



Information #439 (English)

January 2005

## Saint Eugene and the Immaculate Conception December 8<sup>th</sup> - 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dogma

The slabs of marble on the walls near the Altar of the Confession in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome seem like giant pages of an open newspaper. Carved on them is the list of the cardinals, archbishops and bishops that participated in the solemn ceremony of December 8, 1854, the day of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. To the left on the fourth line is written simply: *Eugenius Mazenod Ep. Massiliensis*.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod, then Bishop of Marseilles and Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was present therefore at the extraordinary event of which we will celebrate soon the 150th anniversary. We can turn to some of his thoughts to ponder on this truth of our faith. "I consider it a sort of duty – he writes in his diary – to do everything that is in my power to contribute in some manner to the glory that should be given to the Holy Virgin by this definition."

Two ideas present themselves especially for our times: the social hope that the proclamation of the dogma gives to the Church and the joy that it brings in heaven and on earth.

In fact, the Church has always joined the idea of a *social restoration* to the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Already at the Council of Basilea (1439), John of Segovia implored the Fathers to define the dogma in order "to bring peace to the peoples, restore universal concord and to ensure general reform."

Before the definition of the dogma, Pius IX had clear ideas on the situation of his time and speaks of "cruel wars", "internal struggles", "contagious illnesses", "earthquakes and other fatal disasters." He denounces above all "the sons of darkness, more capable in their affairs than the sons of light." It is clear then why the Bishop of Marseilles can write in a 1849 Pastoral Letter: "The Supreme Pontiff... shows a large trust in her (Mary's) powerful protection and hopes to obtain better days from her after such tormented and anguished times." Another pastoral letter in 1854 is even more explicit: "Blessed be forever this day of rejoicing in which everyone of us will be able... to see in the privilege of Mary the dawn of our own liberation and the ineffable hour in which the fulfilment of the promises began."

The feeling of joy at this event was so strong in Saint Eugene that he wanted December 8 to be one of those warm Roman days filled with a radiant sun, which are so typical of Italy. Unfortunately, however, December 7, it rained all day. "This rain has spoiled the plans for the festive illumination. The city's bells announce tomorrow's grand feast, but the bad weather continues."

At 11 p.m. it was still raining and, if the rain continued, he sensed something would be lacking in the next day's celebration. Laying down the pen with which he was writing these notes, he gave a last look at the sky from the window and went to bed trusting in Mary: "Tomorrow will be

Former Superior General, Richard T. Hanley, 73, died December 9. Please remember him and the family in your prayers. A memorial Mass was held December 17. (See p. 2)

fine weather!” The following morning he immediately rushed to the window: “Well now! What did I say? My trust in Mary was perhaps ill placed? I got up at five in the morning and opened the window: not a cloud in the sky. The weather is beautiful. Explain it as you like; I don’t say that it is a miracle, but I am firmly convinced that it is a special grace granted by God through the intercession of his Divine Mother.”

The echo of this delight can be heard in his 1855 Pastoral Letter: “If there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just that need no repentance (Lk 15,7), how could the blessed spirits and the souls of the saints remain indifferent witnesses, when they see the tribute given down here to their dear Queen?”

But for Saint Eugene the Church’s decision is also the source of abundant graces and blessings for the world. Mary is “the throne, the treasury,

the residence and the sanctuary of all of divine favors.” Compared by the Church to the ark of Noah and to the staircase of Jacob, “we certainly are permitted to believe that in this solemn circumstance... this treasury of favors that is in her will be poured out upon us, this holy ark will be our salvation from the flood of evils that covers the earth, and on the steps of this staircase of mercy, the angels, carrying towards heaven our praises will return with blessings....”

Our times, unfortunately, do not seem much different from those described by Pius IX and bad news daily fills our life. But we can ask ourselves if the anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the dawn of a world renewed by the love of Christ, cannot still encourage us to raise our arms in order to try to give again, with Mary’s help, that hope and joy which come from the Good News. (*Cont.p.3*)

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## General Administration

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### **Memorial Mass for former Superior General**

Former Superior General, Richard Hanley died on December 9, 2004. A memorial Mass was held December 17 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Raleigh, North Carolina. Fr. Marcel DUMAIS, General Councillor for the Canada-United States Region, represented the General Administration. He was accompanied by Frs David KALERT, Provincial of the Oblate United States Province, and David ULLRICH, a member of the Provincial Council.

Richard Hanley was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1931. He joined the Oblate Congregation’s Eastern USA Province as a novice in 1951. After philosophy and theology studies at the Angelicum in Rome, he returned as a priest to the United States in 1959. He began lecturing at Oblate College in Washington, D.C. while working on a doctorate at Catholic University of America. He was much in demand by religious institutes of men and women throughout the USA and Canada for conferences, retreats and seminars. In 1969

Hanley was appointed Provincial of the Western USA Province, a charge he held until his election as Superior General in 1972.

His two years as General were characterized by an almost super-human tour de force of personal contacts with the Congregation’s then 6,500 members spread throughout 46 countries. The affable 1.9-meter American, whom everyone knew as “Dick”, was constantly on the move. He visited some 3500 Oblates in 30 countries during his first year in office. The second year saw him contact another 2000 Oblates in 23 countries. He was aware of the struggle of all in the post-Council Church, and during his travels encouraged one and all to be understanding, accepting and courageous in seeking new ways.

The news of Hanley’s resignation only two years later provoked surprise, disappointment and regret. His concern to be present everywhere and his constant attention to persons had created high expectations in a religious congregation that was struggling to find its way in the post-Vatican

Council period. All nevertheless respected his honesty in recognizing his inability to lead while caught up in the struggle of personal discernment.

In hindsight it would seem that Richard Hanley's brief two years as Superior General helped the Congregation turn the page and begin a new chapter in its history. One might even say that his resignation was like a catalyst that spurred the Congregation to embark upon an in-depth reflection on its charism and mission in a changing world, and to seriously work at the task of renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council.

### **Fr Victor Lelièvre's Cause of Beatification opened**

November 22, by a decree of the 19th, in the presence of Fr. Francis Santucci, the Postulator, the Chancellor of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints opened officially the process of the cause

of beatification of Father Victor Lelièvre.

One of the last steps of the diocesan process in Quebec (Canada) was the exhumation and the recognition of the remains of this famous preacher and promoter of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The body of Fr. Lelièvre has rested at Jesus the Worker since his death in 1956. After the ceremony of exhumation, the body was transferred to a mausoleum inside the House of Jesus the Worker, which he founded in 1919. People who want to pray at his grave will have access to it there at all times.

The 50 volumes of the process (two series of 25: the original and the public copy) have been bound in white parchment. An expert will examine the validity of the documents during the year 2005. The writing of the *Positio super virtutibus* (File on the Virtues) will follow.

### **St. Eugene and the Immaculate Conception (2) From his *Roman Diary* (November 19, 1854)**

Today [...] I did not waste any time this morning. I went at least three times to see Bishop Pacifici, secretary of the assembly of bishops and final editor of the Bull, to have him add a document to the notes, which recall the Apostolic Decrees proving the teaching of the Holy See on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Far from finding me indiscreet, Bishop Pacifici warmly thanked me for my efforts. He said he had been looking for exactly what I had just brought him. He had requested information from a well-known person as to the dates of the Apostolic Letters that I had talked to him about, but he had not been successful. He was very pleased that I furnished him the means of making up the missing elements.

They were the Apostolic letters of Leo XII, instituting and approving the Congregation of Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, that is, as the letters express it, *sine labe originali concepta*. I also presented him with the Apostolic Letters of Gregory XVI and Pius IX, confirming this same Congregation. Bishop Pacifici was very glad that I gave him a copy of our holy rules as a gift. I was pleased to do so.

I really hope that we will have the consolation of reading in the notes of the Bull the citation of the Apostolic Letters that confirmed us, as proof of the constant teaching of the Roman Church on the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother, the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

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## Europe

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### ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCE

#### **New Birmingham mission begins**

After a lengthy year of preparation the “Mission to Secularity” pilot project has been officially launched. Sunday, October 10, the Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham inaugurated this innovative Catholic Mission in central Birmingham at St Michael’s, Moor Street. The church is situated next to the new multi-million pound Bull Ring Shopping Centre.

An international community of four Oblates is responsible for this new initiative in mission and evangelising in western secular society. The members are Fr John STAAK, from the Province of the United States and the delegation of Zambia, Fr Leo PHILOMIN, from the Anglo-Irish Province, Fr Ken THORSON from the Lacombe Province in Canada, and Bro Noel GARCIA, a medical doctor, from the Province of the Philippines.

In welcoming the four young Oblates to St. Michael’s and nearby St. Anne’s the Archbishop said: “This mission, then, is to be a listening post in the heart of the city. Here we hope to listen to the anxieties, the weariness of many, as well as to their joys and delights.” Stressing the novelty and daring of the endeavour Archbishop Nichols emphasised: “This mission is an enterprise, which needs imagination and boldness. There are modern pathways to explore, and modern attitudes to address. This new venture will, I’m sure, take us into new fields.... The task of this mission is to find ways of accompanying the people of this city centre on their many and varied paths, so that, at the right moment, that word of invitation can be given.”

While seeking to maintain the present ecclesial and sacramental life of the faithful at St. Michael’s and St. Anne’s, the missionary community will try to reach out in new ways to the un-churched, the indifferent, the alienated, and to those who, while practising their faith, are struggling to pass it on to their children. (See also *OMI Info* #425, 2003).

### POLAND

#### **Helping to celebrate Mary Immaculate**

The team of parish mission preachers in Poznan decided to help others celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Under the direction of Fr. Krzysztof CZEPIRSKI the team prepared a small booklet that includes a novena to prepare the feast day as well as five meditations and homily suggestions. It was sent free of charge to the 1,000 parishes in Poland that are dedicated to Mary Immaculate.

The response from the parishes was very positive. There is material for each day, ready to use by busy parish priests. The booklet also includes some “publicity” about the mission preachers’ team and their availability. This very active team recently held a study session in Krakow with 35 Oblates in attendance.

### ROME

#### **Congress on Consecrated Life**

The World Congress on Consecrated Life (Nov. 22-27) has just opened in Rome on the theme “A Passion for Christ and Passion for humanity.” It is the first World Congress World organized jointly by two International Unions: the USG (Union of Superiors General representing 200,000 male religious) and the UISG (International Union of Superiors Generals of 800,000 sisters). The objective of the Congress is to analyze the “challenges” facing Consecrated Life at the beginning of the Third Millennium. It was prepared by a Working Document that presents two images or icons that have the purpose of illustrating the meaning and the role of Consecrated Life: the Samaritan woman, who asks Jesus for “the living water” and the Good Samaritan, who cares for the needs of those who suffer.

The 850 participants are from all the continents: Africa (91), the Americas (248), Asia (95), Oceania (17) and Europe (399). The Congregations of religious women, represented by 323 Superiors General, are the most significant

group present. Male religious are represented by 160 Superiors General. Also participating are 113 delegates of various Conferences of religious, the directors of 17 magazines of Consecrated Life, a group of 60 “young” religious, 114 theologians plus invited guests and the 40 members of the organizing Committee. Our Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING and Pierre BAMBÉ (Cameroon), a scholastic at the International Scholasticate in Rome, represented the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Frs Sante BISIGNANO and Fabio CIARDI of the Italian Province were among the invited theologians.

The Working Document and others texts are available for download at the congress web site: [www.vidimusdominum.org](http://www.vidimusdominum.org).

## ITALY

### A web site for Fr. Borzaga

The young people of Calabria (Southern Italy) very quickly familiarized themselves with the life and missionary ideal of Fr. Mario BORZAGA. They read his diaries, were interested in the studies about him, and learned by heart some passages from his writings.

This Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, who disappeared in Laos in 1960, four years after his ordination, exerts a real charm on them. Thus a group in the *Plain of Gioia Tauro* has taken his name for their group and during the Advent of 2003 they flooded their friends with SMS with quotations from Mario’s writings.

Recently they launched a web site dedicated to this missionary (<http://digilander.libero.it/marioborzaga>). It is the work of Angelica Ciccone, a young lady of the *Costruire* (To build) youth movement, and it is very easy to navigate. The various links are gathered by topic: biography, writings, bibliography and there is even a photo album. A newsletter by Fr. Angelo PELIS keeps us up to date on the progress of Fr. Mario’s cause of beatification; and naturally there are also two sections dedicated to the Oblates and the former mission in Laos.

Unfortunately this site exists only in Italian. But

this “beautiful” language is read and understood by many more people in the world than one would think!

## POLAND

### An Oblate returns from Babylon

Father Miroslaw BIERNACKI, a Polish Oblate and military chaplain, has just passed six months in Iraq, precisely in Babylon. It is there, close to the ruins of biblical Babylon, that the Polish contingent in Iraq is located. The last number of *Misyjne Drogi*, the Polish Oblate mission review, presented a report of this unique Oblate experience.

The conditions of military life are well known to Fr Biernacki and he does not complain, but what he found the hardest on this assignment was the climate. In the winter the cold and the mud that nail you to the ground; the sandstorms in the spring; the blazing sun with temperatures surpassing 40°C in the shade in summer.

“I would have liked to contact the local Christians, but there was a war on.... Iraq is a religious country; there are no non-believers. For centuries the people have been moulded by the piety that they sucked with the milk of their mother. They grew on a tree with deep roots and feel no need to change anything.

Poverty is everywhere. Most people must live on less than 10 dollars a month. The few lucky ones that work at military bases, as policemen or soldiers get a hundred dollars and feel they are very rich. Help from Caritas-Poland made it possible to set up clinics in Karbala and Al Hillah. The Caritas funds went through me. We were able to open a kindergarten and at my request the Caritas bought toys and sweets for the children. The packages showed that they had come from Caritas and they were marked with a cross, but discreetly. We did not want this assistance to appear as a missionary “invasion”.

With a thousand dollars from Caritas I prepared one hundred packages for the children at the Al Hillah hospital. There were many children there, with terrible diseases, but next to each bed a

mother watched day and night. For the distribution of the packages, the director invited the mothers and children to the big hall, where there was much excitement. In our packages there were toys and candies, but also school materials, small radios and watches, all things that the people cannot obtain themselves. Spontaneously one mother said how happy she was that there were friends in Poland who loved them and wanted to give the children this happy surprise.

Our soldiers were very impressed by the piety of

the Iraqis. Whether they are on the street, at work, or at the market, they always have their rosary in hand. I did not see any women praying, only men; the very opposite of our country. For us praying is not manly, especially praying the rosary in public! Touched by this example, the soldiers came to ask me for rosaries that they put around their wrists when they left on patrol. Maybe they wanted to show that they also have a religion, that they also pray! There has therefore been a reciprocal influence; one can wonder who influenced the other most....”

## Canada-United States

### UNITED STATES

#### OMI Lowell parishes closing

Lowell, Massachusetts, the “City of Oblates” for almost 150 years, is seeing major changes in Oblate presence as a result of the Archdiocese of Boston’s decision to reconfigure the structure of parishes throughout the archdiocese.

The Oblates have, over the years, staffed six parishes in Lowell, three to serve the French-speaking, one for Hispanics, and two which were “territorial” (for those living in a designated area). With the decision to reduce the number of Lowell parishes from thirteen to seven, four of the parishes established by the Oblates will be closing, one will be transferred to the diocesan clergy’s care, and the Oblates will take on a parish previously directed by archdiocesan priests.

Two of the parishes designated originally for the French-speaking (who migrated from Quebec for jobs in Lowell) are closing. They are Notre Dame de Lourdes, founded by the Oblates in 1908, and Ste. Jeanne d’Arc, founded in 1921. The formerly French national parish of Ste. Marie will replace Sacred Heart, founded by the Oblates in 1884, as a territorial parish on the southeast side of the city.

Although very few services were being conducted in French, the traditions of the Franco-Americans were kept alive by the parishes that served them from the beginning of their time in Lowell. St.

Jean Baptiste church, which was founded in 1868 as the first parish for Franco-Americans, has served as the Hispanic parish of Nuestra Señora del Carmen for the past ten years. It will be closed, and the Oblates will move with the Hispanic community to nearby St. Patrick’s, the first church in Lowell, located in the poorest part of town, called “the Acre” after the early Irish workers who settled there. (From *The Oblate World*)

#### N.D.-du-Cap

#### Welcoming the great distresses of our time

The “Foyers de Charité” (Homes of Charity) were founded by Marthe Robin, a French mystic, and Fr. George Finet of Lyon. In Quebec, Fr Jean GIROUARD, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, established the first community of lay men and women who wanted to live as a family of God on the earth.

It was the parish priest of Notre Dame in Montreal, Jean-Baptiste Vinet, a Sulpician, who asked Jean to go to Châteauneuf-de-Galaure in his place. In Châteauneuf, Jean became acquainted with Fr Finet who was preaching the retreat for 100 people, among whom were 25 priests. Fr Finet introduced Jean to Marthe Robin.

During the final meal of this retreat there was a time for sharing. One Canadian participant finished saying: “Give us a Father for the Foyer in Canada.” Fr Finet then turned to Jean and said

to him: "It is you." Jean protested that he could not, because he was an Oblate and not a secular. He received this answer: "You know, there are communities that give us their Father, because being a Father of a Foyer of Charity is fulltime work." That is how Fr Girouard became an Oblate "given" for the work of the Foyers of Charity in Canada. Later he would learn that the parish priest in Montreal had wanted one in Canada for more than 20 years and that he had sent nearly 300 persons to make the retreat at Châteauneuf with that hope. Providential events then enabled him to establish a Foyer of Charity in Sutton.

Today if you ask Jean to speak about Marthe Robin, he will answer that he learned the "humanity of God" from her. "We have disincarnated God to adapt Him to our liking. But God is human, is understanding, is forgiveness, because God is gift. That is what we lived with Marthe, this intimacy with the Lord who brings love and joy. For Marthe, the word *serious* is not in the Gospel. Marthe was like a *little child*, she was always merry."

The purpose of the Foyers of Charity is to renew people by retreats. To live the Love of God in a community of lay people is the basis for their creation. This is something new in the Church, because they are mixed communities. "God wanted the Foyers to be first of all families," says Fr Girouard. "They are not retreat houses. One lives there like a child of the same family, in a relationship of child of the Father of each Foyer and through him of our celestial Father... For Marthe, the Church is first a family, where each one is responsible for the other and where each person is irreplaceable. In these times of broken families, when people no longer know what a family is, the Foyers of Charity want to bear witness to human and family warmth, by welcoming, like Marthe, *the great distresses of our times*."

## UNITED STATES

### 3rd edition of Woestman's commentary on the "Sacraments"

It has to be a satisfying feeling for an author to see his work go into a second, much less a third edition. It's a sign of how well received his canon

law commentary, *Sacraments: Initiation, Penance, Anointing of the Sick*, has been that Fr. William Woestman, OMI, has revised and updated it.

The recognized value of this volume has been Fr. Woestman's realization that the literary genus of the *Code* excludes to a great extent the presentation of the doctrinal foundation for the various norms. He therefore "fleshed out" the bare bones of the law by citing extensively from documents of the magisterium and liturgical sources in his commentary.

The main addition to this volume is the inclusion of 22 appendices, consisting principally of documents from the Holy See, thus bringing together in one volume pertinent material supplemental to the *Code* itself. The May 9, 2004 letter of Francis Cardinal George, OMI, to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Chicago on *Liturgy and Unity* provides the Forward to the book. Interestingly, the Hong Kong Diocesan Liturgy Commission is publishing a Chinese translation of this work in three volumes for distribution in China. (For more information: Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, 223 Main Street, Ottawa, ON K1S 1C4 Canada. Email: sjutras@ustpaul.ca)

### ST. JEROME (Canada) Wines and cheeses for Christian initiation!

Last September, the third « Wine and Cheese » night was held in the diocese of Saint Jerome (Quebec, Canada) where Gilles CAZABON, OMI is the bishop. Our readers will recall that he was Vicar General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from 1986 to 1992.

People from the four corners of the diocese gathered for this annual benefit event at « Les Jardins sous la nef » in the Sainte Adèle countryside. There were three menus, each consisting of two wines, three cheeses, pâtés, terrines and homemade bread. This gastronomic gathering, unusual in a country setting, not only pleased the palates of one and all, but also raised funds for the Christian initiation projects and the youth program for the Diocese of Saint Jerome.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### CONGO

#### **Kinshasa scholasticate becomes international**

After several years in the Italian Delegation of Senegal, Fr. Domenico ARENA has been in the Democratic Republic of Congo since the month of February. He had recently finished his qualification to teach at the African Institute of Mission Sciences and to join the formators of the Oblate scholastics.

He has found the Congo to be an extraordinary country. Fashioned by the equatorial and tropical climate, it is sometimes virgin forest and plateaus, sometimes wooded savannah. Crossed by the Congo River, it also has lake Tanganika, one of the biggest on the continent, plus one of its highest summits, the Ruwenzori, and even some active volcanoes. We could also add about ten important rivers that flow into the Congo River. Even if for the time being they are still obstacles that isolate many parts of the country, they represent a supply of water that could produce sufficient electric energy to illuminate all of Africa plus some European countries!

Currently everyone, including missionaries, are focussed on the transition period that should finish in June 2005 with elections, which should give the country a democratic government. The biggest reason for hope resides nevertheless in the abounding human wealth of Congolese society. "I think in particular, writes Domenico, of the unique wealth represented by the youth. A young country is always capable of progress. This phenomenon is also seen in the local Church that, like other Christian confessions, abounds with youth. They represent a source for vocations and a strong and active laity, which is already very involved and competent. »

That is why Kinshasa is becoming more and more an international center for priestly and religious formation. Several religious Institutes present in the Congo are bringing their candidates from Africa and other continents to Kinshasa. The Oblates, who arrived in the country in 1931, are

also gradually gathering there all their French-speaking African theology students. Thus at the opening of this university year scholastics began coming to Kinshasa from the Cameroon Province and the Delegation of Senegal. In the future students from Madagascar and other countries will join them. It is the beginning of an experience that aims to integrate internationality as a factor of missionary growth in formation.

The Institute of African Mission Sciences is also just getting started. As an affiliate of the Faculty of Missiology of the Urbaniana University, it is empowered to award a licentiate in this field. This Institute is the first of its kind in Africa: « Something to rejoice about, adds the Italian missionary, if one thinks about the positive impact it will be able to have on the growth of the missionary spirit in this continent where the mission is still living one of the more exciting moments of its history. »

### CAMEROON

#### **Training catechists?**

Henri RICHARD, a native of Vendée (France), has been a missionary in Cameroon for more than thirty years, and he never imagined that he would be put in charge of the Emmaüs Center: a center for the long term formation of catechists. The mission is of major importance for the future of the young Church in North Cameroon.

"I only had my modest experience of basic missionary work at Mokolo and in the mountains, he wrote to *Audacieux pour l'Evangile* in October. That is where I especially learned to know people better, their mentalities, and human realities.

In the beginning, every parish formed its own catechists. Later the diocese created a center for a first brief formation. It was necessary to dare to go further: to gather responsible persons chosen by their parochial community who would accept to leave their town for two years, themselves and their family, of course.



Right from its foundation in 1985, the formation team included a Brother, a Sister, a Cameroonian family and myself. There were also the speakers from parishes of our trainees. This Christmas, the tenth group will finish its training: twelve trained families will go back to their villages.

It is amazing how much people can grow in two years. Each one develops different talents, like

embroidery, carpentry or modern techniques of farming. And of course, all deepen the Word of God, strengthen their faith and prayer life, their family life and their commitments.... And what a broadening of horizons occurs when people leave their hometown and discover others that speak other languages and have other customs. Openness to others, sharing riches.... No, I do not regret having accepted this mission.”

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## Latin America

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### GUATEMALA

#### Playa Grande

Playa Grande is an immense parish of 120 towns, situated in the north of Guatemala, on the Mexican border. The parish has 13 different centres, divided according to language. 70% speak *Maya Q'eqchi'*, the mother tongue of the natives from different parts of the country. The different groups communicate in Spanish. There are also 5 multiethnic centres.

Fr. José Manuel SANTIAGO, recently appointed parish priest, began to visit the various communities to try to grasp the reality of his parish. A four day visit to the Chactela Center was his first immersion in *Maya Q'eqchi'*. In the

hour and half by car between Playa Grande and Chactela he can reach 15 communities. From there an hour or two on foot are needed to go to the other communities where several do not speak Spanish. So one must learn *Q'eqchi'*.

Another challenge is the social care, because Playa Grande was formed in part by the refugees from the mountains and by those who fled to Mexico, then returned to Guatemala and were sent here.

But José Manuel is happy: “We are privileged to work as a team, working at a task that would be impossible for a single person.”

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## OMIWORLD Interviews – Andrzej MADEJ *In Turkmenistan, the victory of kindness*

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At the beginning, he underlined that he was baptized before he was four weeks old, on the last day of October 1951.... Fr. Andrzej MADEJ, recently stopping by the General House, didn't even wait for me to ask the first question. His usual luminous face radiating enthusiasm, Fr. Andrzej began immediately, saying that there was a solemn procession that day to close “the month of the Rosary,” and it was before that procession that he was baptized. From that time, so many events in his life have occurred in association with days, months, and places dedicated to Mary.

#### How did you become an Oblate?

I was still a child when my parents said to me, “Pay attention! Never believe the communists.

They do not tell the truth. We must have confidence in the Church which speaks the truth.” At the age of 13, I learned that one of my companions, a year older than I, had entered a convent and was doing his high school. I said to myself that I could do the same thing. At the time, I didn't yet know that it had anything to do with the Oblates. I knew only that they were in the Catholic Church. I wrote to them, and thus entered the minor seminary with the Oblates at Markowice in Poland.

#### So you continued your journey with the Oblates. Didn't you study in Rome?

Oh yes, I studied theology at the Gregorian University.... It seems like it was a hundred years

ago! Then I continued my studies in Poland, at the Catholic University of Lublin, then at the Pontifical Theological Academy of Krakow. I was ordained a priest in 1977. Very soon after my ordination, the university students of Krakow called me to preach their retreat on the theme of "Evangelization". I remember that the Cardinal of Krakow at the time came for the conclusion of the retreat... who shortly afterward became John Paul II.

### **What was your first ministry after ordination?**

Very interesting. I was sent to study liturgy, under the responsibility of Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki, founder of the movement "Light and Life", called "Oaza" in Poland – today his cause has been introduced. Those were still the times of atheistic propaganda and the government considered those who worked with youth as enemies. Cardinal Wojtyla strongly supported this priest. Therefore, I was chaplain of this movement for several years and that marked my first years of ministry. I accompanied the youth in the movement's camps; they lasted fifteen days, which corresponded to the mysteries of the Rosary. There, we delved into the Gospel, prayed spontaneously.... Those camps were and continue to be organized in the mountains. We now await the day of Fr. Blachnicki's beatification.

### **After that ministry?**

I worked in the Oblate minor seminary and preached some retreats both in Poland as well as in other countries. Above all, I was engaged in media work. The engagement of the Church in this domain seems to me as one of the great responses to the 'signs of the times'; it is necessary that we be there, we must proclaim the Gospel in this '*first Areopagus*' as our former Superior General, Fr. Zago, used to say. Following that, I went to our mission in the Ukraine, at Kiev, for three years beginning in 1994.

### **Then from the Ukraine you finally ended up in Turkmenistan?**

Yes, the Provincial thought that my knowledge of Russian would be advantageous for the evangelization in a former Soviet republic. At the time, Fr. Marcello Zago was still General and he

wanted to open that mission as a challenge for the Oblates. And thus, I went to Ashkabad. Among the ecclesiastical categories we are known as 'missio sui iuris' and we depend directly upon the Holy See. For the Oblates, Turkmenistan is a joint mission of the Polish and United States Provinces. Unfortunately, up until the present there are only Polish Oblates working on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Currently, we are two : Fr. Tomasz Koscinski and myself. Fr. General, Wilhelm Steckling, has promised us a third. It was a great joy when Father McLean, an American Oblate, was able to stay with us for three months.

### **What are you able to tell us about this country?**

The population is around five million inhabitants. Until a little while ago, the majority of the people were nomadic. Even today one sees everywhere sheep, shepherds, and camels.... The women make very beautiful carpets. The cultivation of cotton is very important; there is also gas, petroleum.... But these thirteen years of independence have been and continue to be a time of transition, which is never easy and for which a high price is being paid. Every day I encounter people who live the Beatitudes, poor and simple people, open to the Lord, open to other people, responsible for one another. They are the true 'anawim' (poor) of the Lord.

The majority of the population is Muslim. There are only twelve Orthodox parishes, while we Catholics have some fifty baptized at Askabad and about thirty catechumens. These days, I have come to Rome for a Justice and Peace meeting, and I have been accompanied by two women: Anna who is already baptized, and Galina, from the group of catechumens. The catechumenate lasts from three to four years. We had an audience with the Pope, and I presented them as the first fruits of the Church of Turkmenistan. The Pope has an open heart toward this country and the others of Asia, and he prays much for us. Galina, though not yet baptized, asked him to bless her desire to consecrate herself as a religious sister, and the Pope did so.

**What do you do in your parish?**

Each Sunday at 10 a.m. we celebrate the Mass in Russian and at 6 p.m. in English for the diplomatic community and for the travelers from different countries. Also, on Sunday at midday there is a liturgy of the Word for the group of catechumens. Every day at 8:30 a.m. we pray the Rosary and celebrate the Eucharist; and twice each week, we pray Lauds before the Mass. A breviary in the Russian language has been published in Moscow.

**What is the political climate that you face?**

We are registered as an Apostolic Nunciature. I have the honor of being the cultural attaché of the Nunciature. Therefore, I am part of the diplomatic corps. Frequenting the different receptions can be draining! The government is working to officially register certain denominations, the Catholic Church among them. That is the reason I have been called to the

(Vatican) Secretariat of State this time.

**What about the coexistence with the Muslims?**

It's like being among good neighbours, familiar people – sometimes as friends.

**What do you envision for the mission in Turkmenistan?**

God knows. We must be men of hope. The future is in God's hands. We all hope in the victory of truth, of goodness, of mercy. We are there to contribute to that victory, which is the victory of Christ. And God guides the entire history of the Church toward this happy goal. In the meanwhile there is much instability, but that's life!

**You feel you are truly an Oblate?**

There are so many possibilities to be truly Oblate. The people of Turkmenistan merit more. What a pity not to be a saint! I would like to serve more fully, and I ask your prayer for this mission.

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## Anniversaries – February 2005

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**65<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of Vows**

1940.02.17	7581	Bro. Jean-Charles Dutil	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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**60<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of Vows**

1945.02.02	7939	Fr. Vincent Fitzgerald	United States
1945.02.17	7952	Fr. Remigius Scheuber	Northern S.A.

**60<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of Ordination**

1945.02.18	7403	Fr. Jean-Marie Mouchet	Saint Paul's
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**50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of Vows**

1955.02.27	9865	Fr. John Poole	Anglo-Irish
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**50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of Ordination**

1955.02.20	9177	Fr. Michel Berche	France
1955.02.20	8764	Fr. Jean-Marie Toussaint	France

**OMI INFORMATION** is an unofficial publication  
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
C.P. 9061, 00100 ROMA-AURELIO, Italy  
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22    E-mail : [information@omigen.org](mailto:information@omigen.org)  
<http://www.omeworld.org>

**Editing Team:** Ronald LaFramboise (director), Raúl Castro, Antonino Bucca

**Printing:** Rajapakse Francis Rabindra

**Circulation:** Théophile Le Page

**Suffrages for our Deceased**

	<b>Province</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Place of Death</b>	<b>(No. 98-104) Date of Death</b>
Fr. Marc Monforton	Manitoba	12/08/1932	Saint-Boniface	20/11/2004
Fr. Piotr Plewinski	Poland	28/06/1927	Wroclaw	22/11/2004
Fr. Georges-Etienne Richard	N.D.-du-Cap	18/11/1917	Sainte-Foy	23/11/2004
Fr. Zdenek Cizkovsky	Austria-Czech Rep.	22/02/1921	Kromeriz	26/11/2004
Fr. Camillo Dolci	Italy	08/10/1925	S. Giorgio Canavese	02/12/2004
Bro. Léo-Paul Brodeur	N.D.-du-Cap	14/08/1920	Richelieu	06/12/2004
Fr. Georges Beauregard	N.D.-du-Cap	28/11/1915	West Palm Beach	07/12/2004

*“We will keep alive the memory of our deceased and not fail to pray for them,  
faithfully offering the suffrages prescribed on their behalf.! (Const. 43)*