



A new Central Government: the work begins!

The newly elected Superior General of the Oblates, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, preached this homily in the chapel of the Oblate General House in Rome on January 6, 2010, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. This Eucharistic celebration was a solemn moment of prayer as the new Central Government, elected by the 35th General Chapter in late September, prepares to begin its first formal plenary session.

“Father, draw us beyond the limits which this world imposes to the life where your Spirit makes all life complete.” (Opening Prayer, Solemnity of the Epiphany)

I wish to thank Fr. Steckling and Fr. King for being here with us today. We are grateful to you and to all the members of the previous General Council for the leadership and vision with which you have animated the Congregation during the past twelve years.

We, the new General Council and Superior General, already installed (!), begin our ministry to the Congregation in a solemn way on this missionary feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I think of three missionary dimensions of this celebration:

1. The passage from St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians invites us to marvel at the MYSTERY God has revealed, the mystery of fullness of life in Jesus Christ. This is the heart of our missionary proclamation to the poor. Called to ongoing conversion by our recent Chapter, we are drawn to dwell more deeply in this MYSTERY and to announce this Good News with our whole being: who we are, what we do, our options, our commitments and priorities, what we say and preach.

2. The Epiphany renews our missionary conviction that the Father is drawing all nations on earth to adore Jesus as Lord and Light of the world. As Oblates who bear the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod, we seek conversion to Jesus Crucified ever anew; we are passionate about Jesus and desire “...to know him more deeply, to identify with him, and to let him live in us” (Constitution #2).

3. The celebration of the Epiphany also is a missionary invitation to be travelers on a journey, pilgrims walking by the light of faith. The call to ongoing conversion requires bold availability to cross borders on this journey so that we respond to the needs of the Church and of the poor.

As we inaugurate our work together on this Solemnity of the Epiphany, many things come to mind such as leadership, administration, governance, challenges, ordinary and general sessions, portfolios, finances, strategies, objectives, goals, etc. We hope to work well together in a collaborative, co-responsible way in service to the Congregation’s mission to preach the Gospel to the poor and abandoned. We will use our knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, skills and experience so that we can best respond to the challenges of the mission today.

The Word of God on this feast of the Epiphany also brings to mind an important awareness for us. While King Herod, his well-prepared court, chief priests and scribes had the Scriptures and knew the prophecy regarding Bethlehem, they didn’t see the star nor were they searching for anyone outside of themselves. Instead of welcoming and marveling at the Magi’s quest, King Herod and all Jerusalem became alarmed and perturbed by the presence and questions of the Magi.

In the spirit of the Chapter's invitation to continue embracing conversion at all levels of Oblate life and mission, a process that has only just begun, the Epiphany celebration poses several considerations for this new leadership and for all Oblates.

We learn from the Magi who...

...were humble enough to ask questions and admit that they did not know everything;
 ...overcame fear and left familiar territory, their 'little kingdoms' and ventured out to cross borders;
 ...searched, followed, asked for guidance and looked up to the heavens, not held back by fear of trying or of failing; of being laughed at and rejected;
 ...allowed their hearts to throb with joy as they *saw* the Child and his mother, suspending

attitudes like "been there, done that" and cynicism;

...prostrated themselves in adoration, their whole beings given in loving surrender, oblation;

...offered gifts in joy and gratitude with generous hearts because they were able *to see*.

We pray today to Mary Immaculate and St. Eugene de Mazenod for the wisdom and skills for the ministry of leadership, governance and administration for the benefit of the mission entrusted to the Congregation. We ask too for hearts like those of the Magi, shaped and animated by the beauty and wonder of the great MYSTERY in which we live and which it is our mission to preach to the poor.

Please pray for us.

General Administration

GENERAL POSTULATION

A beatification in sight

The Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints held an "Ordinary Congregation" of Cardinals and Bishops on January 18, 2011. During that session, they approved the material and formal martyrdom of the 22 Oblates, Servants of God. Heading the group is Fr. Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL, provincial. The other 21 were members of the scholasticate community of Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid). Included in the cause is a layman, Cándido Castán, a father of family, who was imprisoned in the scholasticate with the Oblates and murdered with them.

There is a well-founded hope that the beatification, which will be held in the Madrid Cathedral, can be celebrated this year, 2011, the year of the 150th anniversary of St. Eugene de Mazenod, to show that those who live his charism, a real journey of spiritual life, can arrive at Christian perfection and can be proclaimed saints. Before celebrating the beatification, the only thing still lacking is the promulgation of the decree before the pope who will then sign it. The Postulator appreciates the prayers and the financial gifts to cover the costs. (Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, General Postulator)

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

A time of transition

Although the election and installation of the new Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, and his Council took place in the final days of September 2010, their real work as a leadership team really began after a solemn Eucharistic celebration on January 6, 2011. On that day, Father General, standing next to his predecessor, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, and surrounded by the new General Council and other Oblates from the General House, the International Scholasticate and the Province of Italy, offered this prayer during his homily: "We pray today to Mary Immaculate and St. Eugene de Mazenod for the wisdom and skills for the ministry of leadership, governance and administration for the benefit of the mission entrusted to the Congregation." (A video of parts of this Mass can be found on the Congregation's web site: www.omiworld.org)

Other Oblate guests were present, together with many friends and collaborators of the Oblates, both religious and lay. Among the guests was Sister Margaret Muldoon, the Superior General of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, along

with her Council. There has been a long history of collaboration between our two congregations, already from the days of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

Following the Eucharist, about 120 persons sat down to a delicious meal in the General House dining room, enjoying, of course, the festive cakes and spumante that are traditional for the feast of the Epiphany.

Two days after this celebration of the new Central Government, on January 8, the General House chapel was again filled with guests for the final vows of six young Oblates from the International Roman Scholasticate. Fr. General presided at the liturgy and accepted the perpetual commitment of scholastic Brothers Bonga MAJOLA and Thabang NKADIMENG (both from the Northern Province of South Africa), Nathanael POSHOLI (Lesotho), Marcin SERWIN (Assumption, Canada), Gérard TSATSELAM (Cameroun) and Ndodana TSHUMA (Zimbabwe).

The Oblates who had served in the previous administration have been experiencing their own transition, prior to assuming new ministry assignments. Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING left his Roman home of 18 years on January 9 to begin a sabbatical of several months in Bolivia. He wants to participate in the Ignatian Exercises, do some guided reading and perhaps write some kind of spiritual synthesis. From there, he hopes to return to his previous mission in Paraguay.

Fr. Eugene KING, former Vicar General, left Rome on January 12 to return to Ottawa where he taught for many years at St. Paul's University. After a period of repose, he will receive an assignment from the provincial of the Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province.

Fr. Oswald FIRTH, former First Assistant, has returned to his province of origin, the Colombo Province in Sri Lanka, and is keeping very busy. Among other things, he is preparing a group of war widows (whose husbands were either killed or disappeared during the 30 year war) in Eastern Sri Lanka and accompanying them to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) to seek justice and recognition of their plight. He will also be working with Oblates in Australia who are working with migrant peoples.

Fr. Jean Bosco MUSUMBI, former Councillor for Africa-Madagascar, is residing at the Italian Provincial House in Vermicino where he is following on-line courses for training as a professional webmaster.

Fr. Loudeger MAZILE, former Councillor for Latin America, is in Paris until May 2011. He is taking part in a program on spirituality and religious life at the Jesuits' Centre Sèvres.

Fr. Marcel DUMAIS, former Councillor for Canada-United States, has returned to Ottawa. A member of Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province, he says that he is reading a lot, getting updated in biblical studies. Eventually he wants to be involved in the animation of biblical workshops and retreats.

Fr. Federico LABAGLAY, former Councillor for Asia-Oceania, has returned to the Philippine Province. He is currently reintegrating himself into the pastoral reality of Cotabato and Manila. Next summer, he will attend the pastoral renewal course at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila and he will complete his sabbatical with the De Mazenod Experience in Aix.

Asia-Oceania

THAILAND

On the banks of the Mekong

Michel LYNDE, Oblate of French origins in Thailand, wrote to his friends for Christmas.

A happy and peaceful new year to everyone, and if possible, a joyful one.

On television, we see images of cold and snow in France. Brrr! Here, we just have a bit of fog in the morning; during the day, it usually gets up to 30 degrees. But how can we share that?

The political climate is less certain. We have not recovered from the difficulties of May and June. Everyone speaks of revenge. And the

poorest people are manipulated or are victims. The poor health of the king is paralyzing the country and, as everywhere, we cannot exclude the worst.

Here, we are far from the city, but everything is changing, and rapidly. Chiengkhan is on fire! They build and they build, more or less well, hotels, bistros and shops. They tear down too. The good, the less good and the worst are coming here. On Saturday and Sunday, tourists coming from the cities in the south invade the little town. The local residents, at first glad about the possible business, are beginning to ask themselves some questions: they sell, they rent, and they argue. The people here are overwhelmed by the “invaders.” The usual well-known cordiality of Chiengkhan is vanishing, and the traffic with the “left bank” has resumed.

All of this has repercussions on the little Christian community. Some let themselves be taken in by this easy commerce and the false advantages: they are wandering from the group. Others had to go away because of family problems or their job. Some abandon us.

It's not easy for those who are holding on to bear all of this. And their preparation for Christmas is proof of their lethargy. But also of their courage. They tinker a bit; they do a few little things new: the old and new, as the Gospel says.

May this Advent and Christmas time be for all of you a time of light, of new courage, of joy and of peace. God is counting on each one of us to pass on to others this light and joy we receive. Let's sing together most loudly: HE IS WITH US. Loudly enough so that we are heard everywhere. (*Audacieux pour l'évangile*, décembre 2010)

AUSTRALIA

Flooding affects the Oblates

Television and news reports indicate that over 200,000 peoples' lives have been directly affected by the devastating floods that have inundated up to 75% of the state of Queensland. The city of Brisbane has been hard hit by this disaster. One of the Oblates ministering in that area, Fr. Paul SMITHERS, sent this report:

The Oblates have the pastoral care of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish and St. Eugene College in Burpengary, a northern suburb of Brisbane. The Catholic precinct at Burpengary backs on to a creek that on Tuesday, January 11, was overwhelmed with rain and flooded. The flood waters caused major evacuation in our street, destroyed part of the church's car park, the college ovals and flowed at a rapid rate into the commercial centre of Burpengary, leaving a trail of mud and debris.

Thanks be to God, the college and Oblate residence were not flooded.

The real heartache and destruction of these floods came in suburbs closer to Brisbane city and Ipswich, where thousands of people have been affected by flood waters inundating their homes and causing major injury. Fifteen people have died, with more people unaccounted for as a result of these floods. Many of our parishioners cannot get to work because of flooded roads and failed infrastructure. Many Brisbanites have a long road of recovery and reconstruction before them. I have been inspired by stories of parishioners volunteering to help people in other communities and generally people coming together to help each other.

PHILIPPINES

Another bomb attack in Jolo

On Christmas Day, while Oblate Father Romeo VILLANUEVA was reading the gospel at Mass, a bomb exploded at the Sacred Heart Chapel in a police camp in Jolo. The bomb had been attached to a window in the chapel. About 50 persons were assisting at Christmas Mass when the explosion collapsed the roof over the front of the chapel and debris flew in all directions.

A newly ordained priest, Fr. Ricky Bacolcol, was concelebrating; he was thrown off his feet and slightly injured, as were several other persons. The wounded were taken to hospitals, but no one sustained life-threatening injuries. In fact, most of them were able to return home on the same day.

Pope Benedict XVI, during his remarks after praying the Angelus with the faithful at St. Peter's on the day after Christmas, revealed his distress at

the news of this attack and similar attacks against Christians in Nigeria: "It was with great sadness that I learnt about the attack on a Catholic Church in the Philippines during the celebrations for Christmas and also against Christian churches in Nigeria," the pope said. "The earth is once again stained with blood as we have seen in other parts of the world."

In 1994, the Abu Sayyaf attacked the same police camp and abducted an Oblate priest, the late Father Clarence BERTELSMAN. He was rescued hours later as the kidnappers were involved in a gun battle with the Moro National Liberation Front. Fr. Bertelsman himself was injured in that battle.

Africa-Madagascar

CHAD

The joys and sorrows of a missionary

In his Christmas letter, Father Philippe ALIN, speaks of the challenges of parish life in Chad.

At the parish in Torrock, activities move forward as planned. The different groups of catechumens have celebrated their rites and those who will be baptized in the future (350) are being examined. At the last meeting of the parish council, I asked if there are still some new catechumens; they answered that there are even more than before! They have been organized by village and by neighborhood so as to have small groups. So the phenomenon of the influx into the Church continues. But the question remains: "how to animate all of these young people who are coming to us?" There is indeed a youth movement, but it is not very dynamic. Let's hope for the best.

On Sunday, when I celebrate in a village, after Mass, we eat together with the sisters and the animators of the Christian community; it's an opportunity to learn many things about village life. Last Sunday at Tefapou, there was the complaint of an elderly Christian who said: "My wife told me to take a young wife and to leave her alone." A discussion followed: all the women beyond child-bearing age do the same thing! They push their husbands toward polygamy. There were many others who said the same thing. So all the menopausal women don't want sex anymore; they refuse the conjugal union with their husbands who obviously go to find it elsewhere. When I got back to Torrock, I asked my associate, Martin, a moderator at the high school and a man of experience. He was not quite as categorical as the people of Tefapou, but he

acknowledged that it was a big difficulty. In the background, there is the whole African tradition which sees marriage as uniquely geared toward procreation and not toward the love and well-being of the spouses. It's a huge, huge challenge, to proclaim the truth of Christian marriage!

Usually, after Mass, they take me to visit the sick for anointing and communion. On a recent Sunday, at Mabassyacke, they took me to see a very old woman. She had a face of rare beauty: transparent skin, with barely a wrinkle, bright eyes and what seemed to be a permanent smile; a great peace radiated from her person. As I shared my thoughts with her son who was accompanying me, he told me: "It's true; our mother never hit us; she never raised her voice; no one ever saw her angry or fighting with her neighbors." What an extraordinary radiance in this village!

It was in this large village that we had the latest outbreak of cholera. It had begun with those who were looking for gold; they lived and slept in the mud...

Many villages were spared, thanks to their being put under quarantine: access to the village was forbidden to strangers; guards secured the roads; others sprayed visitors with disinfectant. Our Sunday assemblies had to pass through the disinfectant; even the Blessed Sacrament was placed in a mist of disinfectant! But thanks to it, the scourge was kept away.

We had the joy of having three new priests, ordained by the bishop last month. That makes 12 diocesan priests. Their number is not growing because there have unfortunately been departures. I think that the social context, where

moral references no longer exist, influence the behavior of individuals, and when temptations arrive, it's easy to give in.

On my part, I am still accompanying the youth who feel called to a vocation of consecrated life: three or four future Oblates and 10 seminarians. I love this ministry, a plunge into the life of the young; in all simplicity, they bear witness to me by opening to me their heart, their dreams, their struggles, their light and their darkness.

So there's a beautiful sign of the Kingdom that comes to us at Christmas! Let's welcome it! (*Audacieux pour l'évangile*, décembre 2010)

ZAMBIA

Art and the environment

"Total destruction of our natural resources means destruction of our life, because our life depends on them", said the newly appointed Cardinal for Zambia, his Eminence Medardo Mazombwe. This was at the opening of a weeklong Art Exhibition which took place at Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka on November 12, 2010, under the theme "Caring for the Environment".

The experienced and the young artists of Lusaka once again participated at the annual Art Exhibition. The youths, aged between 15 and 22 years, came from Mary Immaculate parish while the experienced artists came from the Visual Arts Center (VAC) in Lusaka.

Cardinal Mazombwe thanked the artists for inspiring and motivating people to care for the environment. He further told the artists that, "it is they who show the beauty of nature and help to desist from destroying it."

The Cardinal reminded the gathering that they are masters, created by God, "When God says you are masters, He is not giving man the right to destroy other creatures but to let them grow, produce and increase or multiply".

He further said, "We are proud and happy that the pastoral team in this parish is aware of the fact that ecology is part of our Christian faith.

The Holy Father confirms this in his words: *'The Church considers that matters concerning environment and its protection are intimately linked with integral Human Development'*. That means the environment plays a great role in the development of human beings. If we destroy it, we destroy ourselves".

The Cardinal told the gathering that art inspires and motivates us to care for the environment. He further spoke of the importance of preserving nature, "If you keep nature, nature keeps you. If your environment is clean, you enjoy beauty and you enjoy good health," he said.

To emphasizing the need for preserving the environment, Cardinal Mazombwe planted a tree on the grounds of Mary Immaculate Parish. (By Musonda Chipili in OMI Zambia, October-December 2010)

LESOTHO

Scholastics on mission in the mountain kingdom

Lesotho is a mountainous kingdom and a Christian country of about 1.5 million people of which the majority are Catholics. Four scholastic brothers, Sefatsa QOPANE and Pius VAN ROOS, both from South Africa; together with Tshepo MOTHEPU and Moabi THIBINYANE from Lesotho, set out for a joint mission.

St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Mission in Makhaleng was established in 1939. However, the mission was without a shepherd for quite some time. St. Bernard's mission, on the outskirts of Roma, is now entrusted to the *Mater Jesu* scholasticate in Lesotho. The current parish priest, Fr Sello TERA, who is also a formator at the scholasticate, recently took over the mission.

Makhaleng is not an industrial area; therefore, the majority of the inhabitants depend on their agricultural produce. Our Constitution stipulates: "Where the church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least". (C. 5) We no longer merely proclaim this Constitution, but we have experienced and lived it.

A week before we began our mission, we sat down with the members of the church council to plan our

work. Our task was to revive the small Christian communities that became inactive soon after the mission was abandoned. Also, we were to work with different sodalities and lastly, to do *status animarum*, in simple terms, a census. The latter activity was the most crucial part of our mission. We were obliged to reach out to all twelve villages where the Christians in the mission live, thus, touching the maximum number of the Christian population in the mission.

During our visits to the villages we would find some of the faithful already gathered, while others were still to come. Each time we paid a visit to a village, people would gather, either at a chief's compound, or at a catechist's house or any Christian prayer house. We normally started our work with prayer which consisted of scripture reading followed by a short reflection by one of us; then afterwards, everyone else was given a chance to share as well.

The next thing was the census, the main aim of our visit. This took more or less six hours per village, depending on the size of the village. However, some people were unable to come to the rendezvous, due to old age, sickness, etc., so we had to go to their homes, taking Holy Communion when necessary. Every time we visited a village, people would set aside their activities to avail themselves of our presence and some people of good will accompanied us from one house to another. Christians from other denominations were also

present, and together we joined in prayer. Some villages were small and it took us only a couple of hours to complete our task; in some cases we would visit two to three villages per day. Other villages were far and we had to travel on horseback.

Just like Oblate houses, which are characterized by a special sense of hospitality (C. 41), Sothos were very hospitable in their homes. They did not have much but they shared much with us. Everywhere we went, people were hospitable in various ways, and some offered refreshments while others kept us company when travelling; still others regaled us with their inexhaustible anecdotes. The lapsed Christians were keen to assure us that they are still Catholics, Dutch Reformed and so on; this gave me a vivid picture that "people aren't leaving their churches; they just aren't going to them", as Reginald Bibby stated. On some Sundays, when a priest was unable to come, due to climate conditions, it was our obligation to lead the congregation of approximately three hundred people in a prayer service.

After a month of tough work in the mission, we had the privilege of visiting the graves of our great pioneer missionaries, namely, Blessed Joseph GERARD and Archbishop Emmanuel MABATHOANA, the first native bishop of Lesotho. (Sefatsa Qopane in the *Cedara Journal*, 2010)

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP A centenary at Richelieu

The 100 years of Fr. Nazaire MORISSETTE were honored with a family celebration on December 14 at the community in Richelieu. Fr. Jacques LALIBERTÉ, vicar provincial, presided at the Eucharist and gave the homily. Present were the jubilarian as well as Fr. Germain RANGER who presented an overview of Fr. Nazaire's life.

After communion, the centenarian expressed with enthusiasm his gratitude and a few highlights of his Oblate life as a spiritual director, preacher of thirty-day retreats and his extensive work with the Congregation of Notre Dame Sisters at the hermitage of Notre-Dame-des-Bois.

For the festive meal, Bishop François Lapierre of Saint-Hyacinthe joined the community along with other invited guests, cousins of Fr. Nazaire, neighbors and Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame. Various speakers expressed their joyful thanksgiving. Parchment testimonials were given to Fr. Morissette from various political representatives; there was also a message and apostolic blessing from Benedict XVI. (Marcel CHÉNIER, *INFO OMI* 15 December 2010)

UNITED STATES An honor for the Secretary General

Father Thomas COUGHLIN, the congregation's General Secretary in Rome, joined three other Oblates as a member of the Bishop Fallon High

School (Buffalo, New York) Hall of Fame at a ceremony late in October. In addition to Fr. Tom, five other individuals and the 1950 golf team were also honored.

Fr. Tom was cited for his work for the congregation, his ministry with the charismatic community in Newburgh, New York, and his work as a professor of scripture in Washington, DC, Rome, Italy, and Lesotho.

This is the ninth year for the alumni association to honor graduates, faculty or staff members. Fr. Tom joins three other Oblates in the Hall of Fame: Frs. Daniel O'LEARY (teacher and principal), David O'BRIEN (missionary in Brazil and a member of the class of 1950 at Holy Angels Collegiate Institute, Fallon High School's predecessor) and William O'DONNELL. The Hall of Fame is located at the Oblates' Holy Angels parish in Buffalo.

Fallon High, named for an Oblate, Bishop Michael FALLON, a former pastor of Holy Angels and later bishop of London, Ontario, was opened in 1951 as part of the Buffalo diocese's expansion of Catholic high school education. It replaced Holy Angels Collegiate Institute, the former Oblate juniorate. By 1975, the school closed, due in part to the shrinking population in the city of Buffalo. During the 25 years of its existence, 25 Fallon graduates entered religious life or priestly ministry, more than half as Oblates. (William O'Donnell in *OMI USA*, December 2010)

UNITED STATES

Basil, sage and rosemary

"Basil, sage and rosemary." That's how Fr. Alfonso GIOPPATO will entitle the book about his life...if he ever writes it. Italy, Chad, Canada, Zambia, Texas ... everywhere that he has gone, in his long, winding missionary journey, he has planted these three herbs, each of them essential in every good Italian meal. (The pastor of Eagle Pass even used Fr. Alfonso's rosemary to sprinkle Holy Water!) Wherever he goes, he regales the Oblate community with his exquisite culinary skill: he is earning the reputation of a great cook. The Oblates of the city of San Antonio await his

monthly visit to enjoy his good humor and his conviviality, but also because they can finally eat the way god intended: "basil, sage and rosemary." His arrival in the community has already been announced a week ahead and already, mouths begin to water.

"I would like to write to *Missioni OMI*, but I am not used to writing..." Fr. Alfonso is like most readers of the magazine! "Why don't you come to visit me where I work," he told me, "and then you can see how I live and you can write the letter yourself. By the way, I just read the latest issue of the magazine. I liked it a lot." "So *Missioni OMI* arrives all the way here?" I asked. "Of course I get it here. Maybe a month late, but it arrives. And I read it."

So, finding myself in Texas, I went to visit him. He is located at the very ends of the earth, in Nixon, a remote village. The house where he lives ... it's better not to say too much about that: it would take the whole magazine to describe it. It's a typical missionary's home: small, prefabricated, almost a shack. Like those of most of his people, you can pull it from one place to another, as is customary in the U.S. It's small but it has everything, like a bazaar of olden days: from the objects he has accumulated in his travels in Africa and North America to his carpenter's tools, from teaching materials for his ministry to his food supplies, everything mixed together and carefully spread out, leaving only one corner clear. Just be careful where you step and you are immediately at home.

After he welcomes me with his usual warmth, he sends me out to pick some rosemary, planting right at the entry to the church, so that he can prepare some lamb cutlets. He has planted the other aromatic herbs under a big tree in front of the house, protected from the sun.

Everyone can take a leaf or a twig, but only for blessing. While cooking, Fr. Alfonso begins to dictate the letter to *Missioni OMI*. This continues during dinner in the evening and the next morning. He tells of his entire life as a missionary. He stops only to welcome people to the Mass celebrated a bit in English and a bit in Spanish, given the mixture of peoples in this

parish. At night, a group of men begin to prepare the barbecue for cooking stuffed turkeys. "Our parish has the largest barbecue in Texas," says the proud Fr. Alfonso. More than a BBQ, it looks more like a locomotive and can cook up to eighty turkeys at a time.

The following morning, Sunday, after Mass, half of the countryside gathers in the parish hall. To the turkeys are added the desserts prepared by the women, a vast and varied array. Those who are cooking and serving wear a blue shirt with the parish emblem on the front and on the back, the words, "In the service of Jesus Christ." They socialize and also earn some money for the parish. But we cannot stay too long, for we must leave for another town, Smily, which belongs to the same mission. The party continues for these simple people and for their equally simple missionary. The dictation also continues, but now... "Fr. Alfonso, there's no more space for the letter! The page is full... ." Patience: it can wait for another time. (Fabio Ciardi in *Missioni OMI*)

UNITED STATES

A house built on rock

As the 50th anniversary of Immaculata Retreat House approached, Bro. Richard COTE began sifting through an abundance of historical memorabilia. He found hundreds of photos, mementos and other items related to the retreat house located in Willimantic, Connecticut.

Brother Richard, the author of "Immaculata: A House Built on Rock," discovered Immaculata could be summed up simply as "a house built by the people for the people."

Located on 53 acres overlooking the scenic Willimantic River Valley, Immaculata offers programs for people of all backgrounds. There are retreats for youth and parish groups, men and women, sisters, seminarians and deacons. There are also retreats for married and engaged couples as well as persons recovering from various addictions.

In recent years, Father Salvador "Chava" GONZALEZ has developed new programs to help young people meet Christ in a deeper way.

He noted that the Founder of the Missionary Oblates, St. Eugene de Mazenod, worked tirelessly for youth, and that tradition continues today at Immaculata.

"Through our Confirmation programs and youth retreats, we bring youngsters to a personal encounter with Christ," said Fr. Gonzalez. "We help them discover their call to live life to the fullest, and we encourage them to share with each other and their families the many gifts they have received through the sacraments."

Multicultural events take place at Immaculata throughout the year, in addition to retreats for people of numerous ethnic groups including Haitian, Hispanic, Brazilian and people of Polish heritage.

In 2006, the Immaculata facility underwent a multi-million dollar improvement. There are 73 rooms, each with private bath, individual heating/cooling controls and wireless internet access. The three presentation rooms, chapel and dining hall have also been modernized.

While Immaculata has a new look, its core mission remains the same – to provide retreatants a place where they can build a deeper relationship with God.

"Immaculata Retreat House is more than a house built on rock—more than a place where programs are offered," said Bro. Richard. "It is a spirit, a desire to share the Word with those who come; a desire to search for the Word with those who come, with the prayerful intercession of our patroness, Mary Immaculate." (www.omiusa.org)



Europe

POLAND**Fr. Alfred O. Rozynek, OMI: 100 years old!**

The parents of Fr. Alfred O. ROZYNEK had 21 children. Of their offspring, the eldest girl became a nun and two of the boys became Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Fr. Alfred was born Niałku near Wolsztyn on December 12, 1910. However, the principal celebration of his 100th birthday was held on December 12.

Ordained in 1936, he ministered in various ways during his long life as an Oblate missionary: as a pastor and as a local superior, including at Holy Cross. A man of deep faith and serenity, he attributes his longevity to “moderation in all things.”

For the public celebration of Fr. Alfred's birthday, the Bishop John Wieczork of Gliwice presided at a Mass in St. Nicholas Church. Other concelebrants were the provincial, Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, 18 Oblates and the pastor of the parish. The homily was preached by Fr. Joseph NIESLONY. A local orchestra provided music and the mayor presented the best wishes of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. At the end, Fr. Alfred expressed his thanks to all the participants. Many of Fr. Alfred's family members were in attendance, including his last living brother, Józef Rozynek. (Fr. Bernard BRIKS in www.oblaci.pl)

FRANCE**A house of service and of giving**

Near Aix en Provence, an old building called the Cagnard enjoys its lovely reputation as a place of giving, of welcome and of service to others. Nearly 100 years ago, some rich lawyers made a gift of this building to their governess. In 1996, this person in turn gave it to the Oblates of France. For six years now, this dwelling has been a house of welcome whose purpose is found in number C. 5 of our Constitutions and Rules: “*We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light.*”

There is a great variety of people who come here: families, individuals who feel the need to be heard, the world of artists, families of prisoners, students... The diocese is also closely linked with the Cagnard for meetings of parishes, organizations and various groups of Christians. Nor should we forget the Oblate community of Aix en Provence who like to come there regularly, as well as several groups of youth from France and elsewhere, accompanied by Oblates. A visit to the Cagnard is also an integral part of each session at the International de Mazenod Center in Aix: they come at the beginning (to bring the group together) and at the end, for an evaluation of their stay in Aix. In 2010, more than a 1,000 persons came; there were 1,600 overnights and more than 4,000 meals were served.

Several weekends of reflection were led by the Oblates and there were also several conferences and other activities offered for those who were interested, especially for persons estranged from the Church.

To do this, an association was organized to help the manager, Eric AUDO, of the Aix en Provence community, to give some life to this house. Presently, there are more than 150 lay members of this association.

Its goal is the following: “*To help, support and assist the continuation of a family-type lodging known by the name of the Cagnard, in its operation and management, in order to offer a warm welcome to individuals, respecting and opening to them some channels of kindness and inner potential.*”

Here are two testimonials:

“The house and the grounds are rich with all that you give, that you bring, that you build and that is experienced every day. Each piece of furniture, every object, the cut firewood (for heating in winter), everything is a reminder of your contribution to the welcoming of people to the Cagnard. Every corner is replete with discussions, laughter, and the sharing that we

have been able to have; and that means that you are present each day. The guests like that feeling. For all of that, thank you!"

"The Cagnard is for us a haven of peace, a privileged place of encounters and sharing. Our visits there give us each time the opportunity for a time of sharing, in a spirit of friendship and often, of spirituality, to help us go together one step more..." (Eric Audo)

POLAND

A difficult project completed

Habilitation is the highest academic qualification a scholar can achieve by his or her own pursuit in several European and Asian countries. Earned after obtaining a research doctorate, such as a PhD, habilitation requires the candidate to write a professorial thesis based on independent scholarship, reviewed by and defended before an academic committee in a process similar to that for the doctoral dissertation. However, the level of scholarship has to be considerably higher than that required for a research doctoral (PhD) thesis in terms of quality and quantity, and must be accomplished independently, in contrast with a PhD dissertation typically directed or guided by a faculty supervisor. (Wikipedia)

On Thursday, December 9 this year, the academic council of the Faculty of Theology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, after relevant courses and examination, granted the postdoctoral degree in dogmatic theology to Fr. Adam WOJTCZAK.

Fr. Adam obtained this degree as a result of an impressive scientific output presented in more than 30 articles on dogmatic theology as well as several books; one of the books that became the basis for the postdoctoral degree is entitled *Matka i Królowa. Ku integralnemu i pogłębianemu rozumieniu tytułów maryjnych* [Mother and Queen. The Integral and Deepened Understanding of Marian Titles]. Therefore, Fr. Adam became the eighth senior academic in the Polish Province.

The habilitation examination was passed quite capably; however, contrary to custom, invited guests did not participate. The reviews of the scientific output were presented during the examination; then Fr. Adam delivered a brilliant habilitation lecture. Finally, the voting took place, after which Fr. Adam was awarded the degree of habilitated doctor.

During the celebratory dinner held in honour of the new habilitated doctor, Fr. Adam thanked all those persons who were involved in his scientific career: thanks went to Rev. Deacon Jan Szpet, the reviewers, the Council of the Faculty and the provincial, Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, as well as to other Oblates, especially to Fr. Teodor JOCHEM, the former provincial who had greatly encouraged Fr. Adam to complete the post-doctoral course.

Fr. Adam continues his ministry as a professor in the Faculty of Theology at the Oblates' scholasticate in Obra. (Fr. Piotr PIASECKI)

Latin America

HAITI

Progress and continued struggles

For several years, Oblate Brother Augustin (Gus) COTÉ has worked from his office in Lowell, Massachusetts (USA) to support the Oblate efforts in Haiti. Every month, he publishes a newsletter that contains excerpts from letters and e-mails he receives from the missionaries in Haiti, as well as from former Oblates and Oblate seminarians who wish to continue their contact with the

Congregation. The following are excerpts from recent e-mails he received from Haiti. They tell of some of the progress and the continued problems the Oblates face, one year after the January 12 earthquake that wreaked so much death and destruction in that tortured nation.

From Fr. Real CORRIVEAU (Port-au-Prince)

HAPPY NEW YEAR! There has been much work getting the small and big details done in

the (provincial) house, especially the kitchen. There is still some painting to be completed, the roof to be patched and painted, iron work on the doors and windows, the front gate to be put up.

Of course there was work at my parish too. It was great to have a marriage celebration, the third of the year. The celebration of 15 baptisms brought the total of 235 for the year. Only one of the 15 has married parents. As you can see, there is still much work to be done around here. I keep praying to St. Anthony of Padua, patron of the parish, to use his miraculous power to perform some miracles for the parents and the young people.

I hope to build a small rectory soon, before getting tied up with the proposed addition of rooms in the garden in back of the house here to replace the building which collapsed on January 12, 2010. Most of the donations we have received have been to help parents to put their children in school and feed them. We have also helped people to fix their houses or rebuild when possible.

The needs have been greatly augmented by the hurricanes and floods, the cholera epidemic, and now the election confusion and the dissatisfaction with the Government. What can happen next?

Fr. Alfred CHARPENTIER (Les Cayes)

You might know by now how much unrest the November 28 elections caused, especially in Les Cayes, where all the government buildings were torched, tires burned in all the streets for five days, some businesses devastated, etc...

During this time nothing was aimed at the church buildings and institutions. The people are just fed up with rigged elections!!! Now, what is even worse, the cholera epidemic is rapidly spreading throughout the country and all over the Les Cayes area. All of our parishes have registered cases of infection and deaths, especially on Ile La Vache, which has up to 80 new cases every day!!! Fr. John HENAULT is coordinating the emergency response there: medical teams and

helicopter flights with personnel and supplies with the help of his amateur radio hams. He's doing a terrific job.

Both the Fraternité des Jeunes and Foyer St. Etienne have been spared so far. No cases have appeared so far at our Foyer infirmary, thanks to extra precautions and help from agencies like World Vision, Hope for Haiti, etc just down the road from us.

We are supposed to have our provincial gathering January 3 to 7 and four ordinations (2 deacons and 2 priests) are scheduled for January 8 at the Oblate Seminary in Camp Perrin where we will gather.

It has been a tough year. We hope and pray for a blessed New Year this time...

PARAGUAY

The ethnic pride of a people

When the Oblates arrived in 1925 at their first destination in South America, they encountered the indigenous Nivacle. Then there began a long process of mutual understanding and mutual dedication. A decisive factor was that all of the missionaries learned this unknown language. Immediately they began to take notes and discover the grammar. It was only recently, in 1990, that Fr. José Seelwische succeeded in publishing the first Nivacle Dictionary. Presently, all of the Nivacle communities have a school, they teach in Nivacle and the teachers have material in their own language. (The 15,000 Nivacle live in 60 communities in the northeast of the Paraguayan Chaco and some live on the Argentine side)

In as much as the Nivacle themselves began to teach and to study their own language, they began to have discussions about the characters, the alphabet and so on, all the more so because it was the Mennonite missionaries who published a translation of the Bible, with some slight spelling differences. A first Nivacle Linguistic Congress (in 2006) was a great success, especially for the ethnic pride of the people. It left a desire for follow-up, this time formally supported by both missions,

that of the Mennonites and the Vicariate of Pilcomayo where the Oblates work.

On the first weekend of December 2010, they were finally able to hold this second Congress, with the participation of 120 persons, most of them professors and Nivacle elders, but there were also representatives of government, non-government and religious organizations. The Vicariate was represented by Bishop Lucio ALFERT, Fr. Rafael TENDE and a consecrated laywoman and anthropologist, Isa Gómez.

The indigenous participants published a statement addressed to the State and to public opinion, stressing the importance of self-management and restitution. They also decided to include three new letters in their alphabet; perhaps a somewhat complicated issue, but a very important one for their identity. (Miguel FRITZ)

MEXICO

A candle is being extinguished....!

A few weeks after his election as Assistant General, Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN underwent surgery in Mexico City. While he was recuperating at the Provincial House, he wrote this testimonial about one of our elders, Fr. Gregorio RAMOS.

A candle will be extinguished in order to kindle a bonfire! That is the image that comes to my mind as I sit in my room and think of Father Gregorio Ramos, a Missionary Oblate, originally from Spain, and now confined to a bed in the Provincial House in Mexico City. Only with the help of a nurse can he sit up, groom himself and walk, either to the Chapel of the Immaculate in the Provincial House for the daily celebration of the Eucharist or to the dining room for his meals. He cannot even speak an intelligible word. He can only observe the comings and goings around him.

I feel happy and proud at the memory of the Gregorio of old, a robust man and full of energy, excited about the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. I remember well how he carefully prepared the faithful of the Parish of La Guadalupe for the great feasts of Christmas and Easter. I have no doubt that

the people enjoyed those liturgical seasons, admiring all the preparations, the talks and sermons on these feasts that celebrate our faith.

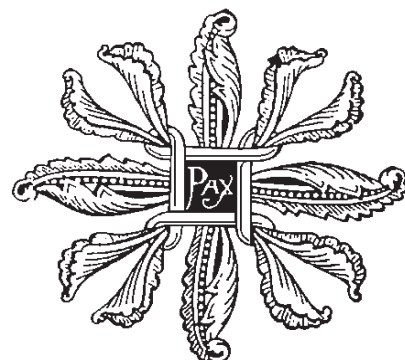
Fr. Goyo loved Christmas nativity scenes. Everyone, Oblates included, looked forward to these times to “*see what Father Goyo had created.*”

Now, from my room, I feel sad as I look upon him, humanly speaking, worn out. There goes another missionary confrere who came from afar. But the memory and the witness of missionary life that he bequeaths us strengthens me in my own commitment as a Missionary Oblate *with the poor and for the poor*. My sorrow disappears and becomes pride for having known this missionary and I am filled with pleasure for having spent many enjoyable times with him. And there are many Oblates who remember and admire him, ever since he stepped foot in Mexico.

Father Gregorio left his family to become part of our missionary family in Spain. He dedicated many years to the formation of seminarians as a teacher; then he left his native land to work in Texas and Mexico.

He leaves sown in our soil and in our hearts the best parts of his life. It is up to each of us to reap that which he planted, dedicating ourselves with the same enthusiasm to the evangelization of those near us who are most in need. That will be the best homage that we can render to Father Goyo and to the many other missionaries who preceded us.

God alone knows when Father Goyo will leave us to enter the House of the Father. But already we can see that *a candle is being extinguished in order to kindle a bonfire.*



Anniversaries for February 2011

65 Years of religious life

1946.02.17	08607	Bro. Olivier Charpentier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1946.02.24	08118	Fr. Michel Lynde	Philippines

60 Years of religious life

1951.02.17	09632	Bro. Aleksander Maniak	Poland
1951.02.17	09631	Bro. Gilbert Pullenayagam	Colombo
1951.02.17	09633	Bro. Lorenzo Williams	United States
1951.02.20	09858	Bro. Don Francis Dematagodaga	Colombo
1951.02.25	09640	Bro. Jos Huyben	Belgium /Netherlands
1951.02.27	08980	Fr. Albert Danker	Natal

60 Years of priesthood

1951.02.18	08060	Fr. Elie Cambron	Belgium/Netherlands
1951.02.18	08098	Fr. Henri Reignat	France
1951.02.18	08124	Fr. Jean-Paul Vantroys	Lacombe
1951.02.24	08087	Fr. Louis Doazan	France
1951.02.25	08088	Fr. Marius Bessemans	Central S. A.

50 Years of religious life

1961.02.17	11495	Bro. Arie de Wijs	Belgium /Netherlands
1961.02.17	11494	Bro. Edward Driggins	United States

50 Years of priesthood

1961.02.22	09865	Fr. John Poole	Anglo-Irish
1961.02.24	09983	Fr. Leroy Landry	United States

Suffrages for our deceased

2010: No. 86-92

2011: No. 1-5

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Bro. Paul Fernando	Colombo	15/02/1927	Maggona	21/05/2010
Fr. Reginald De Silva	Colombo	05/08/1922	Marian Grove	10/07/2010
Fr. Guy Cyr	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	22/03/1939	Québec	13/12/2010
Fr. Roger Vivier	Belgium/Netherlands	23/12/1918	Pottes	19/12/2010
Fr. Johannes Matooane	Lesotho	01/04/1930	Mazenod	19/12/2010
Fr. James Hofto	United States	29/10/1923	San Fernando	24/12/2010
Fr. Jacques Rinfret	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	28/08/1920	Richelieu	28/12/2010
Fr. Paul Winters	Northern Province of South Africa	15/04/1933	Germiston	04/01/2011
Fr. Andrew Wueste	United States	13/09/1929	San Antonio	05/01/2011
Fr. Louis Sebreghts	Belgium/Holland	16/03/1926	Leuven	06/01/2011
Fr. Jean Marie Quéffélec	France	18/11/1910	Troam	08/01/2011
Fr. Jean Lambert	France	13/03/1928	Marseille	15/01/2011

“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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Editor: James Allen
Printing: Kamal Mendis
Circulation: Théophile LePage