

Towards a prophetic community

By Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

I would like to continue my thoughts on community, the first call to conversion from our last Chapter. *Fraternal Life in Community*, a document from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life which appeared in 1994, addresses the topic of common life regarding the difficulties it has to face in our day, especially that of individualism. The religious community is defined as “*the place where the daily and patient passage from ‘me’ to ‘us’ takes place, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted to the community, from seeking ‘my things’ to seeking ‘the things of Christ’.*” This patient passage is a daily task and it happens in a balance that is sometimes difficult to find and maintain, “*between respecting the person and the common good, between the demands and needs of individuals and those of community, between personal charism and the communal apostolic project.*” The enemies of this balance are, on the one hand, fracturing individualism, and on the other, stifling communitarianism.

If this passage is done with balance, the religious community becomes “*the place where we learn daily to take on that new mind which allows us to live in fraternal communion through the richness of diverse gifts and which, at the same time, fosters a convergence of these gifts towards fraternity and towards co-responsibility in the apostolic plan.*”

We might note here that the community neither suppresses nor replaces the “me”: the “me’s” who form the community are the starting point: without individuals, there is no community; at the same time, the community goes beyond them, or better, it draws them to go beyond themselves so

as to find themselves in another arena of action and mission -- the community itself.

This helps us to avoid what the document called “stifling communitarianism”, which suppresses freedom, initiative and individual talents; it is a question of a call received from Jesus who makes of those he has called a community with himself and invites everyone to go beyond self in order to arrive at a higher level, namely, that of community, of family. The mission is given, at the same time, to each individual and to the community. That the individual aspect not be overwhelmed by conversion to the community is well expressed in the first of the nine calls to conversion: “*That each Oblate reflect on the witness of his religious life, living the vows in a prophetic way so as to share these values with the world, as an invitation for others to join our Oblate family.*” The subject of this invitation is “each Oblate.” The starting point is always each of us as a person; here we are asked to reflect on the testimony of our individual Oblate life and to live the commitments of the evangelical counsels in a prophetic way, so that the values which they represent might be communicated to the world and so that other persons, through this testimony, might receive the invitation coming from the very one who called us: to join our family.

A special invitation is addressed to each superior and each community: when we say “each community,” we imply that each community, within the whole of the Oblate Family, plays the same role that individuals play in the local community. That would be an interesting point to develop further.

When we consider the situation of our communities around the world today, it seems clear that internationality is one of its most obvious characteristics, a challenge that can determine the success of our mission and our life in years to come. Looking at things more closely and in view of communal conversion, the question that comes to mind is: Are our differences really something we treasure? We often say so, and we like to say it, but the question remains. The other, in his otherness, is he really a treasure for me? I would not answer too quickly in the affirmative, for we have a long way to go. I am convinced that we are only beginning, but it is certainly worthwhile to face this challenge of being open to the concrete reality of life in our communities

and to pursue this goal. To love one another -- someone whom we perhaps too quickly call our confrere -- is not so obvious, if Jesus made it the second commandment, which completes the love of God and is summarized in the Law and the Prophets! Without realizing it, and often very subtly, we tend to liken the other to ourselves: what we like in the other is what we already find in ourselves; what spontaneously brings us together is what we notice in the other that resembles ourselves -- what we have in common. To love the other not only because he is the other, but also so that he might be the other, that he might be himself; to love him with his differences and his uniqueness: that is the challenge for conversion to a community that will truly be prophetic.

General Administration

GENERAL HOUSE

New superior at the General House

Father General in Council has appointed the Procurator to the Holy See, Fr. Roberto SARTOR, to an additional responsibility, that of Superior of the General House community. He succeeds Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN who was elected Second Assistant General at the recent General Chapter.

Appointed Procurator General in 2002, Roberto acts as canonical or legal advisor to the Superior General and his Council and sometimes to the other Major Superiors of the Congregation. His task also includes the responsibility for the Congregation's official contacts with the Holy See, in particular with the offices that are concerned with religious priests and missionaries. Likewise, the Procurator is in charge of the relations with the Prefecture of the Papal Household for obtaining tickets for the audiences of the Holy Father and the ceremonies that he presides.

Born at One di Fonte (Treviso) in 1951 and ordained a priest in 1982, Roberto was assigned to formation ministry in the Province of Italy where he was superior of the scholasticate in Vermicino from 1990 to 1996. After four years as a member of the Oblate community at Lourdes, he studied Canon Law for two years (2000-2002) at Saint

Paul University in Ottawa to get ready for his future work. He already has a Ph.D. in civil law from the La Sapienza University in Rome.

Roberto is accustomed to fulfilling multiple responsibilities. When Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI was elected Second Assistant General at the 2004 General Chapter, Roberto was asked to assume the added responsibility of Superior of the International Scholasticate, a position he held until 2009.

JPIC

Our representative at the UN

Father Daniel LEBLANC is the Oblates' representative to the United Nations. As such, his work can positively impact the lives of millions of people. Needless to say, Fr. Daniel works in a frenzied and stressful environment.

Much of his day is spent meeting with people from around the world to examine issues of major importance - eradicating poverty, promoting the rights of indigenous people, combating human trafficking of women and children and reducing the impact of global warming.

“By having contact with country representatives and U.N. personnel, I have the opportunity to bring to their attention the realities and

perspectives of people from around the world with whom the Oblates work,” said Fr. Daniel. “Often I can provide information that is truly unique because of our experiences working among the world's poor.”

Issues that the Oblates are involved with that Fr. Daniel has discussed with U.N. personnel include: land-grabbing by the government of Bangladesh against the Garo and Khasi indigenous people, promoting peace and reconciliation during the civil war in Sri Lanka, and efforts along the U.S./Mexico border to promote justice for migrants and immigrants. Father Daniel is also presently at the forefront of efforts to have the U.N. declare 2011-2020 as the Decade for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation For Peace.

Father Daniel works at the United Nations because the Missionary Oblates are recognized there as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). In addition, the Oblates are members of VIVAT International, a consortium of religious congregations at the U.N.

Ordained in Canada in 1978, Fr. Daniel's first assignment was to the missions of Peru. He would spend nearly 30 years there, working among the urban poor of Lima, the capital city, and in the high jungle.

For many years Fr. Daniel was a member, as well as chair, of the Oblate's Latin American Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. He worked on a variety of justice issues: assisting victims of terrorism, investigating mass graves and helping to bring perpetrators to justice.

On June 5, 1992, Fr. Daniel was a victim of a terrorist attack. A car bomb with 600 kilos of dynamite exploded outside a television station located across the street from the Oblates' provincial house. Father Daniel was asleep at the time. He suffered serious injuries that left him unconscious for days. “At one point they had declared me dead but that turned out to be a little premature,” Fr. Daniel now jokes. “There were about 70,000 people killed during Peru's 20-year civil war, but I was not one of them.”

“Our work at the U.N. is a fulfillment of one of St. Eugene's rules that he established for his congregation,” said Fr. Daniel. “We are to be a voice for the poor, and the U.N. is a place where we can make sure that their voice is being heard.” (Oblate World, February 2011)

GENERAL SECRETARIAT “Acts of the 2010 Chapter”

The “Acts of the 2010 Chapter” have been printed in 3 languages: English, Spanish and French.

To provide a copy for each Oblate, they have been mailed to the province, delegation and mission superiors who will see to it that they are distributed within their Unit.

To order more copies, one should contact:

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Asia-Oceania

JAPAN

Oblates far from earthquake

Following the devastating earthquake of March 11, 2011, the Superior of the Japan-Korea Delegation, Fr. Wenceslao LAGUIDAO, sent the following e-mail to Fr. Camille PICHE, Director of the JPIC General Service in Rome.

Japan is being shaken from its foundations! It was the strongest earthquake in Japan's recorded history. There are still different opinions as to the intensity but somewhere near 8.8 on the Richter scale. The number of dead and missing has surpassed a thousand and will continue to rise. Another opinion is that there were two different earthquakes that happened almost at the same time.

It is the break of dawn now (I am preparing to go for the morning mass) and the news is saying that another big earthquake has happened on the other side of Japan (eastern side); nothing to do with what happened yesterday! What will happen next? We leave all to the Lord.

The Oblates are far from the disaster area but the anxiety is intense. It brings memories of the Great Kansai earthquake some 16 years ago. The stench of death came to our doorsteps!

I still am trying to find where Jack DEELY is. He lives in Tokyo and the telephone lines are down due to heavy load.

Please continue to pray for the victims and their families,

Will let you know more as the aftermath of this disaster unfolds.

JAPAN Earthquake and tsunami update

On the first Sunday of Lent, March 13, Fr. Wency LAGUIDAO, Superior of the Japan-Korea delegation, sent this e-mail to many Oblates around the world:

Our friends and Oblate confreres around the world continue to worry about the Oblates in Japan and the whole nation as they see the overwhelming images on television of the devastation, mostly caused by the rampaging waters of tsunami that followed the violent earthquake on Friday, March 11, two days after Ash Wednesday, when the liturgy reminded us all that "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shall return...". The havoc and devastation that is brought to us by the media is beyond description. I wonder how it for the survivors who have lost their loved ones and all their earthly possessions.

The areas badly hit are all up north on the Pacific side of Japan, particularly the prefectures of Miyagi and Iwate. The Oblate missions are down south, mostly on the island of Shikoku. Thanks be to God, all of us are safe and we indeed

appreciate the deluge of emails and phone calls asking if the Oblates in Japan are all accounted for. The very first email asking about our safety came from no less than our new Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN.

The body count continues, but it will take months before the exact number can be known. Unlike the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake 16 years ago, which was land based, most of the casualties of this earthquake perished from the rampaging waters of the tsunami and therefore are difficult to number. One evening paper today said that one small community of a population 17,000 has been completely washed away with no survivor that can be accounted for. How many of those small communities were simply washed away? The irony is that even the small government offices that hold the records of how many people there were are also completely gone.

Another major concern at the moment is the meltdown of the nuclear reactor plant in Fukushima Prefecture. There are already reports of hundreds being exposed to radiation. God forbid that this will be another Chernobyl!

March 14 is the first working day after the earthquake. For us who have been spared from the catastrophe, life has to go on. It is also the graduation season. In a week or two, the cherry trees will be in full bloom but, sad to say, except perhaps in the affected areas. The cherry blossom is one of the beautiful symbols of the country but ironically also a symbol of our ephemerality. Like the very short life of the cherry blossoms we are "here today and gone tomorrow."

This year's Lenten season takes on a special meaning for us in Japan. Please help us pray that the people in the affected areas will find meaning in their sufferings and be able to make the passover to a new beginning. May the light of Christ's resurrection somehow dispel the darkness that they have gone through.

Again, thank you very much for your prayers and assurance of solidarity.

COLOMBO**Canadian by birth, Sri Lankan by choice**

Fr. Robert LUCKHART, a Canadian by birth, a Sri Lankan by choice, a veteran and a multi-faceted personality, passed from this earthly home on February 04, 2011, in Kandy at the ripe age of 87. His 38 long years of dedicated service in Sri Lanka, especially in the work of formation of seminarians and religious, have left an indelible mark in the hearts of his students.

Fr. Luckhart was born on March 12, 1924, in Ontario, Canada. A professed Oblate since 1945, he was ordained a priest in 1951 at the International Scholasticate in Rome. From 1952 until 2011, Fr. Luckhart was engaged in the ministry of formation of scholastics and seminarians, first in Holy Rosary Scholasticate in Ottawa (1952-1965), with a five year hiatus as director of a retreat house (1965-1970). In 1970, he received his obedience to serve at the National Seminary, Ampitiya, Sri Lanka, where he taught philosophy and theology for a period of five years. For the first time he came into direct contact with Sri Lankan culture, religions, and geography. In 1975, he was called to Rome for a new task: superior of the International Scholasticate (1976-1977).

It was in 1978 that the late Bishop Leo Nanayakara, OSB, invited Fr. Luckhart to serve at 'Sevaka Sevana' along with Fr. Michael RODRIGO, in the diocese of Badulla. In 1983, he came to the Kandy Scholasticate. This turned out to be his longest assignment, as well as his last, a period of 27 years until his death. The service he rendered is incalculable. The words of St. Eugene de Mazenod were epitomized in the life of Fr. Luckhart that one must first be human, then Christian and then a saint. He was an endearing personality imbued with the compassionate heart.

Fr. Luckhart was a man of wisdom, the fruit of integrating his knowledge with his life experiences. He was well-versed in philosophy as well as theology. Many students and priests were drawn to him, not merely because of his vast knowledge which earned for him the title 'Walking Encyclopedia' but also because of his kindness in welcoming everyone who came to him. Many seminarians sought him, either for spiritual direction or academic pursuits. The qualities of approachability, amiability and availability, coupled with simplicity, made him a man for all.

He encouraged students to read books and articles which gave them a wider knowledge. He regarded history as an important subject. He would quote the axiom that "one who does not know history knows only half the truth." He was a man of compassion; tolerance was its fruit. Not only the intelligentsia but even ordinary students could be at ease with him because he was so accommodating and understanding.

His last visit to Canada was in 1982. Thereafter, for his last twenty-seven years, he chose to remain in Sri Lanka. As years passed, his contacts with Canada waned. He made Sri Lanka his home; the Sri Lankans, his own people, friends and confreres; the Sri Lankan diet, his own. He assimilated into himself everything that was noble and good. A spirit of detachment and dedication characterize all his religious life.

Each great personality leaves his or her foot prints on this earth. The world is different because of this Oblate's unique presence and significant contribution. He enriched the lives of all who knew him: that is his legacy. (Fr. Jacob THIRUCHELVAM)

Africa-Madagascar

KENYA**First perpetual vows in the mission**

Every journey begins with a single step, and though one might walk for millions and millions of steps, the journey itself becomes joyful and

full of life and enthusiasm when a significant leap that marks growth, development and change occurs. For the Province of OMI Lacombe, the recent occasion, when Gideon RIMBERIA and Joseph MAGAMBO made their final vows, was not only a joyful and a memorable occasion but

equally one that marks a significant growth, small as it might seem, for the Kenya mission. They were the first Oblates from this mission to profess final vows. The multitude of people from all over Kionyo parish and quite a number of dignitaries that came to witness and cheer on Gideon and Joseph on their journey of life as Oblates showed the 'grandeur' of the occasion. A rough estimate of about 2,000 people attended the historic event.

Gideon himself described his emotions at the Mass of Oblation: "I couldn't believe my eyes. Though I was facing the altar, I glanced once in a while behind me to see the multitude of people gathered to witness our final commitment. Deep inside me, I felt that something was happening, something bigger than myself, something that I couldn't explain by words then, but now I would figure it out as a way of letting myself be driven by the Spirit, like Moses, closer to the burning bush to discover in a deeper way God's presence. I felt so peaceful, so relaxed. The singing, the ululations, the dances, the hugs, the greetings, the congratulations and above all the Holy Eucharist accompanied by a very inspiring homily delivered by our provincial, Fr. John M. MALAZDREWICH, made me feel that this was one of my most important transitions in my life history so far. When I made my vows, I knew that a way of being a witness of Christ in the presence of the same people that had come to witness my 'crowning' had begun. For sure, it wasn't my first day in religious life, but I would say that at this step I feel mature; for the past few years, I have done much inner exploration and am more equipped to journey on with God's guidance. With my little experience, I know that man's search for the meaning of life is a built-in desire to find or discover his purpose and then to pursue that purpose with passion. For me, my purpose is to be a witness of Christ in our society today. "With Christ as our model, I also have as models some great men; these are the men that I aspire to be like in my own unique way. I remember in a special way the founders of the Kenya mission and a few deserve to be named for their heroic missionary zeal. I still remember Fr. Harold KAUFMANN whose missionary zeal was always an inspiration to many youths of my parish. May his soul rest in peace. Our great mentor and

example of all times since our prenovitiate, Fr. Bill STANG, will forever live in my memory as a man of honour who leads by example and I am always proud of him. Then there were the formators during our prenovitiate: Bro. Harley MAPES, Bro. Roman ZAPADKA and Father Joseph JACEK. Father Ken FOSTER, the superior of the Kenya mission for quite a long time, is a man whose inspiration and foundational projects put the mission on a sound basis.

"I also recognize the former superior, Fr. Alfred GROLEAU, whose commitment to formation and the mission of Kenya in general has been significant in so many ways. We equally salute all the efforts of the present day missionaries in Kenya whose endeavors are fruitful to the growth of the mission." (www.omilacombe.ca)

NATAL

Cracked feet and blood shot eyes

I stopped by the traffic light as it turned red. I saw on the sidewalk a young boy. He wore a torn, checkered shirt; the black shiny grit on it suggested that it hadn't been washed in a while. The short pants he had weren't any better. His buttocks protruded from his backside, garnishing the holes on his pants. Dust clung to his long, stick-like legs and cracks covered his hard feet. He tapped on my window and as I opened it, in a cracked voice, through dry lips, he muttered: "Uncle, may I have R5 to buy some food?" The breath from his mouth was, at the least, repulsive. He smelled of the streets on which he lived: dry, rotten and ugly. His appearance was the personification of his surroundings. As he spoke to me I put on as best I could a pretentious smile, feigning welcome, and yet betrayed by my eyes which held him in judgmental disdain. I looked at him and saw nothing more than a delicate frame, enfleshed with mere scrapings of meat embedded onto a shaky skeleton. Something about the way he stood spoke of his tiredness no less than his great sadness. His body spoke of a weariness that embraced him and cut deep to his very soul. I looked at his feet. Those cracked feet told the story of a boy who has been through a lot.

They speak of the distant roads on which they

had to walk, comfortable in shoes at first, which sooner than later had to be traded for food. They speak of gravel roads and spiky stones. They speak of bush paths and foot trails. They speak of long, winding, hot tar roads. They speak of hiking days and cold dark nights under starless skies. They speak of momentary relief in the back of a truck. They speak of dangers they had to flee from and dark, terrifying alleys in big city streets. They speak of suffering, hurt and pain. They speak of a journey in which a boy became a man. They speak of a journey they wish they never had to take. They speak of all the things his eyes have seen.

I looked right into his bloodshot eyes and knew that the story of his feet was true. I saw in his eyes the pain that lay deep within. I saw the sleepless nights and the tears shed. I saw the land in which a son became an orphan and parents became a memory. I saw the fear within a boy as he crouched in hiding, afraid of the iron hand that crushed his squatter camp home. I saw the devils that razed his home and the inferno that gobbled it up as they 'cleaned up the city' and 'took out the trash'. I saw his home burn and I saw him defeated and crushed; then I saw him cry his heart out. I saw him like at birth, pulled from his hiding place and shoved into a truck. I saw him in a reserve, sleeping in government tents with twenty other people. I saw hundred of tents with thousands of people. I saw soldiers bully him and I saw him hungry and in pain. I saw him run and run, tears in his eyes, pain in his heart, nothing in his mind and no future in his sight. I looked into his eyes and tears flowed out of mine. The light turned green, I rolled up my window and drove away. I left him standing there: open hand, cracked feet and blood shot eyes. (Scholastic

Bro. John Nhlanhla MHLANGA in *Networking Cedara*, February 21-27, 2011)

SENEGAL

Oblates attend 2011 World Social Forum

Oblates from several regions participated in the recent World Social Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, February 6-11. Patti Radle, a member of the United States JPIC committee, described her experience: "It is very emotional and encouraging to be around thousands and thousands of people who are so sincere about making a better world and seeing beyond borders." The World Social Forum is an annual summit held by non-governmental organizations, civil society members and religious leaders working to create a more sustainable and equitable world.

At a Mass at the cathedral in Dakar, the local archbishop, Cardinal Théodore-Adrien Sarr, gave a blessing and offered prayers for those attending the World Social Forum.

Oblate JPIC General Service Director, Fr. Camille PICHE, hosted an informal inaugural gathering for Oblate participants to convey expectations and a debriefing session following the forum to share experiences. Oblates participate in the World Social Forum in order to express solidarity with the thousands of participants meeting both to share concerns and explore effective responses to a diversity of issues, from globalization, ecological sustainability and trafficking of women and children, to trade relations of nations, extractive industries and indigenous peoples' issues. The Oblate Delegation in Senegal provided hospitality to the Oblate participants. (<http://omiusajpic.org>)

Europe

SPAIN

National gathering of the Oblate family

The Spanish laity of the "Oblate Family" (which they prefer to call themselves rather than "Lay Associates) held a meeting in Pozuelo (Madrid) from 24 to 27 February 2011. There were about 75 present, many of them young people, plus some

Oblates. Oblation, as an aspect of the Oblate charism, was the central theme. Understandably, the topic included, as an example of complete oblation, martyrdom and the Oblate Martyrs of Pozuelo. Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, Postulator General, was one of the speakers. At the request of the organizers, he gave an update on the beatification to be held in Madrid, probably in late

November of this year 2011. After his impassioned speech, he requested the collaboration of Oblate laity to prepare this event. Several have given their names as volunteers to form the various committees. The Postulator also used his visit to coordinate with the Archbishop of Madrid specific details for this celebration.

The most moving event of the meeting was, without doubt, the closing Mass. It was held in the Chapel of the Cemetery of Paracuellos del Jarama, which is next to the Madrid-Barajas airport. Here there were executed and buried in mass graves several thousand Spaniards, many of them clergy, among whom were the Provincial of the Oblates and much of the community of our scholasticate.

To create a climate of faith and prayer and as a preparation for the Mass, the testimony of a surviving scholastic, P. Felipe DÍEZ, was read. He spoke of how they lived in the pre-martyrdom conditions. They were not involved in politics nor did they know anything about that. They were captured and killed solely for being religious. It was impressive to hear about the feelings and faith and forgiveness that gave them courage. The Vice Postulator of the Cause, P. Eutimio GONZÁLEZ, had to stop reading for a few seconds, due to the emotion that overwhelmed him and spread to the assembly of the faithful. This text might be the second reading of the breviary for the feast or memory of our martyrs.

Let us pray for this beatification that it might be, as Cardinal Amato, Prefect of the Dicastery, said to Fr. General and to the Postulator, a motive for conversion and spiritual renewal for our whole Congregation. ((Joaquín Martínez)

ROMANIA

St. Eugene's pilgrimage

At the age of 150, Eugene de Mazenod is going on a pilgrimage. Since last March 6, Eugene, accompanied by the Oblates, has begun to go as a pilgrim to some of the Roman Catholic parishes in southern Romania.

His age could be a hindrance, but in his case, it

should be different, since on May 21, it will be 150 years since his birth into Heaven. Indeed, the Founder of the Oblates will celebrate his 150th birthday in authentically missionary style.

The visit of a saint should be exciting for Catholics, but in the case of Eugene, that is not so. The reactions are much more subdued, mainly because people do not know him. If he worked more miracles, he would probably be more popular. The first thing to do, then, is to tell who Eugene de Mazenod is. We begin with a screening of the movie "*Eugene, a heart as big as the world*," realized by Angelica Ciccone. The video is an introduction to his life story, and during the homily, an Oblate focuses on one aspect of his life or his spirituality.

After this introduction, there follow the intercessory prayers for the needs of humanity and especially for families in need. One who has experienced the pain of separation in his family is proposed as an intercessor for those living in times of crisis. Then, after communion, the congregation turns to him in prayer and at the end of the celebration, they are invited to kiss his relic.

For the occasion, the Oblates have transformed the comic book "*Eugene de Mazenod, Heart of Fire*," written by Antonio Perera and drawn by Juan Manuel Cicuéndez, into a delightful semi-animated cartoon. The first part is offered to the children to show how Eugene, as a boy, was able to move others in the light of the Gospel.

Up until May 15, 2011, every Sunday, except for Palm Sunday and Easter, the pilgrimage will stop at a different parish. On May 21, the Oblates will celebrate the birthday of Eugene at Mărăcineni. (www.omisat.net)



Latin America

PERU**One foot in the grave**

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and I was in an area where many homeless families were living in shacks. I went to visit an ailing man and, to my surprise, found the poor man already dead. I went first to the police and reported the man's death. Early the next day, and with the pickup truck, I went looking for some men to help me remove the body. We had to go to the morgue to pick up a box. It was heavy, made of iron, and the stench was overpowering! Blood stains were everywhere and God only knows whether the box was ever washed.

We left the box on the truck and transferred the body by using a dirty bed blanket from the poor man's bed. It seems the blanket had never been washed. I got permission to have the poor fellow put into a grave in an area for the poor. No one knew his name. He was just an 'unknown' ... but not to his Creator!

The grave was too small so we had to do some more digging because packs of dogs will dig up the bodies. The dirt from the grave was placed to one side and the men placed the body on top of it.

Meanwhile, kids and dogs showed up. The children were watching the process when suddenly the left arm of the dead man fell out of the blanket. The kids and dogs took off like a rocket. Even the men digging got scared.

We put the poor fellow in the grave, covered with his blanket, said a prayer and buried him. One of the men made a little cross from two pieces of wood found in the trash. Then we returned the iron box to the morgue with some added blood stains. I had to pay \$3 for the grave and that was that.

Another day, I gave Holy Communion to a dear lady in her late 80's. I noticed a big, black trunk in the corner of her room and said to her, "I see you are packed for your trip!" She answered,

"Yes, I am ready to go." She went to her real Home two days later.

Another day I got a call from a young nurse asking me to go see her father, a doctor. I knew the man. He was my doctor. He never charged me a cent and he was very kind and good with many people, especially the poor. He had difficulty breathing but he could hear very well. And what did we talk about? Why death, naturally! Being a doctor, he had seen many patients die and he was being realistic about his own death. I made several visits to his bedside and found him in good cheer. Within three days he went Home!

One day the president of a senior citizen's group asked if I would give a talk to them. About 80 elderly women and men were present. I saw faces that express a certain history of their lives as each face is priceless. Then I announced the theme - Death! They all looked at me in a questioning manner. I started by mentioning that most of us present already have a foot in the grave -- including myself -- and they all burst out laughing.

I spoke of the golden years, when human life is ending and a time to make amends, to pardon those who may have wronged you and to ask pardon for the wrong one did. God is giving us ample opportunities to make good use of the little time left. I enjoyed being with this group: their sense of humour, their approach to their natural ending and their not being afraid of death. One should not wait for death but rather death should wait for us. Be happy. After all, we are going to our real Home ... hopefully! (by Blaise MACQUARRIE in *Oblate Spirit*, February 2011)

URUGUAY**Ah...the house is full again...**

That was the expression my mother used when, for one reason or the other, the house where she most recently lived alone filled up with guests or relatives on the occasion of her birthday, or a feast or because my friends came to see me when I was home for a vacation in Italy.

That expression came to my mind and heart when the experience of a house of discernment began again in Uruguay. The three youths arrived and in a few hours, voices, laughter, luggage and packages and a variety of music filled the house. You could hear them speaking among themselves trying to agree on how to organize their room in which there was just a bed for each one. They also accepted with humor the problems of limited space, they who until a few hours before had a room all for themselves. I seemed to be hearing the experience of the first Oblates on that far off January 25, 1816: their laughter and their joy at being together.

For a few weeks already, Fr. Marcos RIVAROLA and I had been living together in the house which in recent years had been a place where we Oblates would come back simply to sleep at night or spend

a few brief moments during the day. For us here in Uruguay, the experience of a vocation house, a place where one can go through a discernment process, has not been a regular thing. Our secularized society does not encourage vocational discernment. But at the same time, this climate helps us in discerning the motivations of whoever begins this journey of community life.

Fernando, Aníbal and Agustin are the three young men who this year have begun this journey. Together with Fr. Marcos (the director of the house) and with me, we will try to watch and discern what God wishes to say to the heart of these young men, and help them realize in their lives the words of Eugene which they themselves have chosen: "Let them be burning candles and not smoldering wicks." (Fr. Mingo DI MEO)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

A gift from St. Eugene

In trying to find an appropriate way celebrate the 150th anniversary of the death of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the Office of Mission Enrichment and Oblate Associates in Belleville, Illinois, has begun a project to help former prisoners re-enter society. The associates prepare backpacks containing personal hygiene items: a towel and washcloth, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, socks, etc. These backpacks are given to poor ex-offenders as they are released from prison.

This special ministry is deeply rooted in Eugene de Mazenod's life. Long before he was "St. Eugene" and even before he was "Father de Mazenod," he did prison ministry in France as a young layman. Writing to his father, Charles Antoine, on January 19, 1807, he says: "... the one who is fulfilling this ministry of charity does not see in these criminals... anything but unfortunates in need of help. It is the task of justice, with both equity and severity, to establish guilt; our duty is to ease their sufferings by every means in our power..."

About a 15 minutes drive from the Oblate ministry sites in Belleville, there is a building

that for many years was Assumption High School (a Catholic all-boys high school for the East St. Louis, Illinois, area). In August of 1995, it opened its doors as the Southwestern Illinois Correction Center, a minimum-security facility for adult males; the usual daily number of prisoners is 672.

Southwestern Illinois Correctional Center is a totally dedicated to the treatment of substance abuse. All offenders involved at the facility attend substance abuse treatment groups five days per week for a minimum of 15 hours per week. Approximately 40-50 men are released each month after serving their sentence.

The Warden, James Davidson, is a graduate of the old Assumption High School. The Oblate Associates are grateful to him, not only for his valuing the dignity of each human person and his willingness to allow this outreach program, but also for the way he encourages his staff to support this endeavor. Each month, twenty backpacks are taken to the prison. Not every ex-offender receives one: only those who are most in need. On the day of their release, after serving their sentence, as they walk out of the prison, they are handed one of St. Eugene's Care Packs. (Geri Furmanek, Director of OMI Mission Enrichment and Oblate Associates)

ASSUMPTION

An award of distinction

In 2004, the Niagara Catholic District School Board introduced the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction to recognize the valuable contribution made by individuals and groups to Catholic education in the Niagara Region of Canada.

The recipient this year was the late Fr. Stanley PUCHNIAK, the first Oblate to come to the Archdiocese of Toronto in 1935 at the invitation of Cardinal James McGuigan to serve the Polish community. He died in 1989.

Marco Magazzeni, in his submission to the Niagara Catholic District School Board requesting that Fr. Puchniak be recognized as a true pioneer of Catholic Education in the Niagara region, said: "Fr. Puchniak is what Catholic education was, what it is today and what it needs to be into the future – sacrifice and determination."

In accepting the award on behalf of the Oblates, Fr. Chris PULCHNY said of our honouree: *"It is an honour to be here this evening to receive the award and recognition for Fr. Stanley Puchniak as the recipient of the 2011 Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction. As you know, he was the first Oblate to come to the Archdiocese of Toronto. He was invited by Cardinal McGuigan in 1935 to serve the Polish community. He had a tremendous love and care for immigrants, the poor and abandoned. He was the founder of St. Stanislaus - St. Casimir Parishes Credit Union which is the largest parish Credit Union in the World. He was instrumental in bringing the Felician Sisters to Canada from the USA. He built three schools, two in Welland and one in Fenwick. And he received the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" medal. He was a priest, teacher and preacher but above all, he was a missionary. He was a proud member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a religious community of men which contributed much to the building up of Canada and helped in weaving the fabric of our society. Whatever he did, he did with the support of his religious community and without that support, I don't think he would have been*

able to accomplish all that he did. He was a visionary, a man full of humour and down to earth. He was able to dream dreams and bring them to reality. If he were here tonight, I think he would be speechless, but in his heart, he would be saying that he was only an instrument and did only what he thought should be done for the betterment of the people he was sent to serve. But I think he would also say: Thank you. Thank you for continuing to believe in dreams and thank you for continuing to make them a reality! On behalf of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I humbly accept this recognition for Fr. Stanley Puchniak and all Oblates who have served in this region". (News and Views, Assumption Province, March 2011)

UNITED STATES

Oblate parishes march for justice

On January 29, at least 2000 people took to the streets of Pacoima, California, in an organized, peaceful march for the rights of undocumented and all immigrants. They carried American flags and signs, such as "Stop Ripping Families Apart" and "No to Deportation, Yes to Legalization" and "Dreams not Nightmares".

The march was led by young Hispanic U.S. military veterans, and then by children waving small flags from many other nations, representing the contributions of immigrants to the United States. These were followed by Aztec dancers and drumming, representing the indigenous roots of many. Many marchers were high school and college-age students who came here as children and who dream of a future as citizens.

The participants were from the Oblates' Mary Immaculate and Santa Rosa parishes, as well as from other parishes and civic organizations. The two-mile long march ended at Mary Immaculate where there was a rally and messages of encouragement given by the organizers and some local politicians to all those who are advocating a sensible reform of the current immigration laws and system.

The Oblates who participated in the March and in the prior organization of the March were Frs.

John CURRAN, Porfirio GARCIA, Antonio PONCE, Stanley ZOWADA and William ANTONE. (<http://omiusajpic.org>)

OMI LACOMBE

Prisons: authentic Oblate work

Fr. Dennis ALEXANDER was first exposed to prison ministry while in Peru. In Puerto Rico, he spent four years as prison chaplain and has worked in the prison system since returning to Canada.

He says that the work of a prison chaplain is to establish a presence, a presence of faith, for prisoners and the staff. Each group has a different set of needs. It is from this presence that the chaplain can then build relationships with the prisoners and staff.

The prison is a building the cement and steel, but it is what happens within the physical structures of the prison that matters. A prison cell is a cement room, but there is no privacy; you can smell all unpleasant odors of others; you hear all the shouting and insults that are hurled at other prisoners. The atmosphere does not promote dignified human living. How do the prisoners get along with all the others in the prison setting? How can and will they relate to each other in a world that is meant to separate and to isolate the prisoners from each other?

Often, the chaplain must be one of the first responders when there is a crisis within the prison. The chaplain needs to be of assistance when there are moments of critical trauma. Dennis framed the work of the chaplain as “one who safeguards the rights of the prisoners within the system” and the “ethical voice for the interactions within the prison.” There are times when the chaplain must challenge certain behaviors and negative events.

Today there is a very strong emphasis on restorative justice. What do we have to do to reintegrate these prisoners into a healthy and contributing part of the larger society? How can we give a vision to the prison that there can be a new future? How can they reinterpret their own reality and embrace a lifestyle that is healthy and life-giving?

The person in front of you is “a different face, a different person, with his own unique needs and life experiences. He is different from anything you have ever known.” Dennis describes how there are times when a dangerous prisoner is brought to him, shackled by his feet and hands (correct procedure to move a dangerous prisoner within the prison building). Then the shackles are removed and “I am alone with the prisoner. Here is where you trust in God and God’s presence with you. The behavior of this man could flip and you could be in danger.” There was a pause in the sentence. “You spend a lot of time in prayer.”

The ministry of the Catholic / Protestant chaplain is not limited to their own faith community. They are meant to provide spiritual services, counseling and support to the prisoners of all other faith traditions and those of no religious connection. There are dietary considerations to be recognized and religious materials in the library that other faiths can consult and use. “This ministry takes time and takes patience. The prisoners do not necessarily want your spiritual stuff. There is a very strong reluctance to get involved in institutional religion.”

Dennis shared the painting of Christ behind bars that is hung in the chapel. He asked his listeners as he asks the prisoners: “Is Christ the visitor or is Christ the inmate?” This painting identifies the prisoners with Christ who is with them in all this brutality and hurtful language of the prisoners and guards.

What keeps him going in such a rough and dangerous atmosphere? “Prayer is extremely important. It is the hope that is connected through prayer.” (By Nestor GREGOIRE in www.omilacombe.com)

UNITED STATES

Celebrating the witness of women

Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, celebrated 2,000 years of the inspiring witness and leadership of women in the Catholic Church by dedicating 206 icons of women who have made their mark in Catholic history, as well as pictures of women today and silhouettes depicting women

at various stages of life in the future. About 50 more icons are to become part of the collection this year. The collection, titled *Women in the Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, adorns the walls of a stairwell of the school's library.

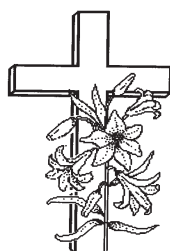
A library not only speaks through books and magazines; it also should speak visually. OST wants to honor those who have given such wonderful contributions to the Church, including not only those of recent vintage but women from the earliest times -- Perpetua, Felicity, Agatha, and many others. The Eastern-style icons depict holy women in the life of the Church over the centuries. Many depict the Blessed Virgin Mary under various titles, including Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Grace and Our Lady of Czestochowa, as well as many titles less familiar in the United States.

Church women in American Catholic history featured in the display include Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, the "Lilly of the Mohawks"; Italian-born St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first saint from the U.S. Church; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint; St. Katherine Drexel, who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to serve African American and Native American Catholics; and St. Rose of Lima, the first canonized saint of the Americas. Twentieth-century saints include St. Edith Stein, a Jewish-born Carmelite nun who converted from atheism to Catholicism and was murdered in the Holocaust in 1942; and St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun whose diary contains the message of God's Divine Mercy. She died in 1938. Pope John Paul II canonized Stein and Kowalska.

Group photographs of the women serving at nearby Oblate institutions represent women in the Church of the present. Women of the future are represented with silhouettes - a grandmother, a young girl playing sports, another receiving First Communion, and a bride. The first icon put up was of Eve, the first woman; right next to her is the Blessed Virgin, the "new Eve."

Sister Sarah Sharkey, professor of Scripture, said that through the displayed icons, believers can enter sacred time and space and can be led to communion with the actual people depicted. "[The icons] also serve as vehicles for spiritual communion with God. Icons are windows into heaven. We take this opportunity to meet and engage these women of the Church - those who have gone before us, those who walk with us today and those who surely will come tomorrow," she said. "These women of yesterday are part of a great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us - women who have run their segment of the race faithfully and who now reach out to us, supporting and encouraging us." Sharkey said.

Father Ron ROLHEISER, president of Oblate School of Theology, prayed that, looking at the display of women who have followed Christ faithfully in the past, those who do so today and those who will in the future, "we will be motivated to seek the city that is to come, we will learn the way that will enable us most assuredly to attain complete union with Christ; as we struggle with our earthly cares, we will be mindful of these women, these friends and co-heirs of Christ, who are also our own sisters, sisters of those who have gone before us, and of our special benefactors." He reminded listeners to remember "how they love us, are near us, intercede ceaselessly for us, and are joined with us in marvelous communion." (*OSTNEWS*, Spring 2011)



Anniversaries for May 2011

65 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1946.05.11 | 08627 | Fr. Humberto Bertrand | Notre-Dame-du-Cap |
| 1946.05.11 | 08626 | Bro. André Locas | Notre-Dame-du-Cap |

65 Years of priesthood

| | | | |
|------------|-------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1946.05.31 | 07291 | Fr. Robert Vreteau | United States |
|------------|-------|--------------------|---------------|

60 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1951.05.31 | 09014 | Fr. Gerard Brunet | United States |
| 1951.05.31 | 09018 | Fr. William Davis | United States |
| 1951.05.31 | 09015 | Fr. Adolph Kaler | United States |
| 1951.05.31 | 09019 | Fr. Michael Levy | United States |
| 1951.05.31 | 09009 | Fr. James Miller | United States |
| 1951.05.31 | 09016 | Fr. Galeb Mokarzel | United States |

50 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1961.05.01 | 11035 | Fr. Hernán Correa | Argentina-Chile |
| 1961.05.01 | 11040 | Fr. Winfried Deing | Namibia |
| 1961.05.01 | 11508 | Bro. Edmond Genicq | Haiti |
| 1961.05.01 | 11036 | Fr. Friedhelm Jansohn | Central European Prov. |
| 1961.05.01 | 11203 | Fr. Walter Winterstein | Central European Prov |
| 1961.05.21 | 11513 | Fr. Heinz Ernst | Namibia |
| 1961.05.31 | 11060 | Fr. Francis Daniel | Jaffna |
| 1961.05.31 | 11051 | Fr. John Camillus Fernando | Colombo |
| 1961.05.31 | 11057 | Fr. Peter Chrysanthus Fernando | Colombo |
| 1961.05.31 | 11062 | Fr. Oswald Firth | Colombo |
| 1961.05.31 | 11517 | Fr. John Edward Joseph | Colombo |
| 1961.05.31 | 11054 | Fr. Merl Mendis | Colombo |
| 1961.05.31 | 11100 | Fr. Antonio Lorenzo Rendon | Brazil |
| 1961.05.31 | 11048 | Fr. Michael Silva | Colombo |

50 Years of priesthood

| | | | |
|------------|-------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1961.05.27 | 09906 | Fr. Ronald Walker | United States |
| 1961.05.31 | 10020 | Fr. Rolland Bennett | United States |
| 1961.05.31 | 10028 | Fr. Guilherme Reinhard | Brazil |

25 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 1986.05.21 | 12968 | Fr. Prudencio O. Alviar | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 13030 | Fr. Alberto Cahilig | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 12971 | Fr. Gerry Gamaliel De los Reyes | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 12972 | Fr. Jonathan Domingo | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 13032 | Fr. Charlie Inzon | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 13031 | Fr. Romeo Marcelino | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 12933 | Fr. Alexander Mariasavari | India |
| 1986.05.21 | 12970 | Fr. Franklin Mirasol | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 12934 | Fr. Francis Nallappan | India |
| 1986.05.21 | 13033 | Fr. Rogelio Tabuada | Philippines |
| 1986.05.21 | 13164 | Fr. Francis Efen Zabala | Philippines |

Suffrages for our deceased

No. 23-28

| NAME | PROV./Del. | BORN | DIED AT | DATE |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Fr. Singarayar Mariathanan | Jaffna | 02/07/1920 | Jaffna | 11/03/2011 |
| Fr. Bernhard Schinke | Central European | 26/09/1942 | Maria Engelport | 16/03/2011 |
| Fr. Pius Leibel | OMI Lacombe | 26/04/1918 | Saskatoon | 23/03/2011 |
| Fr. Clemente Trombetta | Italy | 12/06/1920 | Santa Maria a Vico | 24/03/2011 |
| Fr. Raymond Horain | France | 08/01/1921 | Pontmain | 01/04/2011 |
| Fr. Xavier Tosa Yoshikazu | Colombo | 25/10/1927 | Kochi | 03/04/2011 |

“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; Webmaster: Nino Bucca
Printing: Kamal Mendis
Circulation: Théophile LePage