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Fr. General's Missionary Meditation Finding the Key

In order to interpret a piece of music, you must consider the key; otherwise, the melody does not sound right. A story might be puzzling until you figure out the right key to interpret it. Pages on the internet at times require a password so that you can open them – and there are many other possible examples.

Likewise, in our faith, there are things that are difficult for us to understand and there are those who deduce that certain teachings of our faith simply do not make sense. Isn't the key which opens the door missing here? We must admit, above all, that a central element of our Christian faith is a great enigma. How do we explain the fact that the author of our way of life, Jesus the Christ, has died on a cross? In itself, that tune sounds off-key. It's like a story that we do not know how to interpret, like a door that is locked with a key.

I must say that particularly this year, in presiding at the liturgy of Good Friday, I very much felt the darkness of the cross. At the same time, I found it easy to understand Pilate's way of acting and that of the religious leaders; everything that they did made a certain political sense. Furthermore, they and the people who follow them dominate the story so much that they leave little space for other ideas. But then I noticed in the scene the presence of two silent persons; they almost do not move; they remain standing and they do not speak. What is unique is that they are beneath the cross itself, that is, at the center of the drama. They will be the last persons on earth to whom Jesus will speak: Mary, his mother, and John, his dearly beloved disciple. According to the final testament of Jesus, from now on, the two

are going to live together in the same house.

Let us look closely at these two persons. After Good Friday, will Mary and John possess a key to interpret the events for us? I believe we need to pay attention especially to Mary – we will be doing so during this month of May. Ever since I was young, I have believed that by approaching Mary, the hidden treasures of the faith will be wide open for us.

But in what does it consist, this key that Mary – and at her side, John – can offer us? It will not be simply in the fact that Mary is the mother of Jesus and as a mother, is always going to see the positive side of her son, even in his defeat. A mother will always find a way to defend and rescue her son. If it were only that, John would not have followed this way of thinking much beyond the period of mourning. But Mary is different from other mothers. Was it not explained to her by an angel that her son came from the Spirit of God? And just as John did, Mary had experienced, in the public life of Jesus, that God was in her son, that God was speaking through him and that the very God of her fathers who was going to redeem Israel was acting at that very moment. If God promises something so great, it cannot fail! When, on Easter Sunday, John returns from his race to the empty tomb, the faith of Mary opens up to the light of day. The faith of these two in the God and Father of Jesus, in the God who is faithful to his promises, becomes the key that solves the riddle of the cross. The opaque cross becomes transparent as a sign of God's love, now revealed and manifested – God so loved the world!

At a time like the present, when the followers of Jesus are put in the crucible, it is faith that is sorely needed. In difficult times, we realize even more that it is a precious gift that must be nurtured. A good way to nurture one's faith is to try to live united with Mary, like the apostle John did. In the house where John and Mary live, we will find the key for resolving our confusion; we will learn here that death was not able to cling to the Crucified One, unlike everyone else. Jesus, condemned to death, is in reality one with the God of the promise. The dark and ugly covering of the cross falls away and the truth shines forth; new life is liberated and is even eternal; the way of the cross becomes the way of love. Love shines forth from faith.

All of this is found in the first cell of the Church, the community of Mary and John. Besides Our Lady, in May, the Oblate family also celebrates St. Eugene. Like the apostle John, St. Eugene too

all at once found himself close to Mary when, in 1826, surprisingly he substituted the name of his congregation of Missionaries of St. Charles with Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. I like to believe that this closeness to the Virgin changed him just as it had changed John. Eugene was a "son of thunder" like John; in the home of Mary, he would strengthen not only his faith but also his love to the point that it would inundate everything, as we see it expressed in his last testament of 21 May 1861: charity, charity, charity and zeal.

In the sons and daughters of St. Eugene, since we all live in a single house with Mary Immaculate, the dynamic of that first cell of the Church, that house of Mary and John, could happen again. With Mary and John, with Mary and Eugene, "let us thank the Lord for His is good, for His mercy endures forever." (Ps 107:1)

General Administration

OUR OBLATE ELDERS

Name	OMI Unit	Birth	Ordination	Profession	Age
Fr. Kayser Alexandre	France	27/02/1904	07/07/1929	15/08/1923	106
Fr. Gilbert Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	10/12/1907	21/05/1933	02/08/1928	103
Fr. Quéffélec Jean-Marie	France	18/11/1910	05/07/1936	15/08/1930	100
Fr. Conti Guglia Carmelo	Italy	02/12/1910	23/12/1933	15/08/1927	100
Fr. Rozynek Alfred	Poland	10/12/1910	21/06/1936	15/08/1931	100
Fr. Morissette Nazaire	N.D.-du-Cap	14/12/1910	11/06/1938	21/07/1932	100
Fr. Robert Victor	France	17/02/1912	09/07/1939	15/08/1933	98
Fr. Lazarsky John	USA	07/07/1912	25/05/1940	02/07/1934	98
Fr. Hammond Alphonse	N.D.-du-Cap	02/08/1912	11/06/1938	15/08/1934	98
Fr. Tremblay Eugene A.	USA	26/07/1913	11/06/1938	15/08/1933	97
Fr. Niepieklo Mieczyslaw	Poland	06/08/1913	20/12/1941	08/09/1935	97
Fr. Engel Leopold	Lacombe	05/09/1913	12/06/1938	15/08/1933	97
Fr. Machinia Engelbert	Central European	21/10/1913	18/06/1939	15/08/1934	97
Fr. Caby Arsène	France	07/12/1913	06/07/1941	29/09/1934	97
Bro. Beaudoin Ernest	N.D.-du-Cap	20/12/1913		08/12/1936	97
Fr. Bolduc Marcel	USA	31/12/1913	24/06/1939	28/08/1934	97
Fr. Pigeon Léo-Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	07/03/1914	15/06/1941	02/08/1935	96
Fr. Fix Valentine	Lacombe	18/05/1914	10/06/1938	15/08/1933	96
Fr. Rzezniczek Alfons	France-Benelux	20/05/1914	31/05/1942	08/09/1935	96

Fr. Wittenbrink Boniface	USA	30/06/1914	20/09/1941	15/08/1936	96
Fr. Gervais Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	04/07/1914	09/07/1939	02/08/1933	96
Fr. Schneider Albert	France	21/12/1914	06/07/1941	15/08/1933	96
Fr. Guilbaud Joseph	Lacombe	13/03/1915	06/07/1947	29/09/1934	95
Fr. Payant Roma	N.D.-du-Cap	30/06/1915	15/06/1941	21/07/1937	95
Bro. Rioux Louis	N.D.-du-Cap	09/08/1915		08/09/1937	95
Bro. Turcotte Mathias	N.D.-du-Cap	18/08/1915		19/03/1934	95
Fr. Riffel Timothy	Lacombe	06/10/1915	13/06/1941	15/08/1935	95
Fr. Marien Louis	Belg/Holland	04/11/1915	09/07/1939	08/09/1934	95
Fr. Ayrinhac Marcel	France	15/11/1915	06/07/1947	26/07/1935	95
Fr. Szymurski Kazimierz	France-Benelux	20/11/1915	11/06/1941	08/09/1935	95
Fr. Mróz Marian	France-Benelux	23/11/1915	21/02/1941	08/09/1935	95
Bro. Sampson Alexander	Lacombe	09/01/1916		07/06/1936	94
Fr. Sgambato Antonio	Italy	11/02/1916	28/05/1942	15/08/1936	94
Fr. Lavoie Alfred	USA	15/03/1916	15/06/1940	21/07/1935	94
Fr. Laperrière Jean	N.D.-du-Cap	04/06/1916	15/06/1941	21/07/1935	94
Fr. Estève Fernand	France	25/06/1916	27/02/1944	26/07/1935	94
Fr. Pélicier Henri	France	14/08/1916	23/05/1943	01/11/1935	94
Fr. Louis John	USA	15/08/1916	05/06/1943	15/08/1938	94
Fr. Mulligan John	Lacombe	06/10/1916	09/06/1956	08/09/1951	94
Fr. Fanning William	Anglo-Irish	10/10/1916	29/06/1942	15/09/1937	94
Fr. Blouin Joseph	N.D.-du-Cap	08/12/1916	15/06/1958	15/08/1953	94
Fr. Mouchet Jean-Marie	Lacombe	01/05/1917	18/02/1945	17/02/1942	93
Fr. Anthonypillai Louis	Jaffna	10/07/1917	09/08/1944	15/08/1939	93
Fr. Montgrain Philippe	N.D.-du-Cap	18/08/1917	18/06/1944	15/08/1939	93
Fr. Lajeunesse Lucien	N.D.-du-Cap	19/09/1917	07/06/1942	21/07/1937	93
Fr. Massé Joseph	N.D.-du-Cap	26/09/1917	19/06/1943	02/08/1938	93
Fr. Affinita Giuseppe	Italy	01/10/1917	28/05/1942	15/08/1936	93
Fr. O'Donovan William	Anglo-Irish	13/11/1917	12/06/1941	08/09/1936	93
Fr. Protopapas George	USA	09/12/1917	03/06/1943	04/09/1937	93
Fr. Ebner Francis	Lacombe	02/01/1918	15/09/1944	15/08/1941	92
Bro. Raymond Robert	N.D.-du-Cap	15/01/1918		11/05/1938	92
Bro. Morin Lucien	N.D.-du-Cap	18/02/1918		09/06/1941	92
Fr. Leibel Pius	Lacombe	26/04/1918	15/06/1943	15/08/1938	92
Fr. Prass Charles	USA	17/07/1918	02/06/1945	15/08/1940	92
Fr. Smith William	USA	07/08/1918	04/06/1945	08/09/1939	92
Fr. Croft George	USA	02/12/1918	05/06/1944	08/09/1938	92
Fr. Vivier Roger	Belg/Holland	23/12/1918	18/06/1944	08/09/1939	92
Fr. Hommer Anton	Central European	05/01/1919	10/07/1949	15/08/1940	91
Fr. Riley James	USA	10/01/1919	09/06/1945	15/08/1940	91
Fr. Moyse Fernand	Colombo	14/02/1919	18/06/1944	08/09/1939	91

Fr. Smith Joseph	Northern S.A.	18/02/1919	09/06/1946	15/09/1940	91
Fr. Sherlock John	Philippines	02/03/1919	29/06/1949	15/09/1944	91
Fr. Turenne Edmond	Lacombe	04/03/1919	10/06/1945	15/08/1940	91
Bro. Wilscam René	N.D.-du-Cap	25/03/1919		19/03/1938	91
Fr. Girouard Jean	N.D.-du-Cap	03/04/1919	15/06/1946	15/08/1941	91
Fr. de Grauw Floor	Belg/Holland	11/05/1919	14/07/1946	08/09/1942	91
Fr. Sullivan John	Lacombe	12/05/1919	13/06/1947	15/08/1940	91
Fr. Leddy John	USA	06/06/1919	25/12/1951	08/09/1943	91
Fr. Gagnon Herve	USA	19/07/1919	24/06/1945	02/08/1940	91
Bro. Nadeau Alphonse	N.D.-du-Cap	23/08/1919		31/05/1938	91
Fr. Nanni Gaetano	Australia	03/09/1919	03/05/1943	15/08/1937	91
Fr. Vreteau Robert	USA	09/09/1919	31/05/1946	29/06/1941	91
Fr. Duffy Francis	Natal	11/09/1919	29/06/1947	28/09/1942	91
Fr. Leising Edmundo	Brazil	15/09/1919	03/06/1946	08/09/1940	91
Bro. Ramón Juan	Espagne	07/10/1919		25/07/1956	91
Bro. Lavallée Louis-Philippe	N.D.-du-Cap	15/10/1919		02/08/1940	91
Fr. Lavoie Alexandre	N.D.-du-Cap	19/10/1919	17/06/1945	27/08/1940	91
Bish. Dupont Georges-Hilaire	Cameroun	16/11/1919	09/05/1943	08/09/1938	91
Fr. Courjal André	France	30/11/1919	05/07/1953	08/09/1948	91
Fr. Keller Marcel	France	08/12/1919	18/06/1944	15/08/1939	91
Bro. Beaudet Jean-Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	23/12/1919		16/07/1948	91
Bro. Mothetsi Dionysius	Lesotho	01/01/1920		06/01/1948	90
Fr. Lechat Robert	N.D.-du-Cap	17/01/1920	01/06/1945	10/08/1943	90
Fr. Nijsten Kees	Belg/Holland	26/01/1920	21/02/1948	08/09/1939	90
Fr. Hehn Joseph-Etienne	France	03/02/1920	29/08/1943	15/08/1938	90
Bro. D'Orazio Giuseppe	Amm. Gen.	24/02/1920		12/06/1941	90
Fr. Bernier Gilles	N.D.-du-Cap	26/02/1920	17/06/1945	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Domínguez Olegario	Paraguay	06/03/1920	10/03/1946	15/08/1938	90
Fr. Firtion Joseph	France	12/03/1920	09/05/1943	15/08/1938	90
Fr. Fernández Pablo	Espagne	20/03/1920	25/06/1944	15/08/1938	90
Fr. Brouillet Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	22/03/1920	15/06/1946	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Colson Jean	France	31/03/1920	06/01/1945	08/09/1942	90
Fr. Heemrood Jan	USA	24/05/1920	25/07/1945	11/10/1940	90
Fr. Rigaud Pierre	Lacombe	29/05/1920	06/07/1946	01/11/1941	90
Fr. Trombetta Clemente	Italy	12/06/1920	03/05/1943	15/08/1937	90
Fr. Mariathan Singarayer	Jaffna	02/07/1920	06/08/1948	08/09/1943	90
Fr. Cantin Léo	N.D.-du-Cap	10/07/1920	13/06/1948	02/08/1942	90
Fr. Morin André	France	21/08/1920	15/04/1945	15/10/1940	90
Fr. Beaudet Gérard	Lacombe	25/08/1920	17/06/1945	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Janssen Henri	USA	26/08/1920	26/07/1943	29/09/1938	90
Fr. Rinfret Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	28/08/1920	01/09/1946	02/08/1942	90
Fr. Vaillancourt Joseph	Haiti	30/08/1920	21/09/1946	02/08/1941	90

Fr. Gauthier Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	04/09/1920	31/05/1947	02/08/1941	90
Bro. Comtois Gaston	N.D.-du-Cap	12/09/1920		01/05/1940	90
Fr. Guindon Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	26/09/1920	29/09/1946	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Smalec Edward	Poland	03/10/1920	26/06/1955	14/09/1950	90
Fr. Bève Elie	France	04/10/1920	15/04/1945	15/10/1940	90
Fr. Saint-Sauveur Arthur	N.D.-du-Cap	04/10/1920	17/06/1945	02/08/1940	90
Fr. Shahun Alexander	Lacombe	19/10/1920	04/06/1948	08/09/1941	90
Fr. Miller Leo	USA	22/10/1920	03/06/1952	15/09/1962	90
Fr. Troncy Jean	France	28/10/1920	06/07/1947	01/07/1945	90
Fr. Goulet Lionel	Argent.-Chile	28/10/1920	31/05/1947	02/08/1941	90
Fr. Zachman Clarence	USA	02/11/1920	05/06/1948	15/08/1943	90
Fr. De Cicco Nicola	Italy	21/11/1920	24/11/1945	15/08/1940	90
Fr. Michalak Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	21/11/1920	23/02/1947	08/09/1943	90
Fr. Saison Léon	France	25/12/1920	18/04/1945	08/09/1942	90
Bro. Gaudet Noël	N.D.-du-Cap	25/12/1920		01/11/1951	90

Europe

FRANCE

Martyrs of Laos: Closure of the diocesan process

Last February 27, Bishop Jean-Paul James declared complete the informational process in view of the canonization of the presumed martyrs of Laos.

There was, of course, the formal side of the closure: the swearing in of the members of the tribunal and of the courier who would bring the acts to the Apostolic Nunciature, and the setting of the bishop's seal on the boxes containing the documents (more than 4,000 pages).

There were speeches which told the meaning of such a celebration:

- First, that of Bishop James: our bishop recalled that the martyr is a witness of Christ by his life and his words, up to the very end. He pointed out that the process, in having us focus on these 15 witnesses, priests and Laotian laity and French missionaries, it put before us our vocation as the baptized and confirmed: to give witness to the Gospel. Our bishop also spoke of how much we are in communion with the Church of Laos.

- Then there was that of Bishop Fihey, the judge-delegate. The bishop spoke of how much this process had made the participants enter into the experience of the mission in Laos. We were thus able to be in profound communion with the missionaries, the priests of the country, the lay Christians. Our horizons were broadened.
- Finally, there was that of Father Roland JACQUES, omi.

Father Jacques, the postulator of the cause in the name of the Bishops of Laos, reiterated the importance for that Church to be able to celebrate some of her ancestors in the faith. He spoke in the name of one or the other of the relatives of the presumed Laotian martyrs. Finally, he expressed his thanks for the work that had been accomplished by both the tribunal and by the historical commission. The president of the commission, Mr. Marcel Launay, had recalled the complexity of the events in Laos and the need to be mindful of the context of the mission and of the death of the presumed martyrs.

Present at this celebration of closure were members of the families of the presumed martyrs who live close by: Father Malo, Farther Tenaud,

Father L'HENORET, Father LEROY, Fr. Denis. Among them was a sister of Father Denis, a sister of Father Leroy and a sister of Father L'Hénoret. Their presence reminded us of how much these families had been involved in the mission of their brothers, uncles and cousins.

Also present was Father Jean-Baptiste Etcharren, Superior General of the Foreign Missionaries of Paris. The provincial superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate was not able to join us.

What are the next steps in this process? The 12 boxes of documents will be turned over to the Congregation of the Causes of Saints in Rome. In a few days, these boxes will be opened and the contents will be studied by the Congregation. That will take months and even years because there are many causes on the waiting list. If the martyrdom is recognized by the Holy Father, then the path to beatification will be opened. We hope that this will happen because we know the importance of such an event for the Church in Laos. And we remain in deep communion with our Catholic sisters and brothers who are still in a dangerous situation. (Serge Leray, Diocesan Chancellor)

FRANCE

An Oblate knight

Father Jean GUÉGUEN has been named a knight of the National Order of Merit. This decoration will be conferred upon him on July 24 at La Brosse-Montseaux (where five Oblates were shot to death by the Nazis on July 24, 1944).

It's interesting to read Jean Guéguen's account of the circumstances of this award: "Three years ago, the delegates from south of the Seine and Marne had written to the sub-prefect of Fontainebleau asking that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate receive an award... one time more since 1944! The only one left was the 'National Order of Merit.' They had to give a single name as recipient and Bernard DULLIER, provincial at the time, had suggested my name. I thought the idea had been buried when I got a letter from the Interior Minister whose first name is Brice! So the ball was rolling. Concretely, this decoration goes to the Congregation and the choice was made

from among the living survivors of that day in July, 1944. There are still 18 of us, among whom one ex-Oblate, Philippe Pierre!"

As a matter of "general culture," one can add that the National Order of Merit was established by General de Gaulle in 1963 to reward the "distinguished deeds," civic or military, done for the French nation. There are three degrees: knight, officer and commander. Go for it, Jean! And take a jacket with wide lapels; there might well be other medals in the future...! (Bertrand EVELIN in *OMI France*, February 2010)

UKRAINE

Rebuilding the Church

The activity of the Oblates in Ukraine is not much different from the normal activities of any parish: catechesis, preparation of adults for the sacraments, charitable activities, formation of adults and youth, liturgical celebrations. Indeed, it can be said that there is general faithfulness to the traditional models of ministry. What is different is the context: we ask ourselves every day how we can continue to promote the message of Jesus in a nation in which, according to the statistics, 63% of the people do not identify with any religion and only 0.6% are Roman-Catholic and 5.3% are Greek-Catholic. While one could not define Ukraine as a mission territory in the "strict sense," we are faced with a real missionary task. We are working in a society in which we are a minority, not only as Catholics but also as believers. As much as 98-99% of the population does not participate regularly in any religious function. How do we touch these persons? How do we bring them the Good News and how do we help them encounter the Lord?

We must confess that we are not missionaries in the sense of going directly among non-believers. We believe that depends primarily on our personal conversion and on how we live the Oblate life and charism in community. We try to pray much for those persons who live around us.

For the moment, we are working to help the people who belong to our parishes to help them become more mature Christians, capable, in their turn, to

be missionaries. After the experience of Soviet secularization, they are now experiencing a new kind of secularization coming from the media, from consumerism, from materialism, and from all those places where God is absent, where the values are quite different, and where our entire old way of thinking is brought into question.

Right now, we are involved in two ventures that to us seem to be good strategies for the development of evangelization. One of them is to open an Oblate house of hospitality that would allow those who are interested to live an authentic experience of Oblate life and faith. We believe it is very important to not lose sight of the spirit and the meaning of evangelization; especially, we want to help persons who come into contact with us to grow in the faith and to live their own Christian lives in a globalized and secularized world. We are also thinking about working out a formation program that is more specific to our Oblate charism in favor of the poor. The project consists in approaching the most abandoned and in putting ourselves at their service; one of our Fathers is already collaborating with one of Mother Teresa's sisters in order to welcome and accompany the poorest people.

Within a couple of years, we will probably begin to work in a welcoming center (already being built) for homeless persons. We would also like to build similar centers in our two parishes in Kryvyj Rig and Chernihv.

The other challenge is to bring to completion our various construction projects for our communities. During the Soviet domination, everything was destroyed. Therefore, we had to rebuild many churches, seven of them up to this point. Some of the construction has been completed, while others are in the building stages. There are other ministry sites and chapels in our plans. The greater part of our efforts is taken up by these construction projects. Six of our 8 communities are recently built, as of 2003. This effort is also due to the fact that as Oblates, we chose those places where there was a small number of priests and the presence of the Catholic Church was less or even non-existent.

Among us, there is a continual search for missionary "strategies" adapted to the context where we are located. Most of us are convinced that it would be necessary to offer a different type of formation within our parish groups, one that is more explicitly missionary. Others believe that our own efforts are not sufficient and that we should develop even more of a communion and cooperation with the different movements and the new communities which offer a serious formation and which offer more stability for those who take part. But all of us believe that God will guide us along His ways and will show us how to evangelize the Ukrainian people who still seem wounded by the terrifying soviet system. (Excerpt from an article by Pavlo VYSHKOVKYY and Salvo D'ORTO in *Missioni OMI*, February 2010)

Asia-Oceania

SRI LANKA

The Hard Road to Reconciliation

The Presidential Election in Sri Lanka, considered by many to be a turning point for a nation recently embroiled in a thirty year war, and a harbinger of a lasting peace, has left the country further divided along ethnic lines.

Since its independence from the British in 1948, Sri Lanka, a resplendent island nation reputed for its natural scenic beauty and legendary hospitality,

is home to over 14 million Sinhalese and some 4 million Tamils, out of a total population of 20 million inhabitants. The rest are an assortment of minority groups who live peacefully among the two major communities.

The Tamils, who form a majority in the North and East of the Island, have always felt that they were not treated equally by consecutive post-colonial governments that have been predominantly Sinhalese. Non-violent political efforts by Tamil leaders to obtain equal rights for

their community - whether in terms of language or self government – failed. This led to segments of the Tamil youth resorting to arms in order to carve out a separate state combining the North and the East – considered by Tamils to be their ‘traditional home-land’. This separatist effort was crushed in May of last year in a bloody defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the death of most of their leadership.

The recent Presidential Election has offered no solution to longstanding Tamil grievances. The country is now in a post-war, post-presidential election mood. With only 20% of the Tamils voting in the North, the writing on the wall is clear that the Tamils do not trust the Sinhala politicians in the South to guarantee their regional autonomy and self-rule. 63% of those votes went to retired General Sarath Fonseka and 24% to the incumbent, not because they loved the army commander who routed the fierce Liberation Tigers more, but because they loved President Mahinda Rajapaksa less.

The message is that they have not forgotten or forgiven the ‘war without witnesses’. Last spring, over 350,000 innocent civilians were cornered in a ‘no war zone’ where at least 20,000 of them were mercilessly mowed down and massacred. Those who managed to flee were treated like common prisoners and herded into camps surrounded by barbed-wire from which they were unable to leave until the camps were opened in early December 2009. These incidents are still vivid in the minds of the Tamils.

People in the north are facing fatigue and apathy. Having denied those in the camps vital medical assistance and especially freedom of movement, any attempt from the government towards reconciliation that lacks a political solution will be rejected. They feel their fate of being a neglected community has been sealed.

Healing and reconciliation will necessarily involve trust and confidence building, a journey that is bound to be slow. If it is to happen at all, it must be a people to people effort. Both Tamils and Sinhalese have lived together for ages without the intervention of political figures who

now disseminate racial dissension and division for political expediency. Reconciliation will be difficult, and efforts will need to begin at the community level.

The Oblates have given the lead in the needed work of rebuilding shattered relationships. Last year, they formed small teams of religious sisters – Sinhalese able to speak Tamil – to enter the camps and mingle with the Tamil women and their families. This was called a ‘ministry of presence’ and it has been very successful. The religious sisters gradually set up about twenty Montessori type schools for the kids within the camps. With some 100,000 people still living in the camps, these schools are very important. They are currently teaching some 750 children. Hardened hearts have begun to melt. Tension and fear have begun to ease. Tenuous strains of trust are emerging. Last December, the Oblates and nuns brought their La-Kri-Vi children (known as kids with valiant hearts) from the South to spend Christmas in the camps. Kids of both communities exchanged gifts, sang songs and acted skits. When the time came to depart, it was a scene of laments and tears. The wounds are beginning, gradually, to heal - through children.

The Oblates are taking a lead in promoting needed reconciliation. The leadership of the two Oblate provinces – Colombo and Jaffna – in one of their joint sessions, decided to re-establish the Oblate pre-novitiate in the North (once the scene of relentless war). There, prospective candidates to the Oblate way of life will live and learn together to be missionaries to the poor of both communities. This decision will mark a further vigorous step towards advancing a spirit of harmony and dialogue between the two communities. One resulting imperative of this decision would be for the Sinhala recruit to become conversant in the Tamil language, and vice versa, so that he could become, as John Paul II once said in a Peace Day message “a craftsman of a new humanity”.

The local Church, where all ethnic communities with their deep rooted cultural values and time-tested traditions form parts of the living body of Christ, must take the lead in addressing the

legitimate grievances of these communities in the quest for peace. In this context, the Oblates, with over 150 years existence to their credit and the largest men's religious body in the Island's Church history can become a visible sign and a standard bearer to other religious congregations who may be inclined to seriously engage in this timely ministry of national peace and reconciliation. (*Oswald FIRTH, Assistant General, in JPIC Report, Spring 2010*)

TURKMENISTAN

Catholic Church receives official status

There is good news from Turkmenistan! Fr. Andrzej MADEJ, the superior of the mission, called Father General on March 12 to let him know that the Catholic Church has been officially recognized by the government. Andrzej has been informed about the approval by the Ministry of Justice and the Council for Religion and was to receive a signed document on that very day.

Our two Oblates are still the only priests in the country. For 13 years, the Oblates have been able to stay in Turkmenistan due to their diplomatic status as representatives of the Vatican State. We give thanks to God, and thanks to the patience of our confreres; now the Catholic Church is allowed to have a public presence.

ASIA-OCEANIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE Meeting in Australia

St. Mary's Seminary Melbourne, Australia was the venue for the Asia-Oceania Regional Conference from 22-26 February 2010.

This conference is held yearly with participants coming from the units of Australia, Indonesia, India, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Philippines, Colombo, Jaffna, Vietnam, Pakistan and Bangladesh. An apology was received from Turkmenistan. The Conference was also pleased to welcome Fr. Federico LABAGLAY, Asia-Oceania General Councilor and Fr Oswald FIRTH, First Assistant General.

Fr Roman BERNABE, Provincial of the Philippines, is the president of this Conference.

This was the first time that the Asia Region held its conference in the atmosphere of an Oblate Formation House. This setting provided an opportunity for personal and communal prayer as the participants joined the community for morning and evening prayer as well as the for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Fr. Filadelfo ESTRELLA presented an in-depth review of the history and preparations for the 35th General Chapter. He fielded many questions about the various changes to structures that are being proposed for discussion at the Chapter in September.

Fr Rodolfo (Jun) JACOB (Philippines) was welcomed as the new conference secretary. Agenda items discussed by the Provincials and Delegations Superiors were the Oblate International Scholasticate in Manila; common preparation for Final Vows; financial and personnel support for different Units. Each Provincial and Delegation Superior presented a comprehensive report on his particular Unit.

A half day was granted on the Wednesday so the visiting Oblates could enjoy some of the sights and flavours of the Australian country side.

The conference concluded on the Friday afternoon with a concelebrated Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne to celebrate the Opening of the College Year for Mazenod College. (Fr Harry DYER)

CHINA

Movies, popcorn and Jesus

Every Saturday, a group of up to 15 young neighbours, children of China Little Flower Parish, come to our Oblate apartment from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. From 3:00 to 3:30 p.m., with the help of Scholastica and Luc YOUNG, they read some stories in both English and Chinese from a little Bible story book.

After reading the stories, questions are asked to see if they have understood what they have read. There's no need to say that question time can be quite a rowdy and noisy time as each one

of the young children would like to answer the questions before the others.

From 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., it is party time with lots of popcorn. No matter which flavor is served, our young friends see to it that nothing is left in the serving bowls. There is also lots of fruit juice to go with the popcorn. Popcorn is always associated with movies, so every Saturday we see a movie together with them.

As for the movie, I wish, their taste was as easy as their taste for popcorn. The reason for this is that there is always a little shouting contest among the kids as to which movie to watch. But, as they finally compromise about the choice of the movie, things calm down a little bit, but not quite, since very often, the movies get them pretty involved and excited.

My being with them every Saturday gives me a chance to watch movies I have never watched before. Sometimes, I do get to watch again some movies I have watched years ago.

My most memorable experience was watching the movie Narnia with them. Thinking that the movie would have been difficult for them to comprehend, after the movie, I asked them about Aslan the lion, and whom does Aslan the lion remind them of. They had no problem to tell me that Aslan reminds them of Jesus, his sacrifice, his death and his resurrection. I was taken aback to say the least.

These youngsters are part of the two dozen children with disabilities who live in foster homes organized by China Little Flower. Two foster parents live with and care for the children providing a homey atmosphere.

Apart from entertaining them, the Saturday gathering at the Oblate apartment gives them also some kind of spiritual nourishment. It also gives the foster parents a little break from them, even if it is only for 3 hours.

Finally, due to a generous benefactor from Hong Kong, popcorn of all flavors and fruit juice never lack for our Saturday little gathering. (Luc Young, www.oblateschina.com)

THAILAND

A ministry among the truly abandoned

In his Christmas letter, Brother Bernard WIRTH tells us of one of his days at the Detention Center.

To avoid a bottleneck, I arrived at 6:30 this morning. In that way, I could have a quiet moment to find out what had happened since my last visit. And I could plan the day's activities.

First of all, I visit the Vietnamese prisoners in cell number 4. Two of them escaped last week through the sewers: 200 persons are suffering the retaliation. There are about a hundred of them, confined 24 hours a day in their cell of 20 by 4 meters, with a cement floor and walls. There's no television, no visits, no releases. There is but one bathroom but the W.C.'s are still blocked. Last week, I fought to have them unblocked (at our expense, of course!) Everything has to be done over. When I left, at 5 p.m., the authorizations and contacts with the repairman were OK, but he was not yet there. The atmosphere is tense! I listen and I try to calm their spirits... with little success.

I move on to the cell of the Burmese. They too are about a hundred, between 18 and 25 years old for the most part. Newspapers around the world have spoken about them: they were abandoned in the middle of the sea, beaten back and rejected by everyone. Dumped first of all in a camp, they arrived at the Center in a pitiable condition. Fifteen of them could not even walk. Most of them do not know how to read or write and they speak only their dialect. Contact with them is difficult, but sometimes I make them laugh at my own ignorance. In January, I hope to get permission to teach them a bit of Thai or English.

With the Africans, it is easier: most of them get by in English or in French. As I enter, Mohammed calls me: "Why do we see you so seldom?" (It's true that I often give them over to other volunteers.) I bring them newspapers and magazines. We discuss sports; we laugh. We mention the problems only later. How to contact their friends, their family; how to get money to return to their own country? Our organization helps, but they have to wait for months since the

list is long. Others have health problems. A fan is broken. The drinking water leaves something to be desired. The images on the television are fuzzy. I take note and the list in each cell is often long: I do what I can.

Here I am, back at the office of the NGO which is helping with the Center. I meet Anne, another volunteer from the group: she shares with me what she heard in other cells, for example, of the women. She points out those who would like to see me.

All together, there are 15 cells: between 1,000 and 1,200 prisoners, most of them undocumented, besides the political refugees and those who have finished long terms in other prisons.

Sometimes, there is a ray of sunshine: I think of that woman from Somalia, with six children between the ages of 2 and 10, abandoned by her husband. She is leaving tonight for Canada with her six children. She will be taken into a UNO project. She is sitting on a bench with her little brood, proud to say that she is going to take an

airplane that evening. Everyone shares her joy and the youngest child is passed from one person to the next: even the policemen take him in their arms.

Another joy was being able to celebrate Christmas with them. Ten or so prisoners from each cell were able to come down into the courtyard to take part in a ceremony: we prayed and sang in the language of each one: English, Ibo (Nigeria), Nepalese, Chinese, Korean, Tamil and Thai. Then we went into all the cells to wish each one a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year... at least a little more happiness! We also had a little gift for each one and I appreciated being able to shake the hand of my friends other than through bars!

So there's a brief look at a little corner of life here in Thailand. I spend only fifteen hours a week there. But I am quite attached to them because many of the prisoners are truly the poorest of the poor. They live in indescribable conditions. (in *Audacieux pour l'Évangile*, April 2010)

Latin America

HAITI

The burden of "elephants"

The New Year in Haiti started with a "bang": January 12, at precisely 4:53 PM ... a terrible 7.3 earthquake struck! In just 35 seconds, over 50 violent shocks leveled nearly 2/3 of the capital city, Port-au-Prince, and many surrounding cities and towns in a deadly triangle from Cabaret to Petit Goâve and Jacmel. At least 300,000 people were killed in the blink of an eye; as many were seriously wounded, leaving a homeless refugee population of over one million ... All this in 35 seconds!

For over 2 centuries, the Republic of Haiti has been afflicted with "7 deadly plagues", reminiscent of the biblical accounts of the Old Testament: dictatorship, corruption, illiteracy, epidemics, dependency/occupation, indifference, and the massive "brain drain" of its most gifted citizens. One former Haitian prime minister, Mrs. Michèle Pierre Louis, recently remarked: "The Haitian People are a gifted

people, but one crushed by the heavy burden of elephants ..." Who, what, are these elephants? A small, local elite, a weak government plagued with corruption, a talented force of professionals leaving the country for good.

What should Haiti be doing to break this curse? First of all, the political leaders must at least listen to the scientists and geologists who had predicted the coming catastrophe 2 years ago. Politicians simply ignored the warnings "so as not to alarm the population" (cf. Phoenix Delacroix: 25 sept. 2008, in www.LeMatinHaiti.com). Adequate building codes designed for quake-prone areas should be adopted as soon as possible, and a process of decentralization (population, industry, services, and institutions) made a top government priority.

There are no words to describe Haiti, other than tragedy: one of horror, pain, hunger, desperation. The recent outpouring of humanitarian aid and thousands of relief volunteer workers who

quickly arrived on the scene of the quake is heart-warming to all the victims. Someone cares! But everyone knows that this is always too little and too late. There must be a long-term plan, not only for reconstruction, but for attacking the roots of poverty in this country. It is not the lack of infrastructure that creates poverty, but rather poverty that creates this lack. Poverty is the end result of an economic system which stifles the creation of wealth and discourages local initiatives and investment. Free trade agreements and economic reforms must be central to Haiti's recovery. Haiti must be enabled to produce and to sell its goods and services in order to escape the poverty trap of international hand-outs.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate have been part of Haiti's struggle with "the elephants" since 1943. A handful of pioneers arrived with a fresh vision of Faith, armed with the Charism and Zeal of the Founder, St. Eugène de Mazenod (love of the Church, love of people, love of those most in need). Today, the Oblates in Haiti number over 130 missionaries (including those in formation). We are present in 6 dioceses and 25 parishes. We have established parishes, schools, clinics, cooperatives and credit unions, seminaries, homes for the elderly poor and troubled youth. The foreign-born Oblates have literally worked themselves out of a job well-done in favor of a native Oblate Province, which has itself become missionary to Colombia and French Guyana, as well as to the Haitian immigrants of North America and Europe.

The Oblate Charism includes a special ingredient which we could call "staying power" (it comes from our special fourth vow of Perseverance). We don't run away when the going gets tough! When the quake hit, our seminarians and priests joined in the rescue efforts to free trapped victims from the deadly rubble, stayed out with the people, slept outside on cardboard, celebrated Mass in the streets, contacted relief organizations and workers for food and water, kept the morale high with prayer and song, and social activities for the youth.

To those who legitimately ask: "Where was God on January 12?" The Haitians themselves gave the answer in sustained prayers and song amidst the desolation of collapsed schools, churches, and market places. They took turns in providing all-night community vigils and watches for the safety of all, sharing all they had with each other, comforting the children who were looking for their lost families, asking if they would go back to school tomorrow. Fathers BONNARD, PRINTEMPS, LOUBEAU, MARIO and WILSON are still there, sleeping in tents and ministering to their communities, sustained by the generosity of their brother Oblates both in Haiti and abroad, inspired by the courage of their Haitian brothers and sisters in the face of great loss. There is a similar story in the Bible: The story of Job ... one with a happy ending. Where was God when the earthquake struck? God was there with His people. He is there today. (Fr. Alfred CHARPENTIER, omi, 21 March 2010)

Africa-Madagascar

LESOTHO

Breaking down a "wall of silence"

Oblate scholastic and deacon, Brother Charles PHOOFOLO is one of the few recognized Sign Language Interpreters in Lesotho. Speaking about people with hearing disability, Charles states that "there exists a communication barrier between people with hearing disability and the rest of the Christian community. This is not because of their disability, for they do not have '*religious disability*'. Rather it is because of the purposely maintained '*wall of silence*' between

the two parties. As a result, people with hearing disability feel uncomfortable in the church."

According to Deacon Phoofolo, "the communication barrier denies the people with hearing disability their right to active participation in the religious practices of the Church. It is an undeniable fact that our church still has much to do with regard to the accessibility of the pastoral services to people with hearing impairment."

Deacon Phoofolo highlighted the point that "Sign Language Interpreting is prerequisite

to the accommodation of people with hearing disability in the church. We have to break down the communication barrier by learning their language (sign language) and also making use of Sign Language Interpreters. Without the use of sign language in our churches, people with hearing disability will always find themselves isolated and discriminated against. And in today’s world, this is unjustifiable.”

He concludes with the following information: “According to Vatican Information Service (VIS), there are 278 million people with hearing impairment in the world; 59 million of them are profoundly deaf. The VIS further reports that 80% of the deaf live in less developed countries.” (*Maoblata, April 2010*)

CHAD

Against a fear that enslaves

Father Lukasz BIECEK is a member of our community. His parish is at Badgé, on the border with Cameroon. In this lost outpost, customs officials and policemen take great joy in robbing the population. Recently, the village

chief, in cahoots with these uniformed bandits, sent some his thugs to rough up a man accused of witchcraft...and to rob him of his livestock.

Accusations of witchcraft are now punishable by law. They are unfounded and are a pretext for getting even, especially with those who are the weakest. The *Justice and Peace* committee of the parish reacted and raised a complaint. The thugs admitted that they had been sent by the chief who was then called into court... but in Cameroon, it was covered over in a few days.

The affair continues: the chief has accused Fr. Lukasz of getting involved in politics. He has threatened to poison the head of the *Justice and Peace* committee. Nevertheless, little by little, justice is beginning to emerge, thanks to the courage of a few. In our Christmas liturgies, when we call for the arrival of the “Kingdom of Justice and Peace,” it’s not simply tale from the past. But it takes courage to fight against fear. It is fear that enslaves. (Philippe ALIN, o.m.i. in *Audacieux pour l’Évangile, April 2010*)

Anniversaries for June 2010

70 Years of priesthood

1940.06.15	06141	Fr. Alfred Lavoie	United States
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65 Years of religious life

1945.06.29	07962	Fr. Maurice Hemann	Philippines
1945.06.29	07965	Fr. Maynard Kegler	United States

65 Years of priesthood

1945.06.01	07437	Fr. Robert Lechat	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.06.02	07140	Fr. Charles Prass	United States
1945.06.04	06991	Fr. William Smith	United States
1945.06.09	07142	Fr. James Riley	United States
1945.06.10	07143	Fr. Edmond Turenne	Lacombe
1945.06.17	07127	Fr. Gérard Beaudet	Lacombe
1945.06.17	07125	Fr. Gilles Bernier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.06.17	07105	Fr. Alexandre Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.06.17	07130	Fr. Arthur Saint-Sauveur	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.06.24	07122	Fr. Herve Gagnon	United States
1945.06.24	07102	Fr. Mario Ricci	Italy

60 Years of religious life

1950.06.10	09459	Bro. Louis Detillieux	Lacombe
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60 Years of priesthood

1950.06.16	08172	Fr. François Buteau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.06.16	07618	Fr. Rosaire Langelier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.06.24	08068	Fr. Robert Paradis	Lacombe
1950.06.25	07871	Fr. Leo Gauvin	United States
1950.06.29	08040	Fr. Richard Haslam	Anglo-Irish
1950.06.29	08227	Fr. Denis McCarthy	Australia
1950.06.29	07740	Fr. John Patterson	Natal

50 Years of religious life

1960.06.29	10868	Fr. René Villegas	Bolivia
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50 Years of priesthood

1960.06.11	09987	Fr. Hervé Aubin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.11	09748	Bishop Gilles Cazabon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.11	09771	Fr. Elphège Desbiens	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.11	09531	Fr. Guy Levac	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.11	09991	Fr. Pierre Racette	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.24	09986	Fr. Gérard Cousineau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.24	09962	Fr. Jacques Léger	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.26	09793	Fr. Leon Brzezina	Poland
1960.06.26	09726	Fr. Rémi Cadieux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.06.26	09722	Fr. Waclaw Hryniewicz	Poland
1960.06.26	09720	Fr. Jozef Kowalik	Poland
1960.06.26	09718	Fr. Ernest Malok	Poland
1960.06.26	09719	Fr. Peter Sachta	Poland
1960.06.26	12090	Fr. Jan Sadowski	Assumption
1960.06.29	09992	Fr. René Bélanger	Lacombe
1960.06.29	10236	Fr. Yves Schaller	France

25 Years of priesthood

1985.06.07	12597	Fr. Bevil Bramwell	United States
1985.06.15	12553	Fr. Czeslaw Grabowski	Poland
1985.06.15	12558	Fr. Jan Kobzan	Cameroun
1985.06.15	12562	Fr. Henryk Marciniak	Poland
1985.06.15	12554	Fr. Józef Niesyto	Poland
1985.06.15	12559	Fr. Zygfryd Wiecha	Poland
1985.06.28	12602	Fr. Bryan W. Silva	United States

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 25-33

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Adrien Gaillard	France	09/12/1929	Ajaccio	30/3/2010
Fr. Lawrence Conlon	Lacombe	25/02/1923	Ottawa	03/04/2010
Fr. David Kraus	United States	19/02/1931	Belleville	07/04/2010
Fr. Lucien Pépin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	28/06/1932	Trois-Rivières	13/04/2010
Fr. John Sullivan	OMI Lacombe	12/05/1919	Vancouver	15/04/2010
Fr. Bienvenido Leandicho	Philippines	12/07/1921	Quezon City	16/04/2010
Fr. Horst Ueberall	Central European	18/03/1932	Mainz	20/04/2010
Fr. Charles Borgers	United States	12/11/1916	San Antonio	21/04/2010
Fr. Jean-Claude Forestier	France	23/10/1940	Agen	23/04/2010

“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)

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