



Father General's Missionary Meditation

Truth in love

We continue to celebrate the Easter Season throughout the month of May, that time of the year when we focus on the truth of the resurrection. It's not so easy to speak of "truth" and of "truths", and every missionary is well aware that the language of love is much better understood than the language of truth.

No one openly challenges that which is spoken in acts of sincere love and at times, that is the only language we have in order to pass on what we need to say. However, we would not be good missionaries if we did not also try to communicate the truth of our faith. This applies especially to the truth of the resurrection. That great message is very precise in its content: an empty tomb, some mysterious but very real apparitions, and the incredible consequences that these events have on the witnesses who announce the great news that Jesus has conquered death. Of course, the resurrection remains a truth that one cannot prove mathematically such as "two plus two equal four," since it requires an act of faith; but once it is believed, there is such a strong certainty, that the whole of Christian life is built upon it. There is no mathematical evidence, but there is a conviction based on witnesses; there is enough confidence to be able to place a bet on that particular card, the "gamble of faith" as taught by Blaise Pascal.

Experience teaches us nowadays that when our missionary witness moves from love to truth, we can expect resistance. We can see that even more clearly if we remember the two aspects of truth: faith and action, or doctrine and moral. We will speak again about that. Resistance manifests itself

strongly in the secularized world but it is also present in the religious context. So the question arises: would it be better for us to preach Christ only with acts of love without telling others what we Christians believe as truth? Circumstances can affect the answer that we give, and at times, it can be a question of life or death. Consequently, it is important for us to be particularly conscious of two errors we can fall into when facing resistance.

The first error would consist in being too insubstantial. If we limit ourselves to "religion light" which bothers no one, we risk hiding a very brilliant flame that could bring joy and growth to many persons. Only when a person is assured that Christ is truly risen are they able to conquer the fears that enslave us. If this truth is furthermore integrated into people's lives, Christ will "free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life." (Hebrews 2:15)

The second error would be to present the truth but to do so without charity, in contradiction to that which is recommended for the development of the person in the Letter to the Ephesians (4:15): "Rather, living the truth in love¹, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ."

Today more than ever, people will not tolerate a truth that might indeed be absolute, but is presented with insensitivity and without mercy.

Conclusion: Easter Season reminds us of our missionary commitment to the truth. This must be presented with love, but at the same time,

¹ ἀληθεύοντες δέ ἐν ἀγάπῃ

there will be opposition. Perhaps you are asking: what is this reflection all about? It is because I believe that our faith should sometimes have a bit more sting to it!

The Christian mission – and that of the Oblates – includes two things: the witness of love and also the teaching of the truth. We are speaking now especially about moral truth, given that opposition is especially in this regard. Many reject it, saying that the Church is very rigid in its affirmation of ethical truths and only wants to impose her ideas. Yes, it does happen that love is lacking in some instances, nor do we always recognize the conscience as the ultimate judge for each person.

Nevertheless, one must affirm that the Church and her members must serve the truth. Service requires saying that we are not interested in simply “being right” or that people listen to us, but that we want to point out certain realities for the benefit of all. Nuclear arms are evil! Look out for respect for the sanctity of the family! Let us take care of planet earth, our common

home! When the Church speaks about ethics in business or about the morality of married life, about the right to life from conception till death or about religious freedom, she is simply saying: faith teaches us that these things are real, but reason too affirms that that’s the way things are. It’s a question of truths and not of something to be imposed or to be prohibited because too much freedom is inconvenient. There exist doctrinal truths but also moral truths. Not everyone shares these truths, nor do they contain the answers to everything; and much less do they eliminate the freedom of each conscience; but it is our duty to present “the truth in love,” even when we meet resistance.

The whole month of May is the Easter Season and concludes on the 31st with the feast of Pentecost. It is also a month dedicated to Mary. The story of her life is witness to the great truths of our faith and how she lived them with a mother’s love. For us missionaries, Mary can help us understand, as she did for the apostles, how to pass on the truth to others...with love.

General Administration

GENERAL HOUSE

Oblates welcome First Nations representatives

On April 29, Pope Benedict XVI held a special audience with Canada’s Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine and a delegation of First Nations Elders and former alumni of residential schools. The Canadian Catholic Church was also represented by Archbishop James Weisgerber of Winnipeg, President of the Episcopal Conference, and a delegation of missionary congregations involved in the residential schools. Fr. Timothy COONEN, the bursar of OMI Lacombe Province, represented the communities of men religious.

During that encounter, according to Vatican news sources, the Holy Father expressed his “sorrow at the anguish caused by the deplorable conduct of some members of the church and offered his sympathy and prayerful solidarity.” According to the Vatican statement, the pope “emphasized that

acts of abuse cannot be tolerated in society. He prayed that all those affected would experience healing, and he encouraged First Nations peoples to continue to move forward with renewed hope.” Grand Chief Fontaine said group members “heard what we came for” and were “very happy” with the meeting and the response of Pope Benedict.

As a gesture of friendship and respect, the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, invited Chief Fontaine, his entourage, and other guests to a private reception and dinner at the General House on April 30. Among the guests was Archbishop Gerard Pettipas, CSsR, of Grouard-McLennan and Canada’s ambassador to the Holy See, Anne Leahy.

By this simple act of breaking bread together, Fr. General hopes to forge a renewed relationship between the Oblates and the indigenous peoples of Canada after the difficult years of working out a just settlement for the troubling events that took place for many decades in the residential schools set up

by the Canadian government and administered by Oblates and other church groups.

After the meal, there were various speeches in which the guests thanked the Oblates for their hospitality and encouraged the Congregation to become actively involved in securing just treatment for aboriginal Peoples in Canada and elsewhere.

In his remarks to Chief Fontaine and the guests, Father General stated:

National Chief Fontaine, chiefs and representatives of the First Peoples of Canada: we are happy to have you here at the Oblate General House, which is the home of the world-wide Oblate family, which is spread over five continents. Oblates have been welcomed by you for over 160 years in the homes of your people, and you are still welcoming them. We are pleased to return the favour in this small way.

Archbishop Pettipas and representatives of the Canadian Church, Ambassador Leahy: we are also honoured to welcome all of you here today to our home.

Since their arrival in Canada in 1841 the Oblates have been committed to working among the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people of Canada. Our mission was, and to this day still is, to offer the news of Jesus Christ, a message we firmly believe has value and validity for all peoples of all cultures.

The annals of our missionaries are filled with stories of the generosity of the native peoples of Canada; they embraced the missionaries, shared with them the richness of their culture, taught them their languages, and in some cases taught the missionaries the skills they needed to survive in a new and challenging land. Many of them accepted the message of Jesus Christ that was offered to them, and in turn became leaders, teachers and missionaries to their own people in the life of faith.

The dream of the Oblates has always been that their presence and hard work be life-giving in all its aspects, but unfortunately in practice not everything has been life-giving.

Today we see more clearly that as a community and a church, we have been part of a colonial system that had hurtful consequences. This has

been particularly true among your people, and this painful page of your history should never be forgotten. This is most evident in the Oblates' institutional role in the Indian Residential Schools. As missionaries, while we always professed to live and act according to our faith, we have also been sinners.

In 1991, awakened by your voices, speaking of the pain caused by colonialism and specifically by the Residential Schools, the Oblate Major Superiors of Canada issued a heart-felt and sincere apology to all the Native Peoples of Canada at Lac Sainte Anne, Alberta.

In that statement, in the name of the 1,200 Oblates in Canada these Superiors apologised not only for the Oblate role in operating the schools, but specifically for the sins of members of the Congregation and for the inexcusable abuse of students under the care of Oblates. We join all people of good will in saying 'Never Again' to such abuse.

Thanks to the courage of your people in requiring a re-telling of your history, thanks to years of patient searching together with the Oblates, we have relearned the place of apology when hurt is incurred. We hope that the road ahead will teach the place of forgiveness, truth and reconciliation. We are prepared to work selflessly for these new goals.

Here at the General House we are aware that you, National Chief Fontaine, have worked tirelessly, not only to secure the Settlement Agreement, but also to foster healing and reconciliation in Canada. You have extended your hand to bond a new partnership. You have spoken of how the First Nations of Canada continue to place importance and value on the presence, service and ministry of the Oblates and of other religious and spiritual groups. We are also aware that you have shown understanding towards the Oblates regarding the ways of implementing the Settlement Agreement and for this we are very grateful. From our part, we commit ourselves to work with you and the First Nations people for the betterment also of the social and economic conditions.

The Oblate missionaries in Canada are conscious of their advanced age. They are respected as elders but they are not the force of days gone

by. We learn slowly but surely, with the apostle Saint Paul, that there is strength in weakness. Our faces are now turned to the future.

So, Oblates remain committed to a continuing presence among the First Peoples of Canada. The Oblates in Canada have never turned their back on a challenge. They look forward, with immense hope, to a brighter future rooted in the spirituality, the wisdom and culture of the First Peoples and the grace and loving kindness of the God of Jesus Christ.

A number of young men from your peoples have joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in religious life and mission. We hope and pray that this number will increase. They will be joining a changing congregation shaped often

by young missionaries from among other peoples who have known colonialism, and various forms of oppression. There are about 700 Oblates in training. Just look around this room, and you will see that we are a kind of united nations. Leave here knowing that your peoples have taught and are teaching us much that enriches our way of life and mission among the peoples of the earth.

And in closing, allow me again to express to you, National Chief Fontaine, our appreciation of, and gratitude for, your work for justice, your support for our ministry, and your dedication to healing and reconciliation. May our Creator God, the God whom we know in our deeper inner being, continue to bless you with compassion and wisdom.

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Bishop Albert Sanschagrin, O.M.I.: 1911-2009

Bishop Albert SANSCHAGRIN, bishop-emeritus of Saint-Hyacinthe, died at Richelieu, QC, on April 2, 2009, at the age of 97. He was the eldest of the Oblate bishops and of all the Canadian bishops. He had written a letter to Father General, to be delivered only after his death.

Dear Father General,

Here I am, at the end of this life which the Lord has willed to give me. I feel the need to express my thanks to the Lord and to all those who were instruments of his mercy in my regard.

I could never forget the goodness of the Congregation towards me. I owe her all that I have been and all that I was able to do in service of the Church.

It was the pastor of my home parish who steered me toward the Oblates where I met formators and teachers whose memory I cherish and to whom I offer my deepest gratitude.

At the novitiate, some months before my first vows, I was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the lungs. Nevertheless, they were kind enough to accept me for profession of vows. Three years

later, at the time of my perpetual vows, I had a serious relapse. They sent me to the sanatorium-scholasticate at Sainte-Agathe-des-Mons, which the Oblates had just bought (1934). The doctors allowed me to stay in bed and, with headphones, listen to what was being taught in the classroom. Thus, I was able to be ordained a priest at the age of 24 (1936). I got up from my bed to go to the ordination and then had to go back to bed for the rest of the day. It was the same for my first Mass. And each week, the good Doctor Jeannette treated me for a collapsed lung; that lasted for five years.

This forced retirement has made me reflect on the meaning of life. There is a passage from the former Oblate Rule that often came to mind: "Ask for nothing; refuse nothing!" Do the will of God first of all, joyfully, as it is manifested by my superiors. "Hilarem datorem diligit Deus," St. Paul tells us. ("God loves a cheerful giver.")

Then, in January 1939, I received my first obedience, at the service of the bishops at the Young Catholic Workers central office. They put me in charge of the canonical and liturgical aspects of the 100 Marriages. For me, it was a wonderful experience. At the departure of Father Henri Roy, I became the assistant of Father Victor VILLENEUVE, who put me in charge of the women's branch of the YCW and its services, among which was the Marriage

Preparation Service. Those eight years were filled with accomplishments and consolations. Bear in mind that at that time, the bishops did not pay the Oblates for their work, and the Oblates were glad to put their personnel and their means at the service of the Church.

The bishops of Chile asked the Canadian Oblates to loan them a priest with experience in Catholic Action in order to start up the Young Catholic Workers there. They chose me. I did that for two years. They asked me to look into the possibility of the Oblates' founding a mission in the Chilean desert. I recommended that foundation and they named me the superior. I also had a part in the founding of the missions in Bolivia and Surinam.

In 1953, I was named Superior of the Oblates of Eastern Canada. In 1957, Father Deschâtelets and his Council divided the province.

In the summer of 1957, the Holy See named me Bishop of Amos. So I participated in all the sessions of the Council. In 1967, they transferred me to the diocese of St-Hyacinthe. In 1979, I offered my resignation to the Holy See for reasons of health. Since then, I have offered my services to my successor, Bishop Louis Langevin.

If I am writing you this letter at the moment that I give my soul back to God, it is because I want to tell, and tell again to the Congregation my gratitude for all that she has done for me, especially in times of sickness. I am grateful to her for accepting me for first vows, when it was well known that I had tuberculosis.

I also want to thank the Congregation for having placed me at the service of the Church: "Unico Ecclesiae Servitio!" (Only in the Church's Service!) in Catholic Action and in the episcopacy. The Oblates are at the service of the bishops and of the Church, as Bishop de Mazenod had said.

I recommend myself to your kind prayer in this final moment of my life on this earth. We will all meet again in heaven.

+Albert Sanschagrin, OMI

OMI LACOMBE

The Church of the North

Bishop Reynald ROULEAU doesn't have to wait for approval from Rome for the liturgical books used by most parishes in his diocese. He approves them himself. That's because the Lectionary and rites for the sacraments are in Inuktitut, the language of the 8,000 Inuit Catholics in the Churchill-Hudson Bay Diocese. Not only does Rouleau have permission to approve those translations, likely if he sent those books to Rome for approval, no one there would understand them.

The far-flung, low-population diocese includes the northern tip of Manitoba and stretches to the North Pole covering most of Nunavut.

Since 1912, Oblate missionaries have been translating the Church's rites from French into the syllabic form of Inuktitut with the help of Inuit consultants. Those rites are now in the fourth generation of translation. Missionaries made enormous efforts to learn native languages and the cost of publication has been aided by grants from the Oblates, the diocese and Catholic Missions in Canada.

The entire New Testament is now available in Inuktitut as are those parts of the Old Testament that are included in the Lectionary.

The first hymnal was published in 1957 and a fourth version is now in preparation.

Rouleau said the hymnal is vitally important as the Inuit people love to sing.

A typical Mass is more than two hours, the Oblate bishop said in an interview at the home in Bruderheim of Patrick Lorand, who has helped the Churchill Diocese publish its 60 books and booklets in Inuktitut.

"The way they celebrate is very impressive," he said. "When they sing a song, they sing all the verses."

Each of the readings is read in both Inuktitut and

English, and an interpreter translates Rouleau's English-language homily into Inuktitut.

When Rouleau, a Quebec native, was appointed bishop of Churchill-Hudson Bay in 1987, he knew no Inuktitut and his English was not strong. He is now fluent in English and has learned some Inuktitut.

"It was a real cultural move for me. I needed to be initiated into the style of the diocese, its history and the Inuit way."

He spends about half the year visiting the 17 Catholic communities spread around the diocese. Each visit typically lasts two or three days, but at Christmas and Easter, a visit can stretch out for two weeks. "When I travel North, that is the best time. We live at a slow pace."

The bishop's mission is to be with the people and he spends some of his time in each community walking down the streets enjoying casual conversations.

"The people have a very deep faith. It's a faith based on visual aspects, on gestures. The symbolism is important for them as are the stories, such as stories about Abraham and Jesus." The Catholic rituals with their use of holy water, gestures, flowers, incense and vestments appeal to the people, Rouleau said. "All that is very meaningful and you don't need to explain it." So too are celebrations such as Confirmations, Baptisms and funerals.

Rouleau pays tribute to the missionaries who "have been very attentive to the culture, the language, the way the people relate to each other and the way they relate to the land." The diocese, for example, in 1944 established the Eskimo Museum in Churchill, an institution that has collected and preserved roughly 1,000 pieces of Inuit art, mainly carvings and wall hangings. The museum draws more than 10,000 visitors a year and is now an independent institution. *(By Glen Argan. This article is published with the authorization of the Western Catholic Reporter, www.wcr.ab.ca.)*

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP **Sun and rejoicing in Edmundston**

On March 25, 2009, feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, Bishop Claude CHAMPAGNE began his episcopal ministry in the diocese of Edmundston, New Brunswick. The large and beautiful cathedral was full of people from the diocese, visitors from Yarmouth and Halifax, friends who had come from far off Ottawa, and a good-sized delegation of Oblates from the provinces of Notre-Dame-du-Cap and Lacombe. Along with the Apostolic Nuncio, there were 22 bishops present, among them, Bishops Gilles CAZABON and Douglas CROSBY, as well as about a hundred priests and deacons.

Claude decided to begin the celebration by receiving and venerating his Oblate cross. His predecessor, Bishop François Thibodeau, a Eudist, welcomed the participants and warmly recalled that the Oblates had evangelized more than 80,000 people of the diocese at a retreat house that later became the diocesan center and the bishop's residence. This is commemorated in a room arranged by Bishop Thibodeau in honor of the Oblates.

Many speeches brought out Claude's fine qualities and the people's joy at seeing him become their shepherd: his simplicity, his warmth in meeting people, his spiritual and communal life style. The people of the diocese had been struck by this when he passed through there last October. The Apostolic Nuncio echoed the same ideas. We who were at the celebration witnessed the intense joy that was so obvious as they welcomed Claude. We thank God for that! (Claude ST-LAURENT)



Latin America

PARAGUAY / URUGUAY

The “Under 20 Oblate Team”

Although at first sight, it would appear to be gathering of young soccer players where they discover new talent for the great teams of the world, in reality that is how the Oblates humorously called the gathering for a week of continuing formation for those who have not yet marked 20 years since their first obedience.

From March 1 – 6, 2009, we gathered in Uruguay: six Oblates from each of the two Units. What struck us first of all was the internationality, or better, the cultural mix: missionaries from five countries, ages between 30 and 46, from three continents, but with many things in common -- first and foremost, being in love with Christ, the Church and the poor in the style of Eugene.

When one plans programs of continuing formation, there come to mind persons who can give things to reflect about, ideas for action, motivation, etc. In our gathering, these were not lacking, thanks to those who helped us, through the Scriptures and interpersonal dynamics, to see how each one’s formation story, beginning with the humanity of each one, must help develop one’s human and spiritual growth.

At the same time, something which really helped us was to spend a whole day talking about our experiences of God, about our past, our call to be Oblates, and the difficulties and joys that in these years certainly did not go lacking. That created an atmosphere of strong communion during our time together, helping us to know one another better and to be interested in each other’s mission. We spent each evening watching a film and in the free times, there were card games.

We also took a ride together along the Atlantic coast, visiting some tourist sites in the area, as well as the capital of the country.

At the end of the experience, we closed with a wonderful Uruguayan barbecue and a chat, via

internet, with Fr. Guillermo STECKLING. We told Fr. General about some of our uncertainties about restructuring, about the process of unification and steps to be taken, and how to live deeply the “conversion” which is the theme of the next General Chapter. All of this took place in a simple yet deep spirit among us and with Fr. General who answered our questions with much simplicity and depth.

No doubt about it, we considered the gathering very positive and we plan to continue in this way to know one another better. As Fr. Guillermo suggested: *to look at one another and to look in the same direction.* (Mingo DI MEO)

URUGUAY

Help the rich help those who are poorer

Perhaps some have already heard about the educational center, Talitakum, in Montevideo. The Oblates opened the center a little more than two years ago. As often happens, the center is always trying to raise money. Undoubtedly, they need big help, but much of the time, “a lot of small drops make a river.”

The *Los Pilaes* school is very well known in Montevideo, located in a residential zone of the city; the students who go there come from relatively well-to-do families.

For some years now, Isabel, a member of COMI, works at that school; she holds dear to her heart the work that is being done at Talitakum. One of the tasks of every evangelizer is to help everyone open their hearts to those who need help. To do this, Isabel has begun to foster in her school some initiatives that will help the youth of the Talitakum center. In a short time, she had the school girls setting up in their recreation rooms displays of handicrafts and foods, all made by them and their families. In a few weeks, the quiet of the school disappeared with the healthy hustle and bustle of these girls who are doing all sorts of things to help those who are less fortunate than they are, and they are getting many others involved.

Who says that the children are too young to understand life? They have come to understand: YOU HAVE TO SHARE... (Mingo DI MEO)

PARAGUAY

Special meeting on the economy

The critical economic situation of our province led us, with the encouragement of the General Administration, to call an "emergency meeting." Besides the Provincial Council and the Finance Committee, we were honored by the presence of Fr. Loudeger MAZILE, General Councillor; Fr. Andreas HOHN, treasurer of the Central European Province; and Fr. Antonio BUONANNO, treasurer of the Uruguay Delegation.

Their task was to share and to offer encouragement. A Redemptorist treasurer explained how they have introduced tithing in their parishes. Two lay persons spoke about the possibility of opening a school or setting up rooms to let.

Evidently, we cannot expect an immediate solution. But to look for possibilities together, as brothers, and thus enter more decidedly into a process of discernment which should be happening in all the communities – all of that opens up new horizons and hopes.

PARAGUAY / URUGUAY

Joint session of the Councils

The last week of March, almost the whole Council traveled to Montevideo (Uruguay) for a joint session with the delegation and the Council of Uruguay.

The Council's trip (except for Fr. Zenón BERIKANI who had document problems) to Uruguay was not primarily for the soccer match chosen by each side (much less so after the final results...); but rather, the encounter with our brethren from the delegation was to continue our process of moving closer together. Besides having been really welcomed in Oblate style (we felt at home, among brothers), there were two official events:

1. With all the members of the delegation. We introduced ourselves and we spoke in groups about our dreams and our fears. Later, we shared this during Mass.

2. With the Delegation Council. We looked at all the steps already taken and those which we can take during the upcoming months:

- Fr. Miguel FRITZ preached the retreat in Uruguay in 2008.
- Fr. José David PALUMBO has accepted to preach the retreat in 2010 in Paraguay.
- The 20-year encounter.
- This meeting of the Councils.
- An encounter with the "Oblate family," that is, the Associates in Uruguay.
- The participation of Fr. Marcos RIVAROLA in the youth mission of 2009.
- The participation of the Council of Uruguay in the December meeting of the Council of Paraguay.
- Getting to know the different communities: our visit to Uruguay and theirs in Paraguay.
- The invitation of a representative of Uruguay at our congress.

Asia-Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Leading by example

The Province of Australia has chosen Catholic Education as one of its important ministries. One of the most crucial issues facing those in that ministry is how to see the school in the forefront of evangelization and make the missionary dimension of the College present everywhere. This is particularly crucial for an Oblate College,

as our charism calls us and those we work with to be Missionary; it should be on this criterion that we maintain a strong and sustained presence in the College. Here are just a few of the ways that Mazenod College in Victoria strives to instill a spirit of evangelizers into the curriculum and life of the students:

Every class has Liturgy Prefects who have responsibility for the liturgical life of the class

and the College. This is expressed through the preparation, leadership, celebration and clean-up of every Liturgical Celebration in the College.

Every student has a copy of the Bible and Catholic Catechism which is seen as the crucial basis of their religious education. Students study Religion and Society in Year 11 which gains University accreditation. Mazenod is currently ranked third in the State on academic results in this subject and is the leading Catholic College.

Mass is offered every morning and each Year Level is responsible for the hosting of this Mass. For example, Mondays is Year 7, Tuesday is Year 9 etc. Responsibility for the Mass is through readings, altar serving, offertory etc. Mass is not compulsory for the students but it is an expectation that they make an effort to attend.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered every Friday from 9am-3pm. A different year level is in charge of the day and each student is offered the opportunity of 10-15 minutes of Adoration throughout the day. It is voluntary for the student to attend.

Religious Education extension classes are offered in Years 9 and 10 to help students advance their knowledge and application of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Particular focus is given to Scripture, Ethics and Core Beliefs.

There is an Oblate Youth Association modeled on St Eugene's original youth group. It is called MAYO which stands for Missionary Action Youth Association. MAYO is also the name of one of the young Spanish Oblate martyrs and his life, witness and death are an example to all of the group. This group raised money and awareness for MAMI.

Mission Action Day is the day set aside to raise awareness and finances for those in need. It is much more than one day as there is significant planning and preparation. It is an entirely student-led day and its success depends upon the level of commitment of the students. In 2008, \$49,000 was raised for the Missions with the vast majority supporting Indonesian, Kenyan and Rosies Oblate Missions. During Advent, Rosies receives

donations of sugar from the Year 12's and later in the year St Vincent de Paul receives in excess of 5,000 items of food for their Christmas Hampers. In February 2009, \$24,000 was raised for the Victorian Bush fire Appeals.

Mazenod is the Catholic Boys' Schools Representative in the Southern Region of Building Bridges Interfaith Dialogue Programme between Jewish, Christian and Muslim Schools. This programme uses the analogy of building a bridge to bring about greater understanding and respect between the three great monotheistic faiths.

Year 9 Students are given the opportunity to outreach in Dandenong to newly arrived and struggling migrants. This outreach is through a mentoring programme of support.

Sixty Year 12 students volunteered to be on the list of Rosies Oblate Youth Mission and this greatly helped Rosies while also greatly assisting in the missionary development of the Year 12's.

Vocations Awareness - There have been eight former students in the past 15 years who have entered St Mary's. There is obviously more work to do in this area but that number represents the prayers and support of the College Community. (Cosmic, March-April 2009)

SRI LANKA

More problems to face

As if the war were not enough to make life difficult for the people of Sri Lanka, our Oblate brothers are facing another obstacle in the missionary work. The Sri Lankan parliament is considering a bill that would have far-reaching effects on the Church of that island nation.

A common letter signed by Bishop Vianney Fernando, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka and Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, Chairman of the National Christian Council representing the other Mainline Christian Churches, has been addressed to all Parliamentarians, apprising them of the position of the Churches regarding the proposed Anti-Conversion Bill. The letter expresses concerns

about the contents and implications of the bill, its potential dangers and proposes an alternative to deal with problems that might arise with such alleged conversions and on a wider context to resolve tensions among religions, if and when they arise. The letter is truly an important and significant ecumenical intervention for religious harmony taken by the all Christian Church leaders in Sri Lanka at the present time.

The letter states that, while categorically opposed to unethical conversions, the Church leaders do not agree that legislation is the answer to inter-religious tensions. It is their considered view: "that if this Bill is passed, there will be serious negative repercussions on the people's freedom of choice, inter-religious harmony and national integration". The Christian leaders seek the wise participation of the Representatives of the people in the process of debate and decision-making regarding the above.

Three specific concerns are expressed: 1) the bill will erode the democratic right of religious freedom, namely, the right to choose a religion

according to one's conscience 2) Fear of legal consequences will prevent Christians and similarly others to stand with the afflicted and serve one another. Besides, serving one another is clearly part of the Christian calling. 3) Interpretation and implementation of certain provisions of the Bill are likely to provoke more suspicion, tensions and conflict than resolve them.

The Christian leaders warn that the country cannot simply take on another conflict centered on religious tensions. Instead of legislation, they propose that there be an **"Inter-Religious Council with statutory powers to mediate when tensions occur including when allegations of force are made in conversion"**. A draft for such a Council is already available and could be studied by a suitable committee. If acceptable to Parliament, there would be unstinted support from the Christian leaders and of some leaders of other religions as well for this proposal. Church leaders are ready to further discuss these matters, if Parliamentarians so wish. (*Newsletter of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, April 2009*)

Africa-Madagascar

CAMEROON

Trying to save the "street girls"

Fr. Krzysztof ZIELEND, superior at the "Yves Plumey" Oblate Scholasticate in Yaoundé, recently wrote an article in the Polish Oblates' mission magazine, *Misyjne Drogi*. He first mentions that the Scholasticate is truly international, with 54 seminarians from seven different African countries. Every Saturday, four of the seminarians go to the inner city to give spiritual and material help to the "street girls". He then tells this story:

I was asked to come and say Mass for some "street girls", organized into a group called Rahab, whose aim is to try to build a sense of personal dignity in the girls, and to help them find a better life than on the streets. It was originally started by Fr. Gaby CRUGNOLA. The group is only a small percentage of a great number of

people living in incredible poverty on the streets of Yaoundé. Mostly they come from the rural areas, hoping for a better life in the city: to go to school, to find a job, to be able to go back home with a little bit of money. In fact, only the street welcomes them; they have no family, no home, no work and no school. And the street offers them little: some stolen food or money during the day, and prostitution at night. Living on the fringes of society, they become hardened as the days and weeks go by, and look for the meager pleasures of cigarettes, drugs and sex. Their clients are the better-off people of the city, who come to the downtown to pay for sex.

These girls were not exactly pious Catholics, but they had asked me to come and say Mass for members of their group who had died. On the altar, I found a list of 19 names: 17 had died of AIDS, one had been murdered, and one had committed suicide. The group of 15 girls who

attended was between the ages of 16 and 30, well behaved, and mostly cleanly dressed. I chose the Gospel of Christ curing the lepers, and told them how, in Christ's time, lepers were considered unclean. Driven from their homes, and forced to live on the margins of society, they lived a miserable existence, and often died alone. Yet Christ came to touch them, to heal some of them, and to give all of them hope. He showed them that their lives could change.

One of the girls, Mireille, came to see me after Mass. I can still hear her words ringing in my ears: "Father, pray for us. We want to live!" It is to the poor, such as these, struggling for life, that we are sent as Missionary Oblate. (Adapted from *Misyjne Drogi*, March 2009)

ZIMBABWE

Youth for Life Ministries

Oblate Youth for Life ministries are growing in urban Bulawayo. Youth for Life is a programme of the Oblates which runs workshops for youth. It was piloted in St Luke's mission before this development in the city.

Youth for Life workshops are available for all youth groups and provide leadership training and lifestyle change processes to respond to challenges facing youth in a context of poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS.

The programme begins with a four-day workshop, and then by a three-day follow-up six weeks later and a second three-day workshop six weeks after that. In 2008, a staff of two full-time lay workers was appointed to help Fr Charles NABWENJE who established the programme in the city. The employment of two committed young people has developed the capacity of the ministry, since Oblates do not always have to be there all the time. (*OMI Natal Update*, January – April 2009)

NATAL

Cebula House of Formation

On February 16 the province gathered for the celebration of the 183rd anniversary of

the approval of our Congregation and its Constitutions. During the ceremony, the newly constituted Cebula House of Formation was blessed and the new Superior Fr. Callistus KHATHALI was installed.

Cebula House of Formation provides three years of formation which include one year of in-house formation programmes followed by two years of formation which include a component of classes in philosophy at Cedara.

From 1948 to 1952, Cleland was the location of St Josephs Scholasticate which then moved to Cedara. In 1977, the property was redeployed as the Oblate Prenovitiate. It was first Oblate Prenovitiate set up in Africa and its programme became the model for many others.

The new Cebula House of formation allows us to provide religious formation for at least three years within a smaller community of members of the province. This has become important, given that the large numbers at the Cedara scholasticate and the Theological Institute. These have become increasingly global centres of formation and sometimes overpower the local identity of our own candidates in formation. There is a growing trend, both in our Congregation and others, to make changes like this as formation programmes cluster around centres of Theological education like ours.

Joseph Cebula was an Oblate formator and is thus a worthy patron of an Oblate house of formation. In addition, he was a martyr who, in giving his life for the faith in the face of an evil dictatorship, witnessed for us that the power of the Paschal Mystery is at the centre of every Oblate vocation. (*OMI Natal Update*, January – April 2009)

NATAL

Youth Ministries are developing

The Oblate Youth Ministry Committee continues to work together in its efforts to drive the vision of the Province on youth matters.

Oblate Youth Associates

In its evaluation of the report on the World Youth

Day in Australia, the committee expressed its support of the need to organize Youth Associates. Some members of the committee committed themselves in finding ways and means for the establishment of the Associates.

Leadership Training

In the area of youth formation and empowerment, we are making major in-roads. In collaboration with the St. Philomena Youth Program, a number of our young leaders are being empowered with leadership skills. In addition, youth workshops and camps are being facilitated by members of the youth committee. Young Oblates are increasingly getting involved in forming and animating youth societies in their respective areas of ministry.

Inchanga Youth Centre

The youth ministry project at Inchanga has met with an enthusiastic response. The vision of this project is to set up a youth centre at Inchanga mission. A youth office has been established in one of the former teacher's cottages and a

further cottage is envisaged for use by Couples for Christ. The involvement of Couples for Christ in our ministry at Inchanga comes as a welcome gesture and renders hope for the future. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed, envisaging a number of areas of collaboration at the mission, particularly in developing Inchanga primary School. The large Mission cross at the property will be developed as a centre for pilgrimage and prayer. The enthusiasm of young people to get involved in our ministry has been very encouraging at both Inchanga and the Umsunduzi station.

Ministry to schools

In addition Fr. Mxolisi NGCOBO is involved on a regular basis at the Inchanga primary School. The Oblates are hoping to develop this school in collaboration with Couples for Christ. In September, Oblate Youth Ministries organised a second "schools mission" at St Benedict's Oblate School in Johannesburg. (*OMI Natal Update*, January – April 2009)

Anniversaries for June 2009

70 Years of priesthood

1939.06.18	05846	Fr. Engelbert Machinia	Central European Province
1939.06.24	05938	Fr. Marcel Bolduc	United States
1939.06.25	05563	Fr. Raffaele Salerno	Italy

65 Years of priesthood

1944.06.03	06767	Fr. Hermann Morin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1944.06.05	06793	Fr. George Croft	United States
1944.06.18	07036	Fr. Marcel Keller	France
1944.06.18	06933	Fr. Philippe Montgrain	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1944.06.18	06995	Fr. Fernand Moyse	Colombo
1944.06.18	06994	Fr. Roger Vivier	Belgium/Netherlands
1944.06.25	06873	Fr. Pablo Fernández	Spain
1944.06.29	07015	Fr. Patrick McMahon	Natal
1944.06.29	06531	Fr. Remigio Salzillo	Italy

60 Years of priesthood

1949.06.04	07831	Fr. Aloysius Svobodny	United States
1949.06.11	07695	Fr. Ubald Duchesneau	Lacombe
1949.06.16	07753	Fr. André Matton	Belgium/Netherlands
1949.06.19	08008	Fr. Joseph Baril	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.06.19	07594	Fr. Elzéar Béliveau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.06.19	07686	Fr. Lionel Dumont	Lacombe
1949.06.19	07688	Fr. Maurice McMahon	Lacombe
1949.06.19	07684	Fr. André Savard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.06.26	07508	Fr. Lawrence Conlon	Lacombe
1949.06.29	07689	Fr. Bertrand Maieu	Lacombe
1949.06.29	07412	Fr. Henry McFall	Australia
1949.06.29	07881	Fr. John Sherlock	Philippines

50 Years of religious life

1959.06.24	11228	Bro. Edmond Côté	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.24	11408	Bro. Gérard Ruel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.29	11230	Bro. Jakob Wagner	General Administration

50 Years of priesthood

1959.06.05	09993	Fr. Luciano Lachance	Bolivia
1959.06.05	09525	Fr. Eugène Lapointe	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.05	09994	Fr. Marc Lortie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.05	09313	Fr. Léonce Paquet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.05	09749	Fr. Maurice Provencher	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.05	09989	Fr. Jean-Guy Roberge	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.05	09990	Fr. Rodrigue Vézina	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.06	09302	Fr. Denis Dancause	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

1959.06.06	09743	Fr. Juan-María Tremblay	Argentina-Chile
1959.06.13	09766	Fr. James Mac Donell	Lacombe
1959.06.13	09592	Fr. Joseph Francis Saniapillai	Jaffna
1959.06.20	09705	Fr. Marcel Plamondon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.21	09728	Fr. Robert Lesmerises	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.06.24	09694	Fr. Charles Breault	United States
1959.06.24	09693	Fr. George Capen	United States
1959.06.24	09695	Fr. Ronald Carignan	United States
1959.06.24	09696	Fr. Roberto Lacasse	Bolivia
1959.06.24	09698	Fr. Roger J. Lamoureux	United States
1959.06.24	09509	Fr. Albert Martineau	United States
1959.06.24	09712	Fr. Antoni Skwierawski	Poland
1959.06.28	09311	Fr. Gilles Gauier	Lacombe
1959.06.28	09501	Fr. Justin Trudel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

25 Years of religious life

1984.06.28	12947	Fr. John Malazdrewich	Lacombe
1984.06.28	12785	Fr. John Zunti	Lacombe

25 Years of priesthood

1984.06.09	12573	Fr. Louis Legaré	Lacombe
1984.06.09	13199	Fr. Bounlom Antoine Phengsivilayvanh	France
1984.06.23	12502	Fr. Bernard Briks	Poland
1984.06.23	12507	Fr. Jan Domanski	Poland
1984.06.23	12509	Fr. Klaudiusz Hermanski	Poland
1984.06.23	12505	Fr. Roman Kepa	Poland
1984.06.23	12506	Fr. Kazimierz Lubowicki	Poland
1984.06.23	12508	Fr. Wieslaw Nazaruk	Poland
1984.06.23	12567	Fr. Leopoldo Perez	United States
1984.06.23	12503	Fr. Marian Puchala	Poland
1984.06.29	12546	Fr. Anthony Dummer	United States

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 28-33

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Joseph Juairé	United States	17/02/1923	Hemet	13/04/2009
Fr. Wilfred Borden	OMI Lacombe	08/05/1929	St. Albert	16/04/2009
Fr. Louis Henry	France	13/01/1916	Nancy	17/04/2009
Bro. Don Remigius Jayalathge	Colombo	01/10/1928	Kohuwela	19/04/2009
Sc. Marckenson Marcelin	Haiti	12/11/1982	Port Salut	19/04/2009
Fr. Joseph Horman	Belgium/Netherlands	20/10/1932	Barvaux sur Ourthe	04/05/2009

“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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