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Fr. General's Missionary Meditation Vocations in the Western World

Why a meditation on vocations right after finishing the week of prayer for Oblate vocations and various Church days in the same vein? It's because this theme came up as I was preparing my report for the General Chapter. Also, I just returned from a meeting of religious about Europe¹, and several participants tenaciously stressed this point. But what is it really all about? The question could simply be posed in these words: what must we do as religious and as Oblates to attract vocations in the western world?

This question could arouse certain reactions. Perhaps some will ask for a more exact clarification of the word "vocations," and of course, it is true that every baptized person has a vocation. And certainly, we cannot focus only on vocations to the consecrated life (priests, religious, etc.). Today more than ever, it is important to speak about the basic call to faith in Christ because it is this very faith that is in crisis. Other reactions will avow that religious congregations should not worry too much about survival; it's the mission and the great needs of the world which should take first place and not our internal problems. Comments such as these express essential aspects of the vocation theme and should be taken seriously. We no longer live in an era in which we could imagine a Church in which the clergy and religious have to do almost everything, nor is it the moment to promote withdrawal into our institutional interests.

On the other hand, I believe it would be false escapism if, as religious and, concretely, as

Oblates, we wanted to avoid the question of vocations to our congregation in the western world. How does the situation present itself? First we must say that, thanks be to God, there are vocations, even though they are few: two in one country, five or six in another, etc. Secondly, we must note that in some countries that formerly had many Oblates, there have been no vocations for years and years. Thirdly, we must realize that the situation is dramatic; if it does not change, the greater part of what today is a visible Oblate presence tomorrow will have disappeared.

In practical terms, how should we react? We have discovered valid means that can help us in these times of vocational shortage, and I see them as none other than great opportunities that the Holy Spirit is offering us. The first of these are the lay associates; there are always more Christians who enthusiastically take on the charism and the mission of the Oblates. Some of them, let's say twenty or thirty of them, have already been incorporated into missionary communities in the west and are bring new energy. We need to continue in these directions! Nevertheless, this is no reason to evade our question. The Oblate mission cannot disregard the native vocations of western Europe, of the United States of American, of Canada, and of Australia.

So let us finally speak about these vocations. Dialoguing, meditating and praying, we will often find some ideas. For my part, I would like to propose three points.

The first comes from a recent conversation with cardinal, one of the pope's councilors. He said that we must not hide from youth the fact that

¹ Biannual meeting of the Union of Superiors General:
<http://www.vidimusdominum.info/>

God asks everything of them. I wonder, isn't this precisely what we avoid saying, and we are afraid because it would involve us as well? Yes, let's face it: God asks everything of us.

They say that today's youth find that particularly difficult. On the other hand, "God alone suffices" (Saint Teresa of Avila), and He alone can fulfill our lives. The missionary religious vocation, whether as a Brother or as a priest, demands everything: chastity in celibacy, poverty in the apostolate, obedience to go anywhere in the world and perseverance for a lifetime. All of this is a lot, but for that very fact, it makes happy the one who is called and responds.

The second point is that the call which comes to the young person suggests a commitment, not only in relation to God, but also with a community belonging to the Church. A young man is going to consider giving his life to God, becoming an Oblate, only if we offer him a missionary project for which it is worth giving his life. The project must respond to actual needs – like the lack of God and the absence of meaning, the instability of the family, unemployment, the condition of immigrants, etc. And it should not be a theoretical project

but something already lived by an apostolic community that becomes a spiritual home for the one who feels himself called.

Third, we must repeatedly invite people to this project and do so with great faith, patience and prayer. We need to invite them publicly, during youth days and in parishes; we also need to invite them privately, walking with the young person who feels attracted, by means of frequent contact and conversations and nurturing in him an intense spiritual life. Along with vocations to Oblate life, normally various types of other vocations are going to appear from this effort, and they can all be expressed in the missionary activities of youth.

Oblate life and religious life are something bigger than we are. In the meeting of religious mentioned above, a journalist said that the consecrated life is the legacy of Europe. I think it can even be called the legacy of humanity. Vocations of this kind are most necessary because they indicate that humanity, which came from the loving hands of God, even though it has forgotten Him, is called to leap once again into His hands, responding to this love in freedom and pure gratitude. God alone can fill the human heart, and each religious vocation reminds us of that.

General Administration

PRECAPITULAR COMMISSION

Chapter news

Moderators for the Chapter

As the time for the 35th General Chapter approaches, the Chapter Commissioner, Fr. David KALERT, continues to complete and fine-tune the many lists and tasks that will make the Chapter run more smoothly when it begins on September 8 at the Casa LaSalle in Rome.

The list of those Oblates who will often be working "behind the scenes" to make the Chapter a success is just about complete. Among them are the three Oblates who will serve as moderators or chairpersons during the plenary sessions and who will work closely with the Steering Committee to plan each day.

Those who have accepted the role of moderator are Fathers Filadelfo ESTRELLA, Adriano TITONE, and Hipólito OLEA. Fr. Estrella has served at previous chapters, both as provincial of the Philippines and as a moderator in 2004. Fr. Adriano is currently superior of the Italian scholasticate at Vermicino; he has also served in the Delegation of Senegal. Fr. Hipólito (originally from Mexico City) is a missionary in the mountains of Guatemala.

The young and the less young

For those who like statistics, we can report that the capitulars will range from 35 years old to 74 years old. There will be six "senior" capitulars, 70 years old and above. Three of the capitulars are in their 30's. The average age of the 89 capitulars will be 53.8 years.

Languages

During plenary sessions, there will be simultaneous translation into the three official languages of the Congregation: French, English, and Spanish.

The capitulars were asked to indicate their preferred “working” language for the Chapter (especially for receiving documents or making interventions). The numbers are as follow: French – 31; Spanish – 12; English – 46.

Latin America

HAITI

Back to classes for our scholastics

(3 April 2010: e-mail from Fr. Loudeger MAZILE, General Councilor, to Fr. General)

Thanks for the Easter greetings. Concerning the return to classes, in the public sector, that will happen next week in the whole western department where Port-au-Prince is located. The schools in the rest of the country have been functioning since the month of February.

The Major Seminary will open its doors at the same time as the public schools. The Oblate scholastics in philosophy will join the diocesan students and other religious in shelters put at the disposition of the philosophy faculty of the Major Seminary by religious whose buildings had not been destroyed. Our philosophers will mostly live in tents, but the superiors are also planning to use rooms for those who are not afraid of sleeping inside the houses, just as I am doing at the moment.

Our theologian scholastics will also be brought together by CIFOR (Faculty of Theology run by

the Conference of Religious of Haiti) for classes that will last for three weeks. Then they will return to their respective parishes where they had been assigned. They will do their homework there and will be brought together again for three weeks in June and again, in July, when the school year will officially end.

In that way, the religious and the diocesans will be able to take up their courses again and finish the year according to a special program organized by those in charge of the Major Seminary and the bishops on the one hand and by the administration of CIFOR and the religious superiors on the other hand.

The leaders of the Oblate province, in conjunction with the formators and the local superiors, have decided to occupy the site of the old novitiate at Blanchard, near the philosophy house, in view of having it function for the time being as the theology scholasticate. This site will not be sufficient. That is why the site of the philosophy house will also be used to lodge the theology house community. It’s an emergency situation. Everyone is trying to contribute something and to show good will.

Africa-Madagascar

BOTSWANA

Growing vegetables in the desert

Father Norbert PEPENENE speaks about a vegetable project in the Oblate Mission at Tshabong, in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana.

“The project is the initiative of the sodality of Ladies of St. Ann at Tshabong. Their objective is to help feed the poor people in the area, especially those who are infected/affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Just like everywhere

else in southern Africa, HIV/AIDS is also a big problem here in Botswana. Besides antiretroviral treatment, HIV/AIDS patients also need good nutrition. The project is very helpful in this regard. Part of the produce is sold to the public for the self-maintenance of the project and for the subsistence of the mission.

“To develop the project and to give encouragement to the women involved, Father Vincent MOSENYE and I started intensive fundraising activities. And a

generous donor from England gave us an equivalent of P52,000.00 (US\$ 7,700). The money enabled us to install the irrigation system and the net that protects the plants from direct sunlight, and also to put up the security fence to keep away the wandering animals.

“The regional Agric Officers are taking special interest in the project. They visit us regularly to monitor the progress and to offer advisory service free of charge. According to them, the project not only contributes to poverty reduction but it is also a shining example of how to reconcile rural populations with available resources in their areas.

“If vegetables can be grown successfully in the desert, how much more in the fertile gardens and fields of our Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho? This is an open challenge to everyone!” (Fr. Norbert Seabata Peppenene – Botswana in *Maoblata* May 2010).

SENEGAL

Making bricks for God

When he passed the leadership of Saint Bernadette Parish in Nguéniène to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1977, Missionary of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Simonnet, in all simplicity and humility, made this statement to the Oblates: “During my pastoral service from 1960 until 1977, I made 7,000 bricks for the people of Nguéniène and Djilas. Now, it’s up to you to assemble them and to make a beautiful church which will sing the glory of God and give witness to the power of fraternal charity.” The number of “bricks” corresponded to the number of baptized Christians in 1977.

The parish is celebrating this year its 50th jubilee. And the Oblates who continue to serve the parish have indeed continued to make “bricks” for the greater honor and glory of God.

The church of Nguéniène grew quickly. By 1965, there were 3,000 Christians and 800 catechumens, spread out in 53 chapels, with 5 primary schools for 350 boys and 121 girls. Seventeen years later, when Fr. Simonnet turned it over to the Oblates on April 10, 1977, St. Bernadette parish had 62

chapels in a radius of 20 Km. from Nguéniène, with about 5,954 Christians, an army of 80 brave and zealous catechists who had been formed in the school of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, Frs. Simonnet and Bouteiller.

The pioneer Oblates came from Italy in 1976. Since that time, 34 years ago, the numbers have continued to increase: 11,634, including the 223 baptized last year. The presence of God was so strong that 19 members of the parish community have answered a special call of the Lord: 11 priests; 5 religious Brothers; 3 religious women; and 1 consecrated layman. There are 21 youth preparing to respond to the Lord’s call in formation programs at home and abroad.

The presbyteral ordination of four young Oblates on the very day of the jubilee celebration was another tangible sign of God’s love. Frs. Vincent DIOUF of Fayil, Jean Maurice SÈNE of Ndiémane, Jean Marie SÈNE of Ngas Kop et Paul David NIAH of Loul Sèssene, were ordained by the imposition of the hands of the Archbishop of Dakar, His Eminence, Cardinal Théodore Adrien Sarr.

St. Bernadette parish is now led by the sixth Oblate pastor, Fr. Joseph DAMBA, assisted by his confreres, Frs. Stanislas DIOUF, Léon IWÉLÉ and Vincent DIOUF. (Fr. Enzo ABBATINALI at <http://www.omisen.net/>)

ZAMBIA

Children helping children

During the Lenten Season, the Holy Childhood Missionaries, a children’s group from Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka, embarked on a challenging mission of visiting displaced children living with their families in Mazyopa compound of Lusaka. The aim of the visit was to play with and present gifts to their fellow children. This is in accordance with the Holy Childhood theme of “children helping children.”

The displaced children of Mazyopa compound have been living in makeshift tents with their families for close to four years. The families

moved into tents as a result of the City Council's destroying their houses which were illegally built too close to the railway line on private land.

A week before the Holy Childhood group visited Mazyopa compound, a team of animators went to survey the place. On their way to Mazyopa compound, the animators were shocked to discover that the roads leading to the compound and those within were impassable; even a Land Cruiser in good condition got stuck in the mud.

The Holy Childhood group was accompanied by Fr Barnabas SIMATENDE, Sch. Bro Michael TEMBO, animators and some parishioners.

Most of the children from Lusaka had never been exposed to such levels of suffering. Some could not believe that fellow children live in tents which they call their home. The experience of seeing such poverty in the Capital City was an eye opener to most of the children who come from privileged homes. As a gesture of support for their fellow children, the Holy Childhood group donated the following items: books, clothes, cleaning materials, blankets, and financial support. After the donations were made, all the children present sang and prayed for each other's well-being. Indeed the children of Mazyopa need other children to help them hope for a better tomorrow. (Sch. Bro. Michael Tembo in *OMI Zambia*, March/April 2010)

Asia-Oceania

PAKISTAN

A new Oblate bishop

On April 29, 2010, the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, elevated the Apostolic Prefecture of Quetta in Pakistan to the rank of an Apostolic Vicariate. At the same time, he named as Vicar Apostolic, Father Victor GNANAPRAGASAM, the current Prefect Apostolic. As Vicar Apostolic, Fr. Victor will be ordained a bishop, with the titular See of Timida. His ordination as bishop is scheduled for July 16, 2010.

Bishop-elect Victor was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, in 1940. He professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1960 and was ordained a priest in 1966. After his ordination, he served as a parish priest and as a member of Jaffna's preaching team. In 1974, he became a parish priest in Faisalabad, Pakistan. From 1979 until 1985 and from 1997 until 2001, he was superior of the Delegation of Pakistan. In the intervening years, he also served in various parish and formation ministries. In 1987-1989, he studied psychology and spirituality in England and in Rome.

In 2001, he was named Prefect Apostolic of the newly erect Apostolic Prefecture of Quetta. The prefecture encompasses the entire province of Balochistan, which is 44% of the entire territory of Pakistan. Of the more than eight million inhabitants of the province, there are 29,355

(0.36%) Catholics in seven parishes, served by 13 priests (10 of whom are Oblates).

INDIA

A new province is born

In recent years, whenever there was the announcement of a new province coming into existence in the Oblate Congregation, it was because of the restructuring and merging of two or more older provinces or delegations (e.g., in 2007, the Central European Province was born of the German Province and the Delegation of Austria and the Czech Republic).

During the plenary session of the Central Government of 23 April 2010, Father General and his Council agreed to the request of the Indian Delegation and the recommendation of the Mother Province of Colombo to raise India to the status of a province. Father Francis NALLAPPAN, the present Delegation Superior, was named the First Provincial of the Province of India.

In 1968, Fr. M. Anthony FERNANDO, Provincial of Sri Lanka, sent two Oblates, namely Frs. Emmanuel MARIAMPILLAI and Stanislaus PHILIPS to begin an Oblate mission in the vast country of India, cradle of most world eastern religions and mother of ancient cultures and

civilization. Frs. Emmanuel Mariampillai and Stanislaus PHILIPS, set foot in this sub-continent on a hot summer day, June 29, 1968, and were officially accompanied by the then Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, Most Rev. Dr. R. Arulappa, to Kancheepuram, the Rome of Hindus, a mission in the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, the land preached by Apostle St. Thomas around 52 AD and martyred eventually and they were installed in a simple ceremony by him on July 1st 1968. Forty-two years later, the Oblate presence in India has grown, not only in numbers, but also in the depth of rooting the Gospel and the Charism in the vast expanse of the country.

In keeping with the Vision-Mission Statement (“Pilgrims with the poor towards fullness of Life”) that evolved from the Immense Hope Project and more specifically in the Leadership Congress in February 2009, the Indian Oblates developed clear strategic planning and implementation mechanisms in the areas of Mission, Ministries, Formation, Community and Administration.

The Indian Oblates find themselves in many types of ministry after 42 years. Of course, first and on-going formation are their priority ministries. The Indian Oblate Formation Directory instills in the minds of the younger generation the importance of a missionary spirit, to be ready always to work in any part of the world.

Besides the many missions and parishes where the Oblates preach the Good News among the tribals (Indigenous Peoples) and dalits (lowest caste people), they also focus on the education of poor and unfortunate children through formal and informal schools and boarding homes for the poor. Youth ministry is a vibrant ministry which concentrates on equipping the youth for meeting today’s challenges. The Indian Oblates are also involved in media ministry through their website (www.omiindia.org) and various publications.

Knowing that interreligious dialogue is the basic form of mission today in the context of the religious pluralism in India, the Oblates foster this dialogue at their Aanmodaya Ashram (Center for Indian Spirituality, Interreligious Dialogue and Inculturation). The Missionary Association

of Mary Immaculate is steadily taking root in the Oblate missions and parishes, with the aim of forming supporters and contributors.

The Oblates are spread across this vast country. They are present in 11 dioceses in five States of India. Five of the Oblate missions in India are among the tribals. This segment of the Indian population lives in dire physical and cultural poverty. The Oblates try especially to teach the children new values in line with their culture and to build up their self-esteem. They are protected from exploitation by the landlords and powerful authorities like politicians and naxalites (Maoist insurgency). The Indian Oblates also educate them to understand their basic human rights and duties, so that they might overcome such practices as child labour and child marriages.

Remaining true to the core of our missionary call, Oblates from India serve in missions across borders, in spite of the many demands and needs within the country itself. Today one can find Oblates from India in other Oblate Units of the world, namely, the United States, Canada, Australia, South Korea, Japan, Spain and others. Many Indian Oblates are doing higher studies in various countries.

India has been blessed with many vocations. Altogether there are 63 Oblates in perpetual vows and 23 scholastics in temporary vows as of March 2010. And there are nearly 120 candidates in other formation houses.

The delegation of India will be officially declared a province on 29 May, 2010, by Fr. Clement WAIDYASEKARA, OMI, Provincial of Colombo. The public celebration with local bishops and Oblate dignitaries will be on 15 August 2010 in Chennai, India.

Fr. Nallappan expresses the joy of the members of the new province: “*The Indian Oblates are exuberant with everlasting sentiments of gratitude to God for the manifold blessings given through the Oblate missionaries who brought the seeds of the Word and the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod; and they are grateful to the Oblate world for the tremendous trust*

placed in us and the constant support and encouragement in every way."

The new provincial had been elected as a delegate to the General Chapter, representing India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Now he will be an *ex officio* capitular and his alternate, Fr. Emilianus MORAES, superior of the Bangladesh delegation, will be a capitular.

PHILIPPINES

Death of the first Filipino Oblate priest

The first Filipino Oblate to be ordained a priest, Fr. Bienvenido "Ben" LEANDICHO passed away on April 16, 2010 in Quezon City. He would have celebrated his 89th birthday on July 12, and would have celebrated his 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on December 23. He joined the Oblates in 1947. He made his Novitiate in Mission, Texas, USA from 1947 to 1948. He was sent to the International Scholasticate in Rome where he where he obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Gregorian University. He was ordained in Rome in 1950.

Upon his return to the Philippines in 1951, he served as a parish priest for several years before being put in charge of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, a post which he held from 1962 until 1979. Under his enthusiastic leadership, the association grew rapidly, especially in Luzon where he organized groups of members in many parishes. It spread also in parishes and in the Notre Dame Schools of Cotabato. With the main office at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Caloocan, Fr. Leandicho reached thousands of people, who, as members of the MAMI, shared in the missionary work of the Oblates.

In his later years, he had various ministries. Among them, he served as part-time Chaplain of Maryknoll College in Quezon City, Camp Vicente Lim in Canlubang, Laguna, and some police precincts. Ministering to the police/military personnel, inmates, students, and teachers was his special interest and he was most happy in this kind of missionary work.

Because of declining health, in 2003, he retired at the Bolduc Home next to the Oblate Missionary Center in Quezon City. He loved to receive visitors and tell them stories of missionary life in the Philippines. (<http://www.omiphil.org/>)

THAILAND

Unrest in the streets

For several weeks, the secular press and the television news have reported the often violent clashes between the forces of the Thai government and anti-government protesters, sometimes referred to as the "Red Shirts." On May 20, the government declared that it had mostly quelled the protests. However, it was not a peaceful end to the situation and many problems remain.

The superior of the Oblates' Thailand Delegation, Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO, wrote the following update to Fr. Camille PICHE, director of the Congregation's JPIC office in Rome: "Our situation here is very tense but without any major damage to the life of most people in the country. Unfortunately, Bangkok is burning (about 30 buildings) and we do not know how things will develop. The divisions are very deep. Certainly the poor have little chances in Thai society and their problems should be addressed; however it is also true that what is happening is not towards greater democracy or more justice. It seems to me that the poor are manipulated for the advantage of a few. It is just a change of masters. Let's pray that God brings peace and reciprocal understanding to all people in Thailand."

To Father Genral, Fr. Claudio wrote: "Thank you for your message, your concern and your prayer. May St. Eugene intercede for this people so that we can find peace once again. I feel that it is the greatest desire of the majority here. We finish our seminar tomorrow celebrating St. Eugene together. Everyone is very happy for what we have received from Fr. Frank SANTUCCI. We have anticipated the celebration at noon so as to be able to reach home before the curfew at night. Happy feast day to you and all in Rome."

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Zealous fire retreat at St. Paul University

For the first time, a retreat based on themes drawn from St. Eugene de Mazenod was held at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario. It was facilitated and prepared by scholastic David MACPHEE, a member of the student pastoral team and by Fr. Daniel RENAUD, the University Chaplain. This retreat wanted to delve into the missionary call that is addressed to all Christians through the Oblate charism and the Oblate founder's spiritual path. The retreat was offered simultaneously in French and in English.

The title for the retreat was *Zealous Fire Retreat* ("La retraite du feu sacré" in French) and it was scheduled over four days from March 24 to 27, 2010. It closed on the Saturday with the Eucharistic celebration of the Feast of Saint Eugene. Although the number of participants was modest (25 in total), those who were there were appreciative and offered positive comments and suggestions to improve the format.

Here are a few comments: "Based on lived experience... good listening period... nice method for praying based on biblical texts... This was very enriching for me and it still goes on... the theme has reenergized my faith and my missionary zeal... It was dynamic and inviting... I liked the content: to keep the sacred flame that animates us!"

As Oblates, it was also a great experience in the way that it allowed the two of us to live a common apostolate while preparing the talks on a theme that had us returning to the zeal and spirituality which are at the foundation of the charism of Saint Eugene. (By *David MacPhee and Daniel Renaud in www.omilacombe.ca*)

ASSUMPTION

Mass for President Lech Kaczynski

Over six thousand people gathered on Thursday, April 16, 2010 at St. Maximilian Kolbe in Mississauga Parish to celebrate Memorial Mass honouring the late Polish President Lech

Kaczynski, his wife, and the 94 other dignitaries that perished in last Saturday's plane crash. The Memorial Mass was organized by Fr. Janusz BLAZEJAK, provincial of Missionary Oblates, and Fr. Andrzej SOWA, pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Church.

People came from all directions; some walked several kilometers, as police had closed off street access to cars. Many waved Polish flags while others came with flowers, pictures and candles. It was a sober but important occasion and everyone wanted to play a small part. Prior to the Mass a makeshift shrine was set up under a large wooden cross in the parking lot. It grew larger minute by minute as the crowds continued to flood in. Those who arrived early enough (two to three hours before the Mass) were lucky to get inside: the remainder were joined by priests outside and listened to the proceedings on loudspeakers.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper; leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Michael Ignatieff; leader of the New democratic Party, Jack Layton; the Ambassador of Poland to Canada, Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz; the Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Marek Ciesielczuk; the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, David Onley; and the President and Acting President of the Canadian Polish Congress, Wladyslaw Lizon and Jerzy Barycki. Many other dignitaries lined the pews of the packed church. Thirty-five priests, led by Archbishop of Toronto, Thomas Collins, participated in the Mass. Polish scouts were mobilized to provide logistical support and did so with enthusiastic efficiency and professionalism.

The Mass was touching. Especially moving was the opening hymn which was sung during the arrival of the Archbishop, the throngs of priests and the altar servers that preceded him. For a few minutes, the entire church shook under the voices of those in attendance. It seemed as though the hymn provided the perfect outlet for grief stricken Polish-Canadians to release their emotions. And they did. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper received a standing ovation and

delivered a few fitting words about his fondest memories of President Kaczynski as well as the resilience of the Polish people. There were more speeches of course, all heartfelt and moving. (*Assumption News and Views*, April 2010)

OMI LACOMBE

Honoring and Remembering Our Past Heroes

Last April 23, approximately seventy-five Franco-Albertans met at Campus Saint-Jean in Edmonton Alberta, for a supper in honor of the Oblate Commemoration Fund and of Brother Anthony KOWALCZYK.

About ten years ago, a project to revitalize the Brother Anthony grotto got underway at the university campus. As a first step, it was agreed to erect a life-size bronze statue of the humble man who influenced the history of this academic institution. This sculpture, by internationally renowned artist Danek Mozdzensky, will be placed near the Lacerte building, not far from the grotto built by Brother Anthony's own hands.

Convened on personal invitation only, the purpose of this April 23 gathering was to assemble a number of potential donors who would help finance this historical project evaluated at \$250,000.00.

Along with what was collected at this fund-raising supper, the total at this point amounts to approximately \$90,000.00.

"Erecting this monument has a significant importance for the Campus St-Jean and the Francophone Community of Alberta", affirmed Senator Claudette Tardif, who accompanied her husband, Denis Tardif, master of ceremonies for the supper.

Present also at the meeting were the sculptor Mozdzensky, the dean of CSJ Marc Arnal, Edmonton's Archbishop Richard Smith, along with members of the Brother Anthony Committee.

Aside from the ideal of humility, piety and courage of Brother Anthony, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were also honored at this supper for their role in the development of the francophone

communities in western Canada. (*By René BÉLANGER, OMI, translated by Maurice BLACKBURN, OMI in www.omilacombe.ca*)

OMI LACOMBE

Oblate Partners in Mission/Associates

Rooted in the experience of lay association, our group here in Ottawa has been evolving since the founding of OMI Lacombe as a Province. First calling ourselves "Tempians" (for Father Tempier – St. Eugene's #1 collaborator), we came together to socialize, to share our stories and to be with others who were attracted to the Oblate charism. Animated by the possibilities of having Oblate ministries in the Capital Region coordinated under the umbrella of a "Mission Centre", we gradually grew in our identity and numbers. In one way or another we were experiencing God's call to love through the Oblate charism.

Our "association" was not always that sharply defined, and we each came – questioning – seeking – ready to say "yes". It was our individual experiences of the living call to mission in our hearts that brought us together and into community. We struggled with the word "associate". By the 2006 Convocation, we started to refer to ourselves as Oblate Partners in Mission (OPM). This designation seems to better describe who we are. We see ourselves as an intentional community, made up of vowed Oblates, an Honorary Oblate and lay persons. We feel called to receive some formation and make an obvious and external commitment with the Oblates. We feel keenly the pull of being part of an Oblate community and living in the spirit of St. Eugene. "Associates" are members of the Basic Oblate Community in both Toronto and in Ottawa. All of us are invited to participate in District Oblate retreats and working processes. We work, we pray, we share and we socialize. We love and nourish each other, and always – put ourselves under the guidance of Mary Immaculate and St. Eugene. We come from several parishes, some from Galilee Centre, from Springhurst and there are a few of us down in the Toronto area – some of us know each other only through email. And although some have been around for a while we continue to look at where we are and where we want to go.

Besides our respective ministries, we have participated in some common projects. In the winter of 2009 we held an interfaith prayer service when our city was struggling through a bus strike and then last spring we spearheaded a “Work Bee and Cleanup weekend up at Galilee Centre up in Arnprior (we must have done a good job because Galilee Centre has invited us back again at the end of the month). Together we have worked through the sessions of the Animation Process on Poverty and now are trying to focus on Conversion and the upcoming 35th Chapter. We’re preparing to celebrate with one of our own, Garry Byrne who has just been named an Honorary

Oblate on May 21st we will begin the process of “Appreciating and Celebrating Lay Associates”. In June we will have a retreat given by Ken Hart titled “Growing Our Adult Faith” – a one-day workshop on life-long development of our faith – based on the experiences of St. Eugene.

We continue to look at mission and what God is calling us to do, who we are called to be. We are looking and questioning our identity as Oblate Partners in Mission/Associates and what that means. In our hearts we are “Oblates” – dare we say it out loud? *(Submitted by Eleanor Rabnett in www.omilacombe.ca)*

Europe

ITALY

Music for the 150th anniversary of the death of the Founder

On May 21, the 149th anniversary of the death of the Founder, or of his birth into heaven, the whole Congregation celebrated the feast of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Next year will be the 150th anniversary. Taking advantage of that symbolic number, the Province of Italy is beginning a series of initiatives aimed at making known the extraordinary figure of Eugene, during what we could call the “DeMazenod Year.” Among these projects, one of them is particularly challenging: the production of a musical audio book.

OMI Information has met with Mite Balduzzi, the composer and artistic director of the project, who has already collaborated with the Oblates in some important endeavors: *Aquero*, a musical inspired by the Lourdes apparitions; and two CD’s, *Verbum Panis* and *Chaire*. So we asked him some questions.

An album of songs about Eugene de Mazenod. Why?

There’s a very simple reason and it’s that in 2011, it will be 150 years since his death; it needs to be celebrated properly. And there is another reason, let us say, less historical. The person of Eugene is an icon of grandeur, a great saint with a human story that has not only great spiritual value, but also has a great storyline, with plot twists, intrigues and scenarios totally worthy of a great novel.

How does a work like this come about?

The allure of his life. It is the facts that count; it is what happened that puts thing into motion. However, since a collection of songs does not portray facts or events, but emotions, the work consists in transforming an intriguing story into a sequence of feelings which portray those facts without describing them too literally. In practice, the songs carry two levels of interpretation. They speak of him, of his life; for example, they speak of his flight from Aix when he was still little, but they speak too of all exiles, of the refugees of all times.

And where are we with the composition?

We are about half finished, but there is still a lot of work to be done. It does not end simply with the writing of the songs. There are also the arrangements, the choice of singers, the recording, the choice of images, the packaging... but fortunately, I don’t have to take care of all of that. A work like this is always a cooperative project.

Is it easy or difficult to write about a man, indeed, a saint, from another era?

A saint is a person who speaks to the human spirit, and the Spirit, the one with a capital “S”, is timeless. In this sense, Eugene speaks to our era, neither more nor less than when he spoke to his own. We should also say that we are not making a period film, but a collection of songs. Therefore, there is an obvious translation into

a contemporary artistic form: the content about Eugene remains unchanged, but the expression is entirely the music of an author of the third millennium.

What can music contribute to the life of a saint?

In a certain sense, nothing, because his life is already great music, or better, it's a musical score written by someone else which he was able to interpret divinely. And, exactly because it is music, in a metaphorical sense, I really think that there can be an extraordinary symbiosis with music made up of notes: two worlds which are intertwined and which mutually support one another. The songs do not invent a thing; they only make explicit what is already there. Perhaps they give it freshness and they surely make it efficacious. And, we hope, they also give it a dash of poetry.

When will we hear this work on Eugene?

The first performance is scheduled for May, 2011, at the Divine Love Shrine in Rome. For that occasion, we will put together a show that will include acting and dancing. And maybe also a display of contemporary painting. In other words, as they say today, it will be a multimedia event. The album will be ready earlier.

Do you already have a title?

Not yet. But considering the life of Eugene, especially his youth that was an almost continuous flight caused by the strong winds of the French Revolution; his place in Church history as a wind of renewal; his origins in Provence which is swept by the *mistral* (strong northern winds in France), I believe that the work will be called "Mistral." (*Interviewer: Nino BUCCA*)

POLAND

Oblate Scholasticate celebrates a Jesuit Missionary

Among many great missionaries, Fr Matteo Ricci, SJ (1552-1610) is one of the most intriguing and legendary figures. His deep love for Jesus Christ and his intellectual genius have led his steps towards meaningful dialogue with Chinese culture and sophisticated civilization. Accepted in the Forbidden City of China's Emperor, he

left for other generations of missionaries "a door open to great merits, yet not without many perils and labors", as he himself said on his deathbed. The year 2010 is celebrated worldwide as the 400th anniversary of Matteo Ricci's death and is the occasion for many cultural and scholarly events which contribute to the on-going dialog between China's traditions and Christianity.

One such event took place at the Oblate Scholasticate in Odra, Poland, on May 10 and 11, 2010, the second day being the exact anniversary of Ricci's death in Beijing, where his tomb is located and respected to this very day. The Oblate community welcomed several distinguished guests and speakers: César Guillén Nuñez and Artur Wardęga, SJ, from the Macau Ricci Institute; Thierry Maynard, SJ, from Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou; Noël Golvers from Leuven University and several others from Polish and Ukrainian universities. The conference was opened by the provincial of the Polish Province, Fr Ryszard SZMYDKI, and by the Vice-Rector of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Professor Jacek Witkoś.

The scholastics took a very active role in preparing this event and helped to create a real Oblate and welcoming atmosphere which was sincerely appreciated by all the guests. It is worth mentioning that besides the official speakers, Odra welcomed also about 50 students from several faculties of the University of Poznań, together with international exchange students from China, France and Ukraine. For many of the guests, it was their first occasion to interact in such friendly way with a religious community and stay overnight in a religious house. For some Chinese students who are not Christians, it was the first occasion to inquire so directly about Catholicism and the Oblate way of life. Thus, the event had not only a scholarly but also a human and religious dimension.

The participants were enriched by lectures in 3 languages, English, Polish and Russian. The topics included: *Ricci and Chinese Intellectuals today; From Macao to Beijing (1582- 1610) - Matteo Ricci and the Euro-Jesuit enterprise in China: Portrait of a Jesuit; Developments of the concept of "Catholic mission" from Benedict XIV to Benedict XVI (a historical perspective and its implications); On the Predicament Matteo Ricci*

suffered in China and his Solution; The Polish contribution to the development of the East-West dialogue (life and achievements of Michał Boym S.J.); Ukrainian Orthodox missionaries in China; Protestant Missions in China from the 19th century until the Modern Era and others. A book with all the papers presented in Obra will be published shortly by the Adam Mickiewicz University Press.

an exhibition of photography depicting the beauty of China and its people. There was also an area designated specifically for coffee breaks and informal, interpersonal exchange of views and experiences. As usual, these are an extremely important part of every intellectual enterprise. The title of the conference was: “*Missionaries between East and West: the 400th Anniversary of Matteo Ricci, 1610-2010*”. (Paweł ZAJĄC)

In front of the conference hall, participants enjoyed

Anniversaries for July 2010

75 Years of religious life

1935.07.21	06142	Fr. Jean Laperrière	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1935.07.21	06141	Fr. Alfred Lavoie	United States
1935.07.26	07579	Fr. Marcel Ayrinhac	France
1935.07.26	06913	Fr. Fernand Estève	France

65 Years of religious life

1945.07.01	07781	Fr. Jean Troncy	France
1945.07.16	07990	Fr. Normand Fillion	United States
1945.07.16	08485	Bro. Fernand Savard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.07.25	08111	Fr. Francisco Martín	Spain

65 Years of priesthood

1945.07.08	07189	Fr. Charles Choque	Lacombe
1945.07.08	07187	Fr. Louis Van den Eynde	Belgium/Netherlands
1945.07.25	07198	Fr. Jan Heemrod	United States

60 Years of religious life

□1950.07.16	08858	Fr. Joseph Bouvet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.16	08855	Fr. Jean Fortin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.25	08961	Fr. Rafael Alvarez	Spain
1950.07.25	08948	Fr. Aladino Garmón	Spain

60 Years of priesthood

1950.07.01	07691	Fr. Hugues Barbeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.02	08102	Fr. Jozef Pielorz	Poland
1950.07.04	07952	Fr. Remigius Scheuber	Northern S. A.
1950.07.09	07858	Fr. Maurice Blackburn	Lacombe
1950.07.23	07692	Fr. Roger Prieur	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.25	07990	Fr. Normand Fillion	United States

50 Years of religious life

1960.07.25	10869	Fr. Juan-Manuel Alvarez	Spain
1960.07.25	10871	Fr. José-Antonio Antón-Pacho	Spain
1960.07.25	10870	Fr. Pablo José Fuentes	Argentina-Chile

50 Years of priesthood

1960.07.01	10171	Fr. Michel Bissonnette	Central S. A.
1960.07.01	09530	Fr. Pierre Hurtubise	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.07.03	09517	Fr. Roland Delaunay	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.07.03	10139	Fr. Wilfried Rossel	Belgium/Netherlands
1960.07.10	09723	Fr. Joaquín Martínez	General Administration
1960.07.31	09931	Fr. Rudolf Hohmann	Central European
1960.07.31	10080	Fr. Albert Michael Schneider	Central European

Anniversaries for August 2010**75 Years of religious life**

1935.08.02	06151	Fr. Léo-Paul Pigeon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1935.08.15	06169	Fr. Timothy Riffel	Lacombe

70 Years of religious life

1940.08.02	07125	Fr. Gilles Bernier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1940.08.02	07126	Fr. Roger Brouillet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1940.08.02	07122	Fr. Herve Gagnon	United States
1940.08.02	07129	Fr. Roger Guindon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1940.08.02	07130	Fr. Arthur Saint-Sauveur	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1940.08.15	07099	Fr. Nicola De Cicco	Italy
1940.08.15	07644	Fr. Anton Hommer	Central European
1940.08.15	07140	Fr. Charles Prass	United States
1940.08.15	07102	Fr. Mario Ricci	Italy
1940.08.15	07142	Fr. James Riley	United States
1940.08.15	07143	Fr. Edmond Turenne	Lacombe
1940.08.27	07105	Fr. Alexandre Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

65 Years of religious life

1945.08.02	08004	Fr. Marc Bilodeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.08.02	07977	Fr. Robert Luckhart	Lacombe
1945.08.02	08068	Fr. Robert Paradis	Lacombe
1945.08.15	08008	Fr. Joseph Baril	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

60 Years of religious life

1950.08.02	08868	Fr. Lucien Bouchard	United States
1950.08.02	08871	Fr. Roger Couture	United States
1950.08.02	08827	Fr. Normand Harvey	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.08.12	09624	Bro. Deac. Marcel Lamonde	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.08.15	08876	Fr. André Brault	Lacombe
1950.08.15	08844	Fr. Antonio Ciccone	Italy
1950.08.15	08837	Fr. Donald Dietz	United States
1950.08.15	08833	Fr. Waclaw Gorniak	Poland
1950.08.15	09470	Bro. Paul Haag	France
1950.08.15	08845	Fr. Fortunato Muffolini	Italy
1950.08.15	08838	Fr. Thomas O'Brien	Brazil
1950.08.15	08840	Fr. Alain Piché	Lacombe
1950.08.15	08836	Fr. Paul Wightman	United States
1950.08.15	08841	Fr. William Woestman	United States

50 Years of religious life

1960.08.02	10920	Fr. Richard Avery	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.08.02	10921	Msgr. Jean-Claude Bouchard	Cameroun
1960.08.02	10878	Fr. Raynald Couture	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.08.02	10916	Fr. André Doyon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.08.02	10883	Fr. Ronald LaFramboise	United States
1960.08.02	11087	Fr. Noël Maheu	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1960.08.09	10884	Fr. Maurice Gauthier	Haiti
1960.08.15	10923	Fr. Denis Bourbonnais	Lacombe
1960.08.15	10929	Fr. Alexandre Carrier	Lacombe
1960.08.15	10928	Fr. Dennis Deis	United States
1960.08.15	10937	Fr. Charles Donovan	Lacombe
1960.08.15	10940	Fr. Joseph Hitpas	United States
1960.08.15	11415	Bro. Paul Hoemeke	United States
1960.08.15	10926	Fr. Jacques Johnson	Lacombe
1960.08.15	11089	Fr. Gerardo Le Strat	Lacombe
1960.08.15	10924	Fr. Edward MacNeil	Lacombe
1960.08.15	10936	Fr. Paul Marx	Poland
1960.08.15	11414	Bro. Johannes Mohlalisi	Lesotho
1960.08.15	11090	Fr. Richard Weixelman	Philippines

25 Years of religious life

1985.08.03	12897	Fr. Subash Anthony Costa	Colombo
1985.08.14	13016	Fr. Carlos Alarcon	United States
1985.08.14	12986	Fr. James Brobst	United States
1985.08.14	12901	Fr. John Ettensohn	United States
1985.08.14	13007	Fr. Maurice Lange	United States
1985.08.14	12893	Fr. Robert Leising	United States
1985.08.15	13087	Fr. Jean-Marie Bulumuna	Congo
1985.08.15	12945	Fr. Nokin Norbert Kingani	Congo
1985.08.15	12995	Fr. E-Mpey Jacques Ompey	Congo
1985.08.15	12914	Fr. Marc Pitchebaï	Cameroon
1985.08.15	13023	Fr. Bulayam Jean-René Talabo	United States
1985.08.15	13022	Fr. Kiwawa Jean-Pierre Yambeng	Namibia
1985.08.18	12872	Fr. Yoland Ouellet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1985.08.18	13008	Fr. Louis-Marie Verrette	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

25 Years of priesthood

1985.08.18	12417	Fr. Bieng Jean-Pierre Bwalwel	Congo
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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 34-44

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Gérard Beaudet	OMI Lacombe	25/08/1920	Saskatoon	28/04/2010
Fr. Joseph Beckers	Belgium/Holland	11/10/1924	Eupen	06/05/2010
Fr. Pierre Kerzoncuf	France	15/06/1924	Paris	08/05/2010
Fr. John Lazarsky	United States	07/07/1912	Dallas	09/05/2010
Bro. Robert Dutil	United States	09/09/1922	Tewksbury	12/05/2010
Fr. Roland Delaunay	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	23/05/1924	Richelieu	12/05/2010
Bro. Louis-Philippe Lavallée	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	15/11/1919	Richelieu	15/05/2010
Bro. Gottlieb Shiimi	Namibia	10/05/1929	Windhoek	16/05/2010
Deacon Bro. Sebastian Madinabeitia	Spain	09/05/1924	Madrid	18/05/2010
Fr. William Fanning	Anglo-Irish	10/10/1916	Inchicore	30/05/2010
Fr. Giovanni Colombo	Italy	15/09/1936	Rome	03/06/2010

“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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