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## Letter of the Superior General for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2015



L.J.C. et M.I.

Dear Brother Oblates,

Happy feast day! On this, our patroness' solemnity, we gather as a family to express our love for Mary Immaculate. One of her titles special to the heart of Saint Eugene was the Mother of Mercy. How appropriate as the Church begins this "Year of Mercy" that we remember our Oblate connection to this title of Mary. We ask Saint Eugene to intercede so that we will experience joy because we believe the Father of mercies is among us, deep in the heart of the world, offering grace and salvation in the face of ever crueler poverty, more abandoned sisters and brothers and an increased need for the Gospel. Celebrating the beauty and wonder of the Father's mercy in the Immaculate Conception of Mary, we renew our faith in the Spirit, always at work in our lives and in the world, manifesting God's merciful love through all generations.

We have been on pilgrimage during the Oblate Triennium over the past two years, seeking to respond to God's transforming grace in our lives. Now we enter the third year of the Triennium, with the great hope that the Spirit working within us will do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3: 20). Conversion is not the result of a program of exercises, but

the disarming movement of the Spirit in our lives, transforming stagnation and gloominess into life and light. In the Holy Spirit we pray, watching and waiting, listening and wide awake, in the vivid expectation that the Comforter will provoke within us the "profound personal and community conversion to Jesus Christ" called for by the 2010 General Chapter.

This year of the Oblate Triennium, coinciding with the Church's Year of Mercy, will be marked by many special events within the Congregation throughout 2016: on January 25<sup>th</sup> the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our foundation as the Missionaries of Provence; in March, the Congress on Mission with Youth; in July, both the Congress on Vocations Ministry and the Oblate Youth Encounter before the World Youth Day in Poland; and the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter from September 14 to October 12. We look forward to a wonderful year filled with many events in the Provinces, Missions and Delegations commemorating the third year of the Oblate Triennium. Please support and pray for these events and send in news and pictures to Father Shanil at the Oblate Communications Office to share with the entire Congregation.

During the first year of the Oblate Triennium, we reflected on a core dimension of Saint Eugene's missionary foundation: Oblates are gathered as brothers in apostolic community. He often described our vocation to live in fraternal communion with words evoking the strongest family bonds and he frequently recalled the one heart and soul of the first Christians. It is essential to our charism that we always start

afresh in giving ourselves with joy and generosity to the task of forming community. At the great Millennium, Saint John Paul II called the Church “the home and the school of communion.” Most recently, in opening the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis reminded religious that we are to be “experts in communion”. Although a strong trend pulls us toward individualism and activism, prophetic resistance insists that the mission to live fraternal communion is essential to Oblate consecrated life. Because of an inherent relationship between apostolic community and the vow of chastity, it was this vow that we considered in the first year of the Triennium. We appreciated anew that we are chaste celibate men because of a special invitation from the Lord (C# 14) and we recognized that healthy chastity has been an impetus for us to develop the riches of our hearts (C# 16). The vow of chastity, which consecrates all our affectivity, enables us to create fraternal communion and to generate meaningful relationships in apostolic communities throughout our lives.

During this past year of the Oblate Triennium, we broadened our understanding of ongoing formation (CC# 68-70) as a lifelong task of disciples always growing in the Lord as human beings, as consecrated men and as missionaries. Continuing formation is more than special studies for higher degrees. It is a commitment for life to become, as Eugene de Mazenod called us to be, saints. In this second Triennium year we also reviewed our lives as individuals and communities in relation to the evangelical counsel of poverty (CC# 19-23). It is essential that this vow be more radically assumed by each one of us as a sign that our one true treasure is Jesus Christ alone. The vow of poverty compels us to enter into a deeper communion with Jesus and the poor! (C# 20) Our lives of ministry with the poor question us on many levels: gratitude, simplicity, joy, providence, work... We must evaluate our style of life and examine how materialism and the appetite to consume can diminish our commitment to share everything we earn and receive with our brother Oblates.

The Oblate Triennium this year takes us to a

theme that Oblates are passionate about: Mission (CC# 1-10). We also will pray over and reflect on how we live the vow of obedience (CC# 24-28), following Jesus whose nourishment was to do the will of his Father (Jn. 4:34). We must constantly work toward a more mature understanding of obedience within the context of discernment, fraternal and honest questioning, community consultation and participation, along with availability, humility and faith. Obedience is directly related to mission and together they express what oblation signifies.

As we reflect on Mission during this year of the Oblate Triennium, a prophetic and visionary Scripture passage orients our vision: Luke 4:14-21:

*“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim  
freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,*

*To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.”*

Our Founder chose this text to inspire the Congregation and it illumines our discernment on mission during this 200<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Year. Personally, I experience the power of the Holy Spirit and the call to mission whenever I hear this passage proclaimed. Pondering it prayerfully in community renews us in our missionary oblation. In this moving text Jesus announces his mission in the anointing of the Spirit and it begins with the poor: he is sent to bring good news to captives, the blind and the oppressed and initiates a year of

grace, thus revealing the Father's heart of mercy toward the most abandoned. Our Founder's vocation, a call born in a journey of conversion and marked by a significant experience before the crucifix, is a faithful echo of Jesus' mission announced in the synagogue of Nazareth.

This third year of the Oblate Triennium invites us to reexamine our faithfulness to the charism of Eugene de Mazenod and ultimately our faithfulness to Jesus' mission. All the Units of the Congregation are called to review their missionary activity in the light of this Scripture and our CC&RR. The recent documents of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'* give us a tremendous impetus to renewed missionary vigor. These writings confirm the Oblate charism and illumine our discernment of mission, creating new missionary ardor among us. Already some Oblate Units have engaged in a courageous process of discerning mission and taking hard decisions for the vitality of Oblate life and faithfulness to the charism. I want to encourage and bless them as they discern new directions. Each Unit should prayerfully review, as a missionary community, how it participates in the mission of the Trinity and discern where it is being called to witness at the present time in light of our charism. We pray for the anointing of the Spirit so that we have free hearts to leave behind ministries where we have done great work in order to respond to the most urgent needs and challenges of evangelization today.

A new heart; a new spirit; a new mission: this has been the movement for which we have asked God's grace. The General Chapter of 2010 called us to a new missionary outlook characterized by mazenodian audacity and courage to leave familiar ways, comfortable routines and deathly inertia in order to embrace, not just new or different works of ministry, but a whole new way of being missionaries committed to Jesus Christ. The key is how we are missionaries, not simply being defined by what we do, but by who we are as disciples of Jesus, and how we live our oblation. We are called to integrate, in a mutually life-giving way, the values of consecration with the commitment to mission.

The call to conversion to which we have been

led by the Spirit is generating signs of new life among us. The Spirit is leading us to discover the sacred and prophetic unity of life witness and evangelization. The call to a profound conversion to Jesus Christ brings us beyond the destructive dichotomy between life and work or between being and doing to a spirituality in which we are challenged to maintain holistic relatedness both in the work we do for God's mission and in our religious consecration. We can no longer be satisfied to subordinate the value of our consecrated life -- the vows, our life of faith and apostolic community -- to endless activities freely described as mission.

Mission is a precious gift of the Trinity who invites and draws us to participate in God's endless gift of Self, saving, loving, gracing all of creation. Mission does not belong to us as though it were our possession. As missionaries we must nurture a deep appreciation and reverence for this invitation to cooperate with the work of salvation. Participation in the mission of the Holy Trinity requires community participation and common commitment over individualism; discernment and prayer before business-as-usual meetings and mere organizational discussions; the passionate following of Jesus through the vowed life over living like bachelors who are self-absorbed, post-modern consumers. Our consecration as religious is a constitutive element of how we participate in God's mission.

When we live the integration of mission and consecration, our lives hold the tension, creative and dynamic, between our missionary action of evangelization and the other essential dimensions of life, namely, our relationship to the Trinity, whose will we seek to do; our relationship to others in apostolic community which humanizes and sanctifies us; and the prophetic following of Jesus through the vows. When these dimensions are lived with integrity there is abundant energy for the Kingdom, faithful commitment and joy. When we are committed to maintain the integrity of this tension our lives give greater Gospel light and we witness the Oblate charism through closeness to the poor, zeal for the Gospel and availability for difficult missions. Living more faithfully the values of our consecration will



not diminish our commitment to mission. On the contrary: the more dedicated we are to the vowed life, prayer life and community life, the greater will be our apostolic oblation for God's mission. This relationship is expressed in the biblical motivation for our Jubilee, Mt 5:13-16:

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

*"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

The witness of our lives is salt and light for the world and whatever good we might do will shine not for our own personal glory and renown, but will focus on giving all the glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I trust that the faith sharing resources have been helpful to guide the reflections in communities and that some signs of conversion have come about in our lives. In fact, we have seen many Units of the Congregation promoting this sharing of the experience of God among Oblates and trying to express conversion through real changes in our lives. I would like to ask all the major superiors and local superiors, directors and animators to make an extra effort to encourage all of us to enter into this journey by sharing our faith in community and by seeking some gestures of personal and community conversion among us. The sharing of our experience of God in community builds a strong foundation for a meaningful life together; it empowers us to live with patience and forgiveness; it gives us joy and generous hearts to bear and support one another.

The Spirit is anointing us and breathing new life into the Congregation! The 200<sup>th</sup> Jubilee and the Year of Mercy are offering us a kairos and wonderful signs of new missionary life are visible among us! Let us seize this opportunity

to recommit ourselves to be missionaries for the Church's most difficult and challenging missions and dare to offer our lives unconditionally for the evangelization of the poor and most abandoned today. Wherever we have become settled in safe and comfortable ministries that do not require missionary audacity and zeal, let us be uprooted for God's mission! Let us be set on fire as we contemplate: Jesus gathering his disciples around him and sending them out two by two (not alone!); the first Christians coming together as community to break bread, care for the poor and announce the Good News; Eugene de Mazenod calling some good men to share life and mission. So now, celebrating two hundred years of our existence with immense hope, we return to the roots of our Congregation. This is not nostalgia for the past, but clarity and strength to express with creative fidelity the life-filled charism given to the Church through Saint Eugene de Mazenod. The mission is to be true cooperators with the Savior in offering God's gracious and tender mercy to all, beginning with the poor.

As we celebrate this feast of the mystery of the Holy Trinity's mercy in Mary's life, I would like to remember the numerous close collaborators who share with us in the charism of Saint Eugene all around the world. Honorary Oblates, the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, Oblate Associates, Friends of St. Eugene, the Mazenodian Family, members of secular institutes and religious congregations, lay people, young people, single and married people, friends and relatives... you give yourselves, your time, talent and resources in countless ways, drawn to participate in the charism of Saint Eugene. We are united as a great Oblate Family on this feast of Mary Immaculate, on which we begin the third year of the Oblate Triennium. We journey forward to the 200<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the Congregation hungering for a profound conversion to Jesus Christ. We give you thanks for your support, love and missionary lives. We count on your prayers for us. Happy feast day to all of you!

Mary Immaculate, Mother of Mercy, pray for us!

Father Louis Lougen, OMI  
December 8, 2015

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## General Chapter 2016

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### GENERAL CHAPTER 2016 Father General invites five Brothers

In the first week of November, 2015, five Oblate Brothers, one from each Region, received a letter from the Superior General which stated:

*“The General Chapter of 2010 voted in favor of Rule 128.a.6, giving the Superior General the responsibility of inviting one Brother from each Region to the General Chapter after I have made a consultation.*

*“Having consulted the Brothers Committee in Rome in 2013 and the General Council in its*

*plenary session of September/October 2015, I am hereby convoking you to participate in the General Chapter 2016.”*

The five Brothers who will be capitulars when the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter begins on September 14, 2016, are:

Europe: Rafal DABKOWSKI (Poland)  
 South America: Ivar RUIZ (Bolivia)  
 Canada/US: Jason ROSSIGNOL (U.S.)  
 Africa/Madagascar: Jean-Marie DIAKANOU  
 (Cameroun)  
 Asia/Oceania: Noel GARCIA (Philippines)

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## General Administration

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### JPIC GENERAL SERVICE Committee meeting 2015

From November 2-6, the OMI JPIC General Service Committee met in Rome for their annual session. Present at this session were Frs. Kennedy KATONGO, the Director; Gilberto PIÑÓN, Assistant General holding the Mission portfolio; Miguel FRITZ, General Councillor for Latin America; Bradly ROZAIRO, Asia-Oceania Region; Elphas KHOZA, Africa-Madagascar Region; Antonio PONCE, Canada-US Region; and Miguel PIPOLO, Latin American Region. Fr. Kevin McLAUGHLIN, who represents Europe, was unable to attend. Also present was Fr. Daniel LeBLANC, who represents the Oblates at the United Nations and VIVAT International in New York. Invited as observers and giving input were Frs. Warren BROWN, General Councillor for the Canada-US Region, and Fr. David KUMAR from the General House. Sister Teresa Dagdag from the Maryknoll Sisters was also an observer and special contributor to the session.

Unable to be in Rome for the meeting, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the Superior General sent a letter to the committee. Among other things, he wrote: “We must continue the basic work of helping all Oblates understand and own that the ministry of JPIC is at the heart of evangelization. This work

can never discourage us. We share this good news, we invite each Oblate to be involved and we show the connection between the Gospel and the JPIC ministry. This is a continuous work of conscientization”. He added: “The encyclical [Laudato Si’] provides us with a great moment to develop tools for Oblate communities and our ministries for concrete actions in relation to the environment. The availability of some resources for the Oblates in the midst of missionary work is key to help them be more involved and to see the connections”. Furthermore, “we need to continue to organize more fully and activate our congregational structures for the animation of JPIC so that they are effective, collaborative and friendly. The more effective our structures function, the better we will achieve the previous two points”.

The letter from the Superior General set a tone for the deliberations of the session. There were reports from the Director and from the members as well as discussions on various topics such as: updating the *Vade Mecum* for JPIC ministry; animation tools for the Oblate Triennium; strategies and priorities; work with refugees and migrants; animation of the Regions, Units and local communities regarding JPIC issues; JPIC and the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. (Kennedy Katongo)

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## Africa-Madagascar

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**KENYA****A week in the life...**

*Fr. Gerard Conlon, a Canadian Oblate working in the Kenya Mission, recently published on his home province's website ([www.omilacombe.ca](http://www.omilacombe.ca)) and account of just one week in his missionary life. Here are some excerpts from that busy week in October 2015.*

(Tuesday) afternoon, a troubled young man (Year 10 = 15 years old) whom we assisted last year came to visit, looking downcast – he has been bed-hopping here and there for 2 months. Basically, he's been rejected by his father because he did not go home since November, 2014. I tried to give him a little tough advice and said, "The Principal is waiting to counsel/encourage you." He wanted to go away to be with his brother who would put him in school... it's the other side of Meru, which is "drug country." I reminded him that his father is his best chance for an "educated future"... I asked him: "What will you do if your brother loses his job?" He didn't appreciate my advice and went off sadly. A few hours later I received a text message from him saying: "I've suffered enough and the only option now is to commit SUICIDE". By the time I saw the message, it was 30 minutes later... and he would not answer my call. So I started sending encouraging messages... and received no response. I felt he was just being "dramatic" but as time passed I became more worried.

Wednesday brought no news. I had the Catechist look for him. His father was adamant that the boy would be far away. We got the Local Chief to look for him through the network of Area Managers. He finally showed up on Thursday in

the late afternoon, ready to break down in tears but of course, being a 'man', that's not allowed. I gave him a bit of a hug, then told him how worried we had all been. He shed a tear then, so I sent him off for a shower and fresh clothes at the Convent – I almost shed a tear myself. He returned at supper time and began to relax. As I write this, he is still at the Convent, doing a little work around the place. But he doesn't like manual work, so I don't know what to do with him! After a counselling session on Friday, I decided we need to get the dad to soften his heart. His dad has been "beating" the boy for every minor mistake since he was 7 years old. The "young man" is afraid, but worse, he has not received enough love.

(On Saturday) I spent the rest of the day in a big celebration to say farewell to a Kionyo Catechist, Edward after 26 years of service. In the evening, two lovely Sisters joined us, and stayed the night, to talk about Vocations at the Sunday Masses. With Bro. Joseph MAGAMBO and a young lad of 14 years from our new OMI parish at Kisaju (near Nairobi), our house was full and very joyful.

The young lad, whom we nicknamed "the Professor," has a technical problem regarding his desire to join the Minor Seminary — he is Anglican! His family is now attending the Catholic Church, so Fr. Dionysius ANANUA has been teaching him the basics so he can be received into the Catholic Church, and then he will be "processed" through the catechism classes at the seminary.

[Author's note: Where else can a person get so much variety, excitement, joy and reward from one "job?"]

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## Latin America

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**BRAZIL****First Latin American Vocation Congress**

*"Master, where do you live? He answered: Come and see."* (John 1:38-39) That was the inspirational text for our first Latin American

vocation congress at Aparecida, Brazil, where we Oblates took part representing 9 Units of our Region, coming from 14 different countries, in all 27 men and 3 women missionaries, two of whom were Lay Oblate women.

“Vocationalize” our communities and our mission was the proposal of the congress. To do this, several ideas for the OMI Vocational Year in 2016 were suggested. The eight days were beautiful experiences of encounter among ourselves as Oblate brothers, for revisiting our first love and reflecting on our own Oblate missionary vocation. We shared many events, experiences, prayers, songs, dances, jokes and the joy of being missionaries in the world of today and tomorrow.

To "encounter another" means sitting down with him, face to face, to know him, to love him and to receive his love. To encounter the Risen Jesus means to open one's eyes to His loving person and opening one's heart to His gospel, the Good News. Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter, Zacchaeus and Bartimeus, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Mathew and Thomas, Philip and Andrew, the rich young man and the bent over woman, John and James, Nicodemus and the grateful leper, Saint Eugene and all the men and women He met on His way are witnesses to this. Their "encounter" with Jesus touched the lives of each one of them and in a definitive way. Everything began with that encounter. "To seek" and "To find." Those are two very meaningful words.

Pope Francis, in the Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, invites all Christians to immediately renew their personal encounter with Jesus Christ or, at least, to decide to let themselves be encountered by Him, to try to do this each day without a break (n. 3). The OMI, each one personally and in a very concrete moment, must also wish to know about Him, about His crucial world, about His plan, and ask Him: "*Master, where do you live?*" For us Oblates, his presence must be found, in a special way, in the poor.

At this time, our Vocational Congress coincides with the beginning of the year dedicated to mercy and the bicentennial of the founding of our Congregation. We also want it to be an invitation to all those who want to know the Oblate missionary spirit better and to experience "*come and see.*"

"*What are you looking for? Where do you live?*"

"*Come and see....they went with Him, they saw where He lived and the spent that day with Him. It was about four in the afternoon.*" (John 1:38-39) That was the experience of Saint Eugene and of the Blessed OMI Martyrs. They discovered, in their ENCOUNTER with Jesus, that He was calling them to live in service of the Plan of the Kingdom of God, making it reach the poorest people on the earth.

Our Founder's journey of encounter with Jesus was a long process...until, like the Samaritan woman, he encountered a different way to satisfy his thirst and he gave himself over unconditionally to the plans of God. Today he inspires us in our way of FOLLOWING, so as to respond to the dreams of God for us and for this world.

In all of our proposal to "vocationalize" our life and mission, we are invited to listen to the voice of God, the "bells of today", amidst the many "noises of the sea" which go by us in our daily lives (an allusion to a story about hearing the bells of a church that had been covered over by a lake). We are invited to spread to today's new generations that which excited and captivated us in our Oblate missionary vocation; to share with fervor and enthusiasm our spirituality and our charism with all those who will be in contact with us, so that they too might also be able to have this unique experience of an encounter with Jesus Christ through that fundamental question: "*Master, where do you live?*" Perhaps Jesus will say to them: Go with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and there you will see me; there you will encounter me; and when they see us in our communities and missions, He will inspire in these youth that exclamation: see how they love one another and I too want to be one of them! (Fr. Hector ORTEGA, Uruguay)

## URUGUAY

### Evangelizing in a secular society

*Recently, the provincial of the Mediterranean Province, Father Alberto GNEMMI, and the Vicar Provincial, Father Ismael GARCIA, visited two Latin American Oblate missions, Venezuela and Uruguay. Fr. Gnemmi wrote this about Uruguay in his account of the visit:*



Living in the different communities with these confreres, one discovers the value of fraternal friendship, shared at the various moments of the day. Every Monday, the Oblate Martyrs community comes together to share what they are living and doing in their ministry. There is harmony among them and benefitting from this are the laity who see themselves as partners with our men in carrying on the ministry.

We cannot deny that the cultural context, marked by the progression of secularization begun at the birth of the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, does not make their pastoral ministry easy. Here, I synthesize the content of some conversations I had with the Fathers of the Delegation:

“Not only the progression of political secularization, but also ‘modernity’ has entered into the veins of the this country: the links of solidarity have been broken. There has been economic growth in these last five years after the serious crisis of 2001-20013, but individualism and social uncertainty have also grown.

“It is not easy to foster Christianity in the daily lives of these families with their thousand faces. Generally, with regard to parish ministry, we are moving from a classic method, i.e., the spiritual care of those who attend and sacramental action, to a more missionary approach, aimed at accompanying the people humanly, many of whom are hurting from the many hardships of life. People have religious sentiment, but they have no sense of a faith celebrated, lived. Secularization shapes the country that has not found its religious character. On the positive side, at the diocesan level there is a new air with the work of the new archbishop, Daniel Sturla, Salesian, whom Pope Francis chose to name a Cardinal in the consistory of last February. One breathes a new climate, with the Church more open towards civil society and the many positive events of this time. There is good collaboration between the priests of the big city of Montevideo: the restructuring into four pastoral zones, desired by the Archbishop, has helped this, relative to the past, where the division into ten areas was less effective.”

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## Canada-United States

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### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

#### Oblate receives Nunavut's highest honor

Nunavut is the largest, northernmost, newest, and least populous territory of Canada. It was separated officially from the Northwest Territories on April 1, 1999 ... The creation of Nunavut resulted in the first major change to Canada's political map since the incorporation of the new province of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1949. (Wikipedia)

In September 2015, the Advisory Council of Nunavut named 95 year old Father Robert LECHAT to the high honor of the Order of Nunavut for his many years of service in the Far North of Canada. Among other places, he served for about 25 years, he served as pastor in Igloolik and Hall Beach. He is especially renowned for his work in preserving and promoting the Inuit language.

Born in France, Fr. Lechat came to Canada after the Second World War. He currently resides at the Oblate community, Maison Notre Dame in Richelieu.

### UNITED STATES

#### Ground-breaking for new scholasticate residence

Since the early 1970's, the scholastics of the United States Province have lived in the former convent of the Sisters who used to cook for St. Anthony's Oblate Juniorate students in San Antonio, Texas. Because of the poor condition of that building and because the property will be sold in the near future, for several years there have been plans to build a new residence for Oblates in first formation.

On November 13, 2015, there was a ground-breaking ceremony and celebration for the new home for scholastics, directly across the street from Oblate School of Theology where they take their classes.

About 100 people gathered at the building site to watch the U.S. provincial, Fr. William ANTONE, the former vocation director, Fr. Charles



BANKS, and the “senior scholastic,” Bro. Daniel ZIEGLER, turn over the first shovels of dirt to symbolize the beginning of construction.

The five-building complex will contain a total of 25 bedrooms to accommodate the men in formation and three formators, with two or three rooms for guests.

According to Provincial Councillor, Fr. Arthur FLORES, the new complex is envisioned to serve not just the U.S. province but the entire Congregation. Currently, there are scholastics from Zambia, Canada, Mexico, India, and

the United States. “So the hope is that the Congregation will use the wonderful resources that Oblate School of the Theology has to offer to the Oblate world and to the world in general.”

In describing how the buildings will be used, Fr. Flores pointed out that the scholastics will be anything but isolated in separate buildings since in one of the houses, there will be the chapel; in another, the kitchen and dining room; in a third, a community room for meetings and relaxation.”

Completion of the residence complex is scheduled for late 2016. ([www.omiusa.org](http://www.omiusa.org))

## Europe

### POLAND

#### First scholastics from Madagascar at Obra

About thirty-five years ago, Oblates from Poland established a mission on the large island of Madagascar, in the diocese of Tamatave. They immediately began to think of the future, being faithful to a challenge from the Superior General, Fr. Marcello ZAGO, who told them: “If we have started some undertaking, we must know how to continue it”. Encouraged by this, the Oblates of Madagascar by 1988 began to open houses of formation. This has been so successful that according to the latest *OMI Personnel*, there are now 40 Oblate priests, 5 Brothers and 25 scholastics in the delegation.

While they have well-established houses of formation in Madagascar itself, wishing to teach the candidates that the Congregation is international, for many years they have also sent seminarians and Fathers to study in other countries, especially in Africa and in Rome. Three Malagasy students are currently pursuing their theological studies at the Oblate Scholasticate in Cameroon; one in Rome.

On October 14, 2015, for the first time, two scholastics arrived in Poland, and after one year of a Polish language course in Poznan, they will continue their theology studies at the Oblate Scholasticate in Obra.

Hippolyta RANDRIAMTSALAMA and Andry HERINIRINA have begun their Polish studies. Both of these young Oblates professed their first vows in 2012 and completed their philosophical studies at the Archdiocesan Seminary in Fianarantsoa in 2015.

### FRANCE

#### Three days of hope...

*Dare to live in hope*: that was the theme that brought together some Oblates and their friends last August 27-29. Three days for reflecting, sharing, meditating, breathing... three days for the intersecting of intellectual, artistic, spiritual and convivial approaches. This first summer university met the expectations of the sixty or so persons who were there, even more than they could have hoped for!

About sixty persons gathered at Pontmain, in Mayenne, with Luc TARDIF, the provincial of the Oblates of Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province, a theology professor at St. Paul University in Ottawa, and with Lorraine Sainte-Marie, his colleague at the same university.

A “summer university” at the end of summer break and before “back to the grindstone”, it was appealing for us to act “like grownups!” And these days, we did not have to look far to find a relevant topic ... But we wanted to approach it in a various ways!

*Intellectual*, first of all: three conferences focused on hope from the “theological and practical” point of view; then from “ecclesial perspectives”; and finally vis-à-vis the Oblate charism as a “source of hope for our world.”

Next, the *artistic*, with a classical piano recital at Friday noon by Laurence Garcin; then a concert on Saturday afternoon by Mathieu Pirro, a composer and author. But the artistic dimension was equally considered in two workshops, one on plastic arts led by Anne-Claude Aclif and the other on writing by Mathieu.

The *spiritual* was covered on Thursday evening with a visit whose theme was the message of Pontmain, followed by a period of spiritual refreshment in the basilica where Amélie Appetiti, a young professional dancer, offered us a beautiful danced version of a Salve Regina, something very new for most of us. On Friday morning, a trip to Mont-St-Michel allowed us to live an enchanting moment at the Eucharist in the little village church. On Saturday, the three days concluded with a celebration of hope in the Oblates’ chapel of the missions.

Finally, the *convivial* dimension because that’s sort of the trademark of the OMI! We could have used some sunshine to organize a barbecue, but...never mind! Good humor, joy at meeting one another, at discovering one another: in short, “being human”, gave all the color that was needed at the table. (Bertrand EVELIN in *Audacieux pour l’évangile*, November 2015)

## SPAIN

### Planning for events with youth

The European Commission for Youth and Vocation Ministry, made up of an Oblate from each Oblate Unit in Europe, met at Pozuelo, Spain, on October 23-29. Again this year, the meeting was open to a small representation of laity, youth and religious women coming from various places and who work with the Oblates in youth ministry. Present were youth from France, Spain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Poland and Italy, as well some OMMI, COMI, and Oblate Sisters.

The first days of the meeting, when the youth and the religious women were present, had the character of a “pre-congress” in view of the Second Congress on the Mission with Youth that will be held in Aix next March. The work followed the model that will be used at the Congress itself: “see, judge and act.” The working language was English, but the sharing went beyond the limitations of that one language and the native languages, allowing a deep exchange of experiences, impressions and new ideas from the diverse Oblate youth realities.

The rich sharing emphasized strong common threads: the explicit belonging to the Oblate charism and the relationship with the experience of Eugene; but also those special, individual differences that make it possible to “look at” the world of youth to which we each belong.

Coming into contact with the special characteristics of each one, whether on the personal level or the cultural reality, brought us closer to each other and allowed us to better discover what is going on with youth in our own milieu.

The meeting of the Committee was just part of the different experiences we have lived in common during these past few years: the two GECO meetings (from the Italian: *Giovani d’Europa per il Carisma Oblato* [Youth of Europe for the Oblate Charism]); the Oblate pre-WYD in Malaga, Spain; the PilgrimAix experience of this past summer. It was also another opportunity to make our contribution to the Oblate mission with youth. To have been able to attend the meeting made us feel like “privileged” youth and made us realize how great the Oblate charism is, and can be embodied in various youth situations, even while greatly distant by culture and geography.

After the departure of the youth and the religious women, the Oblates continued the work of the preceding days in order to make a synthesis that will be the contribution of Oblate Europe at the Congress in Aix. There was also an update on the preparations for the upcoming Oblate WYD in Poland. We especially tried to foster fraternity amongst ourselves; we had the strong feeling of

having been called to build that “non-territorial community” which is so special to the mission with the youth of Europe. (*Francesca and Fr. Antonio D’AMORE*)

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### Anniversaries for January 2016

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**70 years of religious life**

1946.01.25	08102	Fr. Jozef Pielorz	Poland
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**65 years of religious life**

1951.01.06	08974	Bishop Sebastian Khoarai	Lesotho
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**60 years of religious life**

1956.01.06	10068	Archbishop. Bernard Mohlalisi	Lesotho
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**60 years of priesthood**

1956.01.08	08779	Fr. Lino Maddalena	Mediterranean
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**50 years of religious life**

1966.01.06	11809	Fr. Alexis Lekau	Lesotho
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1966.01.06	11709	Fr. Ignatius Selialia	Lesotho
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**25 years of religious life**

1991.01.06	13400	Fr. Lucas Atang Leluma	Lesotho
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1991.01.06	13464	Fr. Alphonse Maleka Mathibeli	Lesotho
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1991.01.06	13463	Fr. Lawrence Monyane Moshoeshoe	Lesotho
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1991.01.13	13386	Fr. Wilmar V. Gama	Mexico
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1991.01.20	13788	Fr. Justo Negreiros Matta	Peru
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**25 years of priesthood**

1991.01.05	13012	Fr. Pedro César Brítez	Paraguay
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### Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 77-84

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Rik Demol	Belgium/Holland	19/05/1927	Waregem	04/11/2015
Bro. Bernard Mulligan	OMI Lacombe	16/08/1928	Ottawa	08/11/2015
Fr. Maurice Hemann	Philippines	11/02/1924	Quezon City	10/11/2015
Bro. Majella Demers	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	10/07/1923	Richelieu	11/11/2015
Bro. Gaston Comtois	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	12/09/1920	Richelieu	12/11/2015
Fr. Alfonso Gioppato	United States	23/07/1937	San Antonio	13/11/2015
Fr. Nikolaus Wand	Central European	06/12/1932	Hünfeld	15/11/2015
Fr. Joseph Thévenet	France	04/12/1934	Ajaccio	18/11/2015

*“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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