



### Father General's Missionary Meditation Living in His presence

Sometimes our lives are very busy. But how does that affect our relationship with God? We say that we want to be faithful disciples of Christ, to live continually in his presence and to live the Gospel. Nevertheless, we must admit that our daily hustle and bustle often imposes upon us its own logic. Whether one is driving a car or making purchases, whether one is busy about forming social relationships or organizing activities, one should not become so absorbed in it that he becomes dangerously detached from a life of faith, hope and charity.

Are there ways to counteract these tendencies? In my own surroundings, will it be possible for me to remain in the presence of God and in the constant pursuit of His will? Here is a project that could serve us well at the conclusion of Lent and at the beginning of the Paschal season, a time that should distinguish itself by a greater sense of the presence of the Risen Lord and of the Spirit.

First, we must state that the solution is not to be found in praying all day long. It's good and healthy to give space, each in its proper amount, both to our prayer life and to external activities. Each thing must have its own privileged time and, therefore, take our undivided attention. There is a psalm that says we need to give each thing its proper place. The psalmist says first that the Lord "made the heavens and the earth," but then he states: "The heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth is given to us." (Psalm 115:15-16) God is the origin of everything, of heaven and of earth, but He has given to earthly activities each its own space.

Nevertheless, in second place, we must also recognize that in certain moments, prayer and

action must correspond, must merge. If that does not happen, one could become somewhat schizophrenic, something which we criticize in others; for example, in politicians who present themselves as practicing Christians but don't act very Christian. The same could happen to us unless we find a practical way to connect our prayer life and our action in the midst of our daily hustle and bustle.

There are many ways to do this. For example, it is a question of wanting to develop a contemplative view of the events of each day. The Constitutions and Rules of the Oblates say that they "seek his presence in the hearts of the people and in the events of daily life as well as in the Word of God, in the sacraments and in prayer." (C 31) But for this reflection, I would like to share just one element that could be helpful in living the presence of God: I want to propose that very brief kind of prayer that can be inserted into any moment of the day, without interrupting the flow of activities. The Oblate tradition presents us with a rich variety of this sort of prayer methods (just look at our little book of Oblate prayer); each one will be able to try and then choose what suits him best. So here are some suggestions; they are things that I have found useful for myself:

- Remember a Bible passage that has caught my attention.
- Make a brief examination of conscience: what have I done well and not so well in the course of the day?
- Express my faith in prayers of "oblation" such as: Lord, I trust in you. Happy, Lord, happy. (St. Alberto Hurtado); My God, I don't enjoy

this, but I offer it up for....; Divine Spirit, come and descend upon us here; Thanks, Lord, for the little humiliations.

- Pray for a friend who is standing up in front of us making a speech or giving his opinion on an important topic.
- Visit the Blessed Sacrament in a chapel or a church.
- Pray the rosary.

These are small things that can help place us again in the presence of God. One should not exaggerate these practices, but in an atmosphere that tends

to impose upon us its own ways of thinking and acting, amidst a flood of information, moments of prayer like this can remind us of who we are: followers of Christ who died and rose again. After a brief moment, we will carry on with our activities, but now in the manner of what the Letter to the Colossians says: “Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord.” (Col 3:23) Although they are individual and secret practices, they will not fail to communicate grace to others if we ourselves succeed at keeping ourselves more and more in the presence of God.

## General Administration

### OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE Let's take a look!

There is a new link on the lower left side of the Home Page of our internet site, OMIWORLD. It says “Video.” In fact, it's a link to a recently created page where it will be possible to look at videos about the Oblates, their mission and their history.

We have begun with three videos dug out of our General Archives in Rome. They take us back at least 50 years: the mission with the Eskimos;

the mission in Mackenzie; and the visit of the 26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter with Pope John XXIII in 1959.

This innovation is made possible without cost by the famous *YouTube*. Flipping through its pages, we learned that the Oblates are already present there. Therefore, we hope that in the future we can enrich our section with the best and most meaningful OMI videos on the web. For that reason, we ask you to let us know in the future about your own initiatives in this regard. Just write to [webmaster@omiworld.org](mailto:webmaster@omiworld.org).

## Latin America

### BRAZIL Oblates at the World Social Forum 2009 (part 2)

Is there something that gives meaning to the search for dialogue, discussion and friendship between the mission of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the various social movements, political parties and non-governmental groups responsible for the organization of the World Social Forum as a platform capable of realizing Another Possible World?

With the celebration of its 183 years of existence (17/02/2009), the Congregation offers to the Church and the world the witness of the creative power of the Gospel of Jesus which, once brought to life in time and in history by St. Eugene de Mazenod and his brother missionaries, now comes

to us with unparalleled vigor, challenging us to confront the *crises and opportunities of today* with the same faith and apostolic commitment that were alive in the founding experience of Aix-en-Provence.

In this way, as a religious Congregation in communion with the Church of Jesus and attentive to the calls of God in human history, the Oblates have tried to collaborate in the formation of *subjects of the Kingdom of God*, i.e., persons involved in the building of *another world* through the many missionary services offered to the Church and to society, in response to the needs of the sociocultural reality in which the people we serve reside, as well as the communities where we live.

But since we know that it is a huge challenge

to build and sustain another world such as the one dreamed of, announced and begun by Jesus of Nazareth as Kingdom of God, in which they were quite different, the values, the interpersonal relationships and the sociopolitical practices set up to guide life in society, quickly we realize that we must educate ourselves in order to accept and respect whatever is *different*, seeking beyond ourselves the *other* perspectives, experiences and realities capable of bringing about the “mission” to restore and make whole again humanity and nature.

In this regard, we realize that although couched in religious terminology, our *task* concerns the great responsibility that humans have when confronted with the evils that threaten the destiny of humanity and nature.

Since the problem that challenges us is so enormous, we find indispensable the values of dialogue, openness and understanding, so that, in a healthy interchange among the religious, political and scientific views of life, for example, we can define effective means and strategies capable of resolving and/or lessening the principal problems that afflict humankind, opening the way for *Another Possible World*, as the activists of the World Social Forum proclaim, debate and seem to want to strengthen.

Through this reflection of ours, we would risk concluding that there are various reasons to justify the importance of the interchange that the Oblates are trying to augment on the international stage of the World Social Forum. Let's look at some of them.

While respecting the ethical distinctiveness and ideological character of each model, a parallel between the ideal of the *Kingdom of God* and the proposal of *Another Possible World* allows us to uphold the utopia of a *new reality and new values*, maintaining the unflinching critique of the present model of development and production that destroys nature and creates great numbers of disenfranchised in a sociopolitical organization that is unequal and unjust in the distribution of powers, goods and services.

The forums are platforms for collective building

which foster a harmonious coming together of values, ideologies and different perspectives, offering itself as a favorable space for the debate of themes relevant to humanity, capable of favoring education for tolerance and respect for the social, religious, ethnic and sexual diversity of those who enrich it.

With the internationality of the forums, we discover new and other cultures. The struggles of ethnic and racial minorities are empowered. Links of solidarity are fostered. The destruction of the environment and the violation of human rights by powerful international companies are soundly condemned.

Even with a few organizational difficulties, we encounter in the forums important places for seminars, debates, reflections, presentation of videos and street performances that serve to enrich our intellect and the human capacity to dream about that which does not yet exist but could be done. And there were many voices that spoke: specialists, women, the indigenous, youth, etc.

The simple fact of having participated in a World Social Forum is already enough to give us rich memories, experiences and feelings which call to our attention the need to “do something” in order to produce *Another Possible World*. We learn that it is not acceptable, the frivolous manner in which we are accustomed to look at the absurdities of social exclusion, hunger, poverty, misery, war and the destruction of the environment.

And to live the experience of the World Social Forum along with thirty other Oblates in Belém do Pará, learning by means of the brotherhood and solidarity of missionaries from my own country, Congo, Zambia, Czech Republic, Haiti, Sri Lanka, the USA, Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay, through the inspiration of the Oblate Service of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, was important because it allowed us to live our missionary internationality in a context in which we felt ourselves *citizens of the world*, co-responsible for the destiny of humanity, sharing dreams and hopes in a large multi-ethnic agora which allowed us to experience, at least for a few days, the signs of *Another Possible World*.

(Bro. Lindomar de Abreu DANTAS). **For part 1, see edition 485 OMI Information.**

## BRAZIL

### Pre-novices as evangelizers

*Fr. Robert VALICOURT writes to us about the efforts of young candidates for Oblate life to evangelize during their time of formation.*

In 2009, nine young men are doing their third year of philosophy; one is in the second year; and three of them, who spent a year at Belém, have passed their exams and have been admitted into the first year.

The secondary schools are very, very weak and, for the first year at the university – PUC – the youngsters have to struggle to survive. But in their second year, they already have some experience which puts that at ease. We struggle with individualism and we have managed to achieve a community life that is very fraternal and united.

To help us, we have a sister who is very competent in psychology and who comes twice a month for personal and group counseling. An Oblate priest and another sister help us with the spiritual life. We are very solicitous to create a habit of personal prayer. If we are going to be among the poor in risky situations, we must have a very strong spirituality; otherwise, the missionaries won't stick with it when confronted with so much misery and suffering. They made a lot of progress this year.

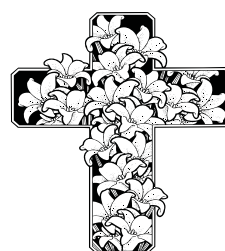
On weekends, they try to do some missionary and apostolic work.

- Two of them, out of concern for the spread of trafficking and use of drugs among children and adolescents, have organized some “capoeira” groups, a sort of dance and martial arts from the time of slavery of the Blacks.
- Others have organized some arts and crafts groups.
- Some have helped the young people to come together and form a group.
- Others are involved in the Childhood Apostolate, a national movement, where those involved follow the development of

children, from birth to age four. In Brazil, they have been able to lower infant mortality considerably.

- Others have increased the number of small “groups for life,” or evangelization groups. From 10 to 20 persons meet at the home of one of the members of the group to meditate on the Word of God, sing, pray and reflect on the problems of their street or neighborhood, and then to act. We have 23 of these groups.
- We also take part in a group that is battling alcoholism and drugs. Here's an example: Alex, 35 years old, father of a family, was on the point of separating from his wife because he drank a lot and used “hard” drugs. Through personal and group counseling, he has managed to put that behind him. He no longer drinks; he no longer uses drugs. He has reconciled with his wife. He has prepared for his First Communion, and then for Confirmation; on December 13, they were married in the church. And we have other victories...
- We have spent two years forming a small Catholic community in a “favela” of a nearby parish where the pastor has never set foot! Of course, they are living in the midst of traffickers and there are quite a few murders.
- One of the young men has organized a popular movement: “Movement in favor of Justice and Life,” with five commissions: the housing commission; the education commission; the health commission; the cultural commission; and the commission for fighting drugs and alcoholism.

There remains a lot more to do. But through these missionary and pastoral initiatives, we help these future Oblates to develop their Oblate missionary vocation among the poorest of the poor, at the service of Justice and Peace, and for the evangelization of peoples. ([www.oblatfrance.com](http://www.oblatfrance.com))



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## Canada-United States

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**OMI LACOMBE**

### **People Who Love to Sing**

Searching for a desired song sends most of us to a mall or, for the more electronically adept, to the iTunes music store. But what do you do when the music you want doesn't exist? Faced with that difficulty, Bogdan OSIECKI undertook the production of a compact disc of music in Inuktitut.

Ministering in the Diocese of Churchill, which covers much of Canada's vast arctic territory, Bogdan became increasingly aware of the need for an easily available source of professional quality music for his Inuit parishioners.

Knowing what the problem was, the next step was a solution. Bogdan was the right man with the right mix of talent and experience for the job, having worked with music for the past thirty-five years. In an interview, he said: "By my nature I'm a musician; I've played all my life. As a young Oblate, I was always directed toward music."

Beginning September 2007, contact was made with Chris Coleman of Leopard Frog Studio in Kingston, Ontario. Chris then traveled to Kugaaruk, Nunavut and spent a week recording in the church. The material was taken back to Kingston to be properly mixed; later, Bogdan traveled to Kingston to help with the process and in doing so more music tracks were added.

The CD, entitled *Peace in my Heart*, consists of eighteen tracks, three of which are prayers in Inuktitut. None of the songs are 'performance' pieces but are simply traditional hymns used regularly at Sunday Mass – Inuktitut translations of English or French songs. Bogdan put his multiple musical talents to good use and can be heard playing the keyboard, guitars, violin, trumpet, flute snare drum and other percussion instruments. The 'choir', Bogdan explained, isn't a choir. "We don't exist as a choir; it's just people who gather on Sunday to sing but not a group that gathers professionally. The men are hunters and the women are mothers and grandmothers. They

are simply people who love to sing."

Producing a CD in a northern Inuit community had both its trials and humorous moments, sometimes the two went together! "We had one recording session where we could hear a strange rustling sound in the background. There was no way of removing it so we had to go back and do the recording over ... again, we could hear the sound but we couldn't figure out where it was coming from. We started the recording once more but this time one of us paid special attention to everything going on. Now, you can only understand the problem if you know what life is like in Kugaaruk. This is the North; people wear their parkas all the time. It turned out the sensitive microphones were picking up the sound of their coats. Parkas off. Problem solved! There were other things we had to deal with that a southern recording studio would never think of. People work during the day so recordings had to be done in the evening and when the men weren't out hunting or at meetings. The Church is in the midst of the village so we had to avoid busy times – 'Okay! All clear! No truck coming. We have about three minutes to try this song again!' – nevertheless, there were times we would have to rerecord a song because barking dogs could be heard in the background."

It took a mountain of dedication and effort to bring Bogdan's idea for a CD of hymns in Inuktitut to fruition. Was the effort worth it? "There was a need for music and as a musician I was able to help. The CD brings the gospel message to the houses even if you can't be there. People get the melody and the message and that helps in Church ... and the music and prayers being in Inuktitut help people retain their language. It's something I would think about doing again in a few years but next time, perhaps, in English, as more and more that's the language of young people. It'll take time though because people are shy. Also, money would have to be found to do it. The Diocese of Churchill paid for the production of this one and we're selling them at fifteen dollars each to try and recoup some of the cost."

As Oblates, one of our important founding stories is that of Bishop de Mazenod breaking with tradition and responding to the needs of the time, using his knowledge of the Provençal dialect to reach the poor, untouched by the Church of southern France. The language may

be different, but in northern Canada an Oblate is using his talents to respond to new needs in a new time, so that once again the gospel may be proclaimed to the poor. (Harley MAPES in [www.omilacombe.ca](http://www.omilacombe.ca))

## Asia-Oceania

### ASIA-OCEANIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE (AORC)

#### A busy week in Bangkok

The Major Superiors of the Oblate Asia-Oceania region gathered together at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Bangkok in Samphan, Thailand, for its Asia-Oceania Regional Conference (AORC) annual meeting, from March 1-6, 2009.

The meeting was also graced by Oswald FIRTH, First Assistant General, and Federico LABAGLAY, General Councilor for Asia-Oceania.

The main agenda of this year's AORC annual meeting were the proposed international scholasticate to be established in Manila, and a proposed international Oblate community ministering to youth in Australia. Following the decision at the 2008 AORC annual meeting in Manila, the proposed "Oblate International Scholasticate—Manila" or OISM, seeks to provide scholastics with the important international formation experience as well as enable the region to collaborate on a project that will bring together their human and material resources. The region has set 2011 as the year of the OISM's formal establishment.

On the other hand, the international Oblate community ministering to youth in Australia was seen as currently unfeasible, and thus was shelved in favor of greater sharing of information about, and possible mutual participation in, Oblate youth gatherings in the region.

The annual meeting also took some time to discuss the increasingly desperate security situation in Sri Lanka, as well as the preparations for the coming General Chapter in 2010.

The Asia-Oceania Regional Conference elected Ramon BERNABE to serve a second term as President of the region. Elected councilors to assist him in the Executive Committee were Claudio BERTUCCIO (Thailand) and Clement WAIDYASEKARA (Colombo). Heading the AORC committees were: David ULLRICH (China) of the Treasurers' Committee; Francis Nallappan (India) of the Formation Committee; Paul NADCHETHIRAM (Jaffna) of the Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee; and Aloysius ROY (Pakistan) of the Inter-religious Dialogue & Mission to Secularity Committee.

Rodolfo JACOBÉ, Jr. was also appointed new Permanent Secretary. Two other Filipino Oblates sit in AORC committees—Francis Efren ZABALA is a member of the region's Formation Committee, while Dennis GUI continues to be a member of the Treasurers' Committee. (OMIPhil OBCOM)

### AUSTRALIA

#### Partners in Mission depart for China

Five members of the Australian Oblate Family left our shores in late January to serve in Hong Kong and Beijing as the first lay missionaries under the Oblate Partners in Mission Programme.

The volunteers are: Charles McPhee, of Pius X Parish, Dernancourt, S.A. Charles is a retired secondary school teacher. Clare Dalgity, of St. Eugene's Parish, Burpengary, Qld. Clare is a retired nursing sister. Lucette Brown of Sacred heart Parish, Wodonga Vic. Lucette is not from an Oblate Parish, but has been a MAMI member for many years. She is a retired primary, school teacher. Alex and Toni White of St. David's Parish, Tea Tree Gully. S.A. Toni works in administration in the Adelaide

Archdiocese Office, and Alex is a scientist with the Department of Defence. They will take leave of absence from their employment.

Charles, Clare and Lucette will go to Hong Kong and live as part of the Oblate Community in Notre Dame Parish, Kowloon. They will teach conversational English to students in the three schools (one secondary and two primary) conducted by the Oblates in Kowloon. They will live in apartments on the fifth floor of one of the primary schools, and participate in the daily life of the Oblate community.

Alex and Toni will join the Oblate community in Beijing, where they will teach conversational English to primary school aged children in an orphanage with which the Oblates have a relationship. They will live in an apartment block which also houses some of the orphans and their school.

People serving as Partners in Mission are volunteers; they offer their time and their abilities free of charge, and are also required to cover the cost of their return airfare. In return, the Oblates provide accommodation, food and basic living necessities.

Their work has a spiritual as well as a practical dimension. The volunteers live as part of an Oblate community and, as such, attend daily Mass and Evening Prayer. They must also study the life of our Founder, St Eugene de Mazenod and discuss aspects of his life and example regularly with the priest with whom they live and work. (*MAMI Bulletin*, February 2009)

## PHILIPPINES

### Peace Weaver Award for Rey Roda

The late Rey RODA was posthumously awarded the Peace Weaver Award by the Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ) and the Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace in ceremonies held at the Garden Orchid Hotel, Zamboanga City, last November 30, 2008. Fr. Ramon BERNABE, Provincial of the Philippines, and Bishop Angelito LAMPON, Vicar Apostolic of Jolo, received the award on behalf of the Oblates,

the Vicariate of Jolo, and the Roda family. The award was in recognition of Rey's being a "disciple of Christ and worker for His peace," citing further that "no higher oblation is there to the cause of peace and human upliftment than martyrdom, like Fr. Roda's."

Rey Roda's first death anniversary was also remembered on January 15, 2009, with celebrations in Tabawan, Tawi-Tawi and in Cotabato City. Bishop Lampon, Fr. Ramon Bernabe, Fr. Raul BIASBAS, Fr. Rito DAQUIPIL, and Fr. Gillarme Joy Pelino of the Diocese of Marbel (who had spent part of his diaconate with Rey in the Tabawan mission), led the Tabawan community, which turned out in full force, in day-long activities to remember Rey's death. Tabawan's small Christian community celebrated Eucharist early in the morning. Then a parade, which included a considerable cross-section of the community, wended its way through the pathways on stilts. It ended on the spot where Rey was killed, where prayers were said and candles lit. From there, the celebration moved to the nearby clinic begun by Rey on the campus of the public elementary school. The renovated clinic was inaugurated by Bishop Lampon and Milet Mendoza, Rey's close friend and partner in his development projects. A medical and dental mission followed, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Bongao and its partners. In the evening, a program of tributes, songs, and dances manifested the mixed emotions of the day.

Meanwhile, in Cotabato City, Bishop Orlando QUEVEDO, the Oblates of the Cotabato district, family, and friends of Rey celebrated Eucharist at the Our Lady of the Holy Rosary church, then gathered for a breakfast meal. A visit to Rey's grave also marked the remembrance of Rey's life and death.

The Provincial, in his remarks at the Tabawan celebration, expressed the thought that a year of grieving had indeed made a big difference. He cited some signs of overcoming the sorrow: the mission is carried on heroically at Notre Dame of Tabawan and the larger community; Rey's scholars are faithfully continuing their studies (one in fact successfully passed the board exam for certified public accountants, to become

the community's first CPA!); and the bonds of friendship and solidarity among those who believed in Rey have strengthened.

A simple book, based on Rey's writings in the course of his missionary life, is being put together by Fr. Jun MERCADO and Ms. Wijawati Rainu. (OMIPhil OBCOM)

## PAKISTAN

### A time to grow

"Dust, more dust and yet more dust. The dust is like the poor referred to by Christ-always with us, here in Pakistan." This is how one of the pioneer Oblates (probably Fr. Lester SILVA) wrote to *The Missionary Oblate* in 1971 to describe what formed his first impressions of Pakistan. Having reached Karachi on the 14th of February that year, they were in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), their mission territory, on the next day "in near perfect weather." In the receding winter, it must have been quite pleasant in the Punjab. Otherwise, like typical men of the tropics, they would have complained of "heat waves and dust storms" or "freezing cold" too.

The mission was tough and their mighty zeal and enthusiasm were soon to be challenged. Fr. Lester himself left the Delegation and then the priesthood, and six others, both Sri Lankans and locals who joined the Delegation later, were to follow his steps. There were also others who left the Oblates and some left the Province. For those with a sense of history, the mission in Pakistan was a failure.

Perhaps this was why, when I was given obedience to Pakistan, words of encouragement were hard to find from Brother Oblates at home: the only word of encouragement came from Fr. Provincial. However, it is two years now since my coming to Pakistan and I have begun to see a different picture. Dust, the poor, heat and cold are still there, but the Oblates here have now taken strong roots. After years of toil and pain, we are experiencing here a time of bloom. This is evident in the numbers. We have 25 priests, 10 scholastics of whom 2 are in Rome and 4 novices. For the first time in history we have seen the number of local Oblates (13) overtaking the number of foreign Oblates (12). Indeed these are good times for the Oblates in Pakistan.

Yet these are also challenging times. Of the 25 Oblates 10 have yet to complete two years of priestly life. Therefore, we are going through a very delicate period of our history which I am tempted to call the second foundation of the Delegation. In this context the words of advice from the then Superior General of the Oblates, Fr. Leo DESCHÂTELETS to the founding missionaries in Pakistan remain more relevant, "While you are getting better prepared to proclaim the Gospel, be sure that you develop team-work and a solid community life, always according to the circumstances of your daily life. But make sure, without any ostentation but simply leading a life of charity, that your small group will be a sign of hope to those poor people." (Fr. Christy SILVA in Colombo Province Newsletter, January/March 2009)

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### CENTRAL PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

#### Fr. Joseph Anthofer - 1933 – 2009

#### Prashant and Shanti Guru par excellence

Oblates who participated at the Interchapter meeting of 2007 will remember the kind and hospitable Oblate who was the host to those who lodged in the thatch-covered buildings at the Sediba Meditation Centre, on the hilltop overlooking the Good Shepherd Retreat Centre near Hartbeespoort in the Republic of South

Africa. Fr. Joseph "Sepp" ANTHOFER died on March 14, 2009, from injuries sustained in a fall.

He came into this world on April 12, 1933, in Austria. In 1954 he took his first vows as an Oblate at Maria Engelpfort in Germany. In 1957, he took his final vows as an Oblate at Hünfeld, Germany and was ordained a priest there in 1959. After pastoral studies in Canada in 1962 – 1963, he arrived in South Africa in 1964.



Working for many years in the Archdiocese of Bloemfontein and in the Diocese of Kimberly, he was known at various times as a provincial, as an Apostolic Visitor, a friend, and a Christian looking to enrich humanity in the name of Jesus the Messiah. Father Sepp was also known and appreciated as a Prashant and Shanti Guru par excellence.

For a long time, he wanted to open a centre for meditation that would be an instrument to unite and renew all of humanity. On October 9, 1993, Sediba Meditation Centre was blessed by Father Marcello ZAGO, the Superior General of the Oblates, in Hartebeesfontein (Archdiocese of Pretoria).

Before establishing this Centre, Fr Anthofer spent four years studying Zen mediation under a teacher in Japan and Hatha Yoga under an Indian Guru. For the last 16 years, the Spirit of the Lord hovered around the mountain location of Sediba; many people of all walks of life and religion came there. Their spirits found repose and they met God 'face to face.'

Initially, he was rejected by some Christians who could not understand what he was doing. They believed that he wanted to mix the 'un-mixable:' Christianity and Buddhism. Some of the criticism was very unkind.

But Fr. Anthofer was convinced that these comments and perceptions were the result of hatred and ignorance. For him, "Zen meditation is not a religion, but a way of life that is about getting in touch with the inner centre. It opens new ways to understand the mystery of God."

## **KENYA**

### **So far, a busy 2009**

Many things have been happening in Kenya since the New Year:

At the Oblate House in Karen, Nairobi, a wall has set apart the new construction site and a new building is taking shape – a dormitory for ten students. Our present accommodations have been full with a constant change of occupants.

On February 2, four scholastics completed their

regencies and left for theological studies in Cedara, South Africa. They are: Dionisius ANANUA, Fidelis KIMAU, Stephen MUIRIUNGI and Gideon RIMBERIA. Dennis KIARA has remained in Karen and has now settled into the second part of his regency. Joseph MAGAMBO continues his ministry with Mario AZRAK and Iyal Daquin IYO, living in Igandene.

February 10 witnessed the departure of two candidates for novitiate: Robert KAGANE and Sammy KANG'ORIA; thus, breaching the gap of novices from Kenya since 2004. We hope that henceforth the flow may continue.

Our prenovitiate in Karen is full. Besides our seven pre-novices, we have two student priests with us, Anthony MBHEKI from South Africa, studying spirituality at Tangaza College, and Faustin LITANDA, doing English courses this month at the school of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

In Meru, on February 21, a new group of postulants was officially accepted. Four of them signed their commitment to the program of postulancy. They are between twenty to twenty-five years of age.

We have many reasons to be thankful to God for the gifts the Oblate Mission has received in 2008 and these first months of 2009: two new members in Didace MAHUKU and Faustin LITANDA, sent to us from the Democratic Republic of Congo; the coming home of our young Kenyan Oblates and their inspiration to us in their work and in their spirit; and the hope of aspiring Oblates who come to us seeking the Lord and a place to work in His vineyard. (*Submitted by Alfred GROLEAU in www.omilacombe.ca*)

## **CHAD**

### **At the service of persons living with HIV/AIDS**

The Oblates have been involved in the Diocesan Center for Information and Aid of the Sick since the year 2000.

Presently, three Oblates are ministering there: Fr. Achille NUNAKUMY, the director; Brother Maurice DEUZOUMBE, laboratory technician;

and Brother Mirabeau DIATANG, nurse and in charge of medical service.

In Chad, as in many African countries, HIV/AIDS is still considered a punishment from the Most High. Therefore, infected persons, especially suffering from the deafness, the indifference, the derision and the distance of friends and family, find themselves alone, unwanted, abandoned and grief-stricken. So we come along to cry out the very words of our Founder at the Church of the Madeleine in March 1813: *“Come now, learn who you are in the eyes of faith.”*

Here are our main activities:

- Prevention;
- Medical care;
- Psychosocial and spiritual support;
- Supervision of orphans and vulnerable children and of revenue producing activities.

For prevention, we conduct education and formation sessions in parishes, high schools, colleges, youth centers...

Medical care begins with a voluntary examination. There are as many as 20 tests per day. Afterwards, there are appointments with infected persons from Monday through Friday. Right now, we have more than 1350 sick people in our active files; 725 are on anti-retroviral treatment.

With the help of the government or other organizations, we provide school support for more than 600 orphans and vulnerable children. We also provide financial credit to caretakers of orphans for revenue producing activities.

We could do more if the center were better structured for these different services. The amount of work is disproportionate to the number of personnel. Finally, as religious, we encounter cases for which we are unable to provide even minimal support: family visits, patients abandoned in our center...

Every person needs to be loved and listened to; persons living with HIV/SIDA need it even more.

We are with them to listen to them and in return, we let ourselves be evangelized by their simple lives. (Frère Mirabeau DIATANG)

## SENEGAL

### A people of great spirituality

*Fr. Nicola VENTRIGLIA, Foreign Mission Procurator of the Province of Italy, shares his impressions after a trip to Senegal.*

I just returned from our mission in Senegal – Guinea, where I had the joy and the grace of spending a few days with all of our missionaries. They were days full of encounters, emotions, sharing the burdens and the richness of spreading the Gospel. I visited all of our missions. I wish I could adequately express the beauty of the mission, and the charm of this continent which is so poor, yet so beautiful and rich in humanity and in spirituality.

Once again, especially the wonderful spirituality of this people amazed me and made me think. Here are just two examples of what I experienced and admired, with joy and wonder and delight.

At Temento, at our Shrine of Our Lady of Peace, I took part in the interdiocesan pilgrimage. Just the numbers say a lot in the context of a minority presence such as are the Catholics in Senegal: more than four thousand youth participated in the vigil and did the last five kilometers on foot. The next morning, at the Mass presided by the Apostolic Nuncio, the number of faithful had almost doubled.

At Dakar, in our parish in Parcelles, I was able to take part in Stations of the Cross, in a church that was full, not only of adults, but also of many, many youths. There is a tradition during Lent of a procession of youths during the night, moving all over the quarter. Hundreds of young people spent the whole night, praying, singing, and meditating. Their re-entry at 5:30 in the morning was touching: a large wooden cross with Christ upon it, behind a sea of young people with beaming faces.

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## Europe

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**ITALY/SPAIN****Historic Provincial Council meeting**

A Provincial Council meeting that perhaps could be considered “historic” took place on March 18 at the Provincial House of the Oblates at Vermicino, Italy. For the first time, the Oblate Provincial Councils of Italy and Spain met together. The two provincial superiors, Nicola PARETTA of Italy and Fernando DE LA PAZ of Spain, felt that this joint meeting was necessary in view of the unification of the two provinces, a merger that will take place gradually and in well planned steps.

For some time now, the Italian and Spanish Oblates have been collaborating, especially in parish missions, youth ministry and in first formation. There have been many exchanges between the provinces over the past four years.

During this joint Provincial Council meeting, they spoke of the present status of the two provinces; of the opportunities that a common mission can present; and of the steps to take to continue the process already begun. Also taking part were Frs. Ignacio ROIS ALONSO and Paolo ARCHIATI from the General Administration. At the end of the meeting, they set up an *ad hoc* committee composed of four Oblates (two from Italy and two from Spain). Its task will be to help the Provincial Councils in establishing the various steps of the process and the necessary instruments for animating the provinces. All of the participants were satisfied with the work accomplished. At the end of June, there will be another meeting of the two Provincial Councils in Madrid. (Pasquale CASTRILLI in [www.omi.it](http://www.omi.it))

**GERMANY****A day of pilgrimage at Maria Engelport**

On February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Catholic Church celebrated the 17<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Sick, introduced by Pope John Paul II. The Oblates celebrated in a special way

this day for the sick and for all those who care for them, on February 15 at Maria Engelport.

At 3:00 p.m., Bishop Jörg Michael Peter, Auxiliary of Trèves, celebrated, along with six concelebrants, a pilgrims’ Mass, with the participation of about 200 faithful. During the Mass, 25 persons received the Anointing of the Sick. Fr. Werner PIEPER and the Dean, Fr. Ernst-Walter Fuss, also administered the Sacrament of the Sick. The bishop celebrated, as is done at Lourdes, by giving to each sick person a blessing with the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. The celebration ended with prayer at the Lourdes grotto at Maria Engelport.

Then an early evening snack in the community dining room closed this first celebration of the World Day of the Sick at Maria Engelport. The good level of participation augurs well for a repeat of the same next year. (*Nachrichten - Zprávy*, March 2009)

**CZECH REPUBLIC****Exhibit: Congo – Hope is called “a trade”**

From March 17 – 30, the Senate of the Czech Republic was the site of a photography exhibit jointly organized by the Missionary Oblates and the Archdiocesan Caritas of Prague. The objective of the exhibit was to show to the politicians of the Czech Republic some missionary projects in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Caritas presented its project: Long distance adoption; the Oblates’ project is the youth center for street children, “Maluku.” There, the youngsters can learn a trade in order to have a better life than that on the street.

The exhibit was set up in the vestibule of the main chamber of the Senate. At the opening, besides representatives of the Missionary Oblates and Caritas Prague, there were senators from the Christian party and guests representing donors and friends. The experience was rendered all

the more pleasant by Congolese musicians and singers. (Tomáš VYHNÁLEK)

## ITALY

### 13 words. And the other 26,422?

*Father Fabio CIARDI wrote the following editorial for the review, **Missioni OMI**, May 2009.*

“This problem of AIDS, it cannot be resolved with the distribution of condoms.” Thirteen words pronounced by Benedict XVI during his recent trip to Africa. Only 13 words have unleashed a huge uproar all over Europe. Do you know how many words the pope spoke in Africa? 26,435!!! Why did journalists and public opinion take note of only 13 words and avoid the others? Besides motives that are now well known (the pharmaceutical firms march us to the beat of their drum: “with sex, do whatever you want;” an untouchable dogma...), the real motive was to turn the volume of the noise up to such a degree that no one could hear the other 26,422.

One of these “other” words is “malaria,” an illness that threatens over 40% of the world population. Another is “tuberculosis.” Yes, two illnesses much more common and which cause many more deaths than AIDS. But can you guess? Those are illnesses of poor countries, while AIDS is an illness that also attacks rich countries. We can allow ourselves to invest huge capital into research about AIDS because it’s right next door to us. There is not a lot of interest in Africans, but in their AIDS, yes, because it’s our problem too. If people die of malaria or tuberculosis, that’s their business!

But above all, the 13 words of the pope were hurled to the four winds so that one could not hear the other 26,422 strong words in which he confronted the major themes of African reality today: reconciliation, peace, reconstruction, the building of a real democracy, respect for human rights, ways to true development and progress, international solidarity. He spoke also of commercial and political relationships that help in development, that are inspired by fairness, justice and honesty, and that do not feed

private interests and corruption. He spoke of the developed countries keeping their often repeated promise to make available 0.7 % of their GNP as official aid for development.

Everyone can say whatever he wants and everyone, beginning with Zapatero and Sarkozy, defends freedom of speech for those who speak against the Church if it criticizes their comments. Even if the pope is mistaken (and we are not saying that!), shouldn’t he too have the freedom to say what he thinks? But do they really know what he said? He said that the problem of AIDS “cannot be overcome only with money, even though necessary; if the soul is lacking... the scourge cannot be resolved by distributing condoms...” And he proposes a two-fold solution: “firstly, the humanization of sexuality, in other words a spiritual and human renewal bringing a new way of behaving towards one another; and secondly, true friendship, above all with those who are suffering, a readiness - even through personal sacrifice - to be present with those who suffer. And these are the factors that help and bring visible progress.” Is this pope out of his mind or did he say things that are really true? Maybe the ones who are out of their minds are the ones who persevere in any way they can in an old style anti-clericalism, without even trying to listen in depth to what the pope is saying, without knowing what they are contradicting.

Condoms against AIDS might be useful to block and temporarily contain the pandemic, but is that really the most suitable way? Or, instead of taking this shortcut, would it not be better to take the longer road of education to conjugal fidelity and dignified control of one’s sexuality?

## GERMANY

### Being a Brother calls for many talents

For Willibald RAAB, and for many others of his time, religious life began while looking for an apprenticeship. There was already an Oblate in his family, his cousin, Brother Anton RAAB, who, at first, took care of the farm at Molzbach, near Hünfeld, and then continued the same work in South Africa. It was through him, therefore, that Willibald came to know the Oblates. In 1956, he

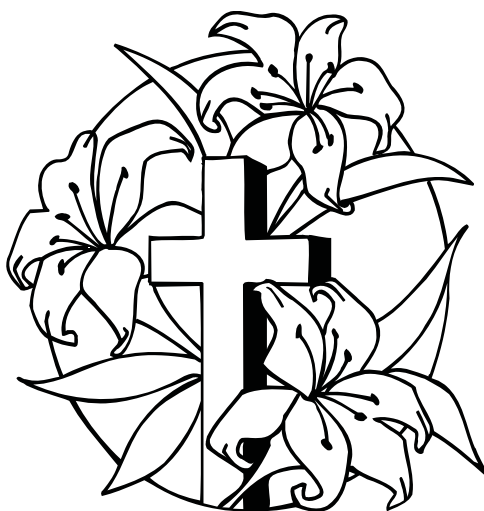
decided to begin an apprenticeship as a carpenter at Bonifatiuskloster in Hünfeld. At that time, the convent was not only a professional school for youth who were studying carpentry, gardening, metal working, book binding and several other professions; it was also, and especially, a place that attracted young men to the vocation of a Brother and then offered them formation.

For Willibald Raab, it just seemed natural to remain at the convent after getting his professional diploma. So in 1960, he began his postulancy, followed by the novitiate. Brother, originally from Franconia, recalls today: "I worked for a long time as a carpenter; then there followed a long period when I had to do other things."

When Brother Raab pronounced his first vows, the Province of Germany was experiencing a period of reconstruction after the war years. The Brothers, and also the scholastics during their vacations, formed what was called the "Team of Master Builders." In the summer of 1962, Willibald Raab joined this group and was part of the team that built the house in Mainz. Since there were already carpenters on the team, he took on other jobs and worked at form-building and concrete. "During the winter months, I could help pouring the floors. I really wanted this job because it involved the use of PVC of which I had no experience; I could really learn a lot."

"Learning a lot" continued for Brother Raab after the completion of the work on the house at Mainz. In the autumn of 1967, after the construction work was finished, the "Team of Master Builders" ceased to be. The Brothers went back to their various communities. For Brother Raab, it was a question of finding a new job. "It was clear to me that I was not going back to carpentry since there were simply too many Brothers who had been formed as carpenters," he recounts. That meant getting busy with something else. For a rather short period, he worked at mailing the magazine, "Der Weinberg," at the same time serving as porter. Besides that, he provided a service of sending books to Oblates and missionaries all over the world. "From 1974 until 1983, I was able once again to work as a carpenter, sort of as a 'belated vocation,'" he says smiling. Then, in the following years, we find him in administration as a bursar, as a porter, and, from 1997 until 2004, as Procurator for Missions. Even though he never went to far-off missions, Willibald Raab worked for seven good years to financially support the missionaries.

In the summer of 2004, Brother Willibald left Mainz for the house at Maria Engelpfort, near Treis-Karden, on the Moselle. There, he is the bursar and takes care of the financial affairs of the local community and the retreats that take place there. (Christoph HEINEMANN in *Der Weinberg*, Avril 2009)



**EASTER GREETINGS TO ALL**

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**Anniversaries for May 2009**


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**60 Years of religious life**

1949.05.01	09232	Bro. Jean Destrée	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.05.01	08621	Fr. Max Risse	Central European Prov.
1949.05.01	08622	Bishop Bernardo Witte	Argentina-Chile
1949.05.01	09233	Bro. Joseph Wucher	France
1949.05.31	08638	Fr. William Du Buisson	United States
1949.05.31	08639	Fr. James Foelker	United States
1949.05.31	08633	Fr. John Sokolski	United States

**50 Years of religious life**

1959.05.01	10628	Fr. Wilhelm Ebbing	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10845	Fr. Aloys Kapp	Namibia
1959.05.01	10632	Fr. Alfons Keuter	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10627	Fr. Klemens Klein-Hessling	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10629	Fr. Heinrich Mayer	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10631	Fr. Alfons Schüling	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10630	Fr. Elmar Theisen	Central European Prov.
1959.05.01	10681	Fr. Johannes Ziffels	Central European Prov.
1959.05.21	11213	Bro. Fernand Vallance	France
1959.05.21	11214	Bro. Norbert Werner	Central European Prov.
1959.05.31	10643	Fr. Jose Arong	United States
1959.05.31	10687	Fr. Salvatore De George	United States
1959.05.31	11216	Bro. Louis Gendre	Lacombe
1959.05.31	11388	Bro. Benjamin Juarez	United States
1959.05.31	10684	Fr. Gerardo Kapustka	Mexico
1959.05.31	10644	Fr. Romeo Villanueva	Philippines
1959.05.31	10683	Fr. Luis Villarreal	United States

**50 Years of priesthood**

1959.05.03	09868	Fr. Jules Daussaint	Belgium/Netherlands
1959.05.24	09746	Fr. Leo Dummer	United States
1959.05.28	09555	Fr. William Hallahan	United States
1959.05.28	09709	Fr. Arthur King	United States
1959.05.30	09454	Fr. Teodoro Pfeifer	Mexico
1959.05.30	09450	Fr. Cornelius Scanlan	United States

**25 Years of religious life**

1984.05.21	12853	Bro. Gorgonio Bongao	Philippines
1984.05.21	12851	Fr. Rafael Tianero	Philippines

**25 Years of priesthood**

1984.05.02	12530	Fr. A. Victor Jeyasingham	Italy
1984.05.10	12522	Fr. Michael Amesse	United States
1984.05.12	12526	Fr. Rodolfo Jacobe	Philippines
1984.05.26	12552	Fr. Marc Boisvert	Haiti

## Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 22-27

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Josef Anthofer	Central Province of South Africa	12/04/1933	Pretoria	14/03/2009
Fr. Kees Verspeek	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	29/04/1912	Blanden	15/03/2009
Fr. Tadeusz Czaja	France-Benelux	07/09.1935	Bahia	17/03/1009
Fr. Gérard Gagnon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	04/11/1918	St-Jean-sur-Richelieu	28/03/2009
Bishop Albert Sanchagrin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	05/08/1911	Richelieu	02/04/2009
Fr. Robert Haramburu	France	03/10/1913	Cambo les Bains	10/04/2009

*“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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