

months, Nigeria has suffered from much religious intolerance. It was on those same paths of suffering that St. Eugene encountered Christ, the crucified Savior, and desired to rebuild His Church.

Secondly, our Constitution 20, quoted above, mentions solidarity as a lesson to learn from the poor. Permit me to say more about that. The Church in Nigeria lives like few others by the solidarity of all the faithful. During the week that I was there, I could see this very concretely. I received so many gifts: a half dozen chickens, two or three goats, a turkey, clothing, two long taxi trips prepaid, liturgical vestments and a large sum of money. The simple folk in the towns are very close to the Church and even those who are wealthier and live in the large cities contribute to their town of origin. The result of this solidarity for us Oblates is that the people who give so generously to us have every right to expect much of us, and they do expect it.

Sociologically and spiritually, can we conclude

that poverty and a vocation to religious and missionary life, in a certain sense, go together? I believe we can! Only the poor seek refuge in God with their whole heart; only they see the urgency of relying on solidarity with others. From the poor, all of us can learn to depend on God in times of want and in persecutions, and to depend on what others give us. The poor challenge young people to be “poor in Spirit,” to give themselves totally to God and to spend themselves for the sake of others. Contact with the poor helps youth understand that a vowed missionary life makes sense.

Yet there remains the concern of the scholastics of Yaoundé about vocations in the west. At least, let us ask ourselves the question: even in secularized countries, could one of the secrets for fostering vocations be a greater closeness to the poor? They are the ones who have the greatest resemblance to missionary religious life and can make it attractive to youth. The Kingdom of God is there!

General Administration

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Studying results of consultation

The Government Committee appointed by the Superior General in Council in 2005 has been working since that time to fulfill a mandate of the 2004 General Chapter, reviewing the structures and functioning of Oblate government, especially regarding the General Chapter, the Central Government, Regions and Units.

Last year, the committee began a consultation of all members of the Congregation regarding some possible changes to the Constitutions and Rules to be studied and decided by the 2010 General Chapter. The committee is grateful to all the Oblates who took part in the consultation which was made available in six languages. There were slightly over 700 Oblates that responded to the questionnaire.

At its March 9-13, 2009, meeting in Rome, the committee studied the results of the consultation and amended some of the items based on

responses to the questionnaire. Their next project is to make this new draft of proposals available to the future capitulars in order to get their opinions prior to the elaboration of a final draft to be discussed at the General Chapter.

A summary of the results of the consultation will be available on the General Chapter page of the Oblate web site: www.omiworld.org.

OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

Biography of Father Albin

A recent addition on the Oblate site (www.omiworld.org), in the “Oblate Library” section, is a new biography of Father ALBINI, written by Yvon BEAUDOIN. His correspondence and a selection of his spiritual writings will follow. Father Albin was the religious who best exemplified the Oblate desired by the Founder, as described in the Rule. He worked seriously to become holy by the practice of the evangelical counsels. Simultaneously and fully, he lived the primary goal of the Congregation, preaching the

Word of God to the poor, as well as the direction of seminaries, the important secondary goal.

For these reasons, a work about Father Albini should have been published sooner in the second series of the collection of *Oblate Writings*, all the more because the Founder himself wanted to begin his cause for canonization and even before Bishop de Mazenod, he received the title "venerable." It was decided to publish first of all some volumes on Fathers TEMPIER and Casimir AUBERT since there were no biographies of these two, while there were several on Father Albini, especially the last one which appeared in 1970, written by Father Louis DELARUE. One could not do more nor better. He delved in an intelligent manner into all the sources that there are and he clearly exposed the historical context.

This new biography recalls just the dates and the essential events in the life of the man, in order to shed light on his writings which form an important part of the entire work. In fact, after the biography of Fr. Albini, one will find his writings, first of all 81 letters or extracts that have been preserved and 53 extracts of about a hundred of his spiritual writings, usually brief notes taken during his lectures and copied on margins of papers or the back of envelopes.

This is the eighth volume in the second series of *Oblate Writings* which will not be printed in the future, but will appear in library section on the Oblate site.

JPIC SERVICE

Blood diamonds and the beat of Congo's drums

Father Camille PICHE', Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office at the General House in Rome, spent Christmas of 2008 on a fact-finding mission to Congo.

Blood diamonds! That is what my trip, December 15, 2008 till January 5, 2009, to Kinshasa and especially to Goma, the war-torn area of North-Kivu and South-Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo evokes. And to diamonds you could add gold, copper, tungsten, uranium, cobalt, coltan, cassiterite, precious stones used to build

our cell-phones and computers, rare but found in abundance in the East and Northeast parts of the DRC. Is it possible that in this day and age, the largest country of Africa, with 70 million inhabitants and with such an abundance of rich minerals people can be so poor? Hundreds of orphans, thousands of undernourished children and emaciated women, jobless youth, people stricken with infectious diseases crowd the Carmelite Sisters' medical dispensary. The Salesian compound is surrounded by countless refugees. The UN mentions 2.5 million people terrorized by armed groups, raped and killed, chased from their villages without water, food or dwelling, to make room for armed mercenaries in search of precious minerals.

Who are these armed groups you may ask? Well! You have the 30 thousand or so genocidal soldiers who moved to the RDC from Rwanda in 1994 led by Laurent Nkunda. The group is called the CNDP (Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple) and dominates the scene. Cunning and ruthless and with an army of 4,000 to 7,000 troops, supported by the Rwanda Government, replenished in combat arms with the complicity of the RDC army and financed by local and Rwandan businessmen who in turn do business with foreign countries like Belgium, Great Britain, Canada, China, France, Finland, Israel, Holland, the USA, South Africa, Switzerland, Dubai, all of which benefit from this largely illicit trade. (UN public report, 2002).

Another significant group is the FDLR (Fédération Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda) involved in clandestine mining operations mainly extracting cassiterite, gold, coltan and tungsten, which they sell to foreign companies, reeking benefits in the millions of dollars. These and maybe 40 more armed groups coming from neighboring countries, some ethnic based, terrorize the whole of East and North-East DRC. The saying is: "You start a war here while I extract gold over there." This made the Congolese Bishops affirm in a December pastoral letter: "*There is no doubt at all that the greed of certain powers is feeding the violence imposed on the population; all conflicts take place in the mining corridors.*"

With an inept government, corrupt officials, an inefficient army and state apparatus, the DRC is unable to protect its citizens, defend its borders, or provide essential services such as proper roads, electricity, water and sewage facilities to the population. *"The DRC," say the Bishops, "is in desperate need of assistance from the International Community to dismantle the armed groups and sincerely re-establish order according to the constitutional law of the country recognized by international law."*

Church institutions, meanwhile, provide education, medical dispensaries and social relief. They give hope to people who otherwise would be in a totally hopeless situation. Church services also offer a reprieve from the drudgery of life or perhaps are the only place where one can feel safe, offering friendship and peace, and listening

to words that give life and meaning to one's life. Churches are full, every service lasting 2 to 3 hours with electric organ and drum ensemble and boisterous church choirs with beautiful voices in harmony, sung in lingala while a dozen swaying acolytes and readers, including the celebrant, make the processional entrance or present the offerings at the altar. People praise God with heart, body and soul.

Pledging the Sunday collection on the feast of Epiphany to the Church of Africa, Pope Benedict XVI also asked the worldwide Church to do likewise. *"Africa needs our help and must not again be forgotten in this profoundly changing world. During this next decade, our efforts and our prayers must be sustained that an authentic hope may rise up in the hearts of the people of Africa."*

Europe

FRANCE

René Motte: Lover of Scripture

"Blessed is the man who delights in the Law of the Lord. He is like a tree planted by a stream; its leaves will never wither."

Our brother, René MOTTE, returned to the house of the Father on Wednesday, February 4, 2009.

Those who knew René will remember him especially as the lover of Scripture, more than being the Assistant General to Fathers HANLEY and JETTE, more than being the founder of the International de Mazonod Center. As a student at the École Biblique in Jerusalem, he had taken part in the excavations under Fr. Roland de Vaux, including those at Qumran. He wrote the articles *David, Dispersion, Egypte, Heure*, for the *Vocabulaire de Theologie Biblique*.

He read the Old Testament in Hebrew. But more than being a text to study, Scripture for him was the Word of God which nourished his life. He taught it so that it could also nourish the life of others, always in view of building up the Faith and the Church. It was his permanent

work of formation. That was especially his work as professor at Solignac, the scholasticate of the French Provinces, where he arrived in 1950, and where he was professor, formator and superior. During his time, more than 400 scholastics, mainly from France, but also from Holland, Laos, Cameroon and Thailand, did their formation there, before leaving to work in France or in the missions. In formation, Solignac emphasized Scripture, with three young professors, Jacques MAIGRET, Marius BOBICHON and René, who were also friendly rivals.

Along with his Biblical qualifications, René was also an accomplished organist, which he put at the service of liturgical celebrations. In the old 13th century abbey at Solignac, the choir would sometimes perform hymns he composed, but which he, unfortunately, never wanted to publish.

With so many others, René lived the years of the Vatican Council with faith and hope. From it, he looked for an "aggiornamento" in the Church, internal reform, new energy for the Mission, Renewed ecumenical dialogue, and new relations with Judaism. From then on, one of the constants of his life was "Don't touch the Council!"

Just as Solignac was being closed as a house of formation, in 1972, René was elected as a delegate from France-Nord to the General Chapter. Unexpectedly the Chapter elected him as Assistant General to Fr. Dick HANLEY, and he continued as such to Fr. Fernand JETTE. René would sometimes say that he didn't quite know what it meant to be Assistant general. But others can testify how he served the whole Congregation in that office. He played a large part in the preparation of the new Constitutions, voted in at the Chapter of 1980. He helped edit the first *Directory of Formation*. He also visited Cameroon-Chad and Zaire, at the time when the opponents of apartheid did not allow the General Councillor for Africa, Fr. HOGAN to get a visa for those countries.

In 1986 he left Rome and the General Administration to go to Aix en Provence. He was asked to "make the house of the founding into a center of permanent formation for the Oblates", the International de Mazenod Center. Among the first to use it was the new General Administration itself. "René Motte led us in the steps of and into the very heart of the Founder. That very down-to-earth experience in the places that Eugene lived renewed in us the features of his spirituality: fervent love for Jesus Christ; united in community like the Apostles; companions in grace, preaching the unchanging actuality of the Cross, and favouring the poor of society. All this is to be lived in the unending battle of nature and grace... as did St. Paul." (Communiqué, October, 1988).

At Aix, René had serious problems with his health. He had an operation for cancer in the autumn of 1987, and was infirm for the rest of his life. He accepted it, did not complain, and continued his work at the Center until he had to leave to go to the nursing home of the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova. His physical strength and capacity for work diminished little by little. In the last year, he was unable to preside at the Eucharist, nor even to pray the daily Office. The last time I saw him, in December 2008, he was dozing. I made some noise, and he opened his eyes and said something like "How wonderful she is, the Virgin Mary." What more can we say! (Michel COURVOISIER omi)

BELGIUM/NETHERLANDS

Father André Nottebaert: Centenarian!

On Saturday, February 7, 2009, there was great activity at Waregem. Everyone had come together – the Provincial, the Mayor, the entire Municipal Council, the family, friends, Oblates from three areas, the "Myriam" Sisters, and others – at the invitation of the Waregem community, to celebrate the 100th birthday of Fr. André NOTTEBAERT. Everything was prepared – the welcome, a full chapel, the organ and trumpets, the aperitifs, speeches, a Guest Book, music, a video of his life, a banquet with some fine wine, and good humor. Everyone will remember this great event, celebrating the centenary of our confrere, Fr. André. The provincial, Fr. Georges VERVUST, caught the spirit of the day. The following is part of the homily that he gave.

When I asked André this week what it meant for him to be 100 years old, he answered: "100 years ... it passes, and yet, it is full of unexpected things." Then he began to go into details about Velaines, where he had been professor, and about the war – being a refugee in France, and then the return to Velaines, and about other places. But – he said – you know all that better than I do, since you have made notes on it all.

In fact, I had already made up a curriculum vitae of André from the provincial dossier, and it was to that to which he referred. There we have all his numerous activities: professor at Velaines, Waregem, and Gijzegem; superior and then Provincial; Superior at the Roman Scholasticate; teaching at Regina Mundi; the De Mazenod Retreats; again at Gijzegem and Solignac; many retreats; the charismatic renewal; "Myriam," the Canadian religious congregation ...

As he put it: "I never really had a place to call home ... I was always here and there." And because of that, Oblates from around the world would ask: "How is Fr. Nottebaert? Is he still alive?" He has left his mark on so many people. We have so many reasons to be thankful for so rich a life!

But it is not about all those things that I wanted to ask André, in order to prepare the homily

for this celebration. No; I wanted to find the foundation on which he had built his 100 years. I was looking for the solid base on which André is still standing, after 100 years of life. His answer was most simple: "I live by the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist. That is how God comes to meet us. Very simply He is there; He lives with us in the same house. He calls us, He invites us, and we can go to Him as much as we want. We can expose the Blessed Sacrament, and then we see that He is there... Our Lady is also very important – it is as if she were on a Lazy Susan which always keeps her right in front of me."

And he continued: "I live the whole day in the presence of God; no problem, just like that. When you came in, I had just finished my breviary. And I was sitting there, not dreaming – that time is over – but just in the presence of God. That is why I am never bored. It is the benefit of being deaf – I am not distracted. I am with God and God is with me. That grew while I was preaching retreats – then you always have to be thinking about God, and that is how you get into the habit. For me, in the past, theology was in first place; now it is in second."

Can one put it more simply or more clearly? Can one go more deeply? Here is true wealth. 100 years, and who knows how many more?? (*BULLETIN DE LIAISON* Belgium-South area February, 2009)

SPAIN

We're already on the road: Madrid 2011

Last January 31, at Pozuelo de Alarcón, there was a meeting of the small committee in charge of beginning the preparation for the Oblate Gathering that will take place in 2011 in conjunction with World Youth Day in Madrid.

The team is made up of the director of Youth and Vocation Ministry in the Province of Spain, Fr. Ismael GARCÍA; the Parish Mission Team consisting of Frs. David LÓPEZ and Rafael MARTÍN; two Oblate Sister, Srs. Patricia and Catarina; and two lay youth, Ángel Nuño from Málaga, and Pablo Vallejo from Madrid.

This was the first encounter of the team in order to prepare for the event. We are happy and grateful for this gift that God has given us with the visit of the Pope in our country. We know that the work and the responsibility are huge, but we are ready to face this challenge. We talked about a variety of things: possible dates and places for the Oblate Gathering; our relationship to the diocese; initial materials to get ready; setting up a web site to prepare for the event; material and human resources....

From now on, we will continue to inform everyone about what is happening with our Oblate Gathering. (Comité Oblato de Preparación JMJ 2011 Madrid, <http://jovenesoblatos.over-blog.es/>)

BELGIUM/NETHERLANDS

Brother Omer and his students

For the foreign students at the Catholic University in Leuven who have not been able to secure a permanent boarding prior to their arrival in Belgium, the Oblates have provided warm hospitality and accommodation since 1989 at Kessel Lo, a borough of Leuven.

Supported by his religious community, the Oblate stalwart who has directed this wonderful service from its outset in 1989 is Brother Omer D'HONDT. As a professionally qualified electrician he joined the Oblates at the age of 20. He holds a Diploma in Central Heating and is a qualified motor mechanic. He is also gifted with many self-taught practical and managerial skills. In short, he is a jack-of-all-trades.

Brother Omer loves to work. He is a man who cannot sit about idle, even when others are in a festive mood. To maintain such a gigantic structure with 44 rooms providing accommodation for 60 people was no easy task. Being a perfectionist, he personally supervised everything so that everything was in good shape. After all, the Oblates were providing a service to the students who need the best of conditions to pursue their studies.

He admits that he has never taken a holiday since he entered religious life in 1966. When asked

once, "Brother why don't you take a holiday?" he replied, "I cannot leave my students alone. I must be available for them 24 hours." If a student was arriving at 1.00 a.m., Bro. Omer would patiently stay up to wait for him. He did not grumble about their being late. On the contrary he said, "That is not a problem for me."

Driving to and from the Brussels National Airport was simply a pass-time for him, since he often accompanied 'his' students, but has never himself travelled in an airplane. Before he joined the Oblates, he did an auto-stop pilgrimage to Lourdes. That was his only trip abroad.

He was friendly and quite at home with 'his' students; to sit with them and enjoy a glass of Belgian beer in the evening was something he looked forward to. During the past 30 years, about 12,000 students practically from practically all over the world have been offered accommodation by Bro. Omer.

On January 5, 2009, this Oblate house of hospitality at Kessel Lo was sold to a Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Institute. The Oblate community that lived there has moved into a smaller house at Blanden. Bro. Omer has been appointed by the university administration as the director of a new Students' Residence in Leuven. This new students' residence is not altogether unknown to the Oblates in Belgium. For it had

been already used by the Belgian Oblates as their scholasticate in 1967-68.

The students of the Catholic University of Leuven owe a deep debt of gratitude to Bro. Omer for his generous service and dedication in the past, present and future. (Claude PERERA)

ITALY

Relic of St. Eugene at Focolari Center

Last December 22, while consecrating the altar in the chapel of the International Center of the Focolari Movement at Rocca di Papa (Italy), the Bishop Mattarese of Frascati placed in the altar a relic of St. Eugene de Mazenod, along with those of Sts. Therese of the Child Jesus and Gemma Galgani.

During the homily, the bishop read a testimony from Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Folcolari Movement and whose body lies in the chapel: "The faith of Saint Eugene in the Church was like a rock. Even though a great founder, he was much more a father figure. And one finds in him a distinct Marian influence: he has the heart of the Mother. He is great because he held, as his fundamental inspiration, the law of the new alliance, that of Jesus. We see him totally intent on cementing into place the bricks of his masterpiece, encouraging mutual love and spreading that most special love which he feels for his own and which comes from 'a heart of flesh.'"

Asia-Oceania

BANGLADESH

Evangelizing the Tea Estates

In an effort to evangelize according to the spirit of their *Constitutions and Rules*, Oblates in Bangladesh are collaborating with groups of religious Sisters, sparing no effort to awaken or to reawaken the faith in the people to whom they are sent, and helping them to discover "who Christ is." Father Subash COSTA and his co-workers are bringing a gospel message to the thousands who live and work on Tea Estates.

To put this missionary work into some perspective, Fr. Costa explains that there are 250 Tea Estates in

Bangladesh and about 700,000 tea estate residents. Among them are over 100,000 children of school age, but only 18,000 are registered as students. Owners and managers of the Tea Estates would rather see the children begin working at an early age than go to school. There is no government controlled school on any estate.

For generations, people have been working on these estates, but they do not have the right to possess a piece of land of their own. According to the law for workers, each family should live in a house with reasonable facilities. In reality, all members of a family live in one unhealthy room, suffering from the rain and the cold.

There is a serious health care problem related to poor nutrition and lack of good hospitals with medicine. Therefore, the death rate on the estates is very high.

Every Tea Estate maintains a well-stocked drinking establishment to provide alcohol so that the workers can forget their current misery.

There are 6 or 7 members in each family, but only one member per family is permanently employed on the estate. They cannot even buy a kilogram of rice with their daily wage. There is little or no job security and retirement benefits are very small.

With only about 100,000 residents on the estates permanently employed, that leaves 600,000 without a steady job. This unfortunate rate of unemployment leads to much frustration, especially for the youth who have scant hope for their own future.

With all this, the Oblates continue to proclaim the Word of God, establishing Christian communities on the estates and trying to make the Church deeply rooted in the local culture and responsible for its own development and growth. Like so many Oblates before them in many parts of the world, they announce the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and a new world born of the resurrection. (*OMI Bangladesh Flashes*, December 2008)

PHILIPPINES Internacionalidad, SI!

Two Filipino scholastics arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, last November 25, 2008, a few months ahead of the beginning of a new school year at the Oblate Argentina-Chile scholasticate in Cordoba. Mark “Berbs” PAGENTE and Angelo Roberto “Bobby” DIANA are the very first Filipino Oblates to be sent to complete their scholasticate studies in Latin America. It is a new initiative on the part of the Philippine Province to send scholastics to post-novitiate houses other than the International Scholasticate in Rome, in order to offer new and varied experiences of the global context in which Oblates are called to mission. At present, the Province still has one scholastic in Rome—Albert DAMIAO—who is expected to complete his theological studies there in 2009.

As part of their initial preparation, Mark and Bobby spent 5 months studying Spanish at the Instituto Cervantes in Manila. Both also had started studying theology at the Loyola School of Theology before they were sent to complete their studies in Argentina, to be with other Oblate scholastics from the Latin American region. (www.omiphil.org)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE The Beating Heart of St. Eugene

Over a decade ago Oblates around the world gathered in Rome to witness the proclamation of St. Eugene de Mazenod as an example of sainthood, a “man of Advent” for today’s world, bringing the reality of God into the human condition. Canonization of the founder came with a realization that the charism of the saint doesn’t belong exclusively to the congregation. The people of God want to share this charism and want to become the Oblates’ partners in mission. This was the beginning of a challenging task – to define just what association with the Oblates and sharing in this charism would mean in practice. And we still struggle with a clear answer...

I believe that along with the deliberations of many brain storming committees, it is very important to listen to the spirit speaking to the Church. St. Eugene de Mazenod indeed speaks loudly in Labrador West. In the small chapel of the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help there is a piece of the heart of St. Eugene. This is not only a relic of the past, but also a symbol of the living charism of St. Eugene in the people of Labrador West. You can feel this heart beating in a renewed rhythm, with enthusiasm, passion and new life.

A few years ago the first group of Friends of St. Eugene pledged during their installation to embrace the charism of St. Eugene in very practical ways, on local, national and international levels. For the past couple of years, the Friends

of St. Eugene had the courage to raise the funds necessary to support Oblate mission projects, to help change the lives of the poor in Zimbabwe and Kenya.

A few months ago this group took on a daunting and challenging endeavor to be missionaries among their own, to prepare and present a Lenten Mission for the parishes of Labrador West. The pastoral team and councils came to the realization that the priority in our ministry should be Evangelization. The time of waiting for people to come is over; the missionary mandate “Go out . . . and proclaim the Good News” is more appropriate now than ever.

A small group of the Friends of St. Eugene began meeting to select a theme and message for the Mission. Inspired by the Mission Statement of OMI Lacombe, and the animation process “On the journey to Emmaus”, they developed an outline which focuses on Welcome Home as the overall anticipated experience of the mission. Fr. André Boyer OMI, who installed the first group of the Friends of St. Eugene in May 2005, has been invited to share his insight and pastoral wisdom as a key note speaker.

In the vision of the Friends of St. Eugene, the first day of the Mission will bring us to realize that “Together we might help one another”. An experience of community gives us support on the shared journey of life. Wherever we find ourselves in life, we know that we are not alone. St. Eugene, in his own struggle to find his identity, his search for the meaning of life, and his longing to belong somewhere, gives us a clear glimpse into the “human side” of a saint.

The second day of the mission depicts two disciples on the road to Emmaus accompanied by a stranger who helps them to put their own personal experience into perspective. They indeed were about to “Experience the love of God”. God himself joins us on the journey of life, motivated by his unconditional love. St. Eugene’s Good Friday encounter clearly exemplifies that a real experience of God’s love is most likely an awakening, a conversion, a turning point in our lives.

There is lots of enthusiasm and passion in the group of Friends of St. Eugene. They offer their gifts of time and talent in so many ways to make the experience of the Parish Mission a true evangelization moment in the lives of the people of Labrador. The charism of St. Eugene is shared and enthusiastically embraced. Isn’t it a truly defining experience of Oblate association? (*Jarek PACHOCKI in www.omilacombe.ca*)

UNITED STATES

Death of an Oblate prophet

St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, 12, that: “*Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues.*” At various times in his life, God designated Fr. Darrell RUIPIPER to live more than one of these charisms. But for those who knew him and his ministry as an Oblate, “prophet” best described him. Darrell went home to the Lord on February 9, 2009.

Protester. Prisoner. Priest. All of these words describe him. A Missionary Oblate since 1958 and a priest since 1963, he devoted his life to promoting equality and care for all of humanity — he called it “building God’s Kingdom.”

His passion first began when he was sent to serve the poor in Brazil. As he wrote in an article for *La Vista Visions*, an Oblate ecological publication, “my time. . . in Brazil was a life-changer. Nothing could have prepared this Iowa farm boy for the shock of the human misery I encountered or the resulting pathos that surged within me.” During the four and a half years Darrell served in Brazil, he was arrested, imprisoned, and finally expelled from the country by the military government.

The suffering of the Brazilian people deeply impacted him, and when he returned to the United States, he was passionate about working to overturn injustices in the world. He worked with the homeless, protested the nuclear arms race (which led to arrests and prison terms), and even traveled to Tehran twice during the Iran hostage crisis.

Over the years, he served as chaplain at a large university, provincial councilor, scholasticate superior, pastor of a racially mixed parish in Chicago, novice master and preacher.

Darrell thought he knew his calling as an Oblate. He was to “leave nothing undared” in the name of justice and peace. Yet, when he met Fr. Thomas Berry, C.P., an expert in ecological studies, his outlook changed. Fr. Berry spoke to Darrell and told him he appreciated the work he was doing, but he suggested that he could better serve the cause of justice and peace through preaching respect for the integrity of creation.

Through research, Fr. Darrell became aware of humanity’s destruction to the environment. He also read the works of Pope John Paul II, who spoke out against ecological abuse. Darrell wrote: “John Paul II said we have not been good stewards of creation. He points to us in the western world and says it is our addiction to consumerism, to comfort, and to convenience that is destroying our home and ourselves.”

Darrell spent the next several years as a traveling preacher. As part of the Oblate Ecological

Initiative, he visited Oblate parishes and institutions preaching what he called “Eco-Missions.” As he explained it: “The missions are designed to be spiritual experiences and consciousness -raising events as well as a springboard to action.”

He believed that everyone is called to take a “stubborn stand” for the future of the human and Earth community. He was convinced that his work was following the example of St. Eugene de Mazenod. “St. Eugene was a man of his times. He read the signs of the times and organized around that, and we must see the signs of the times now.”

A particularly virulent form of leukemia took his life just a few weeks after the diagnosis. Yet always the one to see the humorous view of life, in his last message on his internet blog, he wrote: “So we share what the Native Americans call the same 'bone country'.....and, of course all of us come from the same earth/dirt/ and dust... which reminds me of my new Ash Wednesday blessing: ‘Remember man (sic) that you are biodegradable and you will be recycled.’” (Some of this information is taken from *Oblates, January-February 2006*)

Latin America

BAJA CALIFORNIA MISSION Threads of Hope

The reality is this: The cost of living is the same in Tijuana as it is just across the border in the United States. However, a “good” job at a factory in Tijuana pays only \$80 per week, while in the U.S. the Federal minimum wage pays \$234 per week. As you can imagine, this discrepancy makes living in Tijuana difficult, if not impossible. After all, in Tijuana, laborers will often work over 60 hours each week compared to 40 in the U.S. Can you imagine having to decide between working overtime to feed your family or going home to have the chance to see them?

The Oblates live amongst the poor and reach out to those living in deplorable conditions. In the area known as La Morita, poverty is profound. Houses made from garage doors line the bumpy

dirt roads. Wires run across the ground in a desperate and dangerous attempt to get electricity to nearby homes.

Oblates have established the San Eugenio Mission in La Morita. Here, the underprivileged can visit a doctor, dentist, or even see a physical therapist without the worry of cost. Children can study after school or learn to use a computer. Women gather to learn trades that will benefit their families. These services are a vital part of everyday survival for the 180,000 people living in this Oblate mission, and without the Oblates, they would never have these extraordinary opportunities.

Even the soft hum of sewing machines is the sound of hope for several women living in La Morita. Working busily, these women strive to learn the sewing techniques necessary to make things like school uniforms and dresses. To them,

this is not a hobby. Learning these skills for \$1 per session could transform their lives and the lives of their children.

In 1998, a sewing class made its La Morita Mission debut at the “Hall of the Rainbow,” a small garage on the Oblate property. Today, the group meets in the basement of the clinic. The class was founded by a woman named Mariana, whose photograph now hangs as a memorial on the wall of the classroom. When Mariana passed away from cancer, Angélica stepped into her shoes as the instructor of this fundamental class.

Angélica understands the vitality of the sewing program. She explains that too many people are selfish with their time and talent. “I have to teach,” she says. Working to supply the class with a steady flow of challenges, she buys sewing publications with designs from local stands. Finding new and exciting techniques isn’t Angélica’s only struggle. The class shares only three sewing machines, while the small classroom

can often find ten or more eager students waiting for a turn to test their skills.

In three months time, the women will learn how to make a skirt. In another three months, they will have perfected the techniques for blouse making. Many of the women in the class come primarily to learn how to make school uniforms. This skill is not only helpful for their own children’s use, but they can then take requests from other parents who do not know how to sew. A uniform will typically take two to three hours to make, and the seamstress will receive \$5 for the end result.

The women gathered together in the tiny classroom at the La Morita Mission are eager. They are eager to learn, eager to share, and eager to change the lives of their families with every \$5 uniform that is created. To them, sewing is more than a diversion from realities of life. Sewing is the clothing on their backs, the food on the table, and the roofs over their heads. (Pablo WILHELM in *Oblates*, Spring 2008)

Africa-Madagascar

BOTSWANA MISSION **A new church for Pitsane**

The congregation of St. John the Apostle, at Pitsane, in Botswana, has celebrated the official opening of their new church, on Saturday, 21st February 2009. Father Tšeliso Augustinus TENTE gives us a short history of the church at Pitsane:

Pitsane is one of the nine out-stations under Thusong-ya-Modimo, situated in the Barolong area, along the road leading to the Ramatlabana border, in the southern part of Botswana. Initially, this mission was served by missionaries from St. Theresa parish in Lobatse. Christians from Pitsane were members of St. Francis out-station in Bethete, which is about 15km from Pitsane.

The faithful, especially the sick and the elderly, could not easily make it to Bethete. In 1981, they were allowed to find a place within Pitsane where they could meet and worship on Sundays. The Village Development Committee agreed

that the faithful could use their building for the worship. Eventually all the Christians from Pitsane stopped going to Bethete and joined the sick and the elderly. This new phenomenon was a clear indication that there was a need to build a house of prayer for the Christians at Pitsane.

The site for the church was identified and the Land Board allocated the site for the church building. In June 2008 the building work was started, and it was completed towards the end of the same year.

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner stone,” (Eph 2:20), the mission of Botswana continues to grow into a holy temple, “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (v.22). (Maoblata, March 2009)

CAMEROON **A growing Church in a tropical forest**

Bishop Eugeniusz JURETZKO tells of the Oblate

mission in his diocese in Cameroon.

Lately, we had very poor connections with the outside world. For three months, the internet did not work, nor did the fax. Thanks to a contact in the city, we have succeeded in sending you some news of our diocese, in the tropical forest of Cameroon.

Our communities are experiencing wonderful growth. As happens each year, last year we also had many candidates for baptism, youth and adults. About 300 adults were baptized; add to that the many infant baptisms. One of our Oblates dedicates his time exclusively to the formation of catechists and to the spiritual direction of our "collaborators in the apostolate." We already see the benefit among the catechists who, in this year of St. Paul, are becoming familiar in a special way with the great Apostle of the Nations, their model.

On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul last year, I had the joy of ordaining a diocesan priest, the eleventh since the founding of our diocese in 1991; the twelfth was ordained on February 2. Four other priests coming from the dioceses of Garoua, Bafussam and Edea also work in our diocese. So the number of priests has grown considerably. In 1991, we began with five priests; today there are 21. At the diocesan seminary, there are ten candidates. Their perseverance and the grace of God allow us to count on two priestly ordinations per year. Thanks to the activity of the new movements for adults, youth and children, the spiritual life in the parishes is very much vibrant.

Our social involvement is particularly in the area of health. We have five dispensaries for walk-in care and a hospital for more substantial treatment. Our care-givers work with great self-sacrifice. We can say the same about our teaching personnel in the primary schools and in the kindergartens. Financially, we are somewhat better off since the salary of the teachers is not totally our responsibility. The towns have taken charge of the salaries of eight teachers and for the rest, the parents now contribute about half. As far as constructions are concerned, in spite

of abundant rain and wind, the construction of the new church at Yokadouma is moving forward. Last year, we were able to finish three chapels; a fourth is under construction. We hope to complete the major projects this year. The participation of the faithful is remarkable, given their modest conditions. (*Der Weinberg*, March 2009)

GUINEA BISSAU

Two Political Assassinations

On the night of Sunday, March 1, 2009, a bomb attack killed the Army Chief of Staff, General Batista Tagbe. Many thought that the order had come directly from the President of the Republic. That same night, a large number of well-armed soldiers left Mansoa for Bissau (60 km.). They surrounded the house of President Nino Vieira, entered, and shot him to death.

That is the news that we have received, and which you already probably know. So, within a few hours, Guinea Bissau found itself without the Army Chief, and the President. All roads and borders were immediately closed.

For two days the roads were almost empty. Now it seems that the situation is slowly returning to normal. The government and the army chiefs have met, and have decided to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the whole sad affair.

I have spoken with some fellow Guineans. It seems that what happened was more or less expected, but there are some unclear issues. How could Nino have ordered the attack against his rival, knowing well enough that he would be held responsible? And knowing that, why did he stay quietly in his house? These are questions everyone is asking. Also, since Guinea has become the "beloved sister" of Columbia, people are asking whether drug smuggling has something to do with the two assassinations.

The military, speaking through Zamora Induta (whom we knew during our language course), has said that they have no interest in taking power, and that they respect the Constitution. In fact, the President of the Assembly has become the

temporary President of the Republic, according to the Constitution. That is a positive point in this whole sad affair. We now await new elections, hopefully within two months, though I think that would be difficult.

Yesterday, as I was going along the main road on my way to the Curia, I thought: This road used to

be closed at least once a week to let Nino go by, on his way to the airport. Besides, he was living so well in his house, with his honours and power. In one night, all that is gone. Those mourning for him are only those connected to drug trafficking, and other dishonest acts. And now even they, who felt so strong and safe, are also in fear for their situation. (Fr. Celso CORBIOLI)

Anniversaries for April 2009

60 Years of Priesthood

1949.04.24	08119	Fr. Jacques Dherbomez	France
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50 Years of Religious Life

1959.04.26	10623	Fr. Etienne Van Doosselaere	Belgium/Netherlands
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50 Years of Priesthood

1959.04.04	09293	Fr. Bernard Ménard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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25 Years of Priesthood

1984.04.13	12527	Fr. Eduardo Tanudtanud	Philippines
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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 9-21

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Réal Boissonneault	N.D.-du-Cap	12/02/1938	Québec	13/02/2009
Fr. Martin McMahon	United States	07/09/1930	Buffalo	14/02/2009
Bro. David Schell	United States	14/08/1931	Belleville	17/02/2009
Bro. Danna Gauthreaux	United States	15/12/1945	San Antonio	19/02/2009
Fr. Joseph-Appolinaire Frédéric	Haiti	06/02/1955	Tewksbury	19/02/2009
Fr. François Camatta	France	07/04/1921	Côte Saint André	20/02/2009
Fr. Roger Schoenhofen	United States	03/01/1941	Saint Louis	25/02/2009
Fr. Emmanuel Mariampillai	Colombo	27/07/1924	Chennai	27/02/2009
Fr. Erberto Cerracchio	Italy	01/02/1922	Maddaloni	27/02/2009
Fr. Eugene Ford	Anglo-Irish	12/15/1920	London	02/03/2009
Fr. René Motte	France	06/08/1924	Aix-en-Provence	04/03/2009
Fr. Gérard Marsaud	France	12/06/1934	Le Mans	08/03/2009
Bro. Antonin Gagnon	N.D.-du-Cap	19/11/1923	Richelieu	11/03/2009

“They are before God, bearing the sign, the kind of character proper to our Institute, the vows common to all its members, the firm habit of the same virtues. We are linked to them by the bonds of a special charity. They are still our brothers and we are theirs. They now live in our mother-house, our main residence. The prayers and the love they retain for us will one day draw us to them and we shall live in our place of rest together with them.” (Letter of Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)

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