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### Father General's Missionary Meditation "If priests could be formed ..."

Pope Benedict, in declaring "The Year of the Priest", has proposed to us as a model, St. John Mary Vianney. While the Curé of Ars speaks to the whole church, we Oblates may still seek additional inspiration from his contemporary, Saint Eugene. Rereading the Preface to our Constitutions and Rules we have ample material to meditate about priesthood.

"If priests could be formed", he writes, "afire with zeal for men's salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue", then "in a short while people who had gone astray might be brought back to their long-unrecognized responsibilities". He calls these priests "apostolic men". To form them he has two goals in mind: that they be filled with "zeal" for the salvation of others and that they be solidly grounded in "virtue". He summarizes this ideal with a biblical quotation: "Take great care about what you do and what you teach," was Paul's charge to Timothy. "Always do this, and thus you will save both yourself and those who listen to you" (1 Tim 4: 16). Taking care of oneself, saving oneself, and saving those who are ready to listen: this is Saint Eugene's formula of priestly life.

Most of what our Founder has to say applies, of course, not only to priests but to any Oblate, including our Brothers, those in initial formation and our Lay Associates – indeed to any Christian. If one of the characteristics of priesthood, as understood by St. Eugene, is a particular closeness to people, it probably comes from his awareness that the demands of Christian life are the same for priests and all others. Today we are very sensitive to the fact that Christians are first

of all brothers and sisters. Christ has told us so, and therefore, fraternity under one Master and one Father only, overrides in importance all hierarchical distinctions. Baptism is the most important sacrament and makes every Christian a leader, a prophet and a priest.

In our Congregation, the presence of Brothers is very important to remind us of this fundamental Christian call and of brotherhood. The many lay persons who are inspired by our charism also make us aware of the same fraternity. And last but not least, Mary, our patroness, lets us realize that in the first place, we are all brothers and sisters. We venerate the Mother of God, under the invocation of the Immaculate, by contemplating her holiness. The universal call to holiness pointed out by Vatican II makes us all equal before God.

It is only on the firm ground of fraternity that we will be able to recognize what is so special in ministerial priesthood. Firstly, let us recognize with gratitude that it is special! The Church is rich in diversity – it suffices to have a look at the thousands of old and new spiritualities, organizations, cultural expressions of our faith, etc. Each one of these expressions becomes enriched through the others. The same also happens in the relationship between ordained priesthood and all the other gifts God has bestowed on the Church: all sides become enriched! It is safe to say that a very conscious and active laity makes priests better priests, whilst good priests are instrumental for laity to discover their specific mission in the world. Pope Benedict recently expressed it this way, in more

elaborate terms: “The more aware the faithful become of their responsibilities in the Church the more clearly stand out the priest’s identity and his irreplaceable role as Pastor of the community overall, as a witness of the authenticity of the faith and a steward on behalf of Christ the Head of the mysteries of salvation” (Benedict XVI, September 17, 2009).

May we use a comparison: the relationship between man and woman is meant to enhance and not to diminish the sexual identity of both, not to make them just the same. The same way, a healthy relationship and interplay between the ordained and the non-ordained will make both sides stronger in their particular vocations. One could add: as in marriage, this relationship will become fruitful, bringing forth new vocations to laity and to priesthood.

Secondly, what is it in essence that makes the sacrament of orders so precious? Many things could be said and let us discover them again during this year of the priest. To conclude this

meditation, let me say something that impresses me personally. Our faith tells us that ordained priesthood gives people a sacramental access to Christ; what strikes me is that there is somehow a guarantee in this, making the access to Christ very immediate. When the priest or the deacon baptizes or preaches, when the priest presides at the Eucharist, or forgives sins, anoints the sick, when the bishop ordains, when any of them takes care of the poor or acts as a leader of the faithful – it is “as if” Christ himself were acting there. Indeed Christ is mysteriously present through the sacrament of orders and priests, in spite of their human limitations, do bring us in touch with Christ.

Saint Eugene was aware of the precious gift of priesthood entrusted to the Church but he knew that it required attention and care. “If priests could be formed ... afire with zeal for men's salvation, priests not given to their own interests, solidly grounded in virtue ...” - was he just dreaming, or could his dream become a reality, even today?

## General Administration

### GENERAL CHAPTER

#### **A new heart – A new spirit – A new mission**

The “Year of the Chapter” has begun! The 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, which will begin in Rome on September 8, 2010, is an very important moment in the history of our Congregation. It is a moment of grace, not only for the capitulars, but also for every Oblate throughout the world.

The Chapter’s theme was developed by the Pre-capitular Commission over a year ago. It is based on suggestions offered by the provincials at the Interchapter Meeting in South Africa in October, 2007: **Centered on the person of Jesus Christ, the source of our mission, we commit ourselves to a profound and communal conversion.**

Last May, the Unit superiors received animation materials to be shared with all Oblates. These materials were designed for prayerful personal and communal reflection and discussion. Their

focus, related to the Chapter theme, is threefold: ***Personal conversion; Conversion in community; Conversion of our mission in the world.*** Some of the work is meant to be done individually. Some of it will best be done in smaller community groups and even in Unit assemblies.

General Chapters in recent years have captured the essence of the session in a slogan which often became the title of the document issued by the Chapter: e.g., “Evangelizing the poor at the dawn of the new millennium” and “Witnessing to hope.”

At the most recent meeting of the Pre-capitular Commission, the commissioners suggested the slogan: ***A new heart – A new spirit – A new mission.*** This slogan, which summarizes the Chapter theme, is inspired by the Prophet Ezekiel: “*I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it with a natural heart, so that they will live according*

*to my statutes, and observe and carry out my ordinances; thus they shall be my people and I will be their God.*” (Ezek. 11:19-20)

The commissioners have also drawn up a tentative list of auxiliary personnel for the 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: secretaries, translators, etc. In the name of Father General, the commissioner, Fr. David KALERT, will soon be contacting major superiors and individuals to ask them to sacrifice some of their time to help make the Chapter a success.

**THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND CROCUS**

**Joint session in San Antonio**

From September 8 – 11, there was a Joint Session of the Provincial Councils of the Canada-USA Region (CROCUS) and the Central Government in San Antonio (Texas). It was the first time that the Canada-USA Region had the occasion to meet, as a region, with Fr. General and his Council. The proposed goal was: 1) to foster mutual acquaintance, first of all among the members of the four provincial councils that were present (USA, Lacombe, Assumption, Notre-Dame-du-Cap), and then between these and the members of the General Council; 2) to reflect together on the future of the Region. The following theme, inspired by the charism of the Founder, was proposed: “Leave nothing undared so that the poor with their many faces might be evangelized in the reality of our Region.”

The opening session was in the afternoon of September 8 and consisted mainly of giving the participants a first opportunity to meet one another. The next day, September 9, was for audio-visual presentations, prepared by each of the provinces, consisting of two phases: one, in the morning, on their history; the other, in the afternoon, on the

present situation of each one. This first glance, with all of the obvious contrasts, raised awareness of the differences and the similarities of the challenges faced on all sides.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Bishop Claude CHAMPAGNE, o.m.i., of Edmundston (Canada), spoke on “The mission in the context of the Canada-USA Region.” Then two young Oblates, Pierre-Olivier TREMBLAY (Notre-Dame-du-Cap) and Joseph DOWLING (USA) talked on the theme: “To dream: the future of the Oblate charism in our Region.” The first talk in the morning was followed by work in teams and a plenary session; the same took place after the other two talks in the afternoon. It was a day rich in questions, exchanges and suggestions of every kind.

On the closing day, Friday the 11<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, there was a long and fruitful exchange of ideas between the General Council and the Region; in the afternoon, there were an evaluation of the meeting and some final comments.

All together, the session brought together about 50 participants, among whom were three lay associates and two translators, Maurice LESAGE (NDC) and Ronald LAFRAMBOISE (USA). The service of our translators was greatly appreciated. Appreciated as well were the facilitators of the session (Marc DESSUREAULT, William ANTONE, Marian GIL, Tony O’DELL and Marcel DUMAIS). One must say the same about the personnel of the Oblate Renewal Centre and the administration of Oblate School of Theology who hosted the session. The well prepared liturgies in the morning and the evening were especially helpful in fostering the climate of openness and brotherhood that were so evident throughout the meeting. (Pierre HURTUBISE, o.m.i.)

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**Europe**

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**FRANCE**

**The dean of the Congregation celebrates 80 years of priesthood**

Surely Friday, August 21, 2009, will be a day to

remember. On that day, in fact, the Strasbourg community decided to celebrate several jubilarians: Brother Fernand WALLANCE was celebrating 50 years of religious life; Brother Joseph WUCHER, 60 years of religious life; and

Brother Léon DUMONT, 70 years of religious life. Besides these jubilees of religious life, there were several Oblates celebrating anniversaries of priestly ordination: Fathers Jean PHILIPPE, André DURAND and Charles CATHELIN were celebrating 50 years of priesthood; Father Lucien WISSELMANN, 60 years; Father Marcel KELLER, 65 years; Father Victor ROBERT, 70 years; Father Othon DENNER, 75 years; and Father Alexandre KAYSER, 80 years! Indeed, Father Kayser, still solid as a rock for his 106 years, seems to be the dean of the Congregation.

For the occasion, Archbishop Jean Pierre Grallet of Strasbourg came to preside at the celebration. With a few simple words, Archbishop Grallet congratulated the happy jubilarians, giving a homily that focused on “charity among brothers, the mission that is always new and unfailing fidelity.” It was a very simple but prayerful celebration, in the presence of friends, neighbors, and some little Vietnamese nuns who knew the Oblates well. The provincial of France also came to be with the jubilarians, as well as the provincial vicar for the elderly, Father Bernard NOYER, and the Oblates of the nearby communities.

The feast would not have been complete if the guests had not tasted a famous Alsatian “Gewurztraminer – late vintage” wine, gift from a friend of the Oblates. It was the kind of beautiful Oblate celebration we appreciate so much. (Yves CHALVET DE Récy)

## **POLAND**

### **A man of many talents**

After his priestly ordination, an Oblate usually begins his service in a parish or as a preacher, or possibly as a formator or a professor. When Fr. Alfons KUPKA became a priest in 1955, his superiors had something much different in mind for him. Right after his pastoral year, they sent him to Gdansk. “My superiors were convinced that it would be very helpful for our work in the Mission if I studied architecture,” says Alfons, who today is 77 years old. For a priest to study architecture was certainly not common at that time, and especially in the communist Poland of 1956.

When Fr. Kupka began his studies at Gdansk, circumstances had become quite favorable. After the political troubles of the autumn of 1956, Wladyslaw Gomulka had taken power in Poland. “Suddenly, everything became more liberal,” recounts Alfons, “and when I told the Director of the school that I am a priest, he simply said that would be no problem, as long as I studied and did the same work as the other students.”

After his studies, Alfons Kupka busied himself primarily in restructuring various Oblate houses in Poland, but in particular, he devoted himself to the construction of churches. He recalls that there are between twenty and thirty churches for which he drew the plans and oversaw the construction, besides other tasks. He no longer remembers precisely how many churches there were. At any rate, one can find his work in Poland, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Cameroon and Madagascar. He remembers well one construction job. They were to build a parish church. The authorization was not given and the construction had been prohibited. Time was passing and the Christian community was there and needed a church; in spite of the prohibition and in barely one week, a church of wood and steel was built. For this illegal construction, he had to pay a fine, but today, 30 years later, the church is still there. “You had to have a good head on your shoulders when, in those difficult times, you wanted to start a project,” he said smiling. The same thing happened at Poznan; when the Oblates wanted to build an entirely new church, he passed it off with the authorities as a simple restoration.

If you think it was enough for Fr. Kupka to be both priest and architect, you are mistaken. In 1974, he became provincial of the Polish Oblates. During his mandate, he was able to engage the province in the foreign missions which were always close to his heart. The Oblates were sent to Cameroon and to Madagascar, and there were many things to build there.

For Alfons Kupka, it was not enough simply to send missionaries and to build churches and mission stations. He also wanted to foster the idea of the mission in his own country and for that, he absolutely needed a magazine. “During my

mandate, I was unable to find this missionary review, but once again, we were very lucky. It was the days of the Solidarnosc union, and the State all of a sudden permitted the publication of 12 different Catholic newspapers and magazines.” One of these reviews was “Misyjne Drogi,” the missionary review of the Polish Oblates. The permission was there but what was lacking was an editorial staff. The successor of Alfons as provincial found a solution: “You wanted this magazine; now do it.” And that is how he was appointed to the task in 1983. Since then, “Misyjne Drogi” (Missionary Roads) is in its 27th year and Fr. Kupka continues to work there. And he continues to busy himself with construction. This septuagenarian has no thought of quitting. He is in service as an Oblate: as priest, architect or editor, today he is still wherever his communities needs him. (Christoph HEINEMANN - Der Weinberg, July-August 2009)

## UKRAINE

### A breath of life in Ukraine

“Подих Життя” (pronounced: “Podykh Zhyttia”) means “Breath of Life,” the name of the youth festival that took place on August 13-17 in Obukhif, Ukraine.

The name is important: we all need the breath of life, air to breathe and an incentive to motivate us. Certainly, this is all the more true for youth, surrounded by everything the world presents them, but which leaves them empty and dried up inside. The grace of God, the Holy Spirit, a new life in Christ: this is the water that quenches our thirst; but after the recent past of communism in Ukraine and the arrival of secularizing materialism, many youth truly do not know Him who came so that they might “have life and have it more abundantly.” (Jn 10:10) Therefore, the Oblates and the Ukrainian Oblate youth from our parishes worked together to organize a festival which is meant to be celebrated every summer. Sister Yulia, OMI, the first Ukrainian Oblate sister, also came from Spain to lend a hand. We got the idea for this from the Oblates and Oblate youth in Poland who have had a “Festival of Life” for several years now.

During the festival days, there were conferences on issues that affect youth in a special way, such as knowing one’s self, the future, the family, love, true friendship... And of course, God. Furthermore, they had workshops and small group work on these themes. There were also skits, songs, sports, and Christian rock music concerts.

We wanted to celebrate the life which God has given us! But in order to receive Life, even with a capital L, there were prayers and specially prepared celebrations. It was also a great training exercise in cooperation and corresponsibility: everyone had to participate in the cleaning and upkeep of the camp (we lived in tents and we did the cooking ourselves). It was also an occasion to evangelize: this year, for example, we had a living Way of the Cross (acted out by the youth) through the streets of the town, thus joining ourselves to the many passersby on the street. We also invited a local soccer team to play with us, and we invited the whole city to the concert of Christian music.

Our goal is to invite as many Ukrainian youth as possible, but in a special way, our attention is directed toward those who are the most detached. This year, our very first attempt, was reserved for the youth of our Oblate parishes, in order to gain some experience and to learn how to organize the future festivals. Therefore, there were only 40 participants. Next year, it will already be open to all the youth of Ukraine. We hope that in due time, we will have several hundred. We are already at work on the next festival. So we ask for your prayers and we ask you to invite others to pray that we might be able to give to the youth of Ukraine a real “Breath of Life.” (Diego SÁEZ)



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## Asia-Oceania

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### PHILIPPINES

#### Ministry among indigenous peoples reviewed

Eight Oblates who serve or had served in the Oblate ministry among indigenous peoples (IP) came together with the Provincial, Ramon BERNABE, last August 6 in order to review the direction of, and propose new initiatives for the ministry.

Present at the meeting were Mauricio ZUYCO, Rogelio TABUADA, Navarro MATAS, Elmer BOSTON, Raphael TIANERO, Rizalde OROLA, Jose ADUANA, and Renante ABAN. Each one was given the opportunity to share what he had done before and what he thinks of the ministry at this time. Bro. Mauricio had the most extensive experience among the IP's, spanning almost 40 years. Renan, on the other hand, is the new ministry coordinator, not only for the Oblates, but also for the Archdiocese of Cotabato.

Oblate ministry among the IP's covers two geographical areas in Central Mindanao—the Kulaman Valley in Sultan Kudarat, and Pangipasan in North Cotabato. In Sulu, there is also ministry among the Badjaos through the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo and Notre Dame of Jolo College. Over the years, programs for the IP's have ranged over various areas: ancestral domain survey and documentation; formal and non-formal education; health services; agriculture; basic infrastructure; advocacy for the environment; community organizing; and catechesis. The group acknowledged, however, that the key approach in all of these was cultural solidarity—entering into the whole life of the IP's, particularly in learning their language. From that foundational approach, marked also by profound respect, programs of empowerment and catechesis can be pursued.

The meeting concluded with the identification of some essential elements of the framework of Oblate ministry among the IP's:

- Oblates are engaged in this ministry because

the indigenous peoples are among the voiceless and excluded in society today;

- Oblate ministry among the IP's entails living with the indigenous peoples in their specific locales or communities (inculturation; learning the language; knowing their socio-cultural-political contexts, etc.);
- The indigenous peoples are not a monolithic group, but are composed of various sub-groupings with their own distinctiveness;
- Programs for the IP's should be identity-based, prioritized according to importance, and empowering;
- Oblates serving in this ministry need to be secure in their own Catholic Christian and Oblate identity, and possess an attitude of openness and interest to embrace such ministry;
- Oblates in this ministry should be critical in engaging other partners and stakeholders, so as not to compromise our values and the best interests of the indigenous peoples we seek to serve.

The group also recommended that scholastics with the disposition and inclination for this ministry should be identified early on and given the opportunities for specialized studies in the field of ministry among indigenous peoples. (*RGB in OMI Philippines, August 2009*)

### JAFFNA

#### Oblate center helps war widows

As Tamil people languish in refugee camps after the end of the civil war, widows and children appear to be the ones hardest hit by the situation. One Tamil widow who spoke to UCA News on the condition of anonymity said that her greatest concern is sexual violence against young women such as her 17-year-old daughter. The death of her husband last year has left her with three children at the age of 39. In an effort to protect her daughter, she arranged for a marriage partner. Her story is common and similar fears for their daughters have forced parents to take similar steps.

Widows, whose relatives are in different camps, are often left without family support. They are then left to fend for themselves and try to provide an education as well as moral guidance to their children, many of them teenagers. "Many men were killed in war and now their widows have to take care of themselves and provide for their children's future," says Father Paul Jeyanthan PACHCHEK, director of the Oblate Social Service (OSS) in Mannar diocese, which is helping these women and their children. OSS was formed on May 22, four days after the end of civil war, by 14 Oblate priests in Mannar diocese.

The OSS provides supplementary food and clothes as well as necessities such as cooking utensils and nursery items. It is also providing school textbooks and pocket money for children. The widows are also hungry for their spiritual needs to be met. "Rosaries and prayer books are in demand," said Oblate Father Celestine MASCARINGHE, the parish priest of St. Anthony's church in Cheddikulam. So far, OSS has helped more than 700 widows in Kathirgamar camp, in Cheddikulam.

Father Pachchek notes that "employment and long-term security is only possible for the teenagers if they are released from camps." Like all Church aid workers, he has limited access to people in the camps. The government argues that it must ban aid agencies, media, right groups and even opposition parliamentarians from the camps as screening for Tamil rebels is not complete.

OSS is also preparing to provide sewing machines, cattle, farming equipment and dried food for those who are to be resettled in their villages, said Father Mascringhe. The Ministry of Disaster Relief Services estimates that there are 7,894 widows in 30 camps and 57,293 children, of which 1,034 are orphans. On top of that there are 3,100 expecting mothers, most under the age of 18, according to the ministry. (Thanks to [www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com) August 20, 2009)

## INDONESIA

### Father General visits

The news that the Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm

STECKLING, would come to visit Indonesia in June sent a wave of enthusiasm and excitement through the Province. Because the visit would only be one week, it was necessary to plan well so that as many Oblates as possible would have the maximum benefit from this visit. The main focus was to visit the places of Formation. Due to this special visit, one of the scholastics who would have been due for Final Vows at the end of 2009, agreed to prepare himself for June.

While Fr. General has received the Final Vows of many young Oblates, this celebration had a special feature. For many years, the Indonesian Formation Community had incorporated a Javanese traditional ceremony for the occasion of Final Vows, namely "SIRAMAN", or the washing ceremony, often used as a preparation for marriage. The symbolism is clear: it is to purify oneself for the new life about to be undertaken. The ceremony took place on the morning of the day of vows, and the water used had been gathered from different sources of special significance, namely a number of the Marian shrines in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. The people involved in this ceremony are members of the candidate's family, as well as from his Oblate family. The one pouring the water also says a prayer invoking God's help in the future of the young Oblate. Fr. Steckling took an active part in this cultural ceremony. In the evening of the same day Fr. General received the vows of Bro. Antonius SUSSANTO during Mass.

During his time in Jogjakarta, Fr. General made himself available to meet with all the Scholastics (10) and Novices (6) as well as meeting with all the Formators and the Vocation Director. The following day was what was called the OBLATE GATHERING DAY. 98% of the Province gathered for the question and answer session with Fr. General. This was concluded with Eucharist to celebrate the 40 years of priesthood of 4 Oblates, Fathers Natalino BELINGHERI, Jacques CHAPUIS, Antonio BOCCHI, and Charlie BURROWS.

The following day, Fr. General left to visit the parish of Cilacap where the first Oblates began their ministry in 1972, as well as to visit the

Marian shrine in Kaliori nearby. In both places, he was able to meet with our good and faithful Oblate friends, the members of MAMI and friends of the OMI Seminary. The final place in the itinerary was a visit to the OMI parish of Cengkareng in Jakarta, a parish with 20,000 parishioners and 3 Oblates. Here also Fr. General was able to meet with the special MAMI groups, those people dedicated to supporting our Oblate works. On the day of his departure, Fr. Andri ATMAKA and Fr. Peter STOLL accompanied the General to visit with the Cardinal Archbishop of Jakarta, Julius Darmaatmadja, SJ. The Cardinal has a somewhat special relationship with the Oblates as he had been the invited guest of the Province at the canonization of the Founder.

Then it was time to go. However, the last moments brought with them a particular twist. On arrival, Fr. General had paid for a 7 day visa. Perhaps someone miscalculated, as day one was the day of arrival. So he had to make a little “donation” to the government funds for his “extra” day. (John O’DOHERTY)

## LAOS

### Missionary intention of the Holy Father

*The missionary intention of the Holy Father for September is this: “That Christians in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, who often meet with great difficulties, may not be discouraged from announcing the Gospel to their brothers, trusting in the strength of the Holy Spirit.”*

*Former missionary to Laos, Fr. Angelo PELIS, an Italian Oblate, was interviewed on Vatican Radio about the situation in Laos where he had served as a missionary. Fr. Pelis is currently the postulator for the Cause of Fr. Mario BORZAGA and his catechist, Paul Thoj Xyooj, killed by guerillas in 1960 in Laos. Fr. Pelis explained the situation of the Church in Laos today.*

The Church lives in a situation that today I would not call persecution. In the past, it was persecuted to the point that the few priests and laity in the villages were on the very brink of apostasy. Today, the Church lives under the control of the authorities.

As for the consequences of this for the local Churches, there are two concrete facts. Since 1975, in northern Laos, there is only one priest who, unfortunately, has also suffered years in prison. When he was freed, he remained and, since 1998, he is apostolic administrator. The other fact is that since 1975, the Eucharist has not been celebrated in northern Laos. That is the greatest suffering we endure.

Some positive things have happened in recent years. Last January, after 34 years, a community of women religious has returned to Luang Prabang, the ancient royal capital in northern Laos; they take care of a group of persons who are hearing-impaired. Meanwhile, in Vientiane, the capital, since 1983 there has been an Oblate bishop, a native of Laos, Bishop Jean Khamse VITHAVONG; he has tirelessly worked at his mission. He had very few priests – some of them old and sick – who have suffered much because of the conditions and the control of the authorities. But he too has had the satisfaction and great joy in June, three years ago, of seeing the ordination of two young priests who had studied abroad.

My hope for the future is that there can be greater dialogue with the government of Laos which of late seems to have understood the fundamental humanitarian mission of the Catholic Church. Therefore, there is always the hope that someday, foreigners who were the first evangelizers there – I am speaking especially of the French but also of us Italians since 1957 – that they will be able to return to the country. But there is also hope locally. I am referring to the national seminary that has opened in southern Laos, with about 20 young men and where they are slowly but surely sending out new priests. (Fr. Angelo Pelis, OMI)

## TURKMENISTAN

### Two Oblates: the only priests in the country

*(Excerpt from an interview with Fr. Andrej MADEJ, mission superior, in the publication Misioneros Tercer Milenio)*

There are only two of us Oblates there. We are the only priests in the whole country. We are



there as official representatives of the Holy See. We hold diplomatic passports from the Vatican. Inside our Nunciature, we have a chapel that is open all day and the people who wish to do so can come to pray with us.

I am part of the diplomatic corps. It's a cross for me, since I have to be present at all the receptions. I say to my friends: "What a cross, what a cross!" But this gives me the chance to be present at weddings and banquets two or three times a week. I am the senior member of the diplomatic corps since I

have been there for 12 years, while the others stay only two or three years. I try to be faithful to those appointments since it gives me the opportunity to establish relationships and friendships.

We have a lot of visitors in the house. Not all of them come for strictly religious reasons. Friends and families visit us. Our house, the Nunciature, is a meeting place for cultures and religions. It's a wonderful occasion to foster the values of the Kingdom, hoping that all of this will promote peace among peoples and foster universal brotherhood.

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## Canada-United States

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### UNITED STATES

#### Youth from Florida on mission in Peru

After World Youth Day in Australia in 2008, some youth from St. Stephen's Parish in the Miami Archdiocese expressed a desire to continue to deepen their faith and to experience an Oblate mission outside of their own country.

St. Stephen's is a large, multicultural parish served by three Oblates: Fr. Alejandro ROQUE (Pastor) and two associates, Fathers Jonathan CLOSNER and Quilin BOUZI. Even that team is multicultural since Fr. Alex was born in Cuba; Fr. Jonathan, in Texas; and Fr. Quilin, in Haiti.

For one year, nine youth and four adults took part in mission formation at the parish. They came together twice each month to prepare mentally, spiritually and physically for their foreign mission experience.

In June of 2009, the fourteen arrived in Lima, Peru, where they received a warm welcome from the delegation superior, Fr. Mauricio SCHROEDER. From there, they went by bus to Chincha, three hours southwest of Lima. The Oblates serve in Pueblo Nuevo, an area that lies on the margin of Chincha, populated by the poor. The area was devastated by the earthquake of 2007. Upon arriving in the area, evidence of destruction was evident.

They toured the town with Fr. Eduardo

TERREROS after they moved into their temporary home, a small convent formerly occupied by religious sisters. The visitors' first focus of missionary work was to help Brother Blaise MAC QUARRIE in a project of building homes for people who lost everything in the earthquake. They divided into smaller work groups so that each one could experience different aspects of the construction projects.

Besides the construction work every day, the young missionaries also engaged in other apostolic works in the area. Under the guidance of parish sector leaders, (another name for leaders of Base Ecclesial Communities), they visited the homes of the very poorest parishioners. They would visit with the people, share and listen to experiences, and pray with them.

They also visited the "Asilo de Ancianos", a local home for the elderly, under the care of missionary Brothers from Spain. Many of these elderly people were found in dumpsites, left there to die. Others would be wandering the streets because their families no longer wanted to care for them. The elders looked forward to the visit of the youth each day. Saying "goodbye" to these "grandparents" was one of the hardest things for the visitors, since they realized they would probably never see each other again.

In the evenings, they would gather at the parish for Mass and to thank God for the day's experiences. Their evening ritual was to gather around the

table to share and reflect on the experiences of the day in the context of the gospel.

Originally, they had planned to spend half of their time in Pueblo Nuevo and the other part in the jungle in another Oblate mission. However, they received word from the Oblates in Aucayacu that threats from local terrorist groups were surfacing and roads were being blocked.

Fr. Schroeder suggested they go to a different site, Huancayo, but a protest by indigenous *campesinos* over the recent death of many of their confreres in the north at the hand of the military closed the roads from Lima into the interior.

When presented with the possibility of spending the rest of their time as tourists in Lima, the youth chose to stay in Pueblo Nuevo and continue what they had been doing. As one of the youth told Fr. Jonathan, “God has his reasons Fr. J, and I believe we are being called to remain here in Chincha.... there is a purpose why we were called here.”

Again, there arrived the time to say “goodbye.” Before leaving, the youth went to the various chapels and the main Church of Cristo Rey to give testimonies of their experiences. One of them told the assembly: “I feel as if I have a family right here in Chincha, Cristo Rey.” (Fr. Jonathan Closner-Benavidez, OMI)

## UNITED STATES

### An 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Shanghai

*From June 28-July 8 the peripatetic Fr. George MCLEAN travelled from university to university, overseeing sessions of the South East Asian Regional Conference discussing The Role of Philosophy in the Development of SE Asia. Thus, he would be found in Phnom Penh for the South East Asian Regional Conference; in Shanghai at the Fudan University and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences; and in Xian at the Xian Jiaoton University. At the editor's request, he wrote the following for OMIUSA.*

Oblates, said Pope Pius XI, are specialists in the most difficult missions. With that at heart, in 1946, young George McLean set out from Lowell

High School on the great adventure: to cross the frontiers of “civilization- as-we-know-it.” His goal: to serve the Indians and Eskimos in the, then front line missions of the Great North as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

That his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party this past June 29 was held in Shanghai says much about how the Oblate mission has evolved with the times, for along with the 80 red roses he received were five books written especially in his honor. The one from Africa reflected his typical Oblate outreach to the most needy. That from Eastern Europe reflected his work along the dangerous frontiers of the Cold War in the past; and another from the Middle East, the dangerous lands of the present.

However, perhaps most indicative of the Oblate mission today were the last two books which came from lands least likely to be considered for work by an American priest. One was from the philosophy academy of Hanoi in North Vietnam, one of the last strongholds of communism. The other was from the chief Academy in Tehran, Iran, center of the Muslim effort to live their faith faithfully in the ever more challenging circumstances of our day.

But why was he in Shanghai? Actually, he was on his way to direct a conference on relations between cultures in the frontier land of the Uigurs. That is the border of Western China between the one billion Chinese Hans and even greater Muslim world. Before he could reach there, however, those tensions exploded with reportedly hundreds of deaths in Urumqi, increasing the threat of a clash of civilizations to come. (OMI USA August 2009)



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## Latin America

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### PARAGUAY

#### OMI Youth Congress 2009

Since the local press every weekend reports negative news about youth (fights among sports fans, automobile accidents caused by drunkenness, robberies, urban youth gangs, etc.), it is also a good thing to report the good things that they do. One example is the Youth Congress which took place on September 11-13 in the chapel of the Virgin of Mercy (Yukyty) in the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul (Republicano).

This event was organized by the Youth and Vocational Ministry team of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. There was the active participation of 300 youth, many of them catechists and leaders of youth groups, coming from various parts of the country, representing the departments of San Pedro, Caaguazú, Coronel Oviedo, Concepción, Guairá, Central, the Chaco and even a delegation of 11 youth coming from Brazil.

The Congress provided the youth with a space where they could reflect on the meaning of the Christian mission in our lives. The theme was: "Faithfulness to the mission to which Jesus Christ calls us." The slogan of the Congress was "Jesus Christ was faithful to his mission; Saint Eugene was too. What about me?" The principal speaker was Fr. Olegario DOMINGUEZ, OMI, who spoke about the theme of Christ's faithfulness to his mission. A religious sister also made a presentation and there was a panel of laity (a married couple, an engaged couple and a committed lay woman).

One of the most meaningful activities was walk for the permanent Continental Mission, a walk of 4 km, from the place of the Congress to the top of Lambaré hill. At the end of the walk, the youth group from San Blas presented an allegory: "He sent a missionary."

The young people behaved beautifully. With their joy and all their energy, they jumped, they danced, they sang and they praised God. They

are truly the present and the hope of the Church in our country.

Most of the participants returned to their respective communities with the promise of being missionaries of Christ. They are getting ready for the next youth mission that will take place at the parish of the Virgin of Fatima at General Resquín (San Pedro), on December 9 – 26 of this year.

We hope that everything they lived in the congress will bear much fruit, first of all for the youth themselves and also for the community that welcomed them, and in general, for our entire Church that is so much in need of young leaders.

We are grateful to the ministry team of the community of the Virgin of Mercy (Yukyty) that helped us in making the Congress happen. We are also grateful to the families that welcomed and lodged the participants in their homes. (Bro. Carlos GARCÍA and Gualberto Miranda, members of the Youth and Vocation ministry team)

### URUGUAY

#### The Oblates and *Radio Maria*

The *Radio Maria* journey began in Italy in January of 1987, when the *Radio Maria Association* was set up as a parish radio station. In only three years, this radio station expanded its outreach. When the entire peninsula had been covered by at least 850 transmitters, there was a spontaneous look toward other countries in the world and a unanimous response of the people in supporting the missionary effort beyond their national boundaries.

Now, for the past four years, it is also found in Uruguay. Since May 31, 2005, it has been broadcasting in four regions: Florida, where the headquarters are located, as well as in San José, Tacuarembó and Melo. Broadcasting over the internet ([www.radiomaria.org.uy](http://www.radiomaria.org.uy)) obviously permits them also to reach other regions such as Montevideo.

At the beginning of this year, as the result of a casual or providential contact, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were asked to take charge of a program treating a missionary theme; this began on July 22. The name of the program is "Community in mission" and is broadcast every Wednesday from 8 to 9 p.m. (Uruguayan time). The program team is made up of Father Stefano CARTABIA, who is the coordinator and in charge of content, and two young women from the parish of San Rafael: Sofia, a 25 year old school teacher, and Marianna, a 17 year old student.

Usually the program is divided into three 20 minute blocks of time: the first is on a theme (for example, Jesus in Mark's Gospel); the second is about missionary experiences told by the persons who lived them; the third can have different elements such as songs or recipes. Listeners can intervene by telephone or by sending an instant message.

All of this effort is inspired by the Gospel phrase: "so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (Jn 10:10)

## **PARAGUAY** **In honor of Pa'i Puku**

Twenty-five years ago, Bishop Pedro SHAW,

the legendary Pa'i Puku (the tall priest), died. During all of this year, a German theologian (Dr. Michael Krischer) has been working on an account about the popularity of the late bishop of the VAP (Vicariate Apostolic of Pilcomayo). A special edition will be released in October.

As the result of a casual friendship, the famous Paraguayan harpist, Rito Pederson, dedicated himself to creating a hymn in honor of Pa'i Puku. And he did even more: he produced a whole CD, with his photo. The hymn is sung by Diana Barboza, daughter of two very well known Paraguayan musicians.

This musical number was presented on Sunday, September 20 – the traditional date of the youth pilgrimage of the diocese of Benjamin Aceval (formerly part of the VAP. The local bishop, Mons. Cándido Cárdenas, presided at the Mass, in the presence of all the priests of the diocese and of Fr. Miguel FRITZ, provincial of Paraguay. Fr. Fritz had brought along the 13 pre-novices, as a special conclusion of their retreat. There were many people at the crossroads where Pa'i Puku died (June 21, 1984); they warmly applauded the music in honor of someone whom they consider a saint. (Miguel Fritz)

## **Africa-Madagascar**

### **ZAMBIA**

#### **First Zambian missionary to another country**

In the Zambian delegation's newsletter, the superior, Fr. Joseph PHIRI, asked this question: "Can a young delegation like ours dare to send missionaries in other lands? I have asked myself this question several times. And the answer is yes we can. Fr. Francis KABIKA has finally arrived in Mexico to take up his obedience in that country. I am full of joy for the zeal that Fr. Kabika has expressed. I am glad to note that we have one of our own as a missionary outside the African Continent. I urge my fellow Oblates to embrace the desire to serve the people of God wherever the Congregation may ask you to go."

Still celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the missionary presence of the Oblates in Zambia, the entire delegation rejoices to see Fr. Kabika as the first Zambian to be given an obedience by the Superior General to a mission outside Zambia.

On September 7, 2009, in the pre-novitiate chapel in Lusaka, a blessing and send-off ceremony for Fr. Kabika was held. Present at the ceremony was Fr. Pat GITZEN who was among the first four Oblates to come to Zambia twenty five years ago. (*OMI Zambia*, September-October 2009)

### **LESOTHO**

#### **Congratulations to our new bishops**

*In the October 2009 edition of Maoblata, the*

*newsletter of the Province of Lesotho, the provincial, Fr. Emile Moteaphala, reflected on the feelings of the Oblates on the joyous occasion of the Episcopal ordination of two new bishops. This is an excerpt of his comments:*

Since we heard of the appointments by the Holy Father of our two Oblate brothers as bishops: Fr. Gerard Tlali LEROTHOLI, Archbishop of Maseru and Fr. Augustinus Tumaole BANE, Bishop of Leribe, we the Oblates of Lesotho Province have not been able to contain within us the sentiments expressed in the Magnificat: "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour..."

Indeed we feel honoured by the Church that two of our fellow Oblates be chosen among all the clergy in the Church of Lesotho to be men who "have been designated by the Holy Spirit to take the place of the Apostles as pastors of souls and, together with the Supreme Pontiff and subject to his authority (they) are commissioned to perpetuate the work of Christ, the eternal Pastor."(Christus Dominus)

For us this is a clear sign of the recognition by the Church of the good work which has been done by our Congregation in preparing appropriate leaders of the people of God. It is also a strong encouragement to us to strengthen our efforts to continue to prepare men who can enjoy a full trust by the Church, on whom the Church could gladly entrust any of her ministries. We are encouraged to strengthen the formation, not only of the men in our Congregation but also of all who come under our direct influence. ...

Our brothers assume office at the time when the people of Lesotho are craving for reconciliation and political stability and are grappling with a number of challenging issues. One thinks here of issues like:

\*The continuing litigations between the Government and the opposition parties which started with the general elections of 2007 and necessitated the intervention of SADC in the person of Sir Ketumile Masire.

\*The ever growing gap between a few very rich individuals who live in luxury, and the majority of the people in the country who are poor and live in subhuman conditions.

\*Unemployment and rampant poverty.

\*Global changes which are seriously affecting the poorest in the country: Climate change and its consequent droughts and famine; Economic recession resulting in untold sufferings for the most vulnerable in the country.

\*The HIV/AIDS pandemic which continues to wreak havoc in the country. And several others.

The Catholic faithful are thirsting for direction in the environment where the Church still enjoys great numbers and growth. They would like to hear a voice which calls them to unite and put their hearts, heads and skills together in order to respond to the many challenges and opportunities facing the Catholic Church in Lesotho: self-reliance; how to tap the rich resources, both human and material, which the Church possesses; how to deal with the present threats to the traditional operations of the Church in its Health institutions, Education, and Property; the diminishing Catholic ethos and disintegrating Church infrastructure; and above all the need for unity among the members of the Catholic Church, among Christians and believers, and among all the people in the entire nation.

To me the most critical task facing our new Bishops seems to be in line with what has been proposed as the theme of the coming Synod of the bishops: to mobilize the Church to be "in service to reconciliation, justice and peace." The Catholic faithful and the people of Lesotho are thirsting for reconciliation.

To you our brothers, Gerard and Augustinus, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations. We promise you to find in us what the Founder says about us "You will find in them respect, obedience and devotedness equal to any test."

You can count on our prayers and support, but above all remember that “Shepherds of the Lord’s flock know that they can count on a special divine grace as they carry out their ministry as bishops.”(Pastores Gregis)

## Anniversaries for November 2009

### 60 Years of Religious Life

1949.11.06	08797	Fr. Pierre Tissot	France
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### 50 Years of Religious Life

1959.11.01	11351	Bro. Michel Koostachin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1959.11.01	10812	Fr. Martin Mader	Central European Province
1959.11.01	13725	Fr. Heinrich Treziak	Central European Province

### 25 Years of Priesthood

1984.11.17	12592	Fr. Antonio Mariangeli	Argentine-Chile
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### Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 70-80

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Bro. Michael Holly	United States	22/05/1936	Palm Beach Gardens	03/09/2009
Fr. Jan Opiela	Poland	29/08/1918	Lubliniec	10/09/2009
Fr. Paul Bazinet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	19/05/1913	Richelieu	10/09/2009
Fr. Patrick McMahon	Natal	23/04/1912	Dublin	18/09/2009
Fr. Domingo Estrada	United States	01/12/1942	Pipe Creek	21/09/2009
Fr. Robert Gagnon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	03/03/1929	Québec	23/09/2009
Fr. Robert Evrard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	27/01/1926	Libramont	25/09/2009
Fr. Vincent Fitzgerald	United States	08/12/1919	Belleville	27/09/2009
Fr. Brian Ievers	Central South Africa	31/05/1942	Bloemfontein	28/09/2009
Fr. Edward Randall	United States	10/04/1922	Tewksbury	02/10/2009
Fr. Joseph Ryan	United States	15/11/1916	Tewksbury	02/10/2009

*“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)*