reported an account of the bishop's presence: "The fact of having a Prelate of the Church to give a mission was already a favor, but that of having a holy and self-sacrificing man like the bishop of Vera Cruz was a blessing the like of which few will ever receive again in their lives. Never was there in Austin such religious enthusiasm as that aroused by this illustrious Missionary bishop who won the confidence of all: of rich and poor, men and women, and in a special manner of the little ones of the flock of Christ."

In time, Bishop Guizar y Valencia returned to Mexico. During his final years of life, he suffered a number of chronic illnesses. Following his death in 1938, he was buried in a cemetery in the city where he had served as Ordinary. Twelve years later, when his body was exhumed in order to move it to a chapel in the local cathedral, it was found intact. It continues to remain so to this day. (Fr. Charles BANKS in *OMIUSA*, November 2006)



Africa-Madagascar

ZIMBABWE

Death of the mission's founder, Father Robert de Sylva

In April 1983, Fr. Robert DE SYLVA arrived in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, from the Oblate province of Natal, to launch a new Oblate mission in that country. These were difficult times that saw the bloody oppression of the Mandebele people (1983-85). Undaunted by the civil unrest going on around him, he moved forward as first superior of the Oblate community there; he was joined by Frs. Paul HORROCKS and Augustine MAKHOKOLO.

Under his leadership the Oblates rooted themselves in Zimbabwe by setting up a formation house under the direction of the late Fr. Hugh DALTON. According to the most recent update of the Oblate Personnel, the Zimbabwe mission now has seven Oblate priests and 14 scholastics.

Bob served as superior of the mission until 1990, and as parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Khumalo, until 1999. He was active in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo, and is remembered especially as the chief organiser of the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1988.

Advancing Alzheimer's disease forced him to leave the mission in 2000 and retire to the home province of Natal. He died at Nazareth House in Durban on September 19, 2006.

Born in 1924, Bob received his Oblate formation in South Africa and in Rome. After ordination in 1949, before going to Zimbabwe, he worked as a preacher, a formator, and an educator.

CONGO

New rector at the Saint Eugene de Mazenod Institute

The new school year opened at the Saint Eugene de Mazenod Institute in Kinshasa on October 7, 2006, with a Mass of the Holy Spirit, and classes began on the following Monday, October 9.

The Saint Eugene de Mazenod Institute was founded by the Oblates in 1982. It offers a four-year cycle

of theology courses, and is an affiliate of the Urbaniana University in Rome. Since 2004, it is also the home of the African Institute of Missiology. With doctrinal formation courses, the Institute also offers a curriculum that help religious men and women and laypersons who wish to deepen their knowledge of God, the Bible and at the teachings of the Magisterium.

This year, the institute has enrolled 293 students, among whom are four laypersons and one diocesan priest. The rest of the students come from 38 religious congregations of men and women, working in Congo. Among the 67 members of the faculty, there are only nine Oblate professors. The Institute also has a new rector, Father Baudouin MUBESALA, and a new Administrative Secretary, Father Clément FIYUNGU

Given the internationality of the students and the faculty, Saint Eugene de Mazenod Institute and the African Institute of Missiology would be happy to have other Oblate professors who wish to contribute to the formation of young religious and future missionaries.

LESOTHO

Oblate Brother is killed by robbers

At the General House in Rome, the death of any Oblate is announced on the bulletin board and the community prays together for his eternal repose. But when the announcement of a death comes wrapped in the cloak of violence, the loss of a fellow Oblate is even more difficult to bear:

On October 24, the provincial of Lesotho, Fr. Emile MOTEAPHALA, wrote these words to the Superior General: *I regret to inform you of the death of Brother Peter Mabilikoe MAHAO, OMI, who was shot-dead by armed-robbers, in his room, at Mazenod Monastery; today, Tuesday, 24th October 2006, at about 1.30 am; aged 82.*

Other community members who escaped with injuries during the armed robbery attempt were Brothers Emmanuel Thabiso SEPHAMOLA (43) and Bernard Mosoeu SETSOMI (42). As of October 26, they were still recuperating at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Maseru, where they had been hospital-

ized with multiple bullet-wounds. Their situation was still critical. On October 25, Brother Setsomi had to undergo an emergency operation to remove a bullet that was still lodged somewhere in the region of the intestines. It was causing him a lot of pain and a great deal of digestive system complications. The operation seems to have gone well. The police investigations are underway, but so far nobody has been arrested.

The late Brother Mahao was very talented, especially in carpentry. The well-known small and medium-size crucifixes that have been sold at Mazenod book centers throughout the country over the years are the products of his hands.

ZAMBIA

Encouraging the participation of youth

There is nothing more fulfilling for a young person than to have a sense of belonging in any situation. A sense of belonging comes in many ways, including active participation in a specific task or role. It also includes being accepted as a worthwhile human being and being respected by all, young and old.

The Oblates' Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka has taken the challenge of providing this kind of environment for youth by finding ways of involving them, particularly in parish activities. From the time the parish opened in 2004, the young people have been enthusiastically participating in parish activities, such as the construction of the parish center which will

have, among other things, a hall, meeting rooms and a youth center. As much as eighty per cent of the foundation of the building under construction was built by the youth.

Also, the youth have been named to roles of leadership to ensure that they do not feel left out. Three youths serve on the Parish council and one is the director for catechism. Some are also lectors at Mass.

Fr. Ron WALKER, the pastor at Mary Immaculate Parish, states that there are several programs to ensure that the youth feel part of the parish: "We have had a number of retreats and workshops and we have had evenings of prayer vigils at the formation house with the youth." He continued, "We also have two vocation clubs and the turnout has been excellent on the part of the youth. Almost everyone wants to be a priest! Besides this, there is a youth choir which performs during the 08.00 hours Mass every Sunday whilst the 10.00 hours choir is a mixture of youths and adults."

As a way of familiarizing the Mary Immaculate Parish youth with other parishes located in the remotest areas of the country, the parish organized a youth tour to Lukulu in Western Province for 14 youngsters. The youths financed themselves during this trip to Lukulu.

About 700 people attend Mass every Sunday at Mary Immaculate Parish. One third of the total crowd are the youth.

Asia-Oceania

PAKISTAN

A Parish Mission in Loralai

In Loralai, Balochistan, on the outer edge of the Afghanistan border, seven scholastic Brothers were sent for a parish mission experience during two weeks in July. Father Bernardus RUKMONO accompanied them and Father Renald REMINDRAN directed them, as the parish priest of Holy Rosary Parish in Quetta and responsible for Loralai and its substations. The mission was important since Loralai has been without a resident priest for three years and it had not been visited by a priest or Brother in

eight months. In the meantime, it has relied upon the services of catechists. The scholastics were well prepared to bring a powerful presence to the area, since they are students in third and fourth year theology, with some experience in preaching and home visiting.

In the first week, Father Rukmono and the Brothers reached out to Loralai and to five substations, some 80 to 150 kilometers away. Loralai has about 75 Catholic families while the substations have as few as three or five. The second week was given entirely to the city of Zhob that is 300 kilometers fur-

ther and counts 110 Catholic families. The people were quite amazed to have a priest and seven Brothers among them. Soon upon the arrival of the young Oblates, they spread out to the homes of the Catholic people, accompanied by catechists and volunteers. In the evenings, peoples were invited to *cottage Masses* that gathered three or four families in one home. Then everyone was invited to come for the Sunday Mass, in Loralai the first week, and then in Zhob, the second. The Brothers were enriched by the experience that gave them a taste of missionary life. In a special way they appreciated the hospitality of the people who fed them every day and who displayed great trust and faith in their spiritual leaders.

KOREA

Taking care of homeless youth

Recently the city government of Seoung Nam officially approved the program of Anna House for teenagers living on the streets. Actually this program began gradually in 1998, when some homeless adults who came to our center to have dinner brought with them some difficult youth who were living on the streets.

At the beginning, we prepared an educational program for these young people who are abandoned by their families, had dropped out of school, and were marginalized by society. After a few years, with the help of the parish and a lot of volunteers, we also started a shelter.

Now our program has a clear identity and is carried out in three different houses: Benedict's House, Anna's House Group Home and Eugenio's House.

1. *Benedict's House* is a shelter where runaway teenagers can find emergency assistance. They can stay in the shelter for six months. In that time, with the help of professional people, they receive counseling and education. In dialogue with the client and his family, when it is possible, we try to incorporate him once again into his own family.

2. If, for some reason, it is not possible to return him to his own home and he wants to continue to go to school, we offer him the possibility to stay in *Anna's House Group Home*. Here, while he continues to study, we offer him a family context where he can grow up as a

healthy person, integrated into society.

3. The third level of our program is done in *Eugenio's House*. Here those who can't follow the normal curriculum of studies have the opportunity to start to work, under the supervision of specialized persons, and enter into society in a healthy way. All those who complete this program and start their own life can enter our mentoring program where an adult follows up these boys and offers them the opportunity to have a reference point in their new life. (Vincenzo BORDO)

INDIA

Parents of scholastics see themselves as formators

Parents' Day at the Oblate scholasticate in Poonamallee, India, is an occasion not only for parents and sons to visit with one another, but also for the Oblates to get to know the families from which the scholastics come. On the August 15th Parents' Day, Fr. Cyril JOSEPH welcomed the visitors and invited them to introduce themselves to the whole community. The Superior, Fr. Anthony JEEVARATNAM, spoke about the history of the Oblates and the Oblate charism. He pointed out that priestly life is not power-oriented but a call to service. During the celebration of Mass, the Delegation Superior, Fr. Pathinathan MISSION commented on the parents' role in the faith formation of the future Oblates.

In the afternoon, the parents met in small groups to discuss several questions they had received. They later shared their answers:

1. What do you expect of your son as he lives his Oblate life?

To live an exemplary life; to have love for the poor; to possess the ability to relate and sacrifice; to be noble and generous with a simple heart; to be a role model; to be committed; to have a sense of solidarity; to reach out to the people; to persevere in their Vows and Religious commitments.

2. How do you support your son in formation and also in ongoing formation?

We pray for his vocation; we help him to grow in faith; we make him practice the spiritual activities whenever he comes home; we encourage him to have the sense of serving others; we never expect money from him; we pray for the well being of priests; we support him in time of trials.

3. How do you prepare your son in order to face problems courageously?

We help him to depend fully on prayer; we encour-

age him to have self-confidence and to be obedient to his promises. We encourage him to be always ready to work for the welfare of the people and to bear witness to Gospel values in order to establish the Kingdom of God.

Furthermore, the parents advised the Oblates not to discriminate people in the name of caste, religion, language, or position. They also suggested that there be a similar Parents' Day every year at the scholasticate.

BOOKS

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(Assumption Province) *A Half Century – Pól Wieku: 1956-2006*. Missionary Oblates, Assumption Province, Canada, 2006, 182 pp.

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Anniversaries -- January 2007

50 years of religious life

1957.01.06 10413 Fr. Simon Ponzane

Lesotho

1957.01.06 10821 Bro. Paul Ramalumane

Lesotho

25 years of religious life

1982.01.26 12822 Bro. Rex Harrison

Central S. A.

1982.01.26 12653 Fr. Nhlanhla Daniel Nkosi

Natal

25 years of priesthood

1982.01.03 12462 Fr. Gerard Lerotholi

Lesotho

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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 80-84

NAME	PROVINCE	BIRTH	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Léopold Lanctôt	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	30/05/1911	Richelieu	21/10/2006
Bro. Peterosi Mahao	Lesotho	15/05/1924	Mazenod	24/10/2006
Fr. Charles François	France	10/06/1919	Strasbourg	26/10/2006
Fr. Francis Price	OMI Lacombe	09/01/1922	St. Albert	10/11/2006
Fr. Johannes Lahrenberg	Germany	09/03/1920	Kronach	11/11/2006

“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)