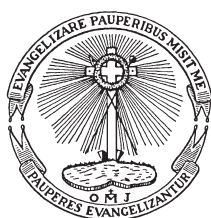




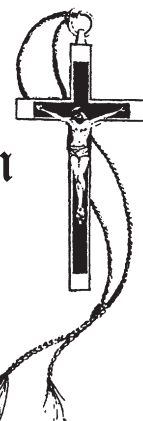
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OMI Information No. 562 (English)

January 2016



25 January 200th Anniversary of our Foundation 1816 - 2016



200 Years – The moment to say “Thanks” to God

Fr. Gilberto Piñón Gaytán, omi, Assistant General

All of us have learned since childhood to say “Thank You!” whenever someone gave us something. During the whole year of 2016 we Oblates will have the opportunity to say “Thank You, Lord, for the many gifts we have received during the last 200 years, since our foundation.” Not only as a Congregation should we give thanks to the Lord, but also as individual Oblate Units. Each unit has its own Oblate history to contemplate and admire, to analyze and recognize the “*passing of the Lord*” in our lives.

I invite each one of us to reflect, meditate and even discuss the following steps of our foundational and vocational oblate process:

1. The Experience of God and the Gift of the Oblate Charism

Our Founder was blessed with the experience of God’s love one Good Friday. He experienced the person of Jesus as Saviour. This experience led Eugene to identify his call to leave everything and follow Jesus. It is this experience that has guided each one of us to enter the Missionary

Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The human and spiritual gifts we have received have led us to identify ourselves with the Oblate Charism of Saint Eugene. This experience of God and of the Oblate Charism is not only essential in the original founding of our Congregation but also in the origins and basis of our own vocation.

I think that spending time meditating on the Preface of our Constitutions and Rules will help us renew ourselves in our basic decision to leave everything and to follow Christ in a radical and prophetic manner. Our Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, has insisted on this many times in his conferences to Oblates all over the world. In the Preface we find the true motivations that guided Father Eugene in founding the Oblates and these same motivations have guided us during the last 200 years.

2. Foundation with the gift of faithful followers

We have been blessed with vocations during the 200 years of existence. Every generation of Oblates has contributed to the understanding of our Charism and has contributed to the

missionary activity in the Church. Thanks to the faithful testimony of previous generations of Oblates we have gained a place in the Church and we can be proud to be part of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The canonization of our Founder in 1995 was very important for helping us to realize that our name is truly a “*passport to Heaven*” like St. Eugene used to say.

3. Establishment and expansion to guarantee continuation

During the course of 200 years we have adapted many things according to the needs of the times. Every General Chapter has been an occasion to evaluate and plan our missionary activity according to the needs of the world. Special care has been given to the adaption of our Constitutions and Rules, which are at the root and heart of our Oblate charism, based on the values which moved the Founder to gather a group of men which, in time, became the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Because these Constitutions and Rules are so basic, they must be reflected and assimilated by every generation of Oblates in evaluating our life and mission.

The Constitutions and Rules are essential criteria of our tradition from the beginning. They have evolved over the years and have been revised through the acts of one or another of our General Chapters to guide us, as Oblate values in our life and mission. From the humble beginning in that upper room of our foundation house in Aix-en-Provence we are now present in 68 countries. Just as our Founder “*spared no effort to extend the Savior’s empire*” we too must now identify where the poor of today are.

The two choices that we have today are to renew ourselves and survive or to remain frozen and face death. Any organism that does not renew itself is destined to death. There is no reason to exist in the Church if we are not faithful to our Oblate Charism. Christ has promised us that the poor will always be with us, but the question is: *Will we have good faithful Oblates to take care of the poor?*

4. The Five Calls of Conversion from the 2010 General Chapter

As usual, the last General Chapter in 2010 is calling us to convert so that we can be efficient in our mission as collaborators in the building of the Reign of God in the world. The call was made 5 years ago and it is still there today in the voice of the present Pope. In *Evangelii Gaudium* the Holy Father is telling us that both Church and society are in need of conversion. We all need to “heal” both ourselves and the world.

5. Suggestions from Major Superiors

Three years ago, in preparation for the Inter-Chapter in Bangkok, the Superior General invited all Major Superiors to come up with some practical signs of conversion. Below are some of the suggestions from Provincial and Delegation Superiors. The question is: Do we dare to choose any of these concrete signs of our communal conversion?

- ◆ Start a Unit discernment process to determine:
 - ◆ Which Oblate ministries should we keep and which new ones should we start?
 - ◆ Which Provinces should be reduced to Delegations; which Delegations should be reduced to Missions?
- ◆ Verify what could be done for the new poor, youth, migrants, refugees, elderly, women empowerment, prisoners, cultural minorities, Indigenous people, and HIV groups.
- ◆ Identify and promote the Oblate charism among the laity and establish a project of missionary collaboration with Oblate Lay Associates based on the Oblate Charism.
- ◆ Begin a new mission “*ad extra*” or within the Oblate Unit among the “*new poor*”.
- ◆ Create “*pilot communities*” stressing our Oblate witnessing of vowed life in an apostolic community among the poor.
- ◆ Each Region assumes a project in common to found a new international and intercultural mission.
- ◆ Build Christian-missionary-parish

communities that are more than just parish management offices.

- ◆ Get involved in social justice, eco-justice and peace & reconciliation through a ministry of non-violence.
- ◆ Dialogue with other faith groups that exist outside but near the Oblate community.
- ◆ Send a letter to the Holy Father to renew our intention to serve the Church and our readiness to accept a new mission where the needs are most pressing among the poor.

In light of *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato si'* we are invited to prepare a new missionary project among the poor taking into account an Ecological and Economic sustainability.

We have a big task before us. Let us be conscious that we are not alone. The Lord walks with us! Let us thank the Lord with some words inspired by the life of Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero:

“It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

“. . . We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted,

knowing that they hold future promise. “We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. . .

“It may be incomplete. But it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

“We are the workers, not master builders; ministers, not Messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. “

And to conclude our thanksgiving let us remember our Founder, Saint Eugene: *“Let all the Oblate brothers be imbued with the family spirit that ought to exist among us. . . For this I have always thanked God as a special gift he has deigned to grant me; he has given me an exceptional heart, an overflow of love which is special to me, . . . with God’s love for men. . . May this mutually help us more to savour the beauty of our vocation, and may everything be related to God for his greater glory. This is the most ardent desire of my heart.”* Letter to Father Mouchette, moderator of scholastics, December 2, 1854. (*Yenveux V, 209*) **Selected Texts, 299, p. 352-3**

General Administration

GENERAL HOUSE

Update on remodeling work

Fr. Roberto SARTOR, the treasurer of the General House, writes about the ongoing work of repair and remodeling at via Aurelia 290.

General House: The first part of the outside work on the entry side of the house has been completed with the installation of new windows, repair of the roof, and the façade completely redone and repainted. Now we are completing the second part, on the rear side. The scaffolding is still covering the façade for the new plaster and paint; the windows of the refectory, the Secretariat and the General Archives have been changed.

International Scholasticate: A major work has been completed at the International Scholasticate; there is a new boiler for heating and for hot water. These will begin functioning in a short time, thus making the scholasticate independent in that aspect.

The Guest House: A new, large construction site has been opened at the Guest House, to remodel it, internally and externally, in order to be able to accommodate a religious community of Sisters who are expected to arrive in September 2016, to reside in this building for a period of 12 years or so.

Crypt / Archive: In the large crypt too, after having been emptied of books and bookcases,

there are major works in progress. So far, the work has focused on demolition to make spaces suitable and sufficient to become the seat of the new General Archives. We are trying to preserve the mosaics in the chapels that were formerly used for individual Masses and which represent images of Mary, Queen of the Oblate missions: at the North Pole, in the Philippines, at the Shrine of Pontmain, and especially the big mosaic in the apse, representing St. Joseph, St. Eugene de Mazenod and Pope Pius XII, the reigning pope at the time of the construction of the General House (1949-1950). During the work, we have made a lovely discovery which expresses how much the Congregation loved the pope: behind the altar of the crypt dedicated to St. Joseph, we found two large boxes filled with prayer intentions which the missionaries in Sri Lanka offered at the time of the golden jubilee of priestly ordination of Pius XII in 1949: prayers for his personal intentions from the schools, colleges and parishes.

The new financial year of the General Administration for 2016 will be the moment for assessing and planning the extent to which we can continue this project of restoration and renovation of the house.

Despite all these works going on, the life of the community, after the inconvenience of noise and abundant dust due to the change of the windows in the rooms and in the offices and in some common rooms, seems to hold steady, with its rhythm of studies, administrative services, conferences, meetings and various committees.

The virtues of fraternal charity and patience by everyone in the house help to maintain calm and peace, including for the treasurers who are always being put to the test.

GENERAL SERVICE FOR OBLATE STUDIES

Oblate Consultation Library

The director of the service, Fr. Fabio CIARDI, writes: In recent months I have set up a library of Oblate literature that can be easily consulted by our students. There is, in the house, a wonderful historical "Oblate Library" that brings together

a large number of works by Oblates, works in all fields of interest, from theology to astronomy, from psychology to ethnology, from pastoral to paleontology, but it is not easily accessible and is organized by author, not by material.

The "Oblate Consultation Library," as I have called it, is much simpler and, as a whole, easier to consult, especially because it is always open to everyone. The books are arranged by subject: biographies of Saint Eugene; his writings and those of his companions; Rules; Superiors General; General Chapters; studies about Oblate spirituality; history of the Congregation; biographies of famous Oblates. It was inaugurated on December 7 and is already being used.

It is dedicated to Father Marcel BERNAD (1860-1928). Born in France, since his youth he studied and taught in Ireland and then spent the rest of his life at the scholasticate in Liege. He was always interested in studies; among other things, he composed a 500 page work on the doctrinal formation of theology students. During the first centenary of the birth of the Congregation, he published a systematic Oblate bibliography, containing 4,000 titles. He also published the first photography album with many historic photographs of the origins of the Oblates, today no longer available otherwise.

"The Oblates of Mary Immaculate," he wrote, "like the apostles, have received the mission not to write but to preach: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. To this, they have remained faithful. The number of missions and retreats that they have preached greatly surpasses the books they have written." At the same time, he recognized that "by writing, the Oblates have done missionary work. Thus, no one will complain if they have written some books; rather, we can get the impression that they have not written enough."

That is what St. Eugene thought too: "It is through the spoken word and not the written word that conversions happen in great numbers." But he also had the impression that the Oblates did not study enough. "Who could exempt from this duty priests or religious, who must not only be the salt of the earth, but also the light of the world?" He especially pressed upon the young men "not

to neglect their studies, not only of theology and philosophy, but also of literature... They should know their own language well and practice using it. It will be time well spent. Make fire erupt from the stone; but for that, it is necessary to hit it: the spark comes from the blow.”

Then, when he opened the foreign missions, he began to ask the Oblates to write, to write, to write...and to publish, so as to make known all the wonders that the grace of God was accomplishing through them.

The photo of Marcel Bernad is located on the wall

of the new library (not by chance, he is shown with a book in hand!). Next to his photo are the photos of three famous Oblate writers, the first two great biographers of St. Eugene, RAMBERT and RAY and the first great historian of the Congregation, ORTOLAN. Between them, there is also the almost unknown photo of the sister of St. Eugene, put there only out of affection...

Finally, there is the document that marks the beginning of the Oblates, the application for authorization addressed to the Vicars General of Aix by the five who wanted to live together, dated 25 January 1816. An easy way to celebrate the bicentennial of its birth.

Africa-Madagascar

CAMEROON

A holy hour with the poor

“A holy hour with the poor” That is the key expression that motivated and set the tone for the day of December 8, 2015, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and official launch of the third year of preparation for the bicentenary of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Cameroon Province.

Indeed, in his letter of last September 8 to the Major Superiors of the Congregation concerning the feast of January 25, 2016, Father General encouraged all Oblates to “connect with the poor in a way that is significant and coherent with our lives.” Thus, touched by the words of the successor of Eugene de Mazenod, Fr. Edward DAGAVOUNANSOU, Provincial Superior of the Oblates in Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria and the members of his council thought of launching the third preparatory year with a holy hour with the poor with their many faces, identified here with the prisoners in the Central Prison in the city of Garoua, northern Cameroon. On the program we had the Eucharistic celebration presided by the vicar provincial, assisted by the vicar general of the archdiocese (an Oblate), a provincial councillor, the provincial treasurer and the provincial secretary. Participating in the Mass were a group of Lay Oblate Associates, some faithful and the prisoners themselves. The

animation of the Mass (songs and readings) was assured by the prisoners themselves. After the Lord's table, everyone went to the table of the Oblates who offered lunch to all the prisoners. Cooking and sharing meals were provided by the lay associates.

It was a real “come and live” experience... moments full of emotion... the Eucharist and the meal: two gestures that were well chosen by the provincial administration to repeat to the prisoners the words of our holy Founder to the poor of the Church of the Madeleine two centuries ago, “You are God’s favourites”. These very same words have actually been inscribed on a picture painted in remembrance of this third preparatory year.

After living this day, it is difficult to find words to express our gratitude: Thank you! Thank you to the Lord for allowing us to realize and experience this event in love, brotherhood and peace. But also thanks to our Father General, Louis LOUGEN, who has been the motivator of this event, through his words that have aroused us to take action. In fact, next year, 2016, the Oblate Cameroon Province turns 70; and yet, this was the first time that the Oblates as a province did something like this.

May Mary Immaculate, “Mother and Queen of Mercy”, obtain for each Oblate in our Province the grace to be merciful as our heavenly Father is

merciful, so as to be open to other forms of poverty that surround us. For the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls and the good of the Church. Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate! (Fr. Yundula AZIZ, provincial secretary)

ZIMBABWE

A new MAMI group

The question of officially launching MAMI has been in discussion for a while in the mission. On the 26th of September 2015, twenty two members gathered together at Mazenod House pre-novitiate to launch the MAMI program in the Zimbabwe Mission. The twenty-two members came from the three different parishes in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo where the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are ministering. They came from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Divine Mercy Parish, and Body and Blood of Christ Parish. The group was well represented in both genders and in age groups. There are now efforts to celebrate the 8th of December 2015 together with this MAMI group for the first time. We are hoping that the MAMI in Zimbabwe will contribute to the work of evangelisation in the Mission as we hope that they will help us to reach out the poor and most abandoned.

The Missionary Associates of Mary Immaculate are part of the Oblate family. They share in our Oblate undertakings, and in our missions. Its members work, with the means at their disposal, to support the Oblate mission work and help in our missionary apostolate. Under the protection of Mary Immaculate, the Mother of Mercy, they become apostolic auxiliaries to the Missionary Oblates. They share in our missionary joys and sorrows. They share in our battles and struggles, rejoicing in our success, making our Congregation ever more known, winning new members for it, propagating its publications, and helping in recruiting vocations to the Oblate way of life. In return, we as Oblates grant them a share in our prayers and good works. We pray in a special way for them as members of our family. Through the Associates, we reach out to the poor and bring the Good News of the kingdom of God.

The day at the pre-novitiate began with adoration which was led by Deacon Lucky MANDAVA, who

reminded all who participated at this adoration that the Associates and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are one family. The Associates will share in our Oblate spiritual benefits.

Immediately, after adoration, the mission superior, Fr. Charles NABWENJE, then gave a very inspirational talk on the Founder of the Oblates, St. Eugene de Mazenod. The talk was so animated that it left the members thirsting to know more about the Oblates.

Fr. Themba CHIPEMBERE also facilitated a talk on the history of the Oblates in Zimbabwe. Fr. Pamidzai MUDZUDZA crowned the day with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. (Fr. Themba CHIPEMBERE in the Zimbabwe Mission Newsletter Sept.-Oct.)

SOUTH AFRICA, NORTHERN PROVINCE

Lay Associates prepare for province amalgamation

On the 20th to the 22nd of November 2015, 23 oblate lay associates from all three South African oblate provinces met for the first ever retreat as one United body. The associates met at Parnassus Farm (Magalisburg) - the camp site of St. Benedict's oblate school in Johannesburg.

The retreat master Fr. Thabang NKADIMENG, Director of the Associates in the Northern Province, preached the retreat on the theme "The Interior Castle". As we approach the amalgamation of provinces, many steps have to be taken just as the soul has to enter different chambers in the castle to reach the diamond who is God, as we find in the spiritual writings of St. Teresa of Avila.

St. Teresa of Avila teaches us how to trust in God and how to always be aware of the need to remain within the castle and not outside.

The retreat is a time of introspection: knowing myself and my calling as a Lay Oblate Associate. How can I as a lay person live the Oblate spirituality in my everyday life? What novelty, if any, do I bring to the Oblate world especially during this time of globalization?

As the new united province will most likely venture into new ministries or retake ministries that have since died, the associates feel a period of discernment is necessary and the involvement of the laity is paramount.

The 23 members representing the three provinces continue as “Proudly Catholic” and embark on going into the world preaching Christ and Him Crucified. It is God who has called us to this most

noble vocation and will make sure the united province continues the good Oblate work begun by so many missionaries before. St. Eugene will exhort us once again to leave nothing undared for the Kingdom of God.

“God will never ask of us anything beyond what we can do.” (St. Eugene de Mazenod, September 27, 1842.) (Oblate Associates of South Africa)

Asia-Oceania

SRI LANKA, COLOMBO

Remembering Fr. Rodrigo

Fr. Michael RODRIGO’S death anniversary was celebrated at Buttala, Moneragala, the place he was gunned down on 10th November, 1987. There were a number of villagers who came to pay tribute to him. Fr. Rohan SILVA, the Provincial Superior, Fr. Emmanuel MOSOEU, the General Councilor for Africa and Madagascar, priests and sisters from the diocese and several Oblates participated. After the Mass, which was celebrated by newly ordained Frs. Philip NANAYAKKARA OMI and Dhanushka FERNANDO. Professor Anton Meemana spoke to the gathering on the spirituality of the environment and our responsibilities. (<http://omicolombo.com/>)

PHILIPPINES

First Filipino OMI Provincial dies in automobile accident

On December 4, Fr. Jose (Joe) ANTE died in an automobile accident in Matanao, not far from his home in Cotabato City. In 1976, he earned the distinction of being the first Filipino OMI Provincial. During his term (1976-1981), he organized socio-economic programs such as cooperatives and free education for children through the Christian Children’s Fund. The CCF funds, generated by the U.S. citizens who sponsor children for one year (for medicine and education), supported over a thousand children.

Born in 1936, he professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1957. In 1960, after finishing philosophy

studies with now Orlando Cardinal QUEVEDO (both of them graduating at the top of their class) at San Jose Seminary, he proceeded to Rome where he obtained his Licentiate in Sacred Theology. He was ordained in Rome in 1964.

Fr. Ante’s first assignment was as Dean of Notre Dame of Jolo College, where he later became President in 1972. While in Jolo, he got involved in establishing consumers cooperatives, credit unions, housing cooperatives and various socio-economic development projects, training out-of-school youth in carpentry and refrigeration, assisting Badjao fishermen to secure loans for their small boats and helping farmers improve their agricultural techniques.

After his service as provincial, he became the fourth president of Notre Dame University in Cotabato (1982-1992).

He also became a member of the Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. As member of the RCC, Fr. Ante had the opportunity to help protect the rights of the inhabitants, and to give impetus to the development of the region—Christians, Muslims, and Highlanders alike.

Fr. Ante went on to spend about 15 years in the Vicariate of Jolo, in various capacities—parish priest of Siasi, Sulu; Rector of the Cathedral; Director of Social Action and Justice and Peace; parish priest of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. He also had a stint at the Our Lady of Grace Parish in Grace Park, Caloocan City. Wherever he was

assigned, he was always on the lookout for ways to help people uplift their lives and develop the community. He stayed close to the people he was working with and ministering to.

On December 9, Cardinal Quevedo presided

at Fr. Joe's funeral Mass at the Archbishop MONGEAU Chapel at Notre Dame University. The Cardinal remembers his classmate as a "wise, intelligent, soft-spoken missionary who loved working with Muslims, a very good leader, a true missionary disciple."

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Mission in Côte-Nord

At the invitation of Fr. Luc TARDIF, provincial, last November 12, right after the provincial congress, a certain number of Oblates were invited to bring together their reflections, plans, concerns, etc., regarding our mission in Côte -Nord. Present were: Gérard BOUDREAULT, Gérard TSATSELAM, Cornelius Ali NNAEMEKA, André LAROCHE, Jacques LALIBERTÉ, Raymond MARQUIS, Laurent DESAULNIERS and Luc Tardif.

The indigenous peoples of Côte-Nord experience many difficulties: the tough life of the youth (often without work) is manifested by suicides, dependence on alcohol and drugs; the violence done to women has been brought to the fore by the Val d'Or revelations... *(Editor: numerous allegations of assault and sexual abuse of local aboriginal women by members of the provincial police.)*

Our missionaries also have their challenges: competition caused by certain Christian sects (Baptists, etc.); promotion of the traditional indigenous religion; and especially attachment to a traditional and superficial way of living Christianity: many Innus hold on to certain rituals (baptism, funerals) without an adequate preparation to give these a deeper meaning.

What orientation should we give to our missionary practices? That's a big question that must remain open to research! Shouldn't we live more intensely the events which interest our people? Shouldn't we risk "going forward into unknown lands?" Is it necessary to respond to all the pressures? Should we not reserve some time for ourselves to spend together in fostering our Oblate life as a team?

The sacraments are an excellent opportunity for catechesis: isn't it vital to form teams that can assure a meaningful preparation? Shouldn't we live close enough to the people so as to understand what will make them grow in their personal relationship with God?

Looking toward the future... It seems urgent that we get younger co-workers but that does not appear to be an easy job. The faith of the grandmothers no longer passes automatically to their grandchildren. There are significant intergenerational hurts! We really need to adjust.

We absolutely need to focus more and strengthen our life as a team; we need to devote time and energy to it! We need new perspectives and a powerful tonic! "Praying together and rejoicing together." (INFO OMI 1 December 2015)

OMI LACOMBE

The Eternal Stranger: Ministry with Migrant Farmworkers

Every spring, as monarch butterflies begin their long journey from Mexico to Canada, they are followed by tens of thousands of human migrants. They come, summer after summer, to harvest fruits, berries and vegetables, low paid work for which few Canadians are interested in applying. The migrants, mostly Mexican men, are part of the Season Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). Their labour and low wages help keep Canadian agri-business competitive and Canadian produce relatively cheap.

One of these men is Antonio. Antonio had been coming to Canada every year for over 20 years, usually arriving in April and returning home in December – the maximum stay allowed under the program. He leaves behind his wife and family –

only those who have wives and children are allowed into the program. Although Antonio spends most of his life in Canada, he will never be allowed to become a permanent resident or to bring his family.

Life in Canada is lonely and the work difficult. But Antonio hopes that, after paying his expenses in Mexico and Canada, he can put aside enough cash to pay for the education of his children. Others are saving to buy a little house or a small business – all depending on the quality of the harvest and the number of hours they are able to work. Over the years Antonio has learned a little English, but there is little opportunity to practice. Antonio and his co-workers live in a kind of barracks, 50 km from the nearest major town. The program does not provide for language classes; the work days are long and Antonio has little opportunity to interact with people other than his co-workers and bosses. The workers remain eternal strangers in the country where they spend so much of their lives. At the same time, those who stay in Canada for the full term of 8 months per annum become strangers to their families back home. Antonio has missed the birth of his children, their birthdays, their graduations and the funerals of his parents.

Oblates in British Colombia (Otto ROLLHEISER) and in Manitoba (Thomas NOVAK) have been part of ministries that befriend and support workers like Antonio. As a student at St. Paul University in the 1980's, Thomas studied the liberating leadership of Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers. Chavez led many successful actions to improve the working conditions of Mexican and Mexican American workers who harvest the fruit and vegetables of California and Texas. Today Thomas coordinates a volunteer ministry to another generation of Mexican farm workers; it is based out of Winnipeg's St. Ignatius Hispanic Catholic Community.

During the harvesting season, Thomas organizes monthly celebrations of the Eucharist in Spanish for Mexican workers in Portage la Prairie and in the village of St. Eustache. The goal of the ministry is not just to provide religious services but to address the isolation of the men, to help them make some contact with the community and to give them a sense that they are cared for

and that they are valued for more than for their labour. Thomas and other volunteers visit with the workers on Friday evenings when they are driven into town to do some shopping and their banking. The volunteers try to address any problems that the workers bring to their attention. Every year the ministry organizes special celebrations around Mexican Independence Day (September 15). The celebrations include a supper prepared by the parishes in Portage and St. Eustache and soccer matches between teams from the larger farms.

In 2009, Thomas co-founded the Migrant Workers Solidarity Network. The MWSN is a more political coalition that educates Manitobans about the realities lived by migrant SAWP workers like Antonio. Its members also campaign for better working conditions for the workers. They have successfully lobbied Manitoba's NDP government to assure that SAWP workers are covered by the provincial medical health plan. In 2015, MWSN volunteers began organizing language classes at two of the farms.

There remains much to do. Although SAWP workers pay the same taxes as Canadian residents, they receive few of the benefits received by other workers. They pay into the national Employment Insurance plan, but cannot collect benefits. Most provinces still deny them participation in provincial Medicare plans. In 2013 the Harper Government stripped SAWP workers of the possibility of applying for the child tax benefit. Workers in most provinces are subject to abuse by recruiters and may be removed from the SAWP program if they are suspected of communicating with a union organizer or otherwise stand up for their rights.

If you would ask Antonio what would be the change he longs for most, he (and many of his co-workers) would say that it would be the opportunity to bring his family here and to make Canada his permanent home. The MWSN is linking up with like-minded coalitions across the country to encourage the new federal government to provide a pathway to permanent residency for all temporary workers. The rallying cry is "Good enough to work here, good enough to live here".

The volunteer work that Thomas does among migrant workers is another way that Oblate priests, brothers and associates of OMI Lacombe Canada seek to be present to those who have been pushed toward the margins and, like St. Eugene, to help them to appreciate their dignity as beloved children of the Creator. (<http://www.omilacombe.ca/>)

UNITED STATES

An honor for an Oblate Brother

On Sunday, November 29, Bro. Thomas CRUISE of the Immaculate Heart of Mary community in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, was the recipient of the Cheverus Medal Award from Sean Cardinal O'Malley, OFM Cap., at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston.

The recipients, who include lay people, religious and deacons, are chosen for their service to the Church for an extended period of time and in a quiet, unassuming and possibly unrecognized fashion.

In 2012, Bro. James LUCAS was a recipient as was Bro. Charles GILBERT in 2010.

This award was instituted by Cardinal O'Malley in 2008, the bicentennial year of the Archdiocese. The medals are conferred upon recipients annually on or around the Solemnity of Christ the King to those who are selected from throughout the Archdiocese.

The silver medal bears the image of Bishop Jean-Louis Anne Magdelaine Lefebvre de Cheverus. On the reverse side is Bishop Cheverus' coat of arms and episcopal motto "diligamus nos invicem" (let us love one another). Bishop Cheverus was the founding Bishop of Boston. He served from 1808 until 1824 when he returned to France. He died in 1836 as the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

OMI LACOMBE

A church with no walls in Hamilton

On October 7, Bishop Doug CROSBY and Frs. Tony O'DELL and Jarek PACHOCKI launched their initiative for a church without walls

outside St. Patrick's Church in Hamilton. At the ceremony of unveiling the statues and the new prayer space, Fr. Tony quoted Pope Francis about the role of the church, "... A church should be a bridge, not a road block."

Taking down the fence surrounding St. Patrick's Church building was a clear sign of the welcoming spirit of hospitality. New statues of the Homeless Jesus and St. Patrick, crafted by internationally known artist, Timothy P. Schmultz, brought the Gospel message outside of the church itself to all who pass by.

Eight feet tall on a four foot pedestal, the statue of St. Patrick, the great saint, known as the "Apostle of Ireland", is an imposing and inspiring figure on the grounds. The dimensions are monumental and heroic – fittingly "larger than life" for a missionary saint who was called by our Lord to evangelize a barbarous land.

The image of the Homeless Jesus is both unusual and arresting. In his comments, Bishop Doug said, "Jesus knew what it was to be bullied, to be falsely accused, arrested, abandoned, condemned to death, imprisoned and executed. The statue challenges us to reach out to those who are suffering." Only after one really looks at the statue will they learn the message: "If they really look at the feet, they will see the wounds in the feet and they will identify it as Jesus." (<http://www.omilacombe.ca/> and <http://www.stpatrickshamilton.ca/thechurchwithoutwalls/>)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

A papal medal for the provincial

Last December 8, on the occasion of the feast of the Immaculate, Archbishop Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa presided at the Eucharist and bestowed the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal on several persons, among whom were Fr. Luc TARDIF and Sister Lorraine Desjardins, Superior General of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. This papal decoration was established by Pope Leo XIII on July 17, 1888. It is usually awarded to laity or members of the clergy for exceptional services to the Church. It is the highest honor that can be attributed to lay persons by the pope.

It is noteworthy that several other members of the province have already received this award, among them Fathers Alexandre TACHÉ, Yvon

BEAUDOIN, Francis MORRISEY, Eugene KING and undoubtedly several others. (INFO OMI December 15, 2015)

Europe

ENGLAND

English Martyrs Parish: 150 years

The year 2015 is a special period of time in the history of English Martyrs Parish, Tower Hill, London. This year we have been celebrating the 150th anniversary since the foundation of the parish. On 6th February 1865, the area of Tower Hill, London, then known as Rosemary Lane, was confided to the pastoral care of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The mission was entrusted to Fr. Robert COOKE, who was the Provincial at the time.

The celebration of 150 years was inaugurated last 22 February with a Mass celebrated by the Superior General of the Oblates, Fr. Louis LOUGEN. This Mass was celebrated with the 'Friends of St. Eugene' – a Lay Association of the Oblates of the Anglo-Irish Province – who came from various parts of England. After the Mass Fr. Louis led an afternoon of reflection with the Friends of St. Eugene. There was another simple celebration organised by the Parish Pastoral Council on 21 June with a Mass of Thanksgiving. It was attended mostly by our parishioners together with the English Martyrs School and a few invited guests, especially some Religious Sisters. After the Mass, the congregation moved to the school grounds for a picnic to celebrate the event.

To mark this special year in the life of our Faith Community, the closing of the celebrations took place on 1 November with the Bishop in charge of our area. The Auxiliary Bishop Nicholas Hudson presided at this Thanksgiving Mass while the English Martyrs School children led the singing. Bishop Hudson also thanked all the Oblates who gave of themselves for this particular mission here in Tower Hill from 1860's onwards. He said "Today we salute them and thank God for the graces he worked through them. Pride of place must go to your founding

Father, Fr. Robert Cooke, to whom you have a fine memorial towards the back of the church". He also reminded us that: "On this day, we recall with affection another saintly person who was also part of your earliest days, Mother Magdalene Taylor, Founder of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. When the Oblates moved to Prescott Street, she and three sisters moved into a small house in Chamber Street. She was declared Venerable only last year; and is also likely to be canonised in due course". (Fr. Francis DANIEL in Oblate Connections – December 2015)

GERMANY

Giving a home to refugees

As of January 2016, about a hundred refugees from different countries, men, women, children, families, will be living at the house of the Oggelsbeuren Foundation. Since May of 2014, this building has been at the disposition of about 80 refugees. The Foundation is directed by the Foundation Council and the Board of Trustees. An Oblate, Fr. Alfred TÖNNIS, is part of the Foundation's Board of Trustees.

Beginning on January 1, 2016, two Oblates (Frs. Heinrich MAYER and Alfred TÖNNIS) will live in the main house. A private chapel and various apartments make up the community space and are available for those who would like to visit and temporarily share their life.

This project was preceded by a two-year process, developing its own concept in the sense of "giving a home" to refugees. A steering group of competent persons was formed. There were visits to refugee camps in Malta, Greece and Lebanon. The people and leaders of the small village of Oggelsbeuren (450 people) were part of the process. The media were encouraging.

The idea of fleeing is a very current issue, not only in terms of the many refugees who are on

the road. In our society, we are living various kinds of escape: escape into alcohol, drugs, sex. Escape into the "reality" of the Internet (there one can custom build embellished or even invented profiles -- then live with them for quite some time). There is the escape of the body (plastic surgery, excessive sports, mental disorders as a result of no longer being able to tolerate one's own body). There is the escape into relationships; escape to the monastery; escape into religious fanaticism; escape into violence. There is also "tax evasion", another form of escape. Escape from responsibility. Escaping, fleeing: it is the issue of our time.

Also very current is the theme of the home, of being at home. Where am I at home? What do I mean by "home?" Is it about persons? Is it about buildings and places? Is it about ways of thinking or philosophical structures? Is it religion? Is it a culture? Is it a relationship with God? The lack of a home is also a theme for our time.

The ideas of escape/flight and feeling at home are also great biblical themes. There is the escape of persons from God's command (Jonas); the flight of the Holy Family; the escape of entire peoples. We also encounter "economic refugees" and "refugees" in terms of violence and natural disasters.

The Oblate provincial and his council have accompanied the development of the project. Already under the provincial, Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, Fr. Tönnis was allowed to take on a decisive role in the development of the project. Under the present provincial, Fr. Stefan OBERGFELL, the provincial council has decided, after consulting the bishop, that Fr. Alfred Tönnis and Heinrich Mayer can live and work in the Foundation.

We want these fleeing people to feel a bit at home,

through our work, through prayer, worship and interreligious celebrations, through our witness of the Christian Good News and of our Rule and of the spirit of our religious community. Two prenovices of our Central European province have already lived with us for a while and have learned of our work.

There are Oblates who work with refugees in various countries: one could surely mention Italy and Spain. They have supported and even developed projects of their own. In many places, this work with people in flight is increasing. For me, it would be important to work in a network. We could cooperate better on the international level. Perhaps it would be good not only to develop the "work with refugees in the whole Oblate world" with conferences and presentation of projects, with tools and its own website, but also, through our very work and a process to develop new missionary energies. Here, we have experienced that with this work, we also reach people who have been distanced from the Church or people who are religiously neutral. Here too a missionary field is opening up. We are experiencing that something new is emerging and a very good interreligious dialogue is beginning.

For me, the refugees are messengers of God. They pull us out of the fences around us, out of our structures, our oasis of well-being and our borders. They broaden our view. They transcend borders and challenge us. They oblige us not to define the works of mercy and a revitalization of our missionary spirit, but to live it.

Especially in view of our 200th Anniversary Year, we could deal with this challenge of God more intensely – in our work, in the spiritual and family life of a religious family found in the whole world: finally, our Pope Francis requires us specifically to receive refugees into our religious houses. (Alfred Tönnis)

Anniversaries -- February 2016

70 Years of religious life

1946.02.17	08607	Bro. Olivier Charpentier	Canada, N.D.-du-Cap
1946.02.24	08118	Fr. Michel Lynde	France

65 Years of religious life

1951.02.17	09631	Bro. Gilbert Pullenayagam	Sri Lanka, Colombo
1951.02.25	09640	Bro. Jos Huyben	Belgium/Holland
1951.02.27	08980	Fr. Albert Danker	South Africa, Natal

65 Years of priesthood

1951.02.18	08098	Fr. Henri Reignat	France
1951.02.18	08124	Fr. Jean-Paul Vantroys	Canada, Lacombe
1951.02.24	08087	Fr. Louis Doazan	France

60 Years of religious life

1956.02.17	10081	Fr. Augustine Makhokolo	South Africa, Northern
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50 Years of religious life

1966.02.06	11711	Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo	South Africa, Natal
1966.02.17	11722	Fr. Derrick Butt	South Africa, Natal
1966.02.17	11723	Fr. Ronald Cairns	South Africa, Northern

50 Years of priesthood

1966.02.12	11159	Fr. Giuseppe Rebusi	Indonesia
1966.02.20	10957	Fr. Lucas Casaert	Bolivia
1966.02.20	10952	Fr. Gerard Delbeke	Congo
1966.02.20	11092	Fr. Gerardo Van de Walle	Argentina-Chile
1966.02.20	11095	Fr. Georges Vervust	Belgium/Holland

25 Years of religious life

1991.02.06	13395	Fr. Mokone Joseph Rathokoa	South Africa, Central
1991.02.06	13293	Fr. Ronald Rehbock	South Africa, Northern
1991.02.06	13343	Fr. Mahlomola Raynold Sekoto	South Africa, Central

25 Years of priesthood

1991.02.02	12833	Fr. Charles Khanyetsi Thamae	Lesotho
1991.02.08	12841	Fr. Sylvester David	South Africa, Natal
1991.02.08	12842	Fr. Alan Henriques	South Africa, Natal
1991.02.09	12920	Fr. Emmanuel Motheho Morallana	Lesotho
1991.02.11	12951	Fr. Widjaja Nicolas Setija	Indonesia
1991.02.16	12919	Fr. Lawrence Tieho Matsora	Lesotho
1991.02.23	12916	Fr. Thabang Joseph Molefi	South Africa, Central

Suffrages for our Deceased

2015: No. 85-94

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Bounlom Antoine Phengsivilayvanh	France	15/11/1954	Créteil	27/11/2015
Fr. Jules Charlier	Belgium/Holland	12/04/1929	Montzen	02/12/2015
Fr. Jose Ante	Philippines	13/07/1936	Matanao	04/12/2015
Fr. Jean Girouard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	03/04/1919	Richelieu	05/12/2015
Fr. Josef Thesing	Central European	23/11/1931	Burlo	06/12/2015
Fr. Joseph Fenart	France	03/10/1932	Lyon	07/12/2015
Bro. Pierre Le Van Cu	Vietnam	26/02/1948	Tiêu Động	21/12/2015
Fr. Maurice McMahon	OMI Lacombe	25/11/1922	St. Albert	23/12/2015
Fr. Henri Chaigneau	France	01/01/1922	Fougères	24/12/2015
Bro. Paolo Menegotto	Belgium-Holland	20/08/1942	Froyennes	25/12/2015

“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)

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
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Printing & circulation: Shanil Jayawardena