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Indonesia: Interreligious Dialogue Symposium

Oblate representatives from various countries in the Asia-Oceania region gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for a 3-day Interreligious Dialogue Symposium on Islam, March 3-6, 2007. The symposium was a follow-up of the mandate of the 34th General Chapter 2004, *“That the General Council and Oblate units explore, facilitate, and support the existence and establishment of communities and support groups of Oblates whose focus will be inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, particularly in Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist milieus, and among autochthonous people.”* (WH 6).

The gathering was organized by the Asia/Oceania Interreligious Dialogue Committee headed by Fr. Andri ATMAKA, the Provincial of Indonesia, with Fr. Sowriappan LOORTHUSAMY (India) and Fr. Roberto LAYSON (Philippines) as members. Fr. Oswald FIRTH, Assistant General and portfolio holder of Mission and Ministries and Fr. Federico LABAGLAY, General Councillor from the Asia-Oceania region, were present and were collaborators in organizing this symposium.

Twenty-six Oblates participated in the event. Most of them were from the AO region, but three representatives from the Africa-Madagascar region also attended. The Symposium brought together Oblates who minister in 15 countries. As far as country of origin is concerned, 11 countries were represented.

The first and major part of the Symposium included presentations by four Muslim speakers and by two Catholic Priests on different aspects of Indonesian Muslim society. All were very informative as complementary parts of a complex jigsaw puzzle. “Most captivating for me”, noted Garth MICHELSON (Natal), “was the input by Mrs Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin

on the role and position of women in the Indonesian Muslim Society in which she promoted vigorously a Muslim form of contemporary gender equality in the family and wider society.”

Each contribution was followed by questions and discussion. Time was also allotted for some Oblates to share their varying experiences in ministry among Muslims, some of which were hopeful, some extremely demanding and exhausting.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world and is known as a tolerant society. The rise of extremist Islam in the country, however, is threatening the peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship of Muslims and Christians.

Oblates from Natal, Senegal, Sahara, Indonesia and Philippines also shared their experiences, pointing out the difficulties as well as the successes in their dialogue with other religions, especially Islam. It is clear that for Oblates working in this part of the region, particularly in the Islam contexts, interreligious Dialogue is no longer a choice. It is an imperative. In February of this year, Pope Benedict XVI said that “interreligious and intercultural dialogue is no longer an option but a vital necessity for our time.” Hans Kung said, “To be religious nowadays is to be interreligious.”

One day of the symposium was spent visiting and interacting with Muslims in an Islamic boarding school or Muslim seminary. Then there followed a visit to a Buddhist monastery, hosted by a friendly, elderly, frank, and down-to-earth monk. He explained small their witness is within the overwhelmingly Muslim society, some 86% of Indonesia’s population.

From there, the group went to the famous Borobudur Buddhist temple, eight storeys high and built of lava rock from a 9th century volcanic eruption and completed in its final form at the end of the last century. The climb to the top was breathtaking, literally, with some of the Oblates' deciding, half way up, to wait for the rest to return down.

During group discussions on the final day, as a possible action plan, the participants drew up some principles, identified key areas of concern and formulated approaches and strategies on how to engage in dialogue. In a follow-up meeting, the AO-IRD Committee planned to accomplish two im-

portant events in the next two years.

The first item will be an Assembly of all the Oblates of the Indonesian Province to talk about inter-religious dialogue. The outcome of the assembly will, it is hoped, synergize the Province to make interreligious/cultural dialogue an integral part of their mission.

The second item will be a gathering in the Asia-Oceania region sometime next year in Thailand. This meeting will focus on ministry with Indigenous Peoples, with special attention to the Hmong. (Information for this article from Garth Michelson and Roberto Layson)

General Administration

Postulation Committee meets for the first time

After having been established by Father General and his Council, the General Postulation Committee met for the first time on March 16 to see how to advance the Oblate Causes. Members of the committee are Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, General Postulator; Paolo ARCHIATI as link with the General Council; and three other members: Nicola FERRA, Yvon BEAUDOIN, and Angelo PELIS. After a brief prayer, the members discussed the following agenda:

Saint Eugene de Mazenod: The discussion centered on how to proceed with the Congregation of Divine Worship so that he might be inscribed in the Universal Calendar on May 21, under the category of Optional Memorial, for the whole Church. It would be important to invite the bishops, beginning with Oblate bishops, and then those in whose dioceses we Oblates work, asking them to send letters of petition to this Vatican office. The provincials will also need to be involved.

The Oblates already beatified: Joseph GÉRARD and Joseph CEBULA. As for the former, it was being rumored that the Oblates of Lesotho were satisfied with beatification. However, Fr. Emile MOTEAPHALA, the provincial, in his recent visit to Rome, categorically denied that and assured us that Fr. Emile TSASANE, vice-postulator, is spreading the devotion, aided by a young Oblate. As for

Blessed Joseph Cebula, it seems that the Polish Oblates are very interested in achieving his canonization, but, since he was beatified with a group, it would be difficult to have him canonized separately.

Victor LELIÈVRE: Yves Beaudoin has already delivered the *Positio* to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. It is number 300 on the waiting list. It could move up significantly, all the way to number 70, if the presumed miracle, currently being studied, is real.

Mario BORZAGA and his catechist Paul Thoj Xyooj: Angelo Pelis, his postulator, assures us that the cause is proceeding very well. The diocesan phase in Trent is almost finished. The tribunal needs to go first of all to France to facilitate the testimony of the eye-witness Laotians living there.

The Oblate Martyrs of Spain: Joaquín Martínez told of the situation in Rome. Given the huge number of presumed Spanish martyrs, they want to beatify a large group of those whose *Positio* had been delivered in Rome before 2001. That of the Oblates came in 2003. So they are waiting at the door, so to speak. We plan to try to see if they can be included in the prior group, but that does not seem very probable.

Charles Dominique ALBINI: Nicola Ferrara reports that after a long silence, he is beginning to hear something about it. Recently, there has been talk of a presumed miracle which, if it were accepted as

valid, would give a green light for the beatification. In May, Frs. Ferrara and Martínez will go to Corsica for the celebration of his “birthday into heaven,” May 20, and to foster the knowledge and devotion to the Apostle of the Island.

Martyrs of Laos: This Cause includes not only 6 Oblates, but also a diocesan priest, some missionaries from the Foreign Missions of Paris, and five lay catechists. The postulator, Roland JACQUES, is working at his usual speed and has already put together 180 pages of biographies. The bishops of Laos are very interested in this Cause.

Promotion of other Oblate Causes: Vita GRANDIN, Ovid CHARLEBOIS and Anton KOWALCZIK. There are obstacles foreign to the Causes in themselves, such as the present relationship of the Oblates with the First Nation peoples of Canada. But the biggest problem is finding those willing to spread the devotion and the reputation of

sanctity of these Servants of God.

Anthology of Oblate sanctity: It has been suggested that we publish a book that pulls together the biographies of our “saints” and other outstanding Oblates, instead of publishing separate booklets.

Masses celebrated for the Oblate Causes: In the past, this plan worked well and was helpful. Now it is less so because there are fewer stipends offered by the faithful. It would be good to find a way to gather Mass intentions for one Cause or the other.

There was also a discussion about the Postulation Museum: how to make it more interesting and how to encourage guests at the General House to visit it. Also, Oblates in general might be interested to know that there is material available at the Postulation (pictures, posters, brochures, and books). Most of it is free for the asking.

Africa-Madagascar

NATAL

An important anniversary of First Evangelization

This year the Catholic Church in Southern Africa will celebrate an extraordinary event. It is something that has immense significance in the history of mission. It is the commemoration of the first Catholic evangelisation of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa in their own social context.

St Michael’s mission is the oldest mission in the diocese of Mariannhill. This year it will celebrate its 150th anniversary. St Michael’s predates the diocese itself and indeed the arrival in South Africa of the Trappist monks under Abbot Francis Pfanner to whom it was confided in 1890, 117 years ago. St Michael’s was the third foundation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Vicariate of Natal. The first and mother house was in Pietermaritzburg (St. Mary’s, 1852). It was the original seat of the Vicar Apostolic. The second was in Durban (St. Joseph’s, 1852). The third was at St Michael’s.

The Catholic Historian, Joy Brain, reports that the

mission was “officially opened on September 2, 1855 in a Zulu hut which had been decorated and arranged to resemble a chapel. About a hundred Zulus were present.” (*Catholic Beginnings in Natal and Beyond* p. 50). This site was closed in 1856 after a tribal dispute. Father (now Blessed) Joseph GERARD and Father Victor BOMPART returned to re-establish the mission in February 1858 once they had obtained a mission site. The chapel was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Jean ALLARD at the current site on 17 July 1859.

The Oblates continued to labour there until 1863 with little sign of success for all their efforts. As a result, the site was retained but the mission was left without clergy in order to divert scarce personnel to Lesotho. In 1861, King Moshoeshoe of the Basotho requested Catholic missionaries in his territory and, faced with limited resources, the bishop and Father Gerard went there themselves. And in 1863 the fourth foundation, Motse-oa-‘M’a-Jesu, was opened, also amongst indigenous Africans.

In 1882 Bishop Charles JOLIVET sent Father Alexandre BAUDRY and Father Louis MATHIEU

to re-establish an Oblate presence at St Michael's. The mission became increasingly stable during the 1880s. The last Oblate sent there was Father GOURLEY in 1890. He reported that the "mission school was now well attended" (Brain, *Catholics in Natal II* p. 110). In the same year Bishop Jolivet began to negotiate with Abbot Pfanner to take over the mission and an agreement was signed at the end of November of that year.

The significance of St Michael's mission goes far beyond its present borders of parish, diocese and even country. It was the first attempt in Southern Africa to evangelize the indigenous African population in their own context. Before St Michael's, those indigenous Africans who became Catholics were assimilated into the churches of the settlers. Now for the first time a Catholic mission station was set up in a rural context of indigenous Black Africans.

The Vicariate of Natal covered a huge territory. That territory now comprises 42 separate dioceses: All four diocese of Lesotho; 23 of the 29 dioceses of South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland; and through the 'mission "*Sui Iuris*" of Zambese' erected in 1879 in territory taken from the Vicariate, all eight dioceses of Zimbabwe and all seven dioceses of Zambia. St Michael's was thus first foundation amongst indigenous Africans in a vicariate covering all of these territories.

The vastness of the challenge places into perspective the great grace that was the arrival of the Trappists in Natal. There is no doubt that the consolidation and establishment of St Michael's is rooted in the decision of the Trappists to accept the mission in 1890. From then onwards the mission had sufficient human resources to grow and eventually develop into a powerful centre of Catholic life. They and their successors, the Mariannahill missionaries and their co-workers, the Precious Blood sisters, were the ones the Lord chose to provide the missionary activity required to make St Michael's what it is today.

St Michael's will formally celebrate 150 years of history in 2007. It is an extraordinary celebration for the life of the Church in Southern Africa. It can claim as one of its founders Blessed Joseph Gerard, who went there as a 24 year old priest to attempt mission amongst indigenous Africans for the first time. He surely learnt from the mistakes

made there to be a better missionary.

The history of St Michael's is important precisely because it has born fruit through perseverance. It is a stunning testament to the heroism of the early missionaries in this part of the Lord's vineyard. They persevered because they trusted that fruits will come in the Lords time and not their own. Blessed Joseph Gerard wrote to the Oblate founder in the following words about his mission to the Zulus: "the Protestants called our coming here a great folly, to what they called a real 'hole', but the folly of the cross is the wisdom of God" (letter to St. Eugene de Mazenod, April 1861).

The late Father Jerome SKHAKHANE, in his doctoral thesis, makes the following comment: "One could say that the missionaries did what appeared to them the best thing to do. In this they initiated the inevitable challenge of Christianity to Zulu customs and traditional beliefs. As they left Natal for Lesotho, they hardly realised what they had done, because they judged the success of their mission merely on the number of converts, and they had gained none at all. Such judgement, however, fails to take into consideration the overall Christian evangelization and response. Surely the history of the Zulu since the so-journ of the missionaries was never to be the same again. The missionaries left the mission, but they left the Zulu with an interrogation mark." (Stuart C. BATE)

ZAMBIA

Ministering to the dying

When Fr. David KALERT finished his sabbatical, after serving as the first provincial of the United States Province, he agreed to go to the Oblate Delegation of Zambia for a year in order to lend a hand on the prenovitiate formation team. Little did he realize that his stay would be extended by six months and that he would become the interim-administrator of Our Lady's Hospice in Lusaka, for victims of HIV/AIDS. The hospice's board of directors is, in the meantime, searching for a permanent administrator so that David can return to his new assignment at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

Our Lady's Hospice was established as a charitable organization sponsored by the Oblates, the Dominican Missionary Sisters, the Franciscan Mis-

sionaries of the Divine Motherhood and the St. Patrick's Missionary Society. The chairman of the board of directors is Fr. Joseph PHIRI, Superior of the Delegation.

According to Fr. Cyril KEBA, "some of the members of the staff do not receive a regular salary; they all receive some incentives and allowances, as it is a benevolent ministry through which people want to perpetuate the compassion of Christ."

Many victims of HIV/AIDS do not even have place to live. They have been rejected by their families, often because the families are poor and do not know how to take care of a patient who has special needs.

Our Lady's Hospice has become a place where these abandoned sick can go. Besides offering specialized medical attention to the patients, the hospice offers comfort in the face of the loneliness and despair that can hinder any good effect that medication might bring.

The Oblates also provide the "ministry of presence" with weekly visits from the Prenovices. These young candidates, besides sharing the Word of God with the patients, take time to listen to them. They speak with them and tell them the news of the country and the world. They try to give the patients some confidence and an interest in living.

Latin America

BOLIVIA

Palm Sunday in prison

"Lord, I am ready to go with you, even to prison and to death." These are words that Simon Peter spoke after Jesus had announced that He was going to be arrested and put to death. This same Peter would, a little later, declare that he did not even know Him. Usually, we interpret this passage as Peter's denial that he knew Jesus, but maybe it was really the first time that Peter was speaking the truth. Indeed, he did not really know Him. Jesus would surprise him even further. The God of Revelation surpassed the expectations of His good disciple who would have to follow Him, even beyond death itself.

Today in Bolivia, Jesus continues surprising us by giving us new experiences. In a beautiful ceremony on Palm Sunday, 350 prisoners at Abra, the maximum security prison of Cochabamba, were escorted by their guards and animated by a pastoral team composed of two Sisters of St. Joseph of Tréveris, two Jesuits, two Augustinians, and two Oblates from the Bolper International Scholasticate.

The celebration brought together the entire prison community. We mingled with both Catholic and evangelical brethren. The donkey that was supposed to join us never arrived: they said that the donkeys had a lot of work to do on that day;

nevertheless, nothing could prevent our joyful gathering to reenact the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. We began the procession with an evangelical song praising God; we concluded with a Catholic hymn. Everyone had practiced both songs so that our differences would not be evident. Later on, we divided into two groups; some went to the evangelical chapel and we Catholics began Mass in our own chapel. Family members who were visiting their loved ones joined in the celebration.

"Lord, I am ready to go with you, even to prison and to death." Often, prison is a place where people lose their identity; they become "nothing" in the eyes of others. As in death, in prison one becomes a "non-being." Nevertheless, Paul reminded us on that same Sunday that Jesus lowered Himself to the point of becoming a "nothing," so that God could raise Him up and exalt His Name above every other name, and in His name, he would raise up all of humanity. That is what we learned from this experience: by following Him, we can succeed in raising others up from the situation where they find themselves: marginal, oppressed, forgotten, and enslaved. We want to help them first of all to be human beings with all the dignity that implies, so that we can then help them live as Christian believers and become the saints that God has called them to be. (Darwin BARRAZA y Alberto HUAMÁN)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Oblate addresses diocesan Vicars for Religious

Oblate Fr. Frank MORRISEY (N.D. du Cap Province), was a principal speaker at the March 14-18 National Conference of Vicars for Religious at Menlo Park in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Also attending the meeting, as representative of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life was Fr. Henry LEMONCELLI, originally from the U.S. Province, but now living at the General House in Rome.

Even though the average age of religious-order priests, sisters and brothers serving in the United States is increasing and their numbers are declining, don't conclude religious communities are dying out, Fr. Morrissey advised the group, instead, to think of consecrated life as an "ongoing history" being written by the Holy Spirit. He added that the divine author's last chapter is "yet to come."

A professor of canon law at St. Paul University in Ottawa, Fr. Morrissey presented an overview of the history of religious life — with a view to the future — in a series of talks during the 40th annual assembly of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious. Vicars for religious serve as the liaison between their bishops and those in consecrated life in their dioceses. More than 50 vicars came from across the country to the meeting, with the theme "Seasons of Hope: Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present, Claiming the Future." (Catholic News Service)

OMI LACOMBE

Archives open for research on aboriginal culture

The Oblates in Western Canada are opening their archives to scholars who wish to do research into the culture of the aboriginal peoples with whom the missionaries ministered as early as the 1840's. The research is part of a project designed to help aboriginal scholars rediscover the roots of their culture. The federal government of Canada is funding the five-year project which will involve the universities of Winnipeg and St. Paul in Ottawa, as well as the Maskwachees Cultural College in Edmonton.

Since the Oblates have a long history in Western Canada and were instrumental in making a record of various aspects of the aboriginal culture, documents written by Oblates have particular value. Some are books and journals written by Oblate priests between 1840 and 1970.

There are also Cree dictionaries, grammars, hymnals, prayer books and manuscripts, all written by priests who served throughout the western Prairies and the North. These documents can greatly help scholars who are investigating the roots of the aboriginal languages and cultures. Following the express desire of their Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, the early Oblate missionaries took great pains to learn the language of the peoples whom they served and to make available resources on those languages, both for future missionaries and for the people themselves.

Obviously, the research will very likely unearth some of the reasons for the bitterness that many of the First Nation people feel about the government-funded residential schools, some of which the Oblates managed. These schools were supposed to prepare native children for life in white society. Often, however, this was at the cost of belittling their language and culture. This and other forms of abuse led to thousands of lawsuits against the government, various churches and several religious communities, including the Oblates, over the past decade. Only last year was a settlement of these costly lawsuits reached.

The opening of the archives is, in the words of Canadian Oblate, Camille PICHÉ, "...a valid exercise and has the potential to be an interesting research/dialogue. An opportunity also for truth to emerge and for healing—if we are humble. An excellent Good Friday experience."

UNITED STATES

Oblate takes Catholic view to lawmakers

Among some people, the name "lobbyist" is not always considered a flattering term. Perhaps Fr. Andrew SMALL (Anglo-Irish Province) would not even want to be considered a lobbyist. But as In-

ternational Economic Development Policy Advisor to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Oblate priest does many of the things that lobbyists do. In Andrew's case, his main work is to advance among lawmakers the Catholic Church's goal of reducing poverty in the developing world.

Thanks in part to the thousands of messages delivered by concerned Catholics and others to U.S. lawmakers last year, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed important trade legislation for Haiti, known as the HOPE Act, just before the 109th Congress adjourned in December. The measure was strongly opposed by the U.S. textile-industry.

Andrew was largely responsible for pushing the HOPE Act onto the agenda of other religious organizations and through Congress. In an unusual ecumenical letter from the heads of the USCCB, The Episcopal Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church of Christ and The United Methodist Church, the religious leaders urged Members of Congress to vote for the HOPE Act.

The letter laid out the rationale for extending these important trade preferences at this time: *Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, with 80 percent of the population living in abject poverty as a result of decades of suffering in the face of political unrest and social instability. Per-*

capita yearly income stands at just \$440 and the inflation rate is 20 percent. More than seven in ten people are unemployed, and 55 percent of the population is illiterate. Forty-two percent of children under the age of five are malnourished, and the health-care system is inadequately equipped to address the destabilizing effects of increasing HIV/AIDS rates.

Despite this legacy of poverty, the present moment offers great hope that Haiti is on the path to deeper security for its people and the entire region. President Préval has undertaken bold initiatives for reform that include combating drug transshipment, lawlessness, and violent crime. These initiatives are essential to the future prosperity and security of the Haitian people, particularly when coupled with steps to generate employment and economic development.

The HOPE Act has given Haiti preferential access to the U.S. market for Haitian exports, a critical step that is designed to attract investment in Haiti, create jobs and help tackle Haiti's crippling poverty and instability. The textile and apparel sector – the segment of the economy that would benefit most from the HOPE Act – offers the best opportunity for the job creation so important for the future of the country. (U.S. JPIC Newsletter)

Asia-Oceania

INDONESIA

Turning goats into scholars

“Self help” has always been a key element of the Oblate approach to assisting the people of Central Java. “Self help” means involving the people in activities which will not only alleviate their current hardships but provide a basis on which, through their own efforts, they can continue to move forward. Soon after establishing the mission in Central Java in 1972, the Oblates recognized that many people were locked into a cycle of poverty because of a lack of education. Therefore, a major long-term strategy has been to provide education. Today, the Oblates have 27 schools in the region, educating youth of varying ages.

However, it costs money to operate schools. Poor families cannot afford the school fees and children miss out on education and a future. For Fr Charlie BURROWS, problems are simply opportunities looking for solutions. To meet this opportunity, he developed a system of scholarships to assist poor children pay for their education: a system of “Goat Scholarships.”

Under the scheme, children in poor families receive a female goat which they must care for by building a shelter, collecting food, providing water, and monitoring the animal's health. Once the goat matures and has kids of its own, these animals are sold and the school fees are paid with the proceeds. The Goat Scholarship scheme not only provides children with

a formal education, but also teaches them valuable lessons in personal responsibility, as well as simple animal husbandry and business skills. The scheme has been a great success, with many thousands of children being provided with access to education. (Australian MAMI newsletter, February 2007)

COLOMBO

Scholastics experience ministry

The scholasticate is a place of prayer and study. This does not mean that the scholastics are totally removed from the world which they hope to serve. To be in touch in that world, the young Oblates at Mary Immaculate Scholasticate in Kandy, Sri Lanka, have organized two initiatives.

They recently formed a "Mazenod Charity Fund" in view of helping the poor whom they meet in their immediate area or come across during their ministries. The plan is to organize self-help projects in order to give scholarships to some poor students and some limited material help to the poor.

They have also formed a "Mission" group, following the Oblate mission tradition, but adapted to today's world. This is mainly focused on youth and children, but not carried on by the traditional method of preaching. They use music, singing, meditation, drama, dialogue, group activities and multi-media presentations which are most appealing to the younger generation. They also use this as an opportunity to pool their talents and to gain helpful experience for their future ministries.

So far they have had six missions.

1. A talk to the animators of Lak-Ri-Vi Movement concerning their annual theme.
2. A prayer session on "The Holy Spirit and family life" in the parishes of Padiwatte and the Kandy Cathedral.
3. A session for the youth of Padiwatte Parish on "Seeing God in day-to-day life."
4. A session for the children in an orphanage in Katugastota on "Experiencing the love of Christ."
5. A workshop on "Christmas and its effects on our life" for parents and children of the Thaloatu Oya area.
6. A program in Tamil on "Communication and writing skills," for children in Hapugasyaya, Matale.

They also are also preparing a liturgical guide to be circulated in the parishes of the Diocese of Kandy for this liturgical year. (Colombo Province Newsletter, Jan.-Feb. 2007)

INDIA

Daughters of Mary Immaculate: Working for women

The Society of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI) is a Society of Apostolic Life founded by Oblate Fr. Arul RAJ and Sister Josephine DMI in 1984 in the remote village of Pandravedu, about 120 km from Chennai. With nearly 350 members, over 170 in formation, and 600 staff and volunteers, they work together to serve the poor, especially those who live in the human bondage of ignorance, inequality, and economic and social slavery in rural, tribal and urban areas.

The DMI and the members of the Federation of Women Self Help Groups promoted by DMI jointly celebrated International Women's Day in a very grand manner on March 8, 2007 at Nehru Indoor Stadium, Chennai. The presence of eminent personalities and higher officials among the massive gathering of 15000 women leaders from various parts of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andaman Nicobar Islands and Andhra Pradesh made it a memorable event in the history of DMI.

The Honorable Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Mrs. Purandareswari, one of the progressive women leaders in the parliament, presided over the function. In her presidential address, she stressed the need and importance of treating both boys and girls equally without any discrimination.

Various other dignitaries spoke and made promises to work for better representation of women in the parliament and to address issues that affect the welfare and development of women in India.

INDONESIA

Asia-Oceania treasurers meet

Eleven Oblate provincial treasurers, members of the Asia-Oceania Treasurers Committee (AOTC), gathered for the first time in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from February 27 to March 2, 2007. The theme of the

meeting was “Called to Serve the Mission.”

As one of the committees of the Asia-Oceania Regional Conference (AORC), the AOTC aims “to assist the Unit treasurers of the Region in the administration of temporal goods in their Units through the sharing of experiences and input from resource persons. It promotes the appreciation of the importance of the ministry of treasurer, and of fund-raising towards self-sufficiency and sustainability, in all the Oblate Units of the Region.”

The first day of the gathering was a joint meeting with the AORC. Fr. Federico LABAGLAY, General Councillor for Asia-Oceania, spoke to the group about the core values in the Oblate’s use of temporal goods which include gifts, work, stewardship, self-sufficiency (sustainability), solidarity and integrity. He added that an Oblate is not the absolute owner of anything and therefore, stewardship in our congregation expresses itself as an integral force in Christian life through the appropriate use of our resources in the service of the members’ sustenance and the institute’s common life and mission. It also motivates us to share in our resources responsibly with others.

Fr. Rufus WHITLEY, Treasurer General, presented the financial situation of the congregation. He also presented the recommendations of the Central Government for Capital Sharing II, and the proposed revision of the current Per Capita Contribution Categories, as mandated by the last Chapter. All these are meant to address the issue of financial security and self-sufficiency of both the congregation and the Units of the congregation.

Rufus reminded the treasurers that “the administration of temporal goods calls for good cooperation between the treasurer and the superior and his council since many items have financial implications which on the surface may not directly appear to be ‘financial’ in nature.” (Dennis GUI)

SRI LANKA

Rebuilding continues after Tsunami 2004

Many Oblate Units responded to the disastrous Tsunami of late 2004 with generous donations. Benefactors of the Oblate mission opened their hearts and their wallets to come to the aid of people they

had never seen, but who had lost everything (including loved ones, in many cases).

One “success story” among so many comes from Bingyria, a village about 120 km from the Sri Lankan capital in Colombo. Here, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, with the help of a significant gift from the Oblates’ Tsunami Relief Fund, have helped families leave the slums where they were living after the tsunami and begin a new life.

These Franciscan sisters have been working among slum dwellers for the past 37 years. The slums of Mattakuliya in Colombo had been created because of village people looking for better conditions in the city and the action of politicians to get rid of squatters who were taking over “more important” parts of the city of Colombo. Over the years, the living conditions of these people have gone from bad to worse. The sisters, together with other organizations, have tried to bring about change by promoting education. But many of the youth give up on education before they complete their studies; they take casual jobs to earn a bit of money, but often end up running in dangerous company. Life becomes a vicious circle.

After the tsunami, the sisters tried to motivate people to make a new beginning. It took much effort to convert fears into optimism and motivate them to think in new ways. But they found twenty-five families who were willing to take that daring step. Out of these twenty-five families, ten of the poorest were chosen to move to Bingyria.

The sisters purchased three acres of land and divided it among the 10 families. Construction on the family homes began in August 2006. The cost of the entire project was over 71,400 euros. The Oblate Tsunami Fund provided over 48,000 euros of these funds. The rest came from the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation and individual benefactors.

The Bingyria families are now convinced that they can live differently than they did in the past and that they can take control of their own lives. By producing much of their own food, they will avoid as much as possible dependence on the market and its fluctuating prices for their daily needs. Through organic farming, they hope to produce rice, vegetables

and fruit. They will also have their own sources for milk and related products. They will make clay pots for cooking, mats and other handicraft items.

There will be a continued formation program for an alternative life-style, in view of building a truly peace-focused community. The very make-up of the group is a symbol of what Sri Lanka, with its different cultures and religions, needs. The members of the new Bingyria community are Singhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus.

CHINA

First Oblate Easter in Beijing

Holy week and Easter are always a special time. But for the three Oblates in Beijing (Irek DAMPC, Louis LEGARÉ and David ULLRICH) these days had even more significance since it was their first experience of Holy Week and the Triduum in the capital of China.

On Palm Sunday, Irek celebrated mass at the Polish embassy. Louie and David took part in the lit-

urgy at the local diocesan seminary, which also serves as a parish church. It is about a ten-minute bicycle ride from where they live (unless Louie's bicycle pedal falls off again!) Due to circumstances, they had their own Holy Thursday liturgy at their apartment, followed by a special dinner to celebrate their call to the sacramental priesthood. They ended up with a final Holy Hour of quiet prayer. On Friday they joined the seminary for the Good Friday liturgy. Kissing Jesus crucified reminded them of St. Eugene's experience two hundred years ago when he realized Christ's love for him and all mankind.

For the Easter Vigil, the three Oblates joined the seminary community again and were invited to concelebrate with the seminary staff. David states: "Streaming into the church with lighted candles and renewing our baptismal vows as eight adult catechumens were about to be baptized was a powerful experience. Later in the mass, as I watched the hundreds of faces of the people receiving communion, I couldn't help but feel I was indeed seeing the face of the Risen Christ in China. What an apt preparation for Pope Benedict's letter to the Chinese Catholics!"

Europe

FRANCE

Baptism Week-End

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate recently invited some young Christians to come together for a weekend of reflection on our baptismal vocation. Nine youth (five girls and four boys), from the region of Parish, from Strasbourg and from Lyon, answered this invitation. The session took place in Lyon on March 17-18. Confronted with the reality of the world where we live, we found it helpful to focus on some basic questions: how to pass from the status of "being baptized" to "living one's baptism?" "How does that engage me?"

The periods for mutual sharing of experiences created a spirit of trust, of friendship and of intimacy. This need to share and present one's authentic self to each other was felt from the very beginning of the meeting: a realization that the person next to us was also Jesus Christ.

A theme that ran throughout the gathering was the meditation on the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well (cfr. John 4). Another notable moment was the prayer vigil on Saturday evening. This brought together all that had been shared and lived during the day. The Eucharist celebrated at noon on Sunday was characterized by an expression of gratitude for the gathering and a mission send-off.

Everyone had the feeling that something important was beginning. There is a thirst to move forward on a vocational path that is rooted in baptism. There is a desire to go to others in order to give witness that God loves us as we are; He awaits us at the crossroads and He wishes to need us.

We decided to meet again next year with the hope of being more numerous, thanks to the shining witness of our lives that takes its meaning from the baptismal font. (Wojciech KOWALEWSKI)

FRANCE**Lyon: a nice surprise during the Holy Days**

As happens every year, the community of Sainte Foy-Chavril invites its friends and acquaintances to celebrate the Holy Days. The size of this house makes possible all sorts of events, including beautiful celebrations.

The accent was on service for the Holy Thursday celebration, standing around a fountain. Some 50 participants that evening appreciated the quality of the celebration, the result of collaboration between the local Oblates and their friends in the "greater community." On this Thursday evening, magnificent white roses decorated the fountain.

On the next day, the roses were red, the appropri-

ate color for Good Friday. But the celebration was enhanced by a nice surprise, a gift from Walburga, a German artist-painter. She is well-known at the community in Aix-en-Provence, especially during the "Art in Heaven" Festival. On this occasion, she offered a painting of Christ crucified, a work she accomplished in just two days and two nights.

As for Easter Sunday, it was at around 6:30 a.m., at sunrise, that the friends and guests came to sing the Easter Alleluia. Again, in the early morning of this third day, the roses had changed color. To celebrate the Resurrection, they were dressed in yellow and gold.

Our hearts too were dressed in great joy: that of celebrating together, as a family, the Risen Christ. He has "preceded us!" (Yves CHALVET)

Anniversaries -- June 2007

70 Years of religious life

1937.06.24	07175	Bro. Jean Couronne	France
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70 Years of priesthood

1937.06.24	05382	Fr. Raymond Lemieux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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65 Years of priesthood

1942.06.07	06516	Fr. Bruno Dicaire	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1942.06.07	06520	Fr. Lucien Lajeunesse	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1942.06.07	06518	Fr. Elphège Robin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1942.06.16	06605	Fr. John Peters	Lacombe
1942.06.29	06599	Fr. William Fanning	Anglo-Irish

60 Years of religious life

1947.06.13	08304	Fr. Marius Nurit	France
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60 Years of priesthood

1947.06.02	07335	Fr. Matthew Casey	United States
1947.06.02	07348	Fr. Patrick Healy	United States
1947.06.02	07334	Fr. Gerard McCormick	United States
1947.06.02	07343	Fr. Russell Nickerson	United States
1947.06.13	07159	Fr. John Sullivan	Lacombe
1947.06.15	07492	Fr. Romeo Murphy	United States
1947.06.27	07365	Fr. Edward Ballesty	Anglo-Irish
1947.06.29	07362	Fr. Gerard Clenaghan	United States
1947.06.29	07539	Fr. Francis Duffy	Natal

50 Years of religious life

1957.06.24	10867	Bro. Jean-Guy Chartier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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50 Years of priesthood

1957.06.01	09014	Fr. Gerard Brunet	United States
1957.06.01	09018	Fr. William Davis	United States
1957.06.01	09027	Fr. Nestor Factora	Philippines
1957.06.01	09019	Fr. Michael Levy	United States
1957.06.01	09009	Fr. James Miller	United States
1957.06.01	09016	Fr. Galeb Mokarzel	United States
1957.06.08	09092	Fr. Guido Blanchette	Argentina-Chile
1957.06.08	09327	Fr. Michael Devaney	United States
1957.06.08	09338	Fr. Gerald Flater	United States
1957.06.08	09336	Fr. Ralph Karl	United States
1957.06.08	09090	Fr. Gérard Laprise	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.06.08	09342	Fr. James Mac Gee	United States
1957.06.08	09328	Fr. Edward Williams	Japan
1957.06.15	08877	Fr. Guy Jalbert	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.06.15	09114	Fr. Lawrence Mac Lennan	Lacombe
1957.06.15	09125	Fr. Harold McIntee	Lacombe
1957.06.15	09082	Fr. Claude Saint-Laurent	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.06.23	09317	Fr. Ernst Drescher	Poland
1957.06.23	09304	Fr. Jacques Leahy	France
1957.06.23	09827	Fr. Henri Méolle	France
1957.06.23	09319	Fr. Walenty Zaplata	Poland
1957.06.29	08878	Fr. Jacques Gagné	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

25 Years of priesthood

1982.06.11	12446	Fr. Warren Brown	United States
1982.06.20	12416	Fr. Bronislaw Dejneka	Poland
1982.06.20	12412	Fr. Aleksander Doniec	Poland
1982.06.20	12414	Fr. Jan Klubek	Poland
1982.06.20	12438	Fr. Stanislaw Oller	Poland
1982.06.20	12413	Fr. Piotr Wojcik	Poland

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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 25-33

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Lorne T. McDonald	OMI Lacombe	29/12/1930	Edmonton	15/03/2007
Fr. Albert Christiaens	France	01/05/1929	Pontmain	24/03/2007
Fr. Ernesto Grösch	Paraguay	18/06/1930	Asunción	25/03/2007
Fr. Donald Stavinoha	United States	01/10/1943	Houston	27/03/2007
Bro. Raymond Desrochers	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	11/05/1920	Richelieu	03/04/2007
Fr. André Chataigner	France	15/05/1946	Marseille	04/04/2007
Fr. William McGonagle	Anglo-Irish	30/08/1920	Inchicore	07/04/2007
Fr. Roger Roy	United States	04/10/1923	Lowell	09/04/2007
Fr. Toine Wassenberg	Belgium-Netherlands	22/02/1923	Maestricht	10/04/2007

“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)