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A new Oblate province is born: Central European Province

On May 21, the Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, presided at the inauguration of the new Central European Province, comprised of the former German Province and the General Delegation of Austria and the Czech Republic. Also present in Hünfeld for the celebration of the new province was the General Councillor for Europe, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO. The first provincial of the new province is Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, formerly provincial of Germany. There are 170 professed members in 20 different communities.

The Oblate presence in Germany began in difficult circumstances. In 1875, a law had been passed in Germany that forbade the presence of most religious orders. France followed suit with similar laws a few years later. Therefore, the Oblates of the Northern Province of France, in 1885, founded a juniorate in Holland near the German border. This house of formation soon attracted young men from Germany. Because the German government would permit entry into Germany only to those religious congregations working in countries under the protection of the German Empire, the Propaganda Fide in Rome entrusted to the Oblates a mission in Southern Africa in what is today Namibia. Having obtained the necessary authorization from the government in 1895, Fr. Louis SOULLIER, the Superior General, officially established the German Province in the diocese of Fulda. The first major house in Germany was founded at Hünfeld in 1897. By 1898, the province already had 31 Fathers and 40 Brothers.

The numbers continued to grow as the Oblates in Germany became well known and appreciated for their missions and retreats. At one point, they operated as many as five juniorates. Furthermore, they were generous in sending missionaries to preach

the Gospel in other places. In 1924, they took charge of the Apostolic Vicariate of Kimberley in South Africa; a year later, they went to the Apostolic Prefecture of Pilcomayo, among the indigenous people of the Chaco of Bolivia (now part of Paraguay). Oblates from Germany were also the founders of the former Central Province in the United States (1924) and St. Mary's Province in Canada (1926). The first Oblates of what became the Polish Province also took their first steps as Oblates in Germany.

In 1911, Oblates from Germany began working in Bohemia and, a year later, in Moravia. In 1918, when the independent republic of Czechoslovakia was established, the Oblates there found themselves in a somewhat delicate situation because of tension between the new republic and Germany. Consequently, in 1924, Archbishop Augustin DONTENWILL, the Superior General, established the Vicariate of Czechoslovakia where the Oblates took care of parishes and shrines and preached missions. In 1927, the vicariate became a province.

In 1934, Oblates from Czechoslovakia established a parish in Vienna, Austria, in a sector of the city that was especially affected by socialism, communism and an anti-religious spirit.

The 1939-1945 war was particularly hard on all Oblates in Europe. Many Oblates were conscripted into the military and many lost their lives on both sides of the conflict. When Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Russians after the Potsdam Treaty, Oblates of German nationality were expelled. Some of them went to Germany; others went to Austria. The Province of Czechoslovakia became a district, dependent on the Central Government of the Oblates in 1946. Then the communist government

confiscated Oblate properties and the province was officially suppressed by the Oblates in 1967.

The 20 Oblates who left Czechoslovakia for Austria received a warm welcome from several bishops. They were able to establish themselves in mission preaching, in working-class parishes and in Marian shrines. From this nucleus of Oblates who had left Czechoslovakia, Fr. Leo DESCHATELETS formally established the Province of Austria in 1947.

In 1991, after political and religious freedom had returned to Czechoslovakia, the Oblates were able to reestablish a community there. In 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia formally separated. Because of dwindling Oblate numbers in Austria and because of the new way of designating Oblate Units in the Constitutions and Rules, in 2003, the General

Delegation of Austria and the Czech Republic was established by the Central Government.

For several years, the Oblates in Europe have discussed how they can best continue to serve the Church and the Oblate mission in light of the present and future situation of personnel in the Congregation. In 1996, the former provinces of France-North, France-East and France-Midi became the Province of France. The Vice-Province of France and Benelux became a Delegation of the Province of Poland in 2003. The former provinces of Holland, Belgium-North and Belgium-South became the Province of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2005. In 2007, the countries in the General Delegation of Scandinavia became district communities of the Province of Poland. The new Central European Province is one more step in this ongoing process.

General Administration

GENERAL POSTULATION

Let's put our saints to work

Fr. Joseph VAILLANCOURT is spreading devotion to our Founder. At the request of Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, General Postulator, he writes from Haiti: "You asked me the details about the healing of Barbara Scalley through the intercession of St. Eugene. Here they are: in 1994 or 1995, Barbara had stomach cancer. Various treatments by the doctors were not very successful; on the contrary, the cancer got worse.

"My sister Rose was a friend of Barbara. During my vacation, she spoke to me about the situation. I gave her the prayer asking a favor of St. Eugene. Barbara has great faith and she prayed daily to St. Eugene, along with her husband. After a novena of prayers, Barbara felt better. She returned to her doctor on the appointed day as usual. After the examination and the x-rays, the doctor, greatly to his surprise, could not find the least trace of cancer. She continued visiting the doctor for several months... She was cured... Deo gratias!

"Pray with me for the cure of a young man 17 years of age who is almost blind. The doctor here can do nothing to help him. Long live St. Eugene, our model!"

On the other hand, Fr. Umberto NESPOLO, Oakland, California, USA, former missionary in Laos, tells us of a really surprising cure of a Laotian who was near death from an incurable stomach cancer, through the intercession of the Servant of God Mario BORZAGA.

Furthermore, they are studying the presumed miraculous cure of the heart of a young man in Corsica, through the intercession of Venerable Charles Dominic ALBINI, and another probable miraculous cure of a little boy in Quebec through the intercession of Servant of God, Victor LELIÈVRE.

Let's give some work to our Oblate "saints."

GENERAL HOUSE

Oblate Partners meet in Rome

The Missionary Oblate Partnership is a group of individuals from the United States who share St. Eugene de Mazenod's conviction that "nothing should be left undared" in the call to reveal the power of Christ's love to the world. They take their inspiration not only from St. Eugene but also from St. Paul's letter to Philemon: "I give thanks to my God always, remembering you in my prayers, as I hear of the love and the faith you have in the Lord

Jesus and for all the holy ones, so that your partnership in the faith may become effective in recognizing every good there is in us that leads to Christ. (vv. 4-6)

They are men and women who seek a deeper connection with the Body of Christ. This connection includes not only philanthropy but spiritual development and a personal encounter with the poor whom the Oblates serve. The Partners consider themselves co-missionaries with the Oblates throughout the world. In the words of Arthur Pingolt, the President of Oblate Partnership, "The goal is not to fix the world's problems: that's God's work. Rather, what Oblate Partners and donors do is to make it possible for the Oblates to be present with the world's poorest. We, then, become part of Christ's presence, from this deeper understanding of what true compassion means."

Their members include the Governor of the State of Colorado, the owner of the New Orleans "Saints" football team, the ambassador of Zambia to the United States, as well as several Honorary Oblates.

Some of them have been greatly blessed materially; they wish to share their blessings with the people whom the Oblates serve. Others are "ordinary people" who are willing to make sacrifices so that the gospel might be preached to the poor.

The Partners have an annual retreat weekend where they learn more about the Oblates and the Oblate charism. This year, they came to the Eternal City for their retreat on April 14-16, at the General House. Originally, the main speaker was to have been the Partnership's Honorary Chairman, Francis Cardinal GEORGE, but the cardinal was unable to travel because of a fall on Holy Saturday that fractured his hip.

The group did, however, hear from Father General and from Sister Theresa Sandok, OSM, an Oblate Partner and Superior General of the Servants of Mary community in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Filling in for the cardinal at Eucharist was Oblate Partner, Archbishop Harry Flynn of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, a diocese where Oblates have been working for over 90 years.

Africa-Madagascar

CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICA

Frans Claerhout paintings: limited edition

A series of paintings by the late Fr Frans CLAERHOUT entitled "The Parables" has been reproduced in a limited edition print collection. It is hoped that this will expose them to the enjoyment of a wider audience. The print set was launched at a celebrity-packed exhibition in the SMAC Gallery in Stellenbosch on Fr Claerhout's birthday on February 15.

The speakers at the occasion were Nobel Peace Laureate and former President of South Africa, Mr F. W. De Klerk and the provincial of Central South Africa, Fr Emmanuel MOSOEU. Both gave moving tributes to the late Fr Claerhout and went on to describe the contribution he made to reconciliation in South Africa.

Fr Wilfried JOYE also showed his art at the exhibition: his paintings found a very enthusiastic audience.

On the printed program, there was a quote from Fr. Claerhout's own words: *You can wait my God! You have a lot of time... I don't! Help me live before I die!*

KENYA

Whoever gives only a cup of cold water...

Bro. Don CLAERHOUT from OMI Lacombe Province tells of the challenge of fulfilling Christ's invitation to give a cup of cold water to His little ones...

Our Leadership Team asked me to come to Kenya over a year ago to complete some work in Meru at our pre-novitiate and to carry on with the work of the water project into which Fr. Ken FORSTER had poured so much energy. The pre-novitiate in Meru is now in good shape but the water project is struggling.

Although the project is not moving at a pace many people would like, we are making progress. The

third stage of bringing water to homes has begun. Each member will receive a stand, which is a meter of half-inch galvanized pipe with fittings and a tap. We are now in the process of cutting 2800 meters of pipe into one-meter sections, threading and assembling – all done by hand of course! We may have four hundred completed to date.

Another time-consuming job is repairing water leaks, caused by those placing the pipe rushing to make more money rather than concentrating on proper workmanship. Sixteen breaks or leaks have already been detected between two of the tanks. Keep in mind that there are more than forty tanks within the project. The repetition of work costs a lot in both time and money but also adds to the frustration. I compare it to dancing – thousands of steps are taken but people are still on the same floor. Just when we feel we are moving ahead, another leak appears.

Much credit has to be given to those who have not given up but go to the sites, dig out the trench for thirty or more feet, make the necessary repairs and cover over the pipes once again.

When taking on the task as coordinator of the project, I asked the committee for a job description so I would know for what it was I was to be responsible. None was given so I assumed that paying wages, bills, office and expenses accumulated by committee members would be on the list. Very few people are trusted with money but for some reason, I am. To keep the project moving, I also help with completing the fittings on tanks as well as repairing broken pipes and fittings. Most people are respectful and their gratitude is often shown. Little children often make my day as they run to the edge of the road to wave and scream as I drive by. (*Info Lacombe*, 20 April 2007)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE

Oblate retreat center to host formation of the laity

Beginning in the fall, three Canadian dioceses will offer a lay formation program that focuses on the Catholic faith as lived out within aboriginal traditions and culture. A joint project of the Saskatoon (Bishop Albert LeGatt), Prince Albert (Bishop Blaise Morand) and Keewatin/Le Pas dioceses (Archbishop Sylvain LAVOIE), the program will be offered in conjunction with an existing two-year program at Queen's House of Retreats. The program already includes courses of study that focus on lay ministry to Ukrainian- and Latin-rite Catholics. The unique program will fill a great need for aboriginal people to deepen their Catholic faith within their own cultural framework, said Verna Vandale, parish life director at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Saskatoon. "It is going to give our people a stronger sense of belonging," said Vandale, a member of the planning committee and a graduate of the diocesan lay formation program. "I think it will really empower the people to nurture their spirituality, both in the context of their aboriginal culture but also as Catholics." Our Lady of Guadalupe parishioner Gayle Weenie said the program is not radical or

controversial, but explores the Catholic faith as it is lived out in aboriginal culture. (CNS)

UNITED STATES

New ministry in Alaska

Fr. Bill MORELL, Vicar Provincial, spent from Feb. 14-22 in Alaska for a series of meetings dealing with the details and logistics of the province's New Ministries Kenai Project. Although time lines, team approach or pastoral strategies are not yet determined, the present plan is to try to offer the Anchorage Archdiocese a team of three or four Oblate priests and brothers. Living in a single community, and working with the local religious and lay leaders, they would provide an evangelizing presence, reaching out to inactive Catholics and to those with no church affiliation.

Together with Anchorage's Oblate Archbishop Roger SCHWIETZ, Bro. Craig BONHAM, superior of the Alaska District, and Sr. Charlotte Davenport, archdiocesan chancellor, he visited three parishes and a mission chapel located on the Western Kenai Peninsula. The group met with leaders and parishioners in Kenai, Soldotna, and Ninilchik.

In all, they made the acquaintance of all the priests and religious women, as well as many of the laity presently in roles of parish leadership on the Kenai Peninsula. The peninsula juts from the southern coast of Alaska in the United States. The name *Kenai* is probably derived from *Kenayskaya*, the Russian name for the Cook Inlet, which borders the peninsula to the west. The area is 90% wilderness, with a climate that is mild, with abundant rainfall. It is one of the few areas in Alaska with a growing season adequate for many crops. The largely working class Kenai population varies with the seasons. In summer, the number increases with a large influx of tourists and recreational fishermen. (OMIUSA, May 2007)

OMI LACOMBE

Bishop Turquetil and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

An article in the March 2007 issue of *Thérèse de Lisieux*, official magazine of the Lisieux Pilgrimage office, speaks of an Oblate bishop. Dominique Menvielle has researched the missionary journey of Bishop Arsène TURQUETIL, among the Inuit and First Nation peoples of the Canadian Far North.

The article tells of the devotion of the Oblate for the young Carmelite nun who was to be named patroness of foreign missions. It was partially because of the missionary spirit of Bishop Turquetil that Pope Pius XI would describe the Oblates as "Specialists in the most difficult missions."

Named Prefect Apostolic of Hudson Bay two months after Thérèse's canonization, Bishop Turquetil placed his mission under her protection, and attributed the first conversions of the Inuit to her intercession. Over the years, he continued to promote devotion to the nun who promised to spend her heaven doing good on earth.

Following the magazine's three-page account of Bishop Turquetil's ministry, there is a second article, written by his grand-nephew, Claude Madeleine. Together with his wife, Yvette, Mr. Madeleine made, in 2006, a pilgrimage, retracing the steps of his Oblate relative in North America. After their journey through Canada, they came to the United States where, accompanied by Fr. Patrice MOREL, they visited Bishop Turquetil's grave at the Oblate

cemetery in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, and later lunched with the Oblates, three of whom had been ordained by the bishop. The last step on their pilgrimage was Washington, DC, where they saw the room where he spent his last years, as well as some of his relics in the archives. (OMIUSA, May 2007)

UNITED STATES

Cardinal George: 10 years in Chicago

When a man becomes the archbishop of a diocese with 2.3 million Catholics, he quickly learns that many of the things he says or does are reported in the daily newspaper. That was one of the first lessons Francis Cardinal GEORGE learned when he became Archbishop of Chicago in 1997.

In the past year, the former Oblate Vicar General was on the front pages of the local and national press many times: addressing sexual misconduct cases locally and nationally, making the decision to close the archdiocesan minor seminary, undergoing successful surgery to remove a cancerous bladder in July 2006 and fracturing his hip in a recent Holy Saturday fall.

As he celebrated the tenth anniversary of his installation as Archbishop of Chicago on May 7, the focus of newspaper articles was on those ten years as shepherd of one of the major dioceses in the world.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "... George's influence in the world church has soared. He is now seen as the leading American voice in Rome, mainly because of his role in mediating negotiations between U.S. bishops and the Vatican in 2002 that led to a national policy of zero tolerance on sexual abuse. After the death of Pope John Paul II, George was key in explaining to the public why Pope Benedict XVI had been selected to lead the church."

Catholic author George Weigel says of him: "Cardinal George is now seen as the intellectual leader of the American hierarchy and one of the most respected members of the College of Cardinals."

The cardinal is also the vice-president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. According to tradition, the vice-president should become the president during the November 2007 meeting of the US bishops.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Meditation on a meditation

by Denyse Mostert, Lay Associate, April 2007

In his *Missionary Meditation* of April, 2007, Father STECKLING, the Superior General, took us to the very heart of situations of violence, conflict, and destruction that run rampant just about everywhere in the world.

“Violence, Source of Suffering and Temptation.”
The title itself stirred up within me a heap of emotions. I would like to speak here about my father. Suffering due to violence—he lived that his entire life. He appeared to have given in to the temptation to deny the faith...

We lived in a peaceful little village in the Ardennes region of Belgium. When the Second World War broke out, I was four years old. Without knowing it, papa was living his last peaceful days.

He was sent to the front line where a tragic battle was awaiting him, a battle that would pursue him until the end of his days. “Around us it was like hell,” he would tell us. “The bombardments, the shouting, the noise, the wounded everywhere, the moans of the dying... I was carrying a rifle but I thought I would not need it. Then a soldier stepped out in front of me with panic written on his face... He shouldered his rifle and I did the same. It is he who died! I had killed a man!” And burning tears would come to papa’s eyes whenever he remembered this... something that happened too frequently!

That event was critical in the life of my father. For the rest of his life, he never stopped asserting his refusal to believe in a God who would permit such atrocities. For the rest of his life, he tried to get me to share what he called his “atheism,” his anger at the very mention of the word “religion.”

I cannot accept the name “atheist” that papa gave himself. Didn’t I see him share a friendly traditional drink when the parish priest would visit to wish him, in his words, “a little hello?” Did I not look on in surprise at the Stations of the Cross on the side of the mountain, refurbished by my father who, for the

time being, seemed to be at peace? Didn’t I see this man who called himself “atheist” listen to the Mass on the radio each week? Of course, he would carefully point out to me that he “did not understand their gobbledygook!!!”

Yes, my father bore to the very end the consequences of a war that neither he nor the enemy soldier he killed ever wanted. Yes, he experienced the fact that *“violence is the source of suffering and temptation.”*

Papa died in his sleep, one March 19, feast of St. Joseph whom they call the patron of a happy death. After having suffered so much from that violence for which he was not prepared, I have to believe that he was welcomed by Christ the Savior into that “New Earth” where all suffering is banished.

Armed conflicts are not the only source of violence. In our countries which we call “peaceful,” violence shows itself in all sorts of ways which the media describe every day in all their sordid details. Even closer to us, in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our work places, we find it in many shapes, from open violence to words that wound.

As disciples of Christ the Savior, what can we do to change this?

First of all, we ourselves can avoid being the source of any injustice, any offense to the dignity of others, any word that hurts. We can also avoid any hasty judgment of those who have been victims of one or the other form of violence and who find themselves in the vicious circle of brutality, hatred and resentment.

Could we not call this attitude “mercy,” a mercy which we all need? Didn’t Christ the Savior himself propose it: “Be merciful as your Father is merciful?”



Europe

ITALY**Clericus Cup: some Oblate victories**

As a perfect ending for Easter Week, on April 14, the Oblate football (soccer) team in Rome, made up of scholastics from the Italian scholasticate in Vermicino and the International Scholasticate, enjoyed their first victory in the Clericus Cup tournament, with a dramatic 3-2 defeat of the North American College (USA).

The Clericus Cup is a tournament sponsored by the Centro Sportivo Italiano (Italian Sports Center) in an effort to bring together clergy and seminarians from the Roman Colleges. It is a great opportunity for these men to come together in a spirit of fraternity to work as a team and to free their minds for a couple of hours from their studies.

Prior to their April 14 victory, the Oblate team had played three matches, losing all three, first to the Croatian Team; next, to the Tiberino College; and then, to the Pontifical Urban College. In spite of their defeats, the team kept its spirits high. With the enthusiasm of the recent Easter celebrations still alive in their hearts, they were able to gather their forces to defeat a team that until their encounter with the Oblates, had enjoyed a winning 3-1 record.

To add glory to their defeat of the United States team, the Oblates proceeded, on April 21, to add another victory to their record, with the defeat of the team from the French College. Obviously, the Oblates' French Founder, from his celestial viewpoint, was cheering for his own "family team."

SPAIN**Gathering in Málaga**

I want to share with you an experience that gave us much joy. On the weekend of March 23-25, in Mollina (Málaga), we held our first get together for youth between 14 and 18 years of age. We had been invited there by the priests of the deanery of Álora to animate and share our experiences with the youth. Accompanying me for this gathering were

six youth of different ages from our parish (Ntra. Sra. de la Esperanza and San Eugenio de Mazenod).

We used the open dialogue that has, for many years, been the format of these get togethers, with topics such as "The movie of your life;" "Keep to the right;" "The joy of being a disciple." But we have updated the program, adding a series of activities, games, audiovisual presentations, and dances, so that today's youth, being so saturated by this world's messages and not at all accustomed to being quiet for a whole weekend, could have an experience of Christ and his message. Here are some examples: a mime entitled "What gives me hope;" an interview with the pope by Jesús Quintero in order to introduce the talk on "Grace;" and the "Gift Jar" (the jar of God's gifts).

We met with about 30 youth from the deanery. For many of them, it was the first time they took a weekend to deepen their spirituality, even though the majority of them are just beginning to live their faith with a group. But we were all surprised at the way the Spirit was present to those in charge, the speakers, the chaperones, and the youth. Many went home deeply moved and, in many cases, questioning their own lifestyle.

It was a wonderful shared experience and it encouraged us to look for new ways to approach youth, without changing the Lord's meaningful message. We have learned that it is always necessary to approach youth in their day to day lives, in their reality, to speak their language, and to talk about things that are important to them. To do that, we make use of new resources, new technologies, and a dynamic that helps us reach their hearts. (Marcin FIGAJ in *Nosotros*, April 2007)

FRANCE**A pilgrimage to the sources**

The Interprovincial Conference of Europe (CIE), during their meeting in Aix en Provence, took advantage of the May 1 holiday in France to take a break from their activities long enough to make a pilgrimage.

With skillful and passionate commentaries provided by Bernard DULLIER, the pilgrimage led the CIE members first of all to Grans, the site of the first mission by the Missionaries of Provence; then, on to Saint Laurent du Verdon, an important place in the history of our Congregation where our Founder wrote the Constitutions and Rules. Finally, the road led to Barjols where the mission of 1818 was an enormous success for the Missionaries of Provence.

This mission, like so many others, was a real success. The church at Barjols was too small to hold the crowd. Therefore, they used a strategy which allowed both those inside and outside to profit from the preacher's wisdom. According to Fr. Dullier, this was the invention of "stereo" before its time. The preacher spoke in a loud voice and his comments were immediately relayed to those outside by another preacher. Everyone, therefore, could benefit from the preaching, even though, for those outside, there was a slight delay. While the mission at Barjols was a great success for the people, the mayor at the time did not seem so pleased; he believed that it had "disturbed the public order." He told that to the Prefect of Var who was soundly embarrassed...

In the opinion of one and all, it was a beautiful day and a beautiful pilgrimage. The commentaries and the anecdotes, skillfully translated into different

languages, were truly appreciated by everyone. In a word, it was a lovely occasion and a great delight to walk in the footsteps of St. Eugene.

Letter from Eugene de Mazenod to the pastor of Barjols – Aix, August 20, 1818

More than 50 pastors are urgently asking for a mission. To be fair in the choice, I thought it necessary to look at the date of the request. Nevertheless, I am inclined to give you the preference. It seems to me that we are obliged to rush off to wherever there is the greatest danger. They are asking for us in Marseille; we could anticipate some positive experiences there, while at Barjols, we could expect only opposition and grief; but we would at least have the joy of coming to relieve the concerns of a good pastor for his straying sheep. Should we draw no better reward from our mission than to have battled hell, with and under the direction of a veteran such as you, then we would still congratulate ourselves for having taken on the task.

All the expenses are related to the frugal meals of the missionaries; we receive no wages for the exhaustion and the hard work which can only be repaid by the Lord. (Yves CHALVET DE RÉCY)

Latin America

BOLIVIA

Feeding the hungry children

Fr. Roberto LACASSE, originally from the United States, has worked for many years in Bolivia. Here he tells of projects dear to his heart.

This year, with the phenomenon of the "NIÑO" we have been heavily afflicted with floods in the tropical part of the country and with droughts in the highlands. Much aid has come in from abroad... It will take time to rebuild the many homes that were lost, and to feed and clothe the thousands of families afflicted. Right now, the country is trying to control and prevent malaria outbreaks.

Our Soup Kitchen started last year, through help

from my home parish in Lewiston (Maine). I am receiving other donations from other sources as well. These keep the soup kitchen going. We started off with 15 kids and ended the school year with 42. Now, with the new school year that just started, we might have more kids, since 65% of the children in my parish are underfed.

Our Center of Missionary Formation has been operating for 3 years, but now, we're offering our services to the 4 parishes of this area, of which I am the Vicar. Our aim is to train lay people to accompany our small basic Christian communities, emerging in our large parishes. Our Oblate seminarians help us during the academic year, but when they leave, people are practically left to themselves. So we need to train the local people to do that accompaniment

in a more stable way. Incidentally, this year, we have several Oblate Scholastics from different countries: 2 from Brazil, 1 from Guatemala, 1 from Haiti, 1 from Colombia, 1 from Peru and 3 from Bolivia. Our weather has been very hot...in the 90's (30's C) at times, very unusual for Cochabamba, at 6,500 ft. above sea level. It must be the effects of global warming, I guess. (OMIUSA, May 2007)

HAITI

Fulfilling a desire to work with the poor

Father Roman MUSIL is a Czech Oblate whose dream of working with the poor is being realized in Haiti.

When four years ago I received my first obedience for the Oblate mission in Haiti, I knew that I was going to go to the poorest country in the western world. Haiti makes up the western third of the island of Hispaniola; the largest part is the Dominican Republic. Seventy percent of Haiti's almost eight million inhabitants live beneath the minimum poverty line; unemployment is at 65 percent; the wealth is in the hands of only five percent of the population. Sixty percent of the people are illiterate.

I wanted to work with the poor and I was not disappointed. In the diocese of Port-de-Paix, where the Oblate Pierre-Antoine PAULO is coadjutor bishop, I took over the poorest parish in the diocese, Baie-de-Henne, on the northwestern point of the island. My community there is made up of 2000 Catholics; in addition to them, there are another 2000 in six mission stations.

The people here earn their livelihood primarily by fishing, as well as by extracting salt from sea water. Some of them own a piece of land where they raise cattle. To assure a better future for the young, school

and education are important. With the help of benefactors, I was able to add on to the local elementary school. It would be ideal if we could also open a Middle School. In general, the education system is not very good. I mentioned above the high percentage of illiteracy. There is no compulsory education law. The teachers cannot count on being paid regularly, and because that happens often enough, they do not have the incentive to hold classes regularly. In order to escape the poverty, the people tend to crowd into the cities. There, however, they become even poorer; previously, they had at least a goat or a garden. The capital, Port-au-Prince, with its two million inhabitants, is typical of this migration. In the slums, the shacks and the people are crammed together. There are no sewers nor trash removal; therefore the streets and roads are full of rubbish and raw sewage. And how could the poor possibly afford a doctor or medicine? Everywhere there are organized gangs of street children. In the capital, there are three to five thousand of them.

In this atmosphere of terrible poverty, one encounters such things as frequent kidnappings. I learned this first hand a year and a half ago, as did my fellow Oblate, Quesnel MAZILE a short time before me. On a trip through a dangers quarter in the capital, I was stopped by a group of 10 to 15 year old ruffians with weapons and I was brought blindfolded to their leader. Locked in a dark room, I got something to eat once a day. When it became known that I am a priest, I was treated better, but I had to give them the phone number of my superior so they could negotiate a ransom. After four days, they were happy to get 2500 euros and they released me. In my homeland, the Czech Republic, the story was reported by the media in great detail. So there they learned something not only about the mission in Haiti but also about the Oblates. (Roman Musil in *Der Weinberg*, May 2007)

Asia-Oceania

SRI LANKA

President's visit to Pope Benedict raises hopes

Sri Lankan Oblates are hopeful that the April 20 meeting of Pope Benedict XVI and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse would bear fruit in bringing peace to that war torn island after years of bloody conflict.

After the meeting, the Vatican Press Office released the following statement: "In the course of the talks - and in the light of the current situation in Sri Lanka - the need was reiterated to respect human rights and resume the path of dialogue and negotiation as the only way to put an end to the violence that is bloodying the island. The Catholic Church, which

offers a significant contribution to the life of the country, will intensify her delicate task of forming consciences with the sole ambition of favoring the common good, reconciliation and peace.”

In his Easter 2007 “Urbi et Orbi” message, the Holy Father stated: “Elsewhere too, peace is sorely needed: in Sri Lanka only a negotiated solution can put an end to the conflict that causes so much bloodshed...”

The Catholic Church has made many public appeals for an end to the civil war, which began in 1983 between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam and the Sri Lanka government. Nearly 65,000 people were killed and more than 500,000 were displaced. Despite a cease-fire signed in February 2002, the reality for many in North and Northeast is war, with numerous abductions and killings by unidentified groups.

Last month more than 150,000 Tamils were displaced due to aerial bombing and shelling by the military.

The movement of the Oblates in Sri Lanka, especially in the North, is greatly hindered by the conflict. Communication is, at times, very difficult, if not impossible, and normal ministry is greatly impeded.

PHILIPPINES

Oblate brother with a green thumb

In recent months, the country has reeled from one catastrophe to another. In one sweep, a super-typhoon ravaged Bicol, Southern Luzon and Metro Manila bringing with it death and destruction. A month later, many villages in the province of Albay became the graveyard of hundreds of people following the rampaging flow of lahar (*hot or cold mixture of water and rock fragments flowing down the slopes of a volcano*) and boulders deposited on the slopes of recently erupted Mayon Volcano brought about by heavy rains generated by a typhoon that passed at its outskirts. Those who survived the lahar flow saw their homes carried away. To date, many of them continue to live in evacuation centers.

Earlier and in the central Visayas this time, the waters near the shorelines of Guimaras were made murky by the country’s worst oil spill. Uncontrolled due to lack of expertise and the proper pieces of

equipment, it devastated the waters, marine life, mangroves, farmlands, lake and sea pens, and infrastructures wherever the wind blew it. Though Greenpeace, Peta, and similar organizations have long stood and fought for government preparedness for such an eventuality, when it did happen, all the government could do was require the oil company to hire the villagers to scoop the lumps of solidified oil with their bare hands, put them in pails and finally, in sacks.

Amidst all this, there is a silent, steady yet purpose-driven man who is doing his share in restoring the environment where he is. In no time at all, he has changed the landscape of the grounds of Our Mother of Perpetual Shrine and Retreat House in Binoligan, Kidapawan City. Our phenomenal sower is Brother Antonio “Tony” NERIC.

After Mass at the cathedral in Kidapawan City, followed with a hearty breakfast and donning rubber boots, a grass-cutting bolo, and a heart so passionate for plants, trees and greens, Tony leaves for his daily date with nature. *Discovery* and *National Geography Channels* will never find a more interesting subject than this man. His calloused hands are set to sow seedlings into every nook and cranny of the 11 hectares of rolling land in Binoligan. He leaves no space unproductive.

Tony was born in March 10, 1933. He comes from a long line of farming families in the largely agricultural town of Camalig, Albay in the Bicol region. Intermittent typhoons and the recurring threats and eruptions of Mayon Volcano had all the more fired up the fervor of the then young Tony for sowing plants and trees, replacing whatever was lost to calamities. Never mind the “green thumb” myth. He loves greening the place wherever he is assigned during his 40 grace-filled years as an Oblate religious missionary brother.

After a little over a year’s stay in Binoligan, the statistics of his sowing is exceptionally impressive. Spending a few months cutting down unproductive trees and clearing the ground, Brother Tony, with two helpers at his side, soon planted thousands of trees: hardwood, softwood, and fruit trees.

Five years from now you may be one of those who

will literally reap a variety of fruits sown by this nature lover made in the image and likeness of the Divine Sower. Soon, fruit festivals will no longer be held in the crowded city of Kidapawan but right there in the rejuvenated Eden - the grounds of the Binoligan Shrine.

The secret behind all these things? Brother Tony says it himself: "I love nature. Next to the Eucharist, it is there where I feel the presence of God most." (Fr. Mamerto "Don" GARCIA)

COLOMBO

A silver jubilee in Anuradhapura

Bishop Norbert M. ANDRADI, Bishop of Anuradhapura, through Father General, sent the following message to his brother Oblates throughout the world.

I am most pleased to announce to you and share with you the good news that we of the diocese of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, have celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the establishment of the diocese. A jubilee year was officially announced when we celebrated the annual feast of the cathedral on May 01, 2006.

Since then, a number of different renewal programs were carried out involving children, youth, those preparing for marriage, married couples, the elderly, priests and religious ministering in the diocese. Different groups of priests serving in the diocese undertook the task of making a pastoral visitation of all the Catholic families of the diocese; for this, I am very pleased and grateful. There was a census taken of each of the parishes, visited with the help of the religious serving in the diocese. Beginning with the inauguration of the jubilee year, a statue of St. Joseph, patron of the diocese, was taken to all the parishes, sub-stations and institutions of the diocese. So much prayer was offered on this occasion. The statue has now been brought back to the cathedral. The final Eucharistic Celebration was presided over by the bishop of Anuradhapura and concelebrated by the attending bishops and priests on May 06, 2007.

All the bishops of Sri Lanka, all the major superiors of religious serving at present in the diocese, all the priests and religious who have served in the diocese, the chief Buddhist Prelates and the heads of the local

government were invited to the final celebration. We thought that it would be fitting to involve the non-Christians as well in this celebration as we live amidst the Buddhist majority.

Though we do not have all the funds needed, we had a symbolic inauguration of the construction of the two wings and the needed repairs to the cathedral. As a mark of our deep respect, we launched a book written on Bishop Henry GUNAWARDENA, O.M.I., the first bishop of the diocese. Most Rev. Bishop Frank Marcus, the Bishop Emeritus of Chilaw, who ordained Msgr. Henry Gunawardena as bishop, presided at Vespers on Saturday, 5th May, 2007.

As we celebrated this event, we recalled with tremendous gratitude and devotion all those bishops, priests, religious and laity who have served here and contributed so much to the cause of evangelization here in the diocese of Anuradhapura. I also visited the grave yard where our foreign missionary sisters are buried. We recall their labor, their sacrifices and love of the people of *Raja Rata* (land of the kings).

This message comes to you as a mark of our gratitude to you. Thank you for having journeyed with us, for having supported us all these years and I kindly request you to implore the Lord on our behalf so that all that we do will be pleasing to the Lord and contribute to the furtherance of God's Kingdom today. We commend to God all those who have served here and have been called to their promised reward and implore God's abundant blessings on all those who continue to serve God here below.

BANGLADESH

Defending a fellow Oblate

Church officials in Bangladesh have been lobbying the government to nullify an arrest warrant issued against an Oblate priest working among exploited indigenous people. "We want the government to quash this case and take action against those who have registered the fabricated case against Father Joseph GOMES," said the Bangladesh Delegation Superior, Father Emil MORAES. In February, the local court issued an arrest warrant against Father Gomes, head of the Oblates' justice, peace and integrity of creation ministry in Bangladesh, after forest officials filed several charges against the activist priest. The charges included

instigating an “unlawful trespass into government-acquired forest, cutting and removing trees, and forcefully encroaching forest zone,” thereby causing the government a loss of nearly \$200,000. Father

Moraes said, “In fact, he was attending a meeting with tribal people (at Khadimnagar) when this alleged crime is said to have been committed.” (Material from Catholic News Service)

BOOKS

Books published recently by or about Oblates. The information is in the language in which the book was written unless otherwise noted.

Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay. *Holy Week. Inuit translation of Holy Week liturgies*. Translated by Robert LECHAT, OMI, 2007. 168 pp.

Cò Don Beppino. *Laos, il Calvario di un Popolo*. Edizioni Villadiseriane: Villa di Serio (BG), 2007, 192 pp.

FRITZ Miguel (Paraguay). *Curso de Liturgia*. Fundación en Alianza. Asunción, 2006, 46 pp.

KEMSEKE Mark (Belgique et Pays Bas). *Bernardetta Soubirous: il messaggio di Lourdes (Bernadette Soubirous: de boodschap van Lourdes)*. NDL Editions : Lourdes, 2005, 28 pp.

Perniola, V., SJ. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, Diocese of Trincomalee/Batticola*, Vol. X., Tisara Press: Dehiwala, 2006, 535 pp.

PROVENCHER Normand (Notre-Dame-du-Cap). *Une place à part entière*. Novalis: Ottawa, 2007, 173 pp.

ROSTKOWSKI Marek. *La Cooperazione dei Laici all'attività missionaria della Chiesa nell'insegnamento di Giovanni Paolo II*. Pontificia Università Gregoriana: Roma, 2007, 172 pp.

SCHLITT Dale M. *Experience and Spirit: a Post-Hegelian Philosophical Theology* (United States). Peter Lang Publishing Co.: New York, 2007, 369 pp.

VYSHKOVSKYY Pavlo (Ukraine). *Il martirio della Chiesa cattolica in Ucraina*. Luci sull'Est: Roma, 2007, 230 pp.

Anniversaries -- July 2007

75 Years of Religious Life

1932.07.21	05382	Fr. Raymond Lemieux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1932.07.21	05371	Fr. Nazaire Morissette	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1932.07.21	05367	Fr. Louis-Marie Parent	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

75 Years of Priesthood

1932.07.10	04407	Fr. Joseph Ricaille	Belgium/Netherlands
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70 Years of Religious Life

1937.07.21	06516	Fr. Bruno Dicaire	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1937.07.21	06520	Fr. Lucien Lajeunesse	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1937.07.21	06541	Fr. Roma Payant	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1937.07.21	06645	Fr. Guy Piuze	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1937.07.21	06518	Fr. Elphège Robin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

65 Years of Priesthood

1942.07.12	06700	Fr. Charles Deharveng	Lacombe
1942.07.12	06695	Fr. Carl Rinchart	Belgium/Netherlands

60 Years of Religious Life

1947.07.16	08306	Fr. Yvon Beaudoin	General Administration
1947.07.16	08326	Fr. Gilles LeBlanc	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

60 Years of Priesthood

1947.07.06	07579	Fr. Marcel Ayrinhac	France
1947.07.06	07540	Fr. Joseph Guilbaud	Lacombe
1947.07.06	07546	Fr. André Pouliquen	Cameroon
1947.07.06	07781	Fr. Jean Troncy	France
1947.07.06	07398	Fr. Pierre Veyrat	Lacombe

50 Years of Religious Life

1957.07.25	10270	Fr. Argimiro Alález	Argentina-Chile
1957.07.25	10269	Fr. Eutimio González	Spain
1957.07.25	10401	Fr. Saturnino Lajo	United States
1957.07.26	10315	Fr. Claudio Brisson	Argentine-Chile
1957.07.26	10307	Fr. Robert Châteauneuf	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.07.26	10313	Fr. René Gauthier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.07.26	10305	Fr. Jean-Guy Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.07.26	10312	Fr. Jacques L'Heureux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1957.07.26	10304	Fr. Rodrigo Marcoux	Mexico

50 Years of Priesthood

1957.07.02	09627	Fr. Pancrazio Di Grazia	Italy
1957.07.07	09159	Fr. Pawel Adamski	Poland
1957.07.07	09265	Fr. Bernhard Albers	Central S. A.
1957.07.07	09324	Fr. Wim Cartens	Belgium/Netherlands
1957.07.07	09403	Fr. Johannes Effern	Germany
1957.07.07	09112	Msgr. Adam Exner	Lacombe
1957.07.07	09056	Fr. Fernando Gargantini	Italy
1957.07.07	09015	Fr. Adolph Kaler	United States
1957.07.07	09344	Fr. Piet Souren	Belgium/Netherlands

25 Years of Priesthood

1982.07.02	12405	Fr. Marcos Rivarola	Italy
1982.07.27	12479	Fr. A. Jeevendra Paul	General Administration
1982.07.31	12481	Fr. Joseph A.D. Alex	Colombo
1982.07.31	12478	Fr. Irwin H. Morais	Colombo
1982.07.31	12477	Fr. Anton D. Peterson	Colombo

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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 34-43

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Marc Bérard	Colombo	25/04/1923	Maradana	18/04/2007
Fr. Matthew Casey	United States	13/02/1918	Tewksbury	28/04/2007
Fr. Roland Gagnon	Haiti	24/04/1925	Les Cayes	08/04/2007
Fr. William Leising	United States	31/03/1913	Medford	10/05/2007
Bro. Gérard Saint-Louis	OMI Lacombe	16/04/1921	Richelieu	10/05/2007
Fr. René Ricaille	Belgium/Netherlands	07/10/1923	Barvaux	10/05/2007
Fr. Leo Wetzel	United States	14/04/1926	Lowell	11/05/2007
Fr. William Bonakele Daniel	Northern South Africa	21/06/1935	Suiderberg	12/05/2007
Fr. Marius Nurit	France	25/10/1914	Marseille	13/05/2007
Fr. James Donovan	United States	22/08/1925	Belleville	15/05/2007

“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)