



OMI INFORMATION OMI INFORMACION OMI INFORMAZIONE OMI NACHRICHTEN OMI WIADOMOŚCI OMI

OMI Information No. 566 (English)

May 2016

Celebrating 200 years of missionary service in the Church 1816-2016

Charity and Zeal

Fr. Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

The “Oblate May” is full of celebrations: the novena for Oblate vocations, the anniversary of the deaths of Fr. Albin and of St. Eugene, the liturgical celebration of Blessed Joseph Gerard. This year is even more special, since it adds to all these reasons for celebrating: the year of mercy, the 200 years of our foundation, the preparation for our 36th General Chapter... What more do we need to be happy and thankful to God for so many gifts of his love?

Well, we actually have one more reason to be thankful for. That is the heart of every May 21 celebration: the testament of our Founder. How many times have we read it, meditated on it, made comments on it! And yet, it remains the cornerstone of our foundation, of our family, of our mission in the Church. It is the heart of his whole life.

We keep the memory of many events related to St. Eugene’s life, but May 21 remains special for us. In the Church’s tradition this is his “day of birth”, the *dies natalis*, the day that God has chosen to call his faithful servant into his glory, the glory for which he had spent all his life!

St. Eugene’s whole life is actually very well summarized in his spiritual testament and gives us as Oblates the two elements that are at the heart of every Oblate vocation and of the Oblate mission. It also summarizes the two great desires of Eugene. All our spirituality turns around these two points.

At the 2013 Interchapter in Bangkok, we tried to start a remote preparation for the 2016 General Chapter by asking ourselves what the “theme” of the Chapter might be. Seven groups discussed and deepened the main elements that had been proposed: Living and witnessing – Evangelical poverty; New Oblates for a renewed and updated mission; New Spirit, new mission... in a changing world; Oblate religious identity – Our mission with the poor; A new missionary identity: dialogical, transparent, with the poor.

All these themes made me think of the inner struggle of the young Eugene, when he was trying to find his way to serve God. On the one hand, he was feeling called to withdraw into the solitude of a monastery and to give himself to contemplation and to stay alone with God, the God that had shown him all his mercy and to whom he wanted to consecrate all his life. On the other hand, knowing the deplorable situation of the Church, of those who had lost their faith, especially of the poor and the most abandoned, he was feeling “guilty” about hiding himself in a monastery, far from the place where he would have shown his gratitude to God through a life given to preaching the Gospel to the poor. That inner struggle lasted quite a while in his life; then, little by little, he came to an integration of these two aspects. In his first Rule, he passed on to his Oblates how crucial it is to live them both, as deeply and fully as possible.

His spiritual testament to the Oblates, his very last words, could not give a better message in the same line. *“Among yourselves practice charity, charity, charity”*. This is a call to always go back to the very heart of our vocation: to live our life as a gift to God in response to his gift to us. We are all forgiven sinners, and this is the very reason of our love for God: gratitude for his love and forgiveness. The best way to show this is to live charity in our relationships within our family, with one another. This is a call to rediscover our very identity as disciples of Jesus, to renew ourselves in the spirit of our charism. This is so well stated in our Constitution 2: *“We are men ‘set apart for the Gospel’ (Rom 1:1), men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to cooperate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us”*.

“And, outside, zeal for the salvation of souls”. The second part of Eugene’s testament emphasizes the other aspect of our Oblate life: mission, evangelization, zeal, our missionary outreach. This is what kept the young Eugene from closing himself up in a monastery, from giving himself to God in a

way that would have prevented his being in the midst of the world, with the people and among the poor. He had experienced the power of the blood of Jesus, shed for him and for his sins, and he wanted to give his whole life to extend the salvation coming from that blood to as many people as he could, especially through his Oblates.

In his Retreat Notes of October 8, 1831, Eugene made it extremely clear that the goal of his small society was that, living together as brothers, the Oblates had as their main work the evangelization of the poor, continuing, through constant imitation, the virtues and the examples of their Savior Jesus Christ. The two aspects of their life are so intimately united that it is in no way possible to separate them.

Mission in and through community, community for mission. This has been the message coming to us from our last General Chapters. A mission with new colors, like those repeatedly indicated by Pope Francis: the peripheries, the borders, the new poor, those that we call *“the poor with their many faces”*, those to whom we give our preference.” (see C. 5)

Africa-Madagascar

MAJOR SUPERIORS OF AMR Extraordinary meeting of the Conference

The Conference of Major Superiors of the Africa-Madagascar Region usually meets bi-annually. However, from April 4-8, there was an extraordinary session of the Conference in Windhoek (Namibia), in order to make regional preparations for the General Chapter and to thank God for the 200 years of the Oblate Congregation.

All of the Major Superiors and elected Chapter delegates were present, as well as Fr. Emmanuel MOSOEU, the General Councillor for the AMR and Fr. Marc DESSUREAULT, the General Treasurer.

The Provincial of Namibia, Fr. Lukas MOSEMEDI, welcomed the participants. Fr. Mosoeu reminded them of the central role that the Region plays in the life of the Universal Church

and urged them to take their rightful place in giving the Congregation and the Church men who are afire with apostolic zeal for the salvation of souls, men ready to change the image and realities of the continent. Fr. Dessureault spoke on the state of the Congregation’s finances and how these affect the Region directly.

Fr. Charles NABWENJE (Zimbabwe), the acting president of the Region, presented a panoramic report on the state of the Region, bringing to light the different realities of each Oblate Unit on the continent.

The participants broke into linguistic groups to analyze the report of the President. Debate and questions followed. In the end, participants applauded the report because they felt it captured the true state of the Region. The participants also worked in sub-regional (language) groups to produce a consolidated report based on individual

Unit reports. There was also a presentation on the preparations for the Chapter.

The Conference was briefed on various projects in the Region: the reunification process in South Africa (already in its final stage); the desire of the Oblates in Zambia to widen their horizon by taking on a mission in Malawi; the project of Cameroon and the CIPF to jointly consider an invitation to open a new mission in Congo Brazzaville; the preparation of the Mission of Nigeria to possibly become a Delegation in 2017.

The Conference also elected its leaders for the next two years. The new President of the Africa-Madagascar Region is Fr. Edouard DAGAVOUNANSOU, the Provincial of Cameroon; the Vice-President is Fr. Charles NABWENJE, Superior of the Mission of Zimbabwe. In his acceptance speech, Fr. Edouard reiterated the need to be united as a Region. He exhorted the whole Conference to never give up, despite the hardship experienced pastorally, financially, etc. He stressed hope which is an attitude of faith that outlives fear and reposes wholly in Christ, our future. (Fr. Emmanuel Youngten TEMSWANG, Secretary of the AMR)

GUINEA BISSAU **Proudly part of the Oblate Family**

Fr. Adriano TITONE, Procurator for the Foreign Missions of the Mediterranean Province, sends us an Easter letter. Here are some excerpts from his letter.

Fondest greetings to each of you, wishing you a heart filled with peace...

I am writing this letter in my few moments of free time during my visits to our missions in Senegal and Guinea Bissau....

I have arrived at the latest foundation in the south of Guinea Bissau: Cacine, where our three Oblates in a mission of first evangelization, Fathers Daniel ALIOU and Carlo ANDOLFI and scholastic Joseph SADIO, are the first steady presence of the Catholic Church. For the people of the place, it is something new which they are discovering day after day.

A Hungarian couple, serving as volunteers, told me how the townspeople are impressed at the singing of the psalms by the little community for their morning prayer.

I went with Fr. Daniel to Quitafine, a town some twenty kilometers from Cacine, where the missionaries have begun to visit a very special community: there are no baptized, but they already have regular meetings, thanks to a good-willed teacher in the area. We could define this teacher as a "Catholic sympathizer" who not only brings the children together for prayer, but together with others, has managed to get a little piece of land and has built a chapel of mud. Although heavy rains have literally dissolved the mud from one side of the chapel, this has not discouraged them and they continue to grow as a budding Christian community. The land is fertile; all they need to do is to sow generously and then cultivate the fruits which grace will provide for the good of all.

In all of these communities of Guinea Bissau and Senegal, they are still feeling the joy of the wonderful experience they lived on the occasion of the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the Oblates' founding.

In recent months a small relic of our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, symbol of his "heart as big as the world", has traveled through all the communities, including those already turned over to the pastoral care of the diocese, such as Djilas and Kaffrine, bringing together many people who thus expressed their affection and gratitude to the Oblates for their pastoral work in Senegal in the last 40 years. Then there was the great pilgrimage to the national shrine of Poponguine which gathered more than 2000 people and where various cultures expressed their joy at knowing and having a role in the endeavor of the Oblate Mission. Many, many claim to be proudly part of the Oblate Family. ... (<http://nosotrosomi.blogspot.it/>)

KENYA **Formation and apostolate at the pre-novitiate**

Since the foundation of the Kenya mission, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Kenya have been trying their best to respond to

our missionary motto: “Evangelizare Pauperes misit me”. This encourages us in Kenya to receive young vocations in order to preach the Gospel message and Christian values to the poor and the most abandoned.

From the Meru postulancy to the Nairobi Oblate pre-novitiate, our Oblate formation provides candidates with time and opportunities for apostolic work so that the young brothers may understand the Oblate call to be in touch with the reality of the poor they minister to.

At our Oblate formation house in Nairobi there is also time for the apostolic work both within the community and outside the community... and this in addition to the time they spend at Tangaza Institute, studying philosophy. In the community, the pre-novices participate in the maintenance, manual work, liturgy, hospitality and community building activities. The pre-novices are active and hard working. They work in the garden, poultry and take care of the rabbits. We always get vegetables, maize, chicken and rabbit meat from our small farm.

The 12 pre-novices also prepare the daily breakfasts and the Sunday meals.

Outside the pre-novitiate, our young men visit an orphanage on Sundays – the Nyumbani Children Home. They assist in teaching catechism, and they pray together with them. They are always accompanied by Oblates, Fr. Stephen MURIUNGI or Fr. Christopher. Fr Fidele MUNKIELE is ministering at the Langata women prison and the pre-novices are beginning to visit with him. When the academic year closes in May, the pre-novices spend two months in our parishes. Some go to Kionyo, where they get involved in small Christian communities, youth ministries, schools apostolate and Sunday services in the prayer houses. Others go to our new parish in Kisaju, just south of Nairobi. There they participate in various pastoral activities.

Our formation program is trying to connect the pre-novices to the pastoral realities, thus they can learn about Oblate way of ministering to the poor and to the community. (Fidele Munkiele in www.omilacombe.ca)

Asia-Oceania

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA **Ecumenical prayer group**

Rajabima Oblate Centre, situated in the ancient sacred Buddhist city of Anuradhapura, is a community established also with the view of reaching out to the poor of other religions. Following the teachings of the Church after the second Vatican Council, the Oblate community at Rajabima has taken the initiative to invite the pastors and community leaders of different Christian denominations to come together for prayer.

This sign of unity among Christians has been appreciated by many and has become a regular event. The Ecumenical Prayer Group gathers every month in a place of worship of one of the participating communities and prays according to the tradition of that particular Christian denomination. The prayer is based on Scripture and life sharing which has become the bond between all the Christians.

Recently, the gathering and ecumenical prayer was held at the Oblate centre. In promoting Christian unity, there were about seventeen representative religious leaders who came forward in creating common ground for understanding and sharing the word of God and working for the common good. The representatives were from the Salvation Army; the Anglican Church of Sri Lanka; the Subandi Brothers; Holy Family Convent of Thalawa; and from Anuradhapura: the Sisters of Providence, St. Joseph’s Cathedral, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The prayer group is the initiative of Fr. Shivantha WAAS and Oblate Deacon Shihan SHANAKA, together with the Methodist and Anglican pastors of the area. Now it is supported by the present Superior, Fr. Emmanuel FERNANDO and is attended by the Oblates of the area, Frs. Dhanushke FERNANDO and Roshan FERNANDO.

JAFFNA, SRI LANKA
3rd year of Triennium: Preaching the Good News

To celebrate the 3rd year of the Oblate Triennium: Mission, the Vow of Obedience and Evangelii Gaudium, the Preaching Band community at Amaithy Aham, Vavuniya, organized mission preaching.

There were two missions preached during Lent at two parishes: Komarasankulam – Calvary and St. Joseph’s Parish, Thalvupadu in the diocese of Mannar. And there will be another mission preached at Allaipiddy parish, in the diocese of Jaffna, during the month of May.

The theme of the mission at St. Joseph’s parish was “Be merciful as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). There was lots of cooperation from the parish priest, the parish council, the parish community, the Sisters of the Holy Cross of Menzingen and the Oblates working in the diocese of Mannar.

The mission programmes included:

- Family visits;
- A Eucharistic Rally, including preaching and blessing the sea shore;
- Seminars for parents;
- Seminars for youth and children;
- Preaching the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The missions were completed on the 19th of March, the Feast of St. Joseph, the Patron of the parish community. The provincial superior, presided over the festive mass. (<http://www.omijaffna.com/>)

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
Helping the poor creatively

The northeastern fishing village of Kuchchaveli is one of the poorest in an area that suffered badly during Sri Lanka's 26-year-long civil war. What once was a predominantly Catholic village is now a place with a church but no Catholics. During the war all Catholics either left for neighboring India or fled south, leaving the church and village to the

jungle. When fighting ceased in 2009, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims resettled the village but none of the original Catholics returned.

A few years ago, Father Jesu RAMESH, from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was appointed to reopen the church, which was by then covered with jungle and inhabited by snakes. With help from police and navy personnel, Father Ramesh cleared the jungle from the church and its grounds. Minor renovations were done with the support of his Oblate congregation.

“There was no place for me to live but I occupied the sacristan's room and started my mission to serve a parish which had no single parishioner,” said Father Ramesh.

The priest quickly learned how impoverished the villagers were and how they solely relied on fishing to make a living. “But from August to January, the monsoon's heavy rain, winds and rough sea, makes fishing impossible,” said Father Ramesh. “During the monsoon a few villagers have land to do some agriculture but even that is affected by wild elephants, which roam the village to eat Palmyra palm fruits.”

Last August a group from Oblates Missions, the charity and social service arm of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, visited the area with the aim of supporting Father Ramesh.

“The group was touched by the depth of poverty suffered by the people and the parents were pleading with them to support their children with some jobs,” said Pat Benedict, a lay coordinator for Oblate Missions.

Father Sriyan RANASINGHE, the director of Oblates Missions, saw a large amount of cow dung on the roads around the village and suggested the idea of selling it in the capital Colombo which is 320 kilometers away.

“We had no way of finding them jobs but we found a God-given resource,” Benedict said.

Benedict said that villagers were requested to collect cow dung, dry it and then turn it into

powder, making it an organic chemical-free fertilizer. They then gave the fertilizer to Father Ramesh who transported it in bags to Colombo via train.

“We sold it in the city with the support of another Catholic charismatic revival movement, the Community of the Risen Lord,” said Benedict. “The fertilizer project was also about bridging the North and South and showing our love to our brothers and sisters in the North and East.

It is not only the Catholics who are involved in this project but also Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims,” he said.

A number of people who had also lost limbs in the war are also involved in the project.

Father Ranasinghe said the Oblate Missions bought equipment such as weighing scales and bagging gear to assist the project. (<http://www.ucanews.com/>)

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP The Brothers in Eastern Canada

The celebration of the bicentenary of the Oblate family (1816-2016) has given us the opportunity to focus on certain elements that influenced the development of the Congregation in Canada since its beginnings there in 1841. Already the Rule of 1818 contains five articles that dealt with Brothers as a given since most religious congregations of the time had both priests and non-priest members. After the approval of the Constitutions by Rome in 1826, the Brothers were so much a part of the Congregation that the Founder placed them, as much as possible, in all the houses of France and then he added them to all the missionary teams abroad: Canada in 1841; Oregon and Sri Lanka in 1847; Algeria and Texas in 1849; Natal in 1851 and British Columbia in 1859.

At our house in Richelieu, last March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, Patron of our Brothers, the Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province paid homage to the memory of the 1,181 Brothers who, since 1843, professed their vows there: 47 are still living and 328 died in their provinces of origin. Father Luc TARDIF, the provincial, presided at the Eucharist with about 40 Brothers present. In this way, we wanted to celebrate the exceptional contribution of our Brothers to the ministry of the Province and the Congregation. In the afternoon, during a community gathering, a good number of the names of Brothers now deceased were recalled to the memory of the participants. Some of them worked outside the Province: 14 at the General

House in Rome and 4 at the Paris Procure; in Africa, 14 in Lesotho and 7 in Cameroon; in Latin America, 7 in Chile, 9 in Bolivia and several in Haiti; in Canada, 21 in Bay James and several in the West or elsewhere in the Great North. It was a joyful and moving day, even historic, probably never to be repeated.

The provincial archives have the obituaries of each Brother who died here. Brother Alphonse NADEAU was the author of 112 of them. They tell at length of the prayer life and work of the Brothers. One could summarize their lives with in one word: consistency, whether it be their presence at prayer and meetings or their service. They loved the Congregation, the Church, the Blessed Virgin. And to that love is added a litany of virtues that characterized them: hospitality, devotion, piety, joy, generosity, zeal, etc.

The work performed by our Brothers varied greatly. The greatest number of them were sacristans, porters, secretaries, messengers, builders, printers, nurses, tailors, gardeners or farmers, but we also find jobs and trades that require further study and diplomas such as welders, plumbers, mechanics, drivers, accountants. Rarer still, there were boat captains and an airline pilot! Some Brothers have left a memory bordering on legendary, such as the sacristan of Saint-Sauveur in Quebec City and Maniwaki for sixty years; the doorman at the University Seminary in Ottawa for forty-six years; another whose skill and talent touched upon the genius!

One author writes: “It must be admitted that they

are not the voice that preaches, the pen that writes, the hand that absolves; in our communities, the Brothers often play the role of the heart that is not seen but which we notice by its beats..." Many Brothers were apostles in touch with the people, counselors and comforters. Archbishop Adelard LANGEVIN, OMI, praised the Brothers to whom, he says, we can apply the word of the Church at St. Joseph's address: "Faithful and prudent men, worthy of confidence ... necessary and valuable additions to our communities by the nobility of an unreserved dedication and the rectitude of a life dedicated to God, divided between prayer and work." "The Congregation would be incomplete without the Brothers..." wrote Father JETTÉ. "They are a great wealth for the Congregation and for the Church..."

By looking closely at the obituaries, we see that several Brothers are worthy of being considered true saints. St. Eugene said of some of them that if they had been members of some ancient Order, they would already be canonized. Among Oblates, Venerable Brother Antoni KOWALCZYK is already in the process of being considered for that. (Richelieu, Fr. Yvon BEAUDOIN)

OMI LACOMBE, CANADA **OMI parish welcomes refugees**

Fr. James FIORI tells of a special project undertaken by his parish in the capital of Canada.

Some months ago, even before the plight of the refugees had reached a fever pitch, someone at Canadian Martyrs Parish in Ottawa asked the question: "Can we and should we, as a parish, sponsor a refugee family?" A mini referendum was conducted. People were asked if they were in favour of sponsoring a refugee family. They were also invited to indicate how they saw themselves contributing to this undertaking: financial aid, providing furniture, clothing etc. The immediate response was incredibly positive.

A committee was formed to co-ordinate this project.. In one of my Sunday homilies I reflected that this experience was truly an example of the miraculous. Not unlike the miraculous catch

of fish, we have experienced the unfathomable presence of God in our midst. Ours is a very small parish and yet we had achieved our financial objectives within weeks, so much so that it was decided we would accept a second family. Our neighbouring parish, Sagrada Familia, joined our efforts in fundraising.

There has been an incredible sense of joy permeating this project. People are excited about reaching out to brothers and sisters who are struggling and in peril. During the Jubilee Year of Mercy we are encouraged to do the corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy. This project certainly was a prime example. I keep asking myself where the people learn these values. Clearly this is an Oblate parish and it would seem that the people have adopted many of the Oblate values and yes, the Oblate Charism. My Oblate predecessors certainly have effectively shared Oblate values. There is no doubt in my mind that this parish is both Oblate and missionary.

On February 2, I had the privilege of leading our Refugee Committee to the airport to receive our first refugee family, the Alkouries, a family of seven. On behalf of the entire parish family I welcomed them to Canada and to their new home. There are some things that don't require words. We could see that in the faces of the family as they recognized the banner welcoming them in Arabic. They too could recognize the love and acceptance in our faces. They are refugees no more. They have come home. As we have told them so many times, "You are safe now."

We welcomed our second family, a couple, on February 18 in a very similar way. There wasn't the awe and wonder of faces of children, but nevertheless there was the deep gratitude that their exile was over and they too had come home.

The committee members have been busy and diligent getting the families settled. Most of the legal things have been accomplished – housing, bank accounts, medical, etc. The children are all enrolled in school and the adults have begun their language classes. It appears they are doing well. We have had two receptions for them at the parish. People have been very authentic in

welcoming them to our community. It was only once they arrived that we became aware that they are not only Christian but also Catholic. They are members of the Melkite Rite. It is indeed a bonus that we can join together at Eucharist to give thanks to God. We thank God for allowing us the privilege of manifesting the mercy of God by welcoming them into our lives and hearts. They are our brothers and sisters who have suffered much and lost everything. No doubt they too are thankful that God heard their cries for help.

I think this is what it means to be an Oblate Parish. I have never been more proud to be a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Oblates host two refugees

On March 21, 2016, two refugees originally from Eritrea moved into the new house belonging to the Fraternité Nazareth at 2575 rue Letourneaux in Montreal. Mrs. Ghidey Ghirmay and her son Essay Michael had arrived in the country a month previously. After fleeing their country of origin and passing through Ethiopia, they waited for five years in Uganda before joining their two Eritrean aunts, Briketi and Hermon, who have been living for several years in Montreal.

At the suggestion of several confreres, the Provincial, Fr. Luc TARDIF, and his council had agreed to let them use an unoccupied apartment in the basement and free of charge. (<http://www.omi-qc-on.com/>)

UNITED STATES

St. Joseph the Worker Shrine: 60th anniversary

A young seminarian from Côte-Saint-André, France, André GARIN, entered the Oblates during Saint Eugene de Mazenod's lifetime. At the end of his studies, André was sent as a missionary to Canada. In 1868 Father André Garin came to Lowell, Massachusetts, to preach a mission for the hundreds of working persons who had come there from Canada. The local diocesan priest, Father O'Brien, could only minister in English. This was a barrier for the

many Canadians who were working in the area textile mills. A true disciple of Saint Eugene, Father Garin preached to the working people, not in "Provençal", but in French as it was spoken in Canada.

During that first mission, enough money was raised by the donations of the working people to meet the down payment for an abandoned church structure at 37 Lee Street. This was the first parish established in Lowell to serve the spiritual needs of the French-speaking immigrants. Saint Joseph was selected as the patron.

As the French population grew, Father Garin began the construction of St. John the Baptist church in 1890 to accommodate more parishioners. The building on Lee Street remained as a chapel, and in 1956, with the encouragement of Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston, it was blessed as a shrine in honor of St. Joseph the Worker.

As part of the many events commemorating the establishment of the Shrine in 1956, historian and curator of the Oblate Historical Museum, Bro. Richard COTE, will be giving a series of four talks entitled "Oblate Heritage Series". The presentations will focus on significant events in the Shrine's history: The First Mass held in St. Joseph Church, May 3, 1868, and celebrated by Fr. Lucien LAGIER; the Founding of the Shrine by Fr. Eugene NOURY, May 10, 1956; the dedication of the Oblate Historical Museum by Fr. Hervé GAGNON, May 28, 1995; and the establishment of the first Oblate community in Lowell, November 1, 1868, with Fr. André Garin, OMI, as first Superior.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP, CANADA

Other avenues of encountering youth in today's Church

Fr. Ali C. NNAEMEKA is a Nigerian Oblate ministering in Canada since 2014.

After my arrival in Canada, I took one year for my missionary immersion in Quebec's local Church. The primary assignment of my community is to minister to the Innu people, a First Nation of Quebec.

After my year of pastoral initiation, I started my pastoral assignment shortly before last Christmas. With the recent arrival of Fr. Alfred RAVELOMAMPISANDRAIBE from Madagascar, our missionary team is comprised of four priests who are in charge of seven out of the nine Innu communities of Quebec.

I am presently in-charge of two of these communities, namely Schefferville (Metimekosh) and Ekuanitshit (Mingan). Although I've been here only a few months, I am already finding the mission very interesting. Our communities, just like every Christian community in Quebec, are made up of the elderly. So, it is almost a luxury to have the youth attend Church activities.

Nevertheless, I have discovered a new way of reaching out to the youth. I found out that the saying, "If the mountain does not come to Muhammed, Muhammed has to go the mountain" has to be applied in their situation. Coming from a nation where soccer is the national sport, I had to make few adjustments in my own choice of sports in this country where the national sport is hockey.

So through sports activities, I started gaining the confidence of the youths. And from all indications, it seems to be fruitful. Surprisingly, during the Easter celebrations, the youth in Mingan showed me their love. During the Holy Thursday and Good Friday celebrations, the youth in our Church helped us greatly. Due to certain cultural activities in the region, most of the members of our Christian communities were traveling. And so, in the absence of the elders, the presence of the youth was not only comforting but providential as they helped out in some of the services, a reality we are no longer used to. While one of them took the first reading on Holy Thursday, two other groups served at the altar both on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

On Good Friday evening, we showed a film (*Of Gods and Men*). During the projection of the film, with the exception of a single elder, all those in attendance were youth. At the end of the Easter celebrations, I have come to understand that if the youth are to be reached in today's Church,

non-traditional pulpits cannot be ignored. (Ali C. Nnaemeka)

UNITED STATES

A Prayer Life of Painting Icons

Renowned as a teacher, preacher and iconographer, the South Dakota roots of Fr. Clyde RAUSCH are evident in his friendly manner and casual demeanor, but when he talks about his ministry of painting icons there is a special excitement in his face and voice. Fr. Clyde became interested in the priesthood while still in high school. He knew he wanted to be a missionary which brought him to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. After ordination he spent 29 years as a missionary in Sweden and it was there that this man, "who never painted anything except buildings," became fascinated with the ancient liturgical art of painting icons (iconography). He also served for six years (1998-2004) as General Councilor for the Region of Europe and from 2005 until 2013 as treasurer of the General House.

In 1969, the newly-ordained Fr. Rausch was sent to a parish in Täby, Sweden. It was there that he first met Swedish Oblate Brother, Olof Åsblom. But it would be years later, in 1986, that Fr. Clyde and Brother Olof would discover their call to iconography when they sponsored a course in the art at the Mariebäck Retreat House in Luleå, Sweden. Fr. Clyde recalls that he thought the serene nature of religious icons would have special appeal to the characteristically quiet and reserved Swedes.

Fr. Clyde points out that new trends in church art developed during the Renaissance, "... painters from Belgium, Germany and other countries tended to be much more detailed than the simpler art form from earlier Swedish artists"

That first one-week course, taught by Fr. Johannes Deurloo, a Dutch Orthodox priest, captured the interest of local village people from all denominations and especially Brother Olof and Fr. Clyde. From then on, the two Oblates began painting icons and teamed up to teach courses in iconography throughout the year between visits from Fr. Deurloo.

Fr. Clyde came back to the states in October 2013 and now resides in San Antonio, Texas where he continues to paint in his studio at the Oblate Retreat Center. In addition to painting reproductions of early Orthodox icons, he creates some original ones and conducts classes at the Oblate School of Theology on the theology of icons, gives retreat conferences using icons, and teaches the technique and prayer method of painting/writing icons.

The liturgical art of painting icons is an ancient one. In the Christian tradition it goes back as far as the first century A.D., when the famous icon of Mary and the infant Jesus which hangs in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, *Salus Populi Romani*, is said to have been painted by St. Luke the Evangelist.

Later, icons became very popular in the Eastern Orthodox Church and were meant to visually tell stories from the Bible. There were very strict rules about what colors should be used along with who and what needed to be depicted in the various scenes based upon the text from the Bible.

Icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church didn't allow for artistic license. Almost everything had a symbolic aspect. The Biblical subjects of the icons had very consistent facial features and tended to be represented in the same pose. Color also played an important role: gold, in the sky, represented Heaven; the clothes of Christ and Mary: red, divine life, blue was the color of human life, etc.

According to Fr. Clyde, Christian icons are not just representations of Biblical events. In the prescribed format of icons, the outer frame represents the border between heaven (the picture) and "the world today" (outside the frame.) The faces of the people in the pictures are "serene," the art takes the view that we are seeing them not as they were, but as they are now (saints in heaven).

A feature of some of Fr. Clyde's icons is that part of the picture crosses over the frame into "the world today," symbolizing that the event is as present today as it was in the past. According to Fr. Rausch, one of the special attributes of icons is that, "The picture will pull you into it, or it will come out to you."

These days, Fr. Clyde's reputation is such that he sometimes is commissioned by churches to create special icons for their sacred spaces. One example is a recent project depicting Mother Teresa with the Blessed Mother holding the infant Jesus that was commissioned by the Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Wisconsin.

For the future, Fr. Rausch hopes to continue painting a series of icons coinciding with the events of the liturgical year. His work is now being published in card-form and anyone interested in more information can contact Fr. Rausch directly at: rausch.omi@gmail.com. (www.omiusa.org)

Europe

FRANCE

A marathon for the 200th anniversary

Two Oblate friends from different countries found an original way to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and to honor Saint Eugene de Mazenod and the first Oblates who began the Congregation in 1816. The two *aficionados* of running, Frs. Cyprian CZOP, a 41 year old Pole, and Pasquale CASTRILLI, a 51 year old Italian, ran in the Paris marathon last April 3.

The world's second largest marathon in terms of number of participants takes place in the capital of France where St. Eugene spent his seminary years at Saint-Sulpice. This year, the 40th edition of the marathon, there were about 41,000 athletes coming from 160 countries. It was the third marathon that Cyprian and Pasquale have run simultaneously, after Poznan (Poland) in 2014 and Rome in 2015. For the record, Cyprian ran the 42 km of the marathon in 3 hours and 5 minutes, coming in 1356th in the general classification. Pasquale did it in 4 hours and 2 minutes, coming in 14220th.

“The idea of running simultaneously in Paris came to us last summer,” says Pasquale, “when, ministry and community responsibilities permitting, we would continue a two-year-old tradition of running marathons together. To tell the truth, on the occasion of the 200th, we initially thought of the marathon in Marseille, the city where St. Eugene was bishop, but that was not possible for various reasons. These marathons run with Cyprian are an opportunity for fraternity and sharing.” (Pasquale Castrilli)

FRANCE

Verdun, 100 years ago

In perusing the Oblate Necrology for the periods of the two World Wars of the 20th century, one learns that a number of Oblates – priests, Brothers, scholastics and even some novices – lost their lives on both sides of these conflicts. One hundred years ago, the “Great War” was raging in Europe. A newly ordained Oblate took part in the terrible Battle of Verdun, which lasted almost the entire year of 1916.

André MAURE (1887-1958) was in formation with the Oblates. Having been ordained a priest by the Bishop of Bayeux in 1916, the very next day he was sent to Verdun. His first letter tells of what was happening there:

“I don’t want to delay in telling you how I spent the first night of my priesthood at Verdun. I had barely joined my regiment when I already heard of a job to be done; I asked the favor of accompanying, as stretcher bearer, the team of

brave men who, that very evening, were going into the Valley of Death, in front of Fort Vaux, in order to build up the bulwarks.

“We leave in the pouring rain. The shades of night envelop the region in a dead silence. From the surrounding peaks there are flashes of light that illumine with ominous rays the darkest of passages. Our weary eyes barely tolerate this succession of violent flashes and heavy darkness. It continues to rain and the trenches are turned into torrents or into stagnant pools. Finally, after a three hour walk, we arrive. A terrible bombardment welcomes us. Right away, there are two seriously wounded and one killed. We need to carry them to where they can be cared for. It’s far, far away; the trench that leads there is filled with obstacles. Sometimes we crawl on hands and knees; we crawl through mud. Sometimes, we climb onto embankments to avoid tree trunks lying in our path. The stretcher lies heavy on our shoulders; we stumble and we fall into huge holes filled with fetid water. The rain continues to pour down, as do the shells. Early in the morning, I get lost near the woods that are now only shredded and jumbled debris. On all sides, there lie dead bodies, animals and humans; gutted caissons; canons; automobiles; carriages abandoned in a pitiful state. This is war with its horrors. Artillery supplies pass me by in the downpour, speeding by with six horses. I cling to a caisson and I arrive at my starting point, which is unrecognizable, all mired in a liquid mud, but I am happy, a few moments later, to approach the holy altar.” <http://www.oblatfrance.com/>

Latin America

ARGENTINA

Refugio San Eugenio: the bishop’s visit

The *Refugio San Eugenio* is in the area of Virrey del Pino, in the Buenos Aires district of La Matanza. There is an internet radio program; lunch for many kids; a scout group; and many youth who gather there “to cure their bodies and souls from the scourge of addiction.” They have various sport, recreational, social and missionary activities. Two Oblates serve at the *Refugio*: Frs. Sergio MENEGONI and Antonio MARIANGELI.

In April, the Bishop of Gregorio de Laferrere, Mons. Gabriel Barba, paid a visit to the *Refugio* that serves as a shelter for children and adolescents who are at risk. The bishop toured the facilities managed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and spoke with the children and adolescents who go there in search of a safe harbor.

“The bishop shared the whole afternoon with us,” stated one of the lay collaborators of the place.

Meanwhile, Father Sergio described the bishop’s

visit as “an unforgettable afternoon” and he summed up the experience with one word: “Thanks.”

“First of all, to God who was present in so many ways: in a dazzlingly clear sky; in an atmosphere of total joy; in the testimonies of the youth; in the celebration of Mass which was the culmination of a wonderful feast,” he explained.

“Thanks too,” he added, “to Bishop Barba who, with his closeness, his simplicity and availability, mingled with the children and youth, sharing in their games, playing ping pong, giving interviews, chatting amiably, and enjoying the ever present mate and fried cakes.”

The religious stated: “Our hearts were full as we received words of encouragement from our shepherd for our work, inspiring us to continue being a ‘beacon of light’ in the neighborhood, radiating hope and life to the many needy youth.”

“What I have just said and for the many experiences we had, this afternoon will be remembered as something unforgettable: an afternoon full of blessings which touched our souls.” (<http://www.aica.org>)

PERU

Episcopal ordination of Bishop Salcedo

The Coliseo del Colegio Salesiano Santa

Rosa in Huancayo served as a temporary “Cathedral” for the April 17 episcopal ordination of Oblate Bishop Carlos SALCEDO OJEDA, the first Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Huancayo and the first Peruvian Oblate bishop. Pope Francis had named him to that service in the Church on January 30, 2016.

At the time of his nomination, he was serving as parish priest in Huancayo and as Coordinator of Justice and Peace for the Oblate Delegation of Peru. Born in 1960, Bishop Salcedo made his first profession of vows as an Oblate in 1990. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1996, he served in various parishes and also as an Oblate formator in both Peru and Paraguay.

Archbishop Pedro Barreto Jimeno, the Ordinary of Huancayo, presided at the ordination, assisted by Archbishop Salvador Piñeiro García Calderón of Ayacucho and Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte of Trujillo. It was the first episcopal ordination to take place in the city of Huancayo.

The new bishop’s coat of arms is very clearly based on the one designed by St. Eugene de Mazenod for his Oblates: the cross, the crown of thorns and the instruments of the passion. His episcopal motto is: “Enviado para dar buenas nuevas a los pobres (Sent to bring good news to the poor)”.

Anniversaries for June 2016

75 Years of religious life

12.06.1941	07799	Bro. Giuseppe D'Orazio	General Administration
29.06.1941	07294	Fr. Francis Montalbano	United States

75 Years of priesthood

1941.06.15	06151	Fr. Léo-Paul Pigeon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
------------	-------	---------------------	-------------------

65 Years of priesthood

01.06.1951	08004	Fr. Marc Bilodeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
24.06.1951	08049	Fr. John Murphy	Anglo-Irish

60 Years of priesthood

08.06.1956	08918	Fr. Alfred Hubenig	Lacombe
09.06.1956	08901	Fr. Charles Beausoleil	United States
09.06.1956	09325	Fr. Lorne Mackey	Lacombe
16.06.1956	09284	Fr. Maurice Joly	Lacombe
24.06.1956	09141	Fr. Paul Duda	Central European
29.06.1956	08844	Fr. Antonio Ciccone	Mediterranean

50 Years of religious life

15.06.1966	11752	Fr. Amador Castillo	Philippines
------------	-------	---------------------	-------------

50 Years of priesthood

30.06.1966	11005	Fr. John Rozmyslowski	Assumption
30.06.1966	10480	Fr. Marian Wieckowski	Poland
30.06.1966	10900	Fr. Franciszek Wojtyla	Poland

25 Years of priesthood

02.06.1991	12976	Fr. José Manuel Cicuéndez	Mediterranean
08.06.1991	12905	Fr. Martin Benning	Central European
08.06.1991	12820	Fr. Günther Kames	Central European
15.06.1991	12962	Fr. Stanislaw Kazek	Poland
15.06.1991	12800	Fr. Roman Kempka	Poland
15.06.1991	12960	Fr. Wojciech Kluj	Poland
15.06.1991	11527	Fr. André Koumans	Belgium/Holland
15.06.1991	12957	Fr. Eugeniusz Kowol	Poland
15.06.1991	12958	Fr. Waldemar Meyka	Poland
15.06.1991	12955	Fr. Wladyslaw Poddebniak	Central European
15.06.1991	12959	Fr. Janusz Snarski	Poland
22.06.1991	12939	Fr. John-Raymond Lau	United States

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 27-33

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Bro. Jean Kanzler	France	24/06/1925	Strasbourg	07/04/2016
Fr. Maynard Boomars	OMI Lacombe	27/12/1937	St. Albert	14/04/2016
Bro./Deacon Joseph Dujmovic	Belgium/Holland	31/10/1939	Baillonville	14/04/2016
Fr. Harold McIntee	OMI Lacombe	29/04/1930	Ottawa	14/04/2016
Fr. Jean-Guy Roberge	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	17/10/1931	Richelieu	15/04/2016
Fr. Thomas Maher	Japan	29/05/1931	Kochi	16/04/2016
Fr. Hubert Bertrand	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	27/11/1928	Richelieu	25/04/2016

“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
via Aurelia 290, I 00165 Roma, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
<http://www.omiworld.org>
Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Shanil Jayawardena
Printing & circulation: Shanil Jayawardena