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Fr. General's Missionary Meditation The second journey

A few weeks ago, someone gave me a small booklet about conversion which incidentally happens to be our Chapter theme. Even though the few pages did not tell me anything new, I must say the considerations of the author about "second conversion" (or second journey) touched me and made me read the booklet twice. Perhaps it is because I need to venture into such a second journey now, at this moment of my life.

According to the author, the first conversion happens chiefly in our mind and prompts us to be active. For a Christian, it means to discover Christ, to recognize more and more who he is and to follow him. It therefore has to do with conscious decisions on my part and my readiness to do things for God. In this first step we feel we are in charge of our lives. We read in the gospels how Peter first decides to follow Christ; at this stage he is quite sure what this is supposed to mean and he even decides what is excluded, what should not happen.

The second conversion goes beyond this level. It requires not only a changing of our minds but also the transformation of our hearts. It comes not from an outside appeal but rather from the inside; the Spirit of Christ and of the Father wants to take over our whole heart. Though we remain free, we discover that we are no longer in charge. We are drawn to allow God to be in charge as Mary did when she agreed to the angel's request and gave her answer, "Be it done to me according to your will". In Peter's case, he is questioned by the risen Lord about his love of him, about his heart, and he is told that someone else will gird him and direct him where he would rather not go himself. At the

moment of the second conversion we lose control of what is going to happen. Things become less clear to us since they are left to God's will. In this second journey however, we will not be spared the famous dark night of the soul (Saint John of the Cross).

In a person's life, the call to such a second journey is normally heard when the prime of youth is over and physical forces begin to diminish, but of course invitations to a deeper conversion can be made to us at other moments, too.

A conversion must be personal for each one of us, but in the theme of our general chapter we mention two realities to which conversion is linked: mission and community. The theme reads: "Centered on the person of Jesus Christ, the source of our mission, we commit ourselves to a profound personal and communal conversion." In the February 2009 Missionary Meditation, we reflected on the appeal to conversion that comes from our mission to the world. What could we say about the community aspect of conversion?

I want to make only one point here. It appears to me that the concept of a second conversion could be applied very well not only to individual persons, or individual Oblates, but also to the Congregation as such.

Our history shows us that for many years the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate grew from strength to strength. Even in the 1960's we could still consider ourselves a young congregation, a recent foundation.

Now we realize that we have aged a bit. The diminishment that followed after the 1960's is the first substantial one in our relatively short history; numbers have dropped more than 40% since then. However, this drop does not indicate that we are going to die out anytime soon; for instance, vocations have indeed been increasing over the last decade by 15%.

But does this phase of diminishment not indicate that God may have something new to tell us? I submit that God's message to us could be described as a call to a second conversion, to a second journey! Such a call would sound like this: "Put no longer so much effort into those things you want to do, but rather be more open to My plans"! Accept your new freedom and surrender to guidance by the Spirit!

A second conversion does not mean that we are to cross our arms! Even though Mary had said, in obedience to the Spirit, "be it done to me according to your word", she shortly thereafter set out in haste on the journey to Elisabeth. The second journey - though implying a more "passive" mode, letting the Spirit take over - has nothing to do with a lazy passivity but rather with passion! May the Spirit fill us all with the passion of Christ's heart, let his almost crazy love for the world be in charge! But then we also should know that we will participate in Christ's passion in the other sense, his passion and death which is the only path that leads to new life.

If we are to begin a second journey in the Congregation, the condition is that we allow God's heart to take over.

General Administration

OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE "Twitter" – What's that?

Recently, the Oblates received an invitation from OMIWORLD (the official organ of Oblate Communications Service) to try to create a communications network in the Congregation through Twitter (www.twitter.com). About 50 Oblates, among whom the Superior General, responded immediately. Some whom we heard from were getting ready for a siesta or to take a walk, but also some were thanking the Lord as they got up in the morning, or were going to preach a retreat, or had interrupted a meeting for ecumenical reasons.

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are text-based messages of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers who are known as "followers."

Furthermore, Oblates who become OMIWORLD "followers" will have the opportunity to become "followers" of other OMIWORLD "followers." That is how a network is established.

OMIWORLD also promises to include in the list of followed blogs Oblates only or persons who belong to the greater Oblate family.

Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow open access. Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, Short Message Service (SMS) or external applications. While the service costs nothing to use, accessing it through SMS may incur phone service provider fees.

Fr. Ron LAFRAMBOISE, former Director of the OMI General Information Service, immediately commented: "We have entered the 21st century."

On our part, we hope that this will serve as a means of growth for our communion.

Quite soon, thanks to Google, OMIWORLD will also publish a blog for sharing our ideas and another one specifically for the General Chapter of 2010.

We already have an account for videos on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/omiworld>

ASSOCIATION OF OBLATE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

Second meeting held in San Antonio USA

The 2004 OMI General Chapter, Witnessing to Hope, approved a recommendation that the Central Government reflect upon the role of higher education in the charism of the Oblate congregation. To this end, the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Education was established by the Oblate General Council with an executive group consisting of member participants from the Oblate Institutes of Higher Education around the world. The first meeting of this executive group was held in Rome, May 19-23, 2008.

A second meeting was held May 25-29, 2009, in San Antonio at the Pat Guidon Center for Continuing Education at Oblate School of Theology. Present at the meeting included representatives of most of the Oblate Institutes: Frs. Dale SCHLITT, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada; Sylvester DAVID, St. Joseph Theological Institute, Cedara, South Africa; Baudouin MUBESALA, De Mazenod Institute, Kinshasa, Congo; Eduardo TANUDDANUD, Notre Dame University, Cotabato, Philippines; Warren BROWN and Ron ROLHEISER, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, USA; and Andrzej JASTRZEBSKI, representing the General Administration, Rome, Italy. Jarosław RÓŻAŃSKI, who teaches at the University of Warsaw, was unable to attend.

Besides sharing news and activities of their respective institutes, the meeting included presentations by Fr. David POWER, OMI, who shared his reflections on Higher Education in the Oblate Congregation from the perspective of his years of education ministry. Fr. Power also shared his reflections on how the Oblate Charism can be seen in our Institutes of Higher Education. Professors from Oblate School of Theology also participated in David Power's presentations and discussions.

The reflections by Fr. Power led the group to discuss how the institutes of higher education can be of service to the congregation, and how the institutes can plan together to recruit younger Oblates to pursue higher studies so that they might prepare to be leaders of these important centers of Oblate ministry for the mission of the Congregation.

In their business meetings, the group considered some future possibilities for the ministry of higher education within the Congregation, including some recommendations for the 2010 General Chapter. One of the most significant parts of the meeting was a series of one-on-one meetings between the various representatives present to plan future concrete methods of collaboration among the various institutes. The statutes of the group that were approved at the 2008 meeting were studied and revised to better reflect the developing nature of this group and the concerns expressed. A next meeting was planned for May 24 to 28, 2010, to be held in Odra, Poland.

Asia-Oceania

JAFFNA

Fr. Philippiah Jesunesan: 1939-2009

On August 13, 2009, just two days before the 50th anniversary of his first profession of vows, former General Councilor for Asia-Oceania, Fr. Philippiah JESUNESAN, died in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He had served on the Superior General's Council from 1998 until 2004. He was also a former provincial of the Jaffna Province.

Born in the diocese of Jaffna in 1939, he pronounced his first vows as an Oblate on August

15, 1959. He did his scholastic studies at Kandy and was ordained in December of 1965. His first obedience was to what was then the Province of Sri Lanka. His earliest ministry was with the preaching band and then he taught at St. Patrick's College and served there as Vice-Rector. He studied sociology in Ottawa for two years. When the Delegation of Jaffna was created in 1984, he was assigned to that unit.

In 1995, the Bishop of Jaffna made him president of the Diocesan Commission for Evangelization. In 1997, he became the provincial of the Vice

Province of Jaffna and served in that role until his election to the Central Government.

Those were troubled times for Sri Lanka; the Oblates in the Jaffna Province felt the brunt of the fighting between government forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE). In late 1995, the Oblates had to leave the city of Jaffna, which was under the control of the LTTE, and then bombed and taken by government forces. The Oblates found refuge in the countryside and the forest, and some went further south into the Diocese of Mannar. When Fr. Jesunesan became provincial, he decided it was time for the Oblates to return to Jaffna and help rebuild the city. A major and symbolic event was the opening of the Columbuturai/Jaffna scholasticate in October 1997. Repair work at the juniorate was begun and in September, it was reopened in Jaffna. The elderly Oblates, who had been taken to Madhu for awhile, were moved back to Jaffna.

Fr. Jesunesan wrote in September 1997: "We have made the logical decision to return to Jaffna and re-institute our various communities, and thus be with the people who are coming back to their cherished homes. It is again a difficult time. I commend our men for their steadfastness, audacity and the readiness to venture out on their journey back home.... Now, we have the great task of re-building ahead of us, both on the community level and on the level of the mission...." This context gave real meaning to the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Sri Lanka.

Following his term as General Councillor, he went to Lacombe Province in Canada where he was part of a mission to secularity team. He returned to his home province to become superior of the scholasticate in Jaffna and a member of the Provincial Council.

His body was taken back to Jaffna for burial. Before his funeral, his body lay in state at St. Joseph's Juniorate where many people, young and old, came to pay their last respects. The funeral was held on August 17 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Jaffna.

THAILAND

I begin with an Alleluia

Michel LYNDE is in Thailand. For Easter, he wrote to his friends in France.

I begin with an Alleluia. Easter and Christmas are two occasions for being in touch, to tell what is happening, here and about.

The Mekong continues to flow serenely; sometimes even in a more daunting manner. Nevertheless, it must be surprised to see all the changes along its banks.

In the past, there were villages of little shops, especially for the Laotians who had only this route to come sell opium and produce from the forest, to buy salt, medicines and all the little items one can find in a bazaar.

Little by little, the wooden shacks are disappearing. Now there are restaurants, guest houses with a view of the river, shops where one can have a coffee or order any other sort of drink. Anything to attract the tourists who are more and more numerous.

The tourists walk around, their noses in the air, an enormous pack on their backs, several cameras dangling from their necks, often poorly dressed and speaking loudly. Who needs television? The comedy is on the streets.

And now I come to our little community. With a lot of work, we had arrived at 42 members. Several families left us, due to debt problems, work and other reasons. Others have died. For Holy Week, there were just 8 or 9 of us; for Easter, we were 12. Of course, numbers don't mean a lot, but...

Nevertheless, we celebrated our liturgies with solemnity and joy. Palm Sunday, the penitential rite, the washing of feet, the Easter Vigil with all the readings, after the Exultet, in a candlelit night. The crosses offered on Friday were covered with flowers on Easter; and we renewed the commitments of our baptism.

A big meal brought our Easter celebrations to a close, a meal immediately followed by the

celebration of the new year as a family.

The craft center will reassume its activities. There are questions there too: how will it continue? Everything invites us to put it into the Lord's hands with total confidence. He is alive; He is with us; He is with them. He is nowhere else but in our lives.

I hope you continue to rejoice. Alleluia.

PHILIPPINES

Archbishop Quevedo: "Enough is enough!"

Declaring "enough is enough!" the Catholic Archbishop of Cotabato has appealed to government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to "end your war."

"For the sake of our evacuees and in the name of our one God of Peace, end your war! Go back to the negotiating table. Let the thousands of evacuees return safely to their home. Collaborate with one another towards this objective. Together, rehabilitate their destroyed properties. Give them another chance for a truly human life," Cotabato Archbishop Orlando QUEVEDO, OMI, said in a nine-paragraph letter dated July 23, read at the State of the Bakwit Address (SOBA) at the gymnasium of the Oblates' Notre Dame University.

"From the depths of my soul I can only cry out to all warring parties, 'Enough is enough!' End your so called search and punish operations. End your terrorist bombings. End your bombardments, end your raids, all you warring parties! Enough is enough!" Quevedo said in the message read by Sister Rose Susan Montejo, superior of the Oblates of Notre Dame. Quevedo issued the "open appeal for peace and for our evacuees" in the letter addressed "to all warring parties."

"As a Religious leader I respect your causes, although I may not agree with your methods. But precisely because I am a Religious leader I strongly condemn every violent act perpetrated that has no concern for the innocent," Quevedo wrote.

"I condemn in the strongest terms as serious

moral evil such crimes as terrorist bombings that by their very nature target the innocent, punitive raids on villages, bombardments that fall on civilian populations, landmines that can kill any passerby. For me 'collateral damage' simply means murder and deliberate unjustifiable destruction of property," he said.

"War," the archbishop wrote, "inflicts more destruction on civilians than on combatants. For every combatant killed, scores of civilians suffer or die. In the past twelve months I have seen thousands of civilians languishing in evacuation camps, first in the Pikit and PALMA (Pigcawayan, Aleosan, Libungan, Midsayap, Alamada in North Cotabato) areas and now in Datu Piang and various other places of Maguindanao. They give birth to babies under dismal conditions, they beg for food and water, they struggle for life in the most miserable situation. They die as statistics. Such human tragedy, it is said, has spawned brutal retaliatory terrorism elsewhere in our region."

"Due punishment for raids has long been meted out in an attrition of casualties and damaged properties. And now what most sadly remains is the senseless logic of war, of action and reaction. And the suffering of thousands of civilian evacuees. Enough is enough!"

Quevedo noted that "with the grace of the Most Merciful, Most Beneficent, Most Compassionate God, the one unique God we all believe in, there is no human conflict that cannot be solved through a genuine honest dialogue of the heart."

Quevedo was president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines from 1999 to 2003, during which he also appealed to the warring parties to end the war in 2000 and 2003 for the sake of the internally displaced persons (IDPs also known hereabouts as evacuees or bakwits). In 2000, nearly a million persons were displaced by then President Joseph Estrada's "all-out war" while a little over 400,000 were displaced by the Arroyo administration's war against the MILF in 2003.

The renewed hostilities in August 2008, following the aborted signing of the Memorandum of

Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), displaced a total of 157,584 families or a total of 756,544 IDPs from August 10, 2000 to July 7, 2009, according to the latest situation report of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) dated July 14.

As of July 7, 2009, the same report states that 51,326 families or 254,119 persons are still in the evacuation centers or "home-based" or staying with relatives. (27/07/09: Carolyn O. Arguillas/MindaNews, as found in <http://www.omiphil.org>)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Oblate Youth Encounter

After returning last year from the International Oblate Youth Encounter and World Youth Day in Australia, Fr. Stan ZOWADA proposed a gathering of youth from Oblate parishes in the U. S. Province for July 13-17, 2009, in San Fernando, California. The Oblates minister in three parishes in that city. Frs. Steven CONSERVA and Juan AYALA formed a committee with him, and along with local youth ministers, the event was organized and funds were raised over a ten month period.

The result of all the brainstorming and planning was a very enthusiastic and sincere crowd of approximately 300 youth and their leaders, about 150 of whom came from beyond the San Fernando Valley parishes, accompanied in some cases by Oblates. They had traveled to the West Coast city from many Oblate parishes many hundreds of miles away: Massachusetts (Lowell); Minnesota (International Falls, St. Paul); Louisiana (New Orleans); Texas (San Antonio, Laredo, Eagle Pass, Houston); South Dakota (Sisseton) and the Baja California Mission in Tijuana, Mexico.

The provincial, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, participated in the whole week, along with other Oblates from various parts of the United States and from the Baja California Mission.

The overall theme for the encounter was "Cry the Gospel!" which was developed during the week under the following titles: "Called to be Human," "Called to be Christian," and "Called to be Saints." Follow-up themes were given to the youth to develop when they return home as a remote preparation for World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011.

Everyone who participated was very impressed

not only by the organization, the hospitality of local families, the generosity of donors, the good ministry of musicians, youth leaders and Oblates, and the enthusiasm of the youth, but also by the joint Oblate effort seen throughout the project. For many of the young people too, this was a moment of conversion in their lives. (Fr. William ANTONE)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Seeking ideas for Year of Priesthood

Each year, the international Oblate review, L'Apostolat, publishes a calendar for its subscribers. To celebrate the Year of the Priesthood, the editors are seeking ideas from Oblates and lay associates.

They would like very short sentences that speak of the characteristics of a priest today: simply a subject, a verb and a complement. From these, they will choose 12, one for each month of their 2010 calendar.

Their hope is that these brief sentences will be a source or reflection and inspiration to those who read them. Ideas should be sent either by e-mail or letter as soon as possible to: apostdm@videotron.ca

Or: Apostolat international
1215 de la Visitation
Montréal, Qc
H2L 3B5

UNITED STATES

An Oblate walks across America - for life

Crossroads for Life is an organization that was started in response to the late Pope John Paul II's

call to the youth of America at the 1993 World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado, to “build a Culture of Life.”

For the 15th summer in a row, students from colleges and universities across the USA walked with Crossroads on three simultaneous pro-life walks across America, and Oblate Fr. Dwight HOEBERECHTS, was the only priest among them. When he is not walking for life, Fr. Dwight is a full-time vocation director in his province.

Father Dwight started the “Southern Walk” in Los Angeles, California, on May 22. Other walks began in Seattle, Washington, and San Francisco, California. The three Walks across America in the USA ended on August 15 at the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Crossroads also had a Canadian walk starting in Toronto on July 31 and ending in Ottawa at the Canadian Parliament on August 15.

As he was preparing for this trek across America, Fr. Dwight wrote this in his blog on www.omiusa.org:

“We will begin our respective 3200-mile (5150 km) walk across the United States to be a witness for the dignity and sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death, especially the unborn.”

“I am especially excited to take on this physical challenge, but I do the walk with a deep spiritual connectedness with our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, who said: ‘Leave nothing undared.’ In the spirit of St. Eugene, I feel connected to our great charism to be a witness for Jesus Christ and speak out in love for the most poor and marginalized of our society: the Unborn, but also against the other realities in the Culture of Death regarding abortion and euthanasia. During these three months of walking, our group will have an impact on the tens of thousands of people we will encounter as we walk along the highways, taking part in other peaceful and prayerful activities in front of abortion clinics, speaking with youth groups and ultimately, sharing our story about this pilgrimage at the many parishes we will visit on a daily basis as well as on the weekends.”

Africa-Madagascar

SOUTH AFRICA, NORTHERN PROVINCE Death of former provincial, Fr. Peter Galloway

Fr. Peter GALLOWAY died in Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa, on July 28, 2009, at the age of 56. Last year, while he was completing his second term as provincial of the Northern Province of South Africa, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer.

Born in Johannesburg, he made his first profession of vows as an Oblate in 1971 and was ordained a priest in 1977. He served as a chaplain in the South African Defense Force after his ordination until 1982, when he was appointed a member of the prenovitiate team. He also served as parish priest in the dioceses of Pretoria and Johannesburg. In 1985 he finished his studies in missiology at the University of South Africa.

He later studied at the Rhula Institute of Religious Psychology in Rome from 1988-1992. Upon his

return to his country, he served as psychological consultant in various houses of formation in the Anglo sub-region of Southern Africa, including St. Joseph’s Scholasticate in Cedara.

He was appointed Provincial Councillor in 1993 and was a member of the prenovitiate formation team in Natal at the time of his first appointment as Provincial of the Transvaal Province in 2002. During his tenure, the name of the province was changed to the Northern Province of South Africa.

NATAL

After 157 years, the work continues

Many Oblates have read the history of the arrival of the Oblates in Natal in 1852 and the opening of the first mission of St. Mary’s in Pietermaritzburg. The first church, where Blessed Joseph GERARD was ordained priest, is now an Oblate heritage site with a museum of the congregation developed for the 150th

anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Southern Africa.

Today St. Mary's is multiracial parish at the heart of the city. The city is an epicenter for moral disintegration characterized by escalating crime, prostitution and other social ills.

"Crime is rife. Just recently we lost Fr. Eldred Leslie [a "Traditional Catholic priest" who was murdered in January 2009] and there is always trouble between political parties, especially during the run-up to elections. We are forever compelled to work harder to bring people to church and give direction to the many unemployed youth in our society," said parish priest Fr. Allan MOSS.

He said there was a greater need to help society experience the word of God, and called on priests to live by example: "Priests must embrace frugal lifestyles and show a commitment to the Christian way of life. In our parish we try by all means to practice what we preach."

Since 2007, a community of three Oblates have been serving St Mary's. They are Fathers Allan Moss OMI, Brian DUFFEY and Ben GUMEDE. (From *The Southern Cross*, is the main English Catholic newspaper in South Africa, as reprinted in *OMI Natal Update*, May-July 2009)

MADAGASCAR

French-speaking retreat for perpetual vows

The Oblates of Madagascar had the joy of welcoming to their island some young Oblates from Cameroon, Nigeria and Senegal who came to prepare for perpetual vows. Some of these young men made their vows here in Madagascar but the others, in their countries of origin. There were three priests to accompany them: Joseph NDONG from Senegal, Martin UHEGBU from Cameroon and Didier RAZAFINDRAFARA from Madagascar. Unfortunately, the brethren from Congo were unable to take part in this experience of solidarity.

The young Oblates present were: (Senegal) Kaynack NIAKH, Vincent DIOUF, Jean

Marie SENE, Samba SENE; (Cameroon) Peter Claver ANUCHA, Simon BAMO; (Madagascar) Jean RASOLONJATOVO, Nicolas RANDRIANJAFIMAHENINA, Rivotiana RASAMOELINA, Riri ANDRIAMANANTENA and Solohanitra RAKOTOARISOA.

The preparation for vows began with three weeks of closed retreat at the Benedictine Fathers' center at Mahitsy, 45 km from the capital. The weather was a bit cold, but the young men profited from this monastic atmosphere, surrounded by nature, in order to listen to the voice of God.

After the retreat, they came to the Administration House to visit the capital and its surroundings. They also visited the places where there are the shrines of the two beatified Malagasies: "Blessed Victoria Rasoamanarivo and Blessed Raphael Louis Rafiringa."

On August 7, they went to the Oblate mission at Mahanoro to observe the missionary activity in the wilderness. At the same time, they had the opportunity to observe the pastoral reality taking place among the poorest people in Madagascar.

After that visit, they went to Tamatave to observe other pastoral sites in the large port city where the Oblates carry on various missionary services.

On the evening of August 15, they presented their Oblate witness for the parishioners of Notre Dame de Lourdes. On the following day, five Malagasies, one Cameroonian and one Nigerian pronounced their vows in this very parish. Those from Senegal pronounced their vows at Dakar on September 5.

For Madagascar, it was a wonderful experience because it's the first time they organized the preparation for perpetual vows; that gave them an opening to the Oblates of the entire world. (Marek OCHLAK, Delegation Superior)

NATAL

Forming young leaders

Collaboration between the Oblate Youth ministry and the St Philomena youth Program has led to a

new training program. Based on the theme “The elder within,” the leadership development project begins by looking at issues of personal growth in association with 6 trained specialists such as social workers and counselors.

Youth from marginalized communities, many of whom are troubled, are also taken on camps on the premise that communing with nature enables them to confront the issues of their lives. Those who have been empowered in this way are becoming increasingly involved in forming and animating youth societies in their respective areas of ministry.

The vision of the Oblate Youth Ministry has always been to reach out to marginalized youth who tend to fall outside the ambit of mainstream programmes. “Sometimes the most talented youth have been damaged by dark trajectories in life, very much like the British pop star Amy Winehouse, and often struggle to straddle the positive energy within themselves. This is what

we want to harness, so that they can take it to the next level,” said Fr. Merlin INCE who is running this programme. This approach, Fr. Ince said, is still experimental, drawing on the success of other programmes, and is constantly being evaluated.

A related programme he also started is a research one during which the “symbolic world” is examined, as key to turning self-destructive power into a pro-active force.

He said he is now starting to see the fruits of his work, seeing how youth have stepped out of the margins and are now in the world of work or at tertiary institutions, and are striving to teach others in the type of situations they were in, before all that they learned through the Oblate/St Philomena's youth leadership development programme. (From *The Southern Cross*, is the main English Catholic newspaper in South Africa, as reprinted in *OMI Natal Update*, May-July 2009)

Latin America

BOLIVIA

22 young Oblates prepare for perpetual vows

Every two years, the Oblate Conference of Latin America (CIAL) offers an Oblate Retreat of four weeks for scholastics who are preparing for perpetual vows.

From July 3 until July 30 this year, 22 scholastics from different Oblate Units gathered at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia: Agustín RAMÍREZ (Paraguay), Carlos GARCÍA (Paraguay), Marcos GARCÍA (Paraguay), Rafael FLEITAS (Paraguay), Adolfo FLORES (Bolivia), Teodoro ROJAS (Bolivia), Edgar JERÉZ (Guatemala), Manuel RUVALCABA (Mexico), Leostene SAINTILBERT (Haiti), Cleber LOPES (Brazil), Paulo de OLIVEIRA (Brazil), Ricardo DE ALMEIDA (Brazil), Wesley DE ARAUJO (Brazil), Francisco DE ASSIS DA SILVA (Brazil), Marcilio DA COSTA (Brazil), Aelson VIERA (Brazil), Darwin ROJAS (Colombia), Germán

ROJAS (Colombia), Christian MALENGILA (Congo), David IBWIDI (Congo), Julio César NARVAEZ (USA), Ricardo LÓPEZ (USA).

The formators' team was made up of Fr. Leo GUILMETTE (Paraguay) as Director of the Oblate Retreat and in charge of the conferences; Fr. Ariel MARTÍNEZ (Mexico) as general coordinator of the retreat; Fr. Omar FRIEDRICH (Argentina) as treasurer and coordinator of the liturgy; and Fr. Victor SANTOYO (Peru) as secretary and in charge of the infirmary.

At the beginning of the retreat, there was a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgin of Cotoca, located at 20 km. from the city of Santa Cruz. Afterwards, in order to help the participants get to know one another, the scholastics had the opportunity to make a presentation about their own country, its history and culture, and the different ministries of the Oblates there. There were three free days at the end of each week for community outings; these helped build

friendships and strengthen Oblate brotherhood.

The retreat was outstanding for the attitude of the scholastics, especially in their respect for the silence that allowed for a good atmosphere for prayer and for achieving the principal objective of the retreat. Each day, the celebration of the Eucharist was greatly enlivened by the creativity and the variety of songs in Portuguese, Guarani, Quechua, a Congolese language, Creole, English and Spanish. Each day ended with an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

The two Oblates who work in the parish of St. Martin de Porres, Frs. Oscar SALGUERO and Lucas CASAERT, were always available for different services and necessary logistics; they demonstrated the usual Oblate hospitality of the Province of Bolivia.

There were also visits from Fr. Guillermo SILES, Provincial of Bolivia, who spoke about the current political and ecclesial situation of the country; Fr. Gregorio IRIARTE, who shared with us his ministry and presented his latest book; and from Brazil, Fr. Francisco RUBEAU, Superior of the post-novitiate in Sao Paulo, Brazil, came to spend five days.

The Oblate Retreat took place at the House of Spirituality "John Paul II," managed by the Missionaries of the Beatitudes, some 19 km. from the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. (P. Victor Santoyo, OMI)

BRAZIL

"Romaria" with the prenovices

The author, Fr. Henri LECONTE, is a member of the formation team at the prenovitiate in the Province of Brazil.

I returned from my vacation to immediately begin a missionary week with the young men in the formation community. This missionary week took place 900 km from Belém, at Anapu, where a nun from the United States, Sister Dorothy, was murdered four years ago, on February 12. Every year since then, besides her anniversary day, there is a "romaria" in July. The word "romaria" is

difficult to translate, since the word "pilgrimage" is too narrow. It's a popular religious rally, led by the cross, a recurring celebration that can last from one to several days, going to a place that is important in the peoples' faith-life. In this case, it was four days long (three days of walking, then a big celebration on the last day), starting at Sister Dorothy's tomb, near the parish center at Anapu, to the place where she was murdered. The distance: a bit more than 50 km. Fortunately, I did not know the "details" about this missionary week before I got there, for I would certainly not have ventured into it at the age of 76! And I would have missed something very moving.

Imagine--150 persons at the beginning and more than 300 at the end (adults, youth and even children), walking beneath the sun (35° C; 95° F), or in the rain (a big equatorial downpour on the last day). On the first day, we walked only 7 km in the afternoon, just to get our legs ready; on the second day, 25 km, with wake-up at 4:30 a.m.; and on the third day, 20 km. Trucks made it possible to transport the children or the disabled who would not have made it otherwise. Personally, I walked the whole way, something that encouraged several others (adults and youth) to not use the trucks. They told me that they could hardly give in when they saw an "old man" walking. Every evening, we had very rudimentary encampments in the villages where there were no structures to welcome us. Between 200 and 300 persons (that last evening) had to somehow manage to hang that many hammocks and try to sleep, after a nice bath in a not too distant stream. At each step of the way, at noon and in the evening, the villages received us with a warm welcome. We slept away the fatigue, the heat and the very uneven road (on the way back in the truck, I counted 80 steep ascents and descents), the dust or the mud, depending on the moment.

What I remember most is an exciting and very enriching experience. The young men of our community came back full of enthusiasm (a bit flabbergasted, I should say, by this old man who accompanied them). At the beginning, they too were thinking of a traditional missionary week, something rather calm, but they discovered even more during this "romaria" the demands of the missionary life. I admired their ability to organize

and their cleverness in finding the ideal spot (!) to hang their hammocks.

There's also food for reflection on the faith of these people and their desire to honor the memory of this nun who defended them so passionately. The mass on the last day, at the site of the murder (from 9:30 a.m. till noon, standing in the sun) was evidently a powerful moment. The return was in trucks. The convoy of trucks in the streets of Anapu, lasting almost 45 minutes, made one forget the fatigue, even if a nice shower was most attractive.

The idea of participating in this originated in the fact that I am a member of the Dorothy Committee. I came home, of course, convinced of the need to continue. Now that I am aware of the conditions of this manifestation of faith, I am ready to begin again next year. I hope it will be with the new group of young men who will begin in February. Surely, being one year older, perhaps I will take advantage of the trucks a bit (some of the hills are really difficult), but I cannot see myself not being part of this truly missionary occasion.

Europe

UKRAINE

Young missionaries from Poland

Since their beginning in Katowice, Poland, in 2004, the Nineveh Evangelical Communities have given new life to Oblate parish youth groups. Their spirituality is based on the apostolic person and they see themselves as sent into the world, the Nineveh of today, to call others to conversion.

On the evening of July 30 this year, a group of young people set out on mission. Sixteen missionaries from all over Poland, representing the Nineveh Communities and the Oblate Missionary Volunteer Movement, traveled to Ukraine for a three-week missionary project. They divided into three groups to bring their message to the towns of Kryvyi Rih, Obukhova and Gnevan.

The Gnevan group helped to build a church. The group that went to Obukhova took part in a week-long youth festival modeled after the Festival of Life that is held in Kodeń, Poland, each year.

The evangelizing mission to Ukraine took place only after much preparation. During the past year, the young missionaries had three meetings at the Nineveh Formation Center in Kokotek. There, they tried to deepen their spirituality, get to know each other and learn the basics of the Ukrainian language. They also memorized religious songs and rehearsed pantomime performances.

FRANCE

Perpetual vow preparation in Aix

This millennium in which we live is a time of contradictions:

- a time when man searches for spiritual nourishment and a time when he becomes an atheist;
- a time when the whole world is connected and a time when neighbours do not know each other.

This is really a challenging period for the whole of humanity. To face this challenge as missionaries of the new millennium and to prepare ourselves to commit to that mission by perpetual vows, 14 of us, young Oblates from different units in Europe and the International Scholasticate in Rome, gathered in the place where St. Eugene brought together his first companions. The Perpetual Vows program took place at the motherhouse of the Congregation from August 1-19.

In this journey, we were assisted by 6 veteran Oblates led by Fr. Adriano TITONE and Bro. Dominique DESSOLIN. We spent 18 days together, feeling closer to our holy founder and the first Oblates, visiting the important places of the first years of the Congregation, being inspired by their life stories, discussing our commitment by our religious vows.

We were inspired to face the new millennium

with hope and vigour by the presentation of Fr. Chicho ROIS, the General Councillor for Europe. The time we spent together was a time for bonding as brothers in the same Oblate family, | crossing the barriers of language and culture, though we come from 14 different countries. (Piotr PIASECKI)

Anniversaries for October 2009

60 Years of religious life

1949.10.01	08765	Fr. Thomas Scully	Anglo-Irish
1949.10.17	08772	Fr. Clement Novakowski	Lacombe
1949.10.18	08780	Fr. Giovanni Galperti	Italy

60 Years of priesthood

1949.10.16	07892	Fr. André Rebuffet	France
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50 Years of religious life

1959.10.05	10762	Fr. Guus Koolen	Belgium/Holland
1959.10.07	10809	Fr. Antoni Mendrela	Assumption
1959.10.07	10808	Fr. Ludwik Spalek	Poland
1959.10.15	11030	Fr. Marcel Annequin	France
1959.10.15	11202	Fr. Elias Lagrille	France

50 Years of priesthood

1959.10.04	09489	Fr. Benito Framarin	Italy
1959.10.08	10122	Fr. Vincenzo Abbatinali	Italy
1959.10.11	10040	Fr. Christian Duriez	France
1959.10.11	09847	Fr. Casimir Milan	Cameroun

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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 57-69

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Bernhard Nordkamp	Central European	03/07/1937	Borken	25/07/2009
Fr. Leo Dionne	United States	16/05/1932	Miami	29/07/2009
Fr. Peter Galloway	Northern Prov. South Africa	28/10/1952	Victory Park	29/07/2009
Fr. Yvon Saint-Arnaud	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	20/07/1918	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu	05/08/2009
Fr. Marcus Anandanpulle	Colombo	10/04/1948	London	07/08/2009
Fr. Philipiah Jesunesan	Jaffna	19/09/1939	Colombo	13/08/2009
Fr. Raffaele Salerno	Italy	26/01/1914	Pescara	15/08/2009
Fr. Robert Aaron	United States	08/10/1939	Belleville	17/08/2009
Fr. Ralph Karl	United States	08/06/1930	Middleburg Heights	20/09/2009
Fr. Nottebaert André	Belgium/Holland	07/02/1909	Waregem	22/08/2009
Fr. Hermann Lübbering	Central European	02/10/1917	Borken	23/08/2009
Bro. Fernand Dumont	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	13/06/1936	Richelieu	24/08/2009
Fr. Roch Trudel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	09/05/1925	Trois-Rivières	30/08/2009

“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)