



Information No. 497 (English)

March 2010

Father General's Missionary Meditation

Lenten experiences

Recently I attended an event in town dedicated to a cooperation project between the cities of Rome and Kinshasa. The COMI, an Oblate related secular institute, were behind the initiative. A wonderful Congolese band played African music, we heard poetry about the Congo, we listened to witnesses by two young Italians who had spent some time in the Congo with the project, a health center, etc.

As part of the program, we listened to a medical doctor whose talk impressed me in a special way. Based on his experience not in Congo but in Luanda, Angola, he explained to us the different forms of malnutrition, its cure and its prevention. The talk became a bit longer than was needed to understand the subject. But what was the subject? It became clear that the doctor wanted not just to explain a medical condition; he wanted to touch our hearts.

Nobody mentioned anything religious - perhaps there was a reference in the songs - but at a certain point, I realized that everything fitted perfectly into Lent. This quite secular event became a perfect Lenten exercise! The paschal mystery was obviously present during the talk on malnutrition and it was not a medical doctor but the God and Father of Jesus Christ who seemed to be speaking to us, trying to communicate to us not just some information, but his own Spirit, the Spirit of compassion, love and solidarity.

We could define Lent as a time during which we learn to listen and to see in new ways. Through our accepting austerity and becoming more silent and attentive, our ears and eyes open up to realities we usually miss. We may see people close to us in a new light, conversations where God is not even explicitly recognized may reveal

to us the face of the Lord and the words and symbols of liturgy may draw us in more deeply.

Let me offer two more examples for this. The first: someone pointed out to me recently that the apology offered by Tiger Woods, the golf champion, had a message for Lent. That day, Tiger Woods' apology occupied the first 10 minutes of the BBC evening news! It was true, his words, even with all the ambiguity one could find in such a press conference, spoke about that change of mind and life we all want to achieve during Lent.

The second example is from liturgy. Some time ago, the altar caught my attention, just the altar itself. What do we see in this very special table? On top of the altar we offer our gifts which will be transformed and shared; the altar therefore symbolizes our hearts. It also points to Christ and evokes his meals in Bethany or in the house of Zacchaeus; his Last Supper and the altar of the cross. It even announces the final banquet of all peoples.

As I now realize, we have dealt above with the very classical elements of the Lenten period: fasting (austerity and silence), almsgiving (support of a clinic and fight against malnutrition) and prayer (liturgy). During the talk of the doctor, I also understood that our preparation to celebrate the Easter mysteries does not mean doing many extra things. It may mean that we do less in order to get into more. It is through silence and listening, watching and praying, that we become more sensitive and capture the presence of God in everyday life events. God then has many ways to touch our hearts and to transform them.

General Administration

GENERAL HOUSE

90 years and still smiling

There is probably no Oblate in the world that has such widespread traces of himself as does Brother Giuseppe D’ORAZIO. For many decades, he has left his finger prints on much of the mail that has gone out from the General House. On February 24, 2010, Giuseppe celebrated his 90th birthday. Over sixty Oblate priests, Brothers and scholastics from the General House, the International Scholasticate, and the Italian Province, as well as friends and family members, took part in a Eucharist presided by the General House superior, Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN.

In his homily, Gilberto characterized Giuseppe as a man of great joy and of great devotion. Having professed his first vows in 1941, he has been part of the General House community since 1947, when the Superior General, Fr. Leo DESCHÂTELETS, called him to Rome from the Italian Province.

Never afraid to greet the many General House visitors and chat with them, whether they understand a word of Italian or not, he can come into a relatively quiet dining room and bring a smile or two to the lips of those who are eating there.

One of his steadiest and faithful services to the Congregation at its center has been to gather outgoing mail twice each day, weigh it, put on postage and carry it down to the Vatican post office. Thus, the traces of himself that have gone all over the world.

He loves the city of Rome and each day, he tries to go out to his favorite churches and shrines to light a candle or pray for a special intention. His devotion to the Mother of God and St. Eugene de Mazenod is well known. There is always a candle or flowers for Mary and for the Founder in the community chapel, placed there by Giuseppe D’Orazio.

As happens to most people in their later years, Giuseppe has experienced illness and suffering. A year ago, there was fear for his life when he

became so ill with influenza. But the gauge of his recovery was when he was able to again go out upon the sidewalks of Rome to make his tour of churches and favorite statues.

PRECAPITULAR COMMISSION

The Chapter logo

The readers of our web page will have noticed that for the past few weeks, in the left-hand column, there is a new logo for our upcoming General Chapter. Again this time, as for the Chapter of 2004, the logo was designed, in dialogue with the Precapitular Commission, by Fr. Sante RONCHI, the current superior of the Mission of Romania.

Fr. Sante himself tells us of the ideas that inspired his design: “Against the backdrop of a sphere which embraces humanity, there is found on every longitude and latitude (our internationality) the activity of the Oblates who make themselves one with the world (the O of OMI is replaced by the globe itself, thus indicating the transcendence of salvation wrought by Christ [the M and I are more visible]). Clearly, the arrow symbolizes conversion (the theme of the Chapter): always starting over, being first on the road of that redemption which we proclaim to others. It is a journey through which the poverty of the human condition keeps expanding outward toward the status of the new man.”

GENERAL POSTULATION

Some good news!

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has asked the Postulator General for some copies of the “Positio” of the Cause of the Oblate Martyrs of Spain so that the theological consultants can go ahead and study it. This is a very important step in the apostolic or Roman process.

Once the consultants have studied it, they will meet with the Prefect in a “congress” in order to vote. If the votes are favourable, they move on to the next step: the College of Cardinals will review

the conclusions and they too will vote. If both “congresses” give a favourable vote, the Prefect will ask for the pope’s signature on the Decree and they will set the date and place for the beatification.

We would like to celebrate it in Madrid in 2011, on the occasion of the jubilee year of Saint Eugene: the 150th anniversary of his death.

I urge all the Friends of the Oblate Martyrs to pray even more that the Cause not encounter insuperable obstacles and that the boat reach port happily and quickly, that is to say, the beatification which we desire so ardently. One could, for example, make a novena asking for this grace. If anyone needs the *Prayer for an early beatification*, they can ask me for it.

Servants of God Francisco Esteban and Martyr Companions, pray for us. (Joaquín Martínez Vega, OMI, Postulador)

PRECAPITULAR COMMISSION

In six months: the 35th General Chapter

On September 8, 2010, the Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, will officially call to order the 35th General Chapter. Held in Rome at the Christian Brother’s Conference Center, the Chapter should last one month, with the closing anticipated on October 8. However, it is the prerogative of the capitulars to change the length of the Chapter, once it has begun.

At the 35th General Chapter, there will be 88 capitulars (ex officio, elected, and invited). The largest number of capitulars took part in the 1972 General Chapter: 143. For the Chapter of 2010, there will be 88 capitulars (compared with 97 in 2004).

The average age will be about 53 (the same as in 2004). The oldest will be 74; the youngest will be 35.

Regions	Ex officio	Elected	Invited	Total
Africa-Madagascar	7	9		16
Latin America	6	5		11
Asia-Oceania	5	7		12
Canada-United States	4	10		14
Europe	7	12		19
General House		1		1
Central Gov./Gen.Adm.	11			11
Invited			4	4
Total	40	44	4	88

Africa-Madagascar

GUINEA BISSAU

Woman of great dignity

Dolanda is a six year old girl who lives in a village about 10 km from Bissau, in a rural area which is hard to reach because of the deplorable condition of the road. Hers is a modest home: four walls of baked clay covered with a zinc roof. She always accompanied her mother who, in order to feed her family, sold eggs, bananas and peanuts on the edge of the main streets of Bor. She immediately

struck up a friendship with Giusi, my collaborator and assistant treasurer, who, captivated by the beauty of the girl’s eyes, but also by her great poverty, became a second mother to her. In that way, the girl managed to get a few candies and a little dress, but especially, much love.

One day, we no longer saw either her or her mother. We asked around, but no one knew a thing. Two months went by. We were finally able to trace her and to go to her house to find her.

And what we discovered! Her mother was gravely ill. We also discovered that this young woman (at most 30 years old) has five children, the youngest of whom is only 15 months old. Beautiful as she was, she was nothing but a skeleton. The oldest child is in fourth grade (the only boy); the second is in third grade and is seven years old. She was supposed to go to school last year but they had no money to pay the tuition (1,000 francs, equal to about a euro and half). Then comes Dolanda who is six years old; of course, there was no money for her to go to school as well. Then there's the little 15 month old girl. We felt bad at seeing such poverty but we also admired the dignity of that young mother.

We told her we wanted to help her and so we gave her some money and asked her to get some food since she has five beautiful pearls, and if she is not well, who would be able to take care of them? We asked about her husband and she said that he had left more than a year ago to live with another woman; he never returned.

We went back after a few weeks. The mother was on a straw mat on the ground; she could barely speak or breathe and she could not get up. She had seen a doctor, but now it was too late; she could not even swallow her medicine.

Her daughters stood around her. One of them was fanning her to give her a bit of relief, the only means she had to alleviate her pain. The little girls surrounded us. With moist eyes, but never losing her dignity and with no sighing or lamenting, the mother begged us with her eyes to take care of them when she would no longer be there. Within us, there were feelings of deep sorrow at not being able to save her and of anger for so much injustice in this world. It is always the poor who are the losers because they do not have the money and the means to buy medicine; they don't have a place to be cured in a hospital. Had we found her sooner, she would have surely been saved. But no: only three days later they told us that she suffered no longer.

The house is now emptier than ever. We do not know who will get custody of the little ones. Maybe the grandmother or perhaps the father will come to get them. We spoke with him and we told him that we

will take care of their studies and of their healthcare. Certainly, there will be no lack of people whom Providence will point out to us in order to help us rediscover hope and confidence, even though no one can take the place of a mother.

When we see the children, they cling to us and it's always great fun. There are so many experiences like this! Seeing these young women die and not being able to do a thing to help them! Yet you see them serene, without a complaint, resigned! They are women of great dignity, of great courage, women who from childhood are bound to a life of sacrifice.

In a few months, we will open an orphanage, and these little girls will surely be the first to have a place. The Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta will take care of them. I am sure that they will know how to give them that affection that they will continue, for a long time, to miss from their mother.

As for me, my enthusiasm is not lacking even though the years are passing... Would you believe, I have had the courage to take on the study of a seventh language...at almost the age of 70! In fact, in August I began to study Creole, the language spoken a bit by everyone in Guinea, a sort of Portuguese-Guinean dialect of the marketplace. And so I am learning my seventh "Our Father." I hope to be able to remember at least one of them when I present myself before the Lord to pass my most important exam!

God's Will is the same as ever: to do what I can in service of this diocese among the poorest in the world. The challenges are still many and large. (Giancarlo TODESCO)

CONGO

Good news for our Faculty of Theology

Fr Didier MUPAYA, OMI, Academic Secretary of the St. Eugene de Mazenod Institute in Kinshasa, has announced good news on the progress of our faculty of theology.

"I am pleased to announce that according to the listing and categorization based on the analysis of viability conducted in September of 2009

and presented last weekend by the Minister of Higher Education and Universities (an inquiry which decided the closure of dozens of colleges and universities in Kinshasa), our St. Eugene de Mazenod Institute is ranked second among institutions of higher education and viable private universities, with a rating of 92%.

“The evaluation considered the criteria of infrastructure, material and human resources.”

ZAMBIA

Oblate bishop criticized for speaking up for the poor

Oblate Bishop Paul DUFFY of Mongu diocese, who has been doing missionary work for the last 25 years in Zambia's Western Province, called on the Government of Zambia to help the poor by fulfilling a campaign promise to rebuild the main road and provide more economic opportunities for local people.

Bishop Duffy said the Western Province of Zambia still ranks as the poorest in the whole country and that poor people are still waiting to see promises fulfilled. This was especially true regarding the Mongu-Kalabo road, which has been in a worsening state for several years. He went on to say that people keep hearing promises from government leaders, but are still waiting for action.

Government leaders in Zambia are angrily rebuking Bishop Duffy's statements. A group affiliated with the ruling party is petitioning the Vatican's representative. Western Province of Zambia suffers more than any other province from high poverty levels, low economic production and a neglected infrastructure. In Western Province, the majority of children are unable to obtain basic nutritional needs. Most women are highly disadvantaged and live in extreme poverty, vulnerable to HIV/AIDS as they are forced to engage in risky behaviors for economic survival. The Diocese of Mongu is involved in several development projects: it runs HIV/AIDS programs and the only teacher's training college in the region; it supports the Catholic radio station and operates hunger relief programs for the local people.

The Bishop's statement has received support from all civil society groups in Zambia, development organizations like Caritas Mongu and from a local member of parliament who said that he totally agrees with Bishop Paul Duffy's statement because the President of Zambia is the one who gave these promises to the people of Lukulu and that people voted for him on the basis that he was going to implement all those development programs.

In a show of solidarity, Zambian Oblate treasurer, Fr Godfrey MPUNDU, described Bishop Duffy as a voice of the voiceless in Western Province. Fr. Mpundu suggested that the ruling government leadership review its own record in Western Province over the last 25 years which coincides with the time that Bishop Duffy has been doing missionary work in the region.

MADAGASCAR

30th anniversary of the Oblates in Madagascar

On December 3, 2009, with a eucharistic celebration, the Delegation Council of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate inaugurated the 30th anniversary year of the Oblates in Madagascar; the anniversary itself will be celebrated on December 3, 2010.

During the decades of the 60's and 70's, the diocese of Tamatave lost 24 missionaries, an event that caused the diminishment of pastoral visits to the communities in the savannas.

Bishop Jerome Razafindraka, therefore, made some diligent overtures to the General House in order to get some Missionary Oblates who could work in the diocese of Tamatave. In September 1976, the General Administration of the Oblates accepted the request of the Malagache bishop to open a new mission in the diocese. Fr. Marcello ZAGO, at that time the Assistant General of the Congregation for the missions, contacted the Oblate Province of Poland to provide personnel. In January 1977, the foundation was accepted, initially for a limited period of three years.

At the end of 1977, Frs. KUPKA and CHRO-SZCZ spent three weeks in Madagascar to get a closer look at the situation of this new mission

site. Their report was sent to the General Council, along with a favorable opinion. The Council accepted the new foundation on May 15, 1979.

A month later, the Bishop of Tamatave, having been informed, was able, during a trip through Poland, to be present at the ordination of three new priests assigned to the mission in his diocese. Fr. Franciszek Chroszcz came to Madagascar on September 12 1980. Four other priests would come only on December 3, 1980. Today, the Delegation of Madagascar has 55 Oblates, of whom 31 are priests, 4 deacons, 3 Brothers, 17 scholastics, 6 novices and 12 prenovices. (*Écho OMI Madagascar*, January 2010)

CONGO

Two great events

It was the very mission of the Church which called the people of God in Ifwanzondo and Panu and the Oblate missionaries to express their living faith by building a surgery center and a rectory.

In fact, the Provincial Superior of the Missionary Oblates, Father Macaire MANIMBA, presided at the inauguration of the surgery center at Ifwanzondo of January 3 and the beautiful rectory in Panu on January 10.

Ifwanzondo and its surgery center

Founded in 1950 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Catholic Mission is located 20 km from Idiofa. Ifwanzondo lies in a valley surrounded by villages and two small rivers whose murmuring and bubbling waters encourage recollection.

Evangelization also means helping people rise up. From this crucible, there were born a health center and a surgical suite. After nine years of patient work, the surgery center became a reality thanks to the financial support of Italian friends from Francavilla Fontana. The dedication ceremony began with a prayer led by Father Macaire; then came some appropriate words from the superior of Ifwanzondo, Father Jean-Marie WENZ, before the actual blessing of the surgery center. Before a large crowd, Father Macaire blessed this place designed to relieve the physical suffering of

men and women affected by disease. Palm wine was poured on the ground by the local chief. To crown the event, the head doctor of the Idiofa area cut the ribbon to the applause of the crowd.

In his comments, the Provincial touched upon total human development. The health of our people is part of this concern. In a sense, human development is part of evangelization.

Panu and its new rectory

Panu is a waterfront mission located nearly 200 km of Idiofa, belonging to the deanery of Mateko, to the north of the diocese. Founded in 1964 by the Missionary Oblates, it is set in a rapidly growing rural city. A beautiful and attractive rectory is the result of efforts of the Oblates of the Province of Congo, supported by the Oblates of the German Province and Propaganda Fide. There, at the end of a row of coffee trees, there stands this beautiful, big building with all the amenities, after two years of hard work: offices, bedrooms, inside toilets and showers. The collaboration of the Christians of Panu must be appreciated for all that it is worth.

On Sunday, January 10, Fr. Macaire Manimba blessed this new building during a Eucharistic celebration, in the presence of civil authorities, the priests from neighboring parishes, the provincial councilors, some protestant pastors and the faithful, eyewitnesses of this historic event. In his remarks to the Christians of Panu, Father Provincial spoke of the reason for the excitement that filled everyone on the night before and on the day of the celebration. In fact, it can be said that with the construction of the rectory, the Church of Pannu has grown. Having found a safe place to sleep and relax, the missionaries will be able to proclaim the Word of God.

The Christians of Panu were invited to help the Oblate missionaries to live together, because it is in their unity that the missionaries will draw the strength to evangelize the poor. Moreover, they were called to be models and, for the honor of their city, they must look after and maintain this new building. This is important since this invitation to deeper commitment opens the way for

other initiatives. The mission of Panu, insisted the provincial, must be built in peace in order for the Church to grow in Panu and its surrounding areas.

After the Mass, which lasted nearly three hours, it was time for refreshments with the entire parish community in order to seal the bonds of friendship and brotherhood. (Lin KIEKIE, omi)

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES

Bishop Lampon: “Don’t be intimidated by the blast.”

The local Church and its members must continue living their faith without fear, the bishop of Jolo said after a grenade blast outside his cathedral.

A grenade exploded outside Our Lady of Mount Carmel cathedral in Jolo, Sulu province, at 5.40 a.m., about 20 minutes before the first Mass on Jan. 10, the bishop said.

Police reported no casualties. It was the first day of the gun ban being implemented around the country ahead of the May 10 general elections.

“Whether in your office, in the market place, inside the city hall, wherever, you are you must live your Christian faith as we cannot act as if we are afraid,” Oblates of Mary Immaculate Bishop Angelito LAMPON told Sulu's Christian minority during a Jan. 11 interview over Church radio. Sulu is predominantly Muslim.

The bishop believes the Church was the target. “How can it be random if it was thrown inside the church compound near pastoral offices?” the prelate asked. However, he said he had no idea who was behind the attack and why it happened.

Oblate Father Jose ANTE told UCA News he saw a man throw a grenade into the church grounds. “The grenade exploded near the tombs of (two) bishops,” he said. There were no people around at that time but a couple of windows were destroyed. “God is still protecting us,” the priest said.

Jeffery Sapang, reporter with Jolo apostolic vicariate's radio station DXMM, told UCA News police have not identified any suspects.

Some reports blamed “terrorists” for the incident but Sapang said there is no proof of this.

Jolo is among 10 “election hotspots” listed by the Philippine National Police because of its proliferation of guns and private armies. The recent incident is the fourth explosion in Jolo in less than a year.

People just continue with their lives, Sapang said.

Government forces on Sept. 20 shelled a mountain area in Sulu's Indanan town where Abu Sayyaf militants were believed to hold camp.

Muslim leaders and peace advocates criticized the timing of operations during the festival ending the Muslim holy month of Ramadan disrupting prayers in mosques.

“Since the military operations ... there has been talk of people preparing for repercussions, but we don't know if this is retaliation or what,” lay pastoral worker Carmen Gobaton told UCA News. (UCAN: <http://www.ucanews.com/> January 12, 2010) --

THAILAND

No time to waste

(Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO, Superior of the Thai Delegation, tells of the busy schedule and preoccupations of a superior.)

Ever since I was named superior of the delegation, my work, besides the administrative part, is essentially animation and support of our members, obviously together with planning in order to make our service more effective. For this reason, I find myself on the road a lot in order to visit each person on the spot and be with each one in his mission.

Besides a community in Laos (about 800 km

from Bangkok), all of the other communities are located in a radius of 600 km from the house where I live. Consequently, I travel several thousand kilometers each month. In these past three years, our mission has grown with new ministries, especially among the very poor in the city (those ill from AIDS, the abandoned elderly, exploited children, prisoners) and the immigrants. We have also expanded service to the Hmong ethnic group with more direct contact with people in several villages and with literacy programs in their language. We have also begun a more stable presence in Laos, even in spite of all the limitations of the situation in that country.

The animation of community and religious life absorbs time and energy because, although we are only about twenty, we are no fewer than 6 nationalities with ages ranging from 28 to 84 years. It has been helpful in recent years to develop our continuing education and, especially at this time, the preparation for the next General Chapter of the Congregation, dedicated to personal and communal conversion.

Also the economic dimension continues to challenge us. So many times I have had the experience of Providence intervening when we really have nothing. Indeed, the people with whom most of us work certainly are unable to support us. So then we must look elsewhere. But while it is relatively easy to find someone who is willing to help our poor, it is always really very difficult to find someone who is willing to support us in our daily lives. I wonder why so many people think that the Church has far too much money!? Sometimes I have had to remind people that, if you want the poor to be served, it is necessary to help maintain those who serve them, since the poor cannot pay our salary! But God takes care of us and what we need always arrives, even though sometimes, for people like me of little faith, it is not easy to wait for the moment that God has chosen. When there is a sick Father and you do not know if you have enough money to take care of him or when you have 30 kids to support, and you do not know if you have enough to feed them next week, God asks of me a leap of faith. And if I do that, he never lets me down. We have carried on for three

years, even though we often do not even have the where-with-all for three months. God pushes us in that way to grow in trust of Him who feeds the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field.

The house where I live, for example, needs urgent repairs which, for us, are very costly (about 6,000 Euros), but...the funds are not there, so... God will provide or He will help us share with the poor the fact of not having a sound house.

I also continue to work with the Episcopal Conference for the theological commission and the continuing education of the local clergy. In practical terms, it means preaching retreats to the clergy of various dioceses and participating in continuing education programs and sabbaticals; it also means studying and writing about topics that the bishops are asking us to study, in Thai of course. I also work with the Conference of Major Superiors of men and women in Thailand and Laos, again preaching retreats and helping to animate activities. I am involved on another level in local institutions. I continue to teach at the national seminary of Laos, but now I limit myself to one intensive course per year, because I cannot do more. I help the Nunciature with various services, especially in the theological and academic fields. Finally, I have become more and more immersed in the structures of the Archdiocese of Bangkok as a member of the Presbyteral Council and also of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

It might seem to be a lot, but in these years, I have learned to do one thing at a time; I notice that there is always time for everything, provided that we don't waste any of it. (Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO)



Europe

FRANCE**The process of the martyrs of Laos**

At the request of the Bishops' Conference of Laos, our Congregation agreed, in 2004, to promote the "cause of the Martyrs of Laos."

Besides the well known process of Father Mario BORZAGA, omi, and his catechist, Paul Tho Xyooj, already begun in Trent, Italy, this cause includes 15 other Servants of God, presumed martyrs. Five of them are Oblates: Fathers Louis LEROY (1923-61), Michel COQUELET (1931-61), Vincent L'HENORET (1921-61), Jean WAUTHIER (1926-67) and Joseph BOISSEL (1909-1969). Five of them are Laotians: a secular priest, the proto-martyr Joseph Tiên (1922-54), and three catechists; the youngest died at the age of 16. The five others are members of the Paris Foreign Mission Society.

Fr. Roland JACQUES, the postulator appointed by the bishops of Laos, has worked, according to their expressed demand, with a great deal of discretion. He has prepared four volumes of documents (1863 pages) and two volumes of writings (1308 pages). About 420 documents among the total 748 concern the Oblate part of the cause. The writings are mostly letters: in all, 1054 are copies and 417 are in the handwriting of the Oblate martyrs; the same goes for the *codex historicus* of several of their missionary outposts.

The Historical Commission, made up of nine members, of whom six are university professors, made its conclusions in October 2009.

As for the tribunal in charge of the diocesan process itself, it was organized by the diocese of Nantes in France; it is presided over by the retired bishop of Coutances, the diocese of origin of Fr. Louis Leroy. A number of other dioceses in France have made financial contributions to the cause, as well as the Pontifical Mission Societies in France and Germany. Eighty-five witnesses have been heard; 34 of them were in Laos, in spite of great difficulties.

In the final days of 2009, the tribunal of Nantes made the final juridical act, called oddly enough "publication of the acts." In fact, it's a question of submitting them in their entirety for the examination of the postulator, the lawyer for the bishops of Laos, and the promoter of justice, who is in charge of overseeing legality and the common good of the Church. The public ceremony for closing the process has been set by the bishop of Nantes for Saturday, February 27 at 14:30 hours. On that day, they will send the acts to Rome. Everyone is invited to the celebration.

The Bishops' Conference of Laos has already addressed a formal request to the Oblates that they conjointly present to the Holy See all 17 Servants of God in a single, reunified process. (Roland Jacques, omi)

FRANCE**On the road again**

For the past three years, Father Alfonso BARTOLOTTA has been working part-time with *Cap Mission*, a service of the Diocese of Lyon for Youth Ministry and Missionary Cooperation. *Cap Mission* (www.jeunes-lyon.cef.fr/-Cap-Mission) hopes to help youth and the European culture to broaden their horizons by means of actual contact with the missions. This is meant to help them, first of all, to better understand others with their distinct differences, not only in the cultural sphere but also in worship and religion, in the broadest sense of the terms.

To realize this plan which Cape Mission and the Youth Ministry of Lyon have been developing for three years, Fr. Alfonso proposed, in 2008, the first trip to Niger with the White Fathers; and in 2009, to Senegal with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The goal for 2010 is Madagascar, with the Diocese of Lyon. It will be three-week journey, from July 20 until August 9, for university students between 18 and 30 years old; they will be accompanied by Cardinal Philippe Barbarin of Lyon.

The trip will be like a passageway between two worlds, like a door that will allow the youth to step away from themselves in order to meet others and learn of their uniqueness. Today, thanks to the phenomenon of globalization, there is an inner spirit of going out and opening oneself, of meeting and discovering, of looking beyond one's own horizons, to see the immensity of the missionary and humanitarian panorama. It is precisely for this that they will go out together to discover a young Church: there will be welcoming session in the Diocese of Fénérive-Est, created in 2001. There will be other meetings with missionary and humanitarian workers in the grasslands. There will also be experiences of a lively culture with songs, dances and traditional ceremonies; they will see how people live in the countryside and they will visit the ancient city of Antananarivo. The adventure will conclude with a hike through the tropical forest on the east coast!

FRANCE

The School of the Mission

Since November of 2007, some young Oblates in France have had a dream. Their dream became a reality in this beautiful true story, told by Alfonso BARTOLOTTA.

It was a shared dream; it was held in common by young Oblates who often work in youth ministry, in the "young planet," and by the youth themselves, boys and girls, who are close to the Oblate communities. They were all interested in growing, in walking together, in order to better discover the missionary dimension of their lives. They all wanted to devote themselves to the mission, each one according to his or her own vocation.

In other words, it was a question of trying, on a daily basis, in our own respective walks of life, to translate our faith into "acts;" to stay "connected" to the Christian life while fully living our day to day human life. It was a question of preparing ourselves to be missionaries in a pluralistic and multi-religious society which is continually changing. It was a question of sharing with others what makes us live and what lives within us.

Where could we live together such an experience? One place seemed especially appropriate, a place which, for the Oblates, "speaks" historically: Aix en Provence. Aix is indeed the cradle of our religious family. This is where our Founder had a passion for the mission among young people. This is where the Oblate charism and spirituality took shape and form. Dare I say, it's the place of the "Oblate incarnation" -- thanks to the courageous and daring "yes" of a small group of men who gradually opened themselves to the entire world. It could not be otherwise, with a Founder of whom it was said that he had "a heart as big as the world." In the beginning, who could have imagined such growth, such dynamism? That dream, too, has become a reality.

We wanted to walk in the footsteps of our Founder and our predecessors, doing as they did but differently, because He who walks with us until the end of time, sends us His Spirit. And the Spirit is creator. Will there be a new creation, a new birth, a new way of being, of living, of being witness to the mission? It is simply asked of us also, today's youth and young Oblates, to believe, to trust, and to dare. For it is not just our project. This is the project of Him who sent us. He is here with us on our journey.

We were 15 Oblates (some older than others in the group) and 16 young people, aged 20 to 30 years, professionals and students, boys and girls. We were very different from each other. Our journeys of faith were really different, and also our cultures, because we came from Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Colombia, Mexico, Haiti, Poland, Belgium, Italy and France!

We lived together for three weekends. Each included: a quick input on spiritual theology, a biblical topic and something on mission. And here are the three stages of our journey: 1. "*Beloved of Christ the Savior.*" Discovering who I am before God. "*Entering into the experience of Christ on the Cross.*" 2. "*Touched by the world situation.*" Looking at the world around me and "the poor with their many faces." 3. "*Gathered in a community.*" Living with brothers and sisters. (*Audacieux pour l'Évangile*, January 2010)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES**Oblate released from prison**

Father Carl KABAT, an American Oblate well-known for his non-violent protests against nuclear arms, was released from jail on December 22, 2009, where he had been detained since his August 6 act of civil disobedience. In his lifetime, the 76 year old priest has spent a total of 17 years in prison, at various times, for such actions.

This time, he was arrested on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, by the United States in 1945. He had illegally entered a missile site in the State of Colorado. Before being arrested by the authorities from Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Carl had cut through the fence surrounding an underground nuclear missile. He had time to hang up some signs of protest and to pray.

At his trial, he was sentenced to 137 days in jail, the time already spent behind bars, even though the local district attorney had asked that he be sentenced to a year for each crime committed.

In his statement to the press after his arrest, Carl said:

"The Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a priest, at the close of its Vatican Council II in 1965, condemned nuclear bombs as a crime against humanity and are to be condemned unreservedly.

The World Council of Churches has proclaimed that 'the manufacture, deployment or use of nuclear bombs is a crime against humanity.'

I support President Barack Obama's desire and have attempted to do my little bit in his effort.

The nuclear bomb that is in the ground here is more than 20 times more powerful than the atomic bombs we dropped on the Japanese. Each of those bombs killed more than 100,000 people. At least twenty times that number totals more than 2 million people.

The Bible says in the words of Isaiah. 'They shall beat their spears into pruning hooks and their swords into plowshares.' May the Holy One have mercy on us for not doing so."

UNITED STATES**Retreat Center sponsors international outreach**

From November 17-20, 2009, King's House Retreat and Renewal Center in Belleville, Illinois, sponsored four students from *Colegio Vista Hermosa*, an Oblate High School in Mexico City, to join students from Notre Dame Catholic High School of Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

They came to learn a special peer-to-peer form of retreat ministry called *KAIROS*. Numerous St. Louis area Catholic High Schools use this model for their retreats each year at King's House.

Under the guidance of Agustin Tello, retreat director for the Mexican Province's new retreat house in Tepoztlán, Mexico, Enrique Chavez, María Fernanda Diaz, Salvador Escalante and Nicolás Valdéz will be bringing the *KAIROS* retreat model from the United States to Mexico in order to adapt and share it in their own cultural context.

This opportunity came about through connections made at the annual North American Conference for Oblate Retreat and Renewal Centers, (NACORRC) held this past year at Immaculata Retreat Center in Willimantic, CT. At that meeting, Agustín Tello, Frs. James BROBST & the late Bob AARON discussed the possibility of this kind of outreach. Fr. David KRAUS stepped in later to keep up the momentum. (*Fr. James Brobst in OMI USA, January 2010*)

OMI LACOMBE**A Week of Blizzards**

In the Arctic, the second part of January is a time of cold weather and blizzards. January, February and the middle of March are the months when the temperature normally stays under -40°C degrees,

but this year, as elsewhere in Canada, January was rather mild. The temperature stayed around -25°C. Yet, the last week was full of blizzards and freezing cold.

Nunavut is the largest territory in Canada. It covers one fifth of the whole Canadian land mass, so the weather also differs greatly across this vast region. Some areas are stormier, some are quieter, there are parts with high mountains, hills and flat areas, islands and vast lands, ocean and lakes. There is everything but trees!

Kivalliq region, which is situated on the shores of Hudson Bay, is known for its strong winds. My town is called, in English, Repulse Bay. It was probably called that by whale hunters long ago (you still can see their stone shelters in the vicinity of our hamlet) because it's almost always windy here.

It is said that global warming is seen very clearly in the polar areas. I would say that it's true if we consider global warming as something that causes extreme and unpredictable weather. This past week we had three blizzards ... and they were three very different storms. The first started on Sunday, January 24 and lasted until Wednesday morning. It wasn't a very strong blizzard; the visibility wasn't too bad as I could still see the buildings next door and when night fell, I could still see the lights of houses some distance away. Yet, the next day the school and offices were closed – conditions were bad enough that the heavy equipment to clean the roads could not get out! Wednesday, once the wind died down, was a beautiful day and they started to work on clearing away the snow, but then the next afternoon it started all over ... this time with an extreme cold wind chill in the range between -50°C to -55°C. That storm lasted until early Saturday morning. It was cold but the visibility was not too bad. Once the last remnants of the blizzard had passed, Saturday was a clear, sunny day; in fact, the brightest day since the sun once again started to rise above the horizon as winter slowly wanes. Then, early Sunday morning the next blizzard came with very strong winds of sixty kilometers an hour gusting to eighty and very, very poor visibility. That blizzard is still

howling outside as I write these words. The forecast says it should end tonight or on Tuesday morning.

These immensely powerful storms have many effects on the community. A low pressure system causes the blizzards but it also makes people tired and leaves them with a headache. The school and offices are closed and while the stores are usually open, they become progressively emptier and emptier each day since the plane with groceries and other supplies cannot land until the storm ends. A lack of groceries is bad enough, however, that's not the biggest problem. The biggest inconvenience during a blizzard is not the cold or the lack of supplies in the store but the lack of water. Every day the water truck makes its deliveries to each home in the community as for an average family the household water tank holds a one-day supply. If a blizzard lasts longer than that, the water starts to run short. Yes, there is an endless supply of snow outside but it's not something you would want to drink!

Those unfamiliar with the community might assume that people spend these stormy days captive within their homes. Far from it! People still go out to visit and they still come to church. When walking on the road during a blizzard and in its aftermath, one passes abandoned trucks and ski-doo's but that doesn't stop people from getting out of the house. They are Inuit. They are made for the cold weather. Even during the storms and intense cold, children and adults alike still come to church ... those eight or ten years old come by themselves while the younger ones are accompanied by their parents. One may be surprised but it is often the children who encourage the parents to go out in severe weather and come to church.

Sometimes a mother talks to me, worrying about her child going out in a cold weather. I always say: "Don't worry. He's an Inuk. He'll be fine". We too go through many blizzards in our personal and spiritual lives and we too worry if we will make it. No worries... we are Christians; we will be fine! (*Submitted by Daniel SZWARC, for www.omilacombe.ca*)

Latin America

PARAGUAY**Sharing about the realities of our consecrated life**

From February 15-20, we experienced a very fraternal meeting in the retreat house of the Shrine of Tuparendá. We were about 20 Oblates from the southern cone of Latin America, with different life experiences, from provincials to scholastics in their first month of vows.

The formation team of the Interprovincial Conference of Latin America organized this meeting so that formators and students together could deepen their reflection on some of the realities of our consecrated life, and in particular: the Oblate vocation of the Brother and the complex reality of affectivity, with its strong points and its weaknesses.

The atmosphere of the meeting, in spite of the temperature of almost 40° C, was innovative and joyous. There was much to gain also in the

sharing that took place during free time. Over some icy cold *tereré* (a typical Latin American herbal drink) and a few words in Guaraní, as the days went by, we had the opportunity to share in a reflective atmosphere of listening, not only to the speakers who helped us reflect, but also to each one of the participants at the time of sharing experiences, challenges, difficulties and accomplishments.

At the end of the meeting, we could not fail to visit the Shrine of the Virgin of Caacupé. It was a very Oblate way of dedicating, once again, the reality of formation and of the mission in Latin America to Mary, Patron of our Congregation.

Special thanks go to the host province of Paraguay for the way they welcomed such a large number of Oblates and for being with us during this lovely experience of brotherhood..
(Fr. Antonio MESSERI, omi, for the Formation Team of CIAL)

Anniversaries for April 2010

65 years of priesthood

1945.04.15	07384	Fr. Elie Bève	France
1945.04.15	07388	Fr. Adolphe Careil	France
1945.04.15	07383	Fr. André Morin	France
1945.04.18	07413	Fr. Léon Saison	France

50 years of priesthood

1960.04.02	09682	Fr. Patricio Dominguez	Spain
1960.04.02	09683	Fr. Valentín Fernández	Argentina-Chile
1960.04.10	09926	Fr. Johannes Beringer	Central European Prov.
1960.04.10	09891	Fr. Wilhelm Deutmeyer	Central S. Africa
1960.04.10	09886	Fr. Volker Grunwald	Central European Prov.
1960.04.10	09885	Fr. Josef Thesing	Central European Prov.
1960.04.10	09890	Fr. Nikolaus Wand	Central European Prov.
1960.04.10	09887	Fr. Bernhard Wolf	Central European Prov.
1960.04.17	09825	Fr. Gerard Kenny	Anglo-Irish

25 years of priesthood

1985.04.20	12575	Fr. Carlo Mattei	Italy
1985.04.20	12529	Fr. James Taggart	United States

Suffrages for our deceased

No. 12-18

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Guy Piuze	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	07/05/1915	Richelieu	04/02/2010
Bro. Wilhelm Götz	Central European Prov.	21/05/1933	Hünfeld	06/02/2010
Bro. Pierre Babilotte	France	13/10/1921	Pontmain	08/02/2010
Bro. Andrea Cianciullo	Italy	23/11/1923	Santa Maria a Vico	12/02/2010
Fr. Roland Saint Pierre	United States	11/10/1926	Pawtucket, RI	13/02/2010
Bro. Anselme Lambert	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	29/05/1918	St-Jean-sur-Richelieu	17/02/2010
Fr. Wilhelm Ebbing	Central European Prov.	29/07/1936	Borken	18/02/2010

“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)

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
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Printing: Kamal Mendis
Circulation: Théophile LePage