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Celebrating St. Eugene in Poland

By Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, Superior General

The 150th anniversary of the death of St. Eugene continues to be celebrated throughout the world. On October 28 and 29, I was privileged to participate in two days of celebration in Poland with many other Oblates, lay people, priests, Brothers and Sisters from Poland, from all over Europe, from Canada and from the Delegations and Missions of Poland.

On Friday, October 28th, there was an International Conference in Obra, entitled "From the French Revolution to the New Evangelization". This conference was sponsored by the Department of Church History, Faculty of Theology, of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan and the Oblate Scholasticate in Obra. This conference considered the charism and mission of St. Eugene de Mazenod on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his death.

Three hundred participants filled the auditorium for a full day of twelve lectures. The conference was opened by Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, Provincial of Poland, and he warmly welcomed all those present. Fr. Pawel ZAJAC, responsible for organizing this stimulating day, then gave an introduction to the French Revolution and the personal remembrances of Eugene de Mazenod. Professor Roberto Regoli of the Gregorian University in Rome gave incisive input on Napoleon Bonaparte's relationship to the Catholic Church. Dr. Rafal Dobek, of Adam Mickiewicz University, expounded on the union of the altar and throne in France since 1825, a very relevant theme for Eugene de Mazenod's mission. This was complimented by an in-depth presentation on anti-clericalism in 19th century France given by Prof. Andrzej Chwalba from Cracow's Jagiellonian University.

After a brief break, we entered directly into a biographical narrative of St. Eugene's life by Fr. Pawel LATUSEK, of the Scholasticate in Obra. This was followed by a delightful and very personal perspective of Eugene de Mazenod, his family and personal contrasts, given by his sister's descendant, Mr. Bertrand Morand of Aix-en-Provence. Fr. Fabio CIARDI, from the General Administration, gave us a deeper understanding of Eugene's missionary method, away from Jansenism and closer to the Savior.

After lunch, Eugene de Mazenod and the influence of the French school of spirituality was presented by Fr. Kazimierz LUBOWICKI, of the Pontifical Faculty of Wroclaw. A look into Eugene's relations with the Jesuits gave us a deeper appreciation for the ties we have with the Society of Jesus and this was the work of Fr. Robert Danieluk, S.J., of the Society's Roman Archives. Fr. Frank SANTUCCI, from the Aix-en-Provence community, then gave us an understanding of the pastoral work of Eugene as Bishop of Marseille.

Fr. Marek ROSTKOWSKI, from the Rome's Pontifical University Urbaniana, helped us understand the significant Oblate contribution to missiology. From Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw, Fr. Jaroslaw ROZANSKI, gave a presentation on eminent Oblate missionaries. Fr. Franck Santucci brought the day to a very fitting conclusion by relating the charism of St. Eugene to the new evangelization. Fortunately, these talks, which were replete with information, insights and questions to be deepened, will be published so that the entire Congregation may reap the benefits of this International Conference.

On Saturday, October 29, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of St. Eugene's death continued, moving from the academic sphere to liturgical, spiritual and artistic expressions. More Oblates, many lay people and religious from Oblate parishes and ministries arrived and we began the day with the solemn celebration of Morning Prayer of Pastors, commemorating St. Eugene. Fr. Kazimierz LUBOWICKI preached a homily centered on St. Eugene's relationship with Jesus Christ. Later that morning, a festive celebration of the Eucharist presided by Bishop Eugeniusz JURETZKO, of the Diocese of Yokadouma, Cameroun, followed in the old baroque church of Obra. Everything in the liturgy was just as St. Eugene would have liked it. Fr. Fabio CIARDI, leaned over to me at one point and whispered in my ear, "These Oblates are proud to be Oblates!"

In the afternoon, we were participants of two special programs: a theatrical production and a concert. A play, "Eugene de Mazenod's Leaflet" written and produced by "Nineveh", the Oblates' youth movement from Katowice, was the first event. It was a representation of Eugene today, ministering to the broken and poor and leading others to find passion in Jesus and to become announcers of the Gospel of the Savior's mercy and love. This was extremely well portrayed, very creative and current; the message resonated in the hearts of the audience. I am impressed at the capacity of the young people to identify with St. Eugene and

his message and to communicate it in such a powerful and inspiring manner.

When the play was over, we went almost immediately to church for the musical concert. The church of Obra was packed and the renowned Polish musical group, "Gang Marsela", performed a variety of popular and religious music. The band presented several songs inspired in the life of St. Eugene and his experience of the cross, his love for the poor and his ministry of compassion. At first the strains of modern pop music seemed to be in stark contrast to the ancient ornate church. Yet, the music conveyed the eternal message of God's love revealed in the cross of our Savior and touching our lives today.

The joy, peace and courage to go forth with the Gospel lighted everyone's hearts as we went into the dark of the late afternoon. That moment symbolically captured the two days of celebration honoring the life and mission of St. Eugene: Gospel light going into the darkness. St. Eugene's experience of God's compassion shown forth in the Cross of Jesus; his decision to dedicate his life to the evangelization of the poor and abandoned; and the mercy that he preached and lived toward others; these realities continue to draw men to follow Jesus as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. These experiences also inspire many lay people to embrace St. Eugene's charism and give their lives to the service of God's mission. St. Eugene de Mazenod, pray for us!

General Administration

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLASTICATE

My summer with Las Oblatas

Scholastic Brother Devin WATKINS is a member of the US province and is currently studying in Rome in his second year of theology.

Have you ever watched a seed sprout? Seen its first green leaf unfurl and reach toward the sun? You know instinctively that it contains an enormous potential for growth and an abundant harvest at some distant point in the future, but at the same time, you see how fragile and vulnerable it is, realizing that a rough touch or a strong gust of wind could wound it mortally. This, in a nutshell, was my blessed experience this past

summer: to see a sprout struggling to reach the heavens. Let me explain.

After having finished my first year of theology studies in Rome, I was sent to Spain in order to learn Spanish and help out with the Oblate Malaga Experience and WYD Madrid. The studies went well, but what I didn't expect was to get a first-hand glimpse of our Oblate beginnings – when things were tough but so fresh for Eugene and his tiny band in their first years together – by simply meeting the Misioneras Oblatas de Maria Inmaculada (Las Oblatas).

Maybe you have heard about them, but they are a recently born Institute – ten years since diocesan

approbation – that share our Oblate spirit, charism, and even Constitutions and Rules almost to the letter. My involvement with them began in Malaga when Fr. Tony ORTIZ and I were assigned to welcome the Oblate pilgrims from the US along with two of their number: Raquel TORO, the Vicar General and director of formation, and Katherina RAMRATH, a German *juniorada* studying medicine. The rest of them – 21 in all – were also helping out with the different national groups.

These women dedicated their vacation time to helping out and it is due in large part to their efforts that the Malaga experience as a whole came together. Even in the midst of the excitement of Malaga, most of us Oblates saw immediately that these Oblatas are filled with St. Eugene's charism, completely available for our common mission, and incredibly close to the people. They were the first ones up in the morning and the last ones to go to bed, always talking to the kids and making sure things went well.

Once the Experience was over, I assumed that I might see these women again perhaps once more in Madrid for lunch or something. But, as often happens, God had other plans in mind. I did have lunch with them after WYD, but during the meal, their Superior General, Marimar GOMEZ, invited me to go on retreat with them in the beautiful north of Spain! And so, after receiving the proper permissions, I was off to spend a week

in a Discalced Carmelite Convent (a ten minute walk from the beach) with ten Oblatas, with voices like angels and hearts aglow with joy.

From the first moment with them, I felt like a brother among beloved sisters and was amazed that even some of the little things we Oblates do were somehow manifested in their mannerisms – such as a strong devotion to the practice of oraison and a curious difficulty staying silent for extended periods of time (punctuated by random bursts of laughter during silent meals). But what was even more touching was hearing their story and realizing that they are living what St. Eugene had sought to live in the first house in Aix – the lack of material resources or secure housing, the constant problem of how to pay the bills – but through it all, a pure peace and joy that is almost palpable. Somehow during that week, my heart was opened to a feminine expression of our beloved Congregation, one whose sole aim is to live our common Oblate charism to the full and whose members' sole ambition is to give their lives for the mission. To sum up the experience, I feel in the very depths of my soul that I have 21 new sisters whose depth of charity and zeal promises to renew and reinvigorate how we live our Oblate mission and charism.

So, have you ever seen a seed sprout and reach for the heavens? I have, and because of it my hope for our future is stronger than ever.

Asia-Oceania

BANGLADESH

Installation of first Bishop of Sylhet

With several thousands of people present, including many of his Oblate brothers, Bishop Bejoy D'CRUZE was installed as the first Bishop of Sylhet on September 30.

On the previous day, Bishop Bejoy arrived at Lokhipur Mission, accompanied by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Joseph Marino, and other bishops. The faithful of Sylhet gathered at the mission long before the arrival of their new Shepherd, anxiously waiting to welcome him. Four different cultures were represented in the welcoming ceremony: Khasi, Garo, Orao and Bengalee. The faithful expressed their joy and

happiness by singing and dancing. After the welcoming program the bishop was taken to the church for a prayers service including adoration and a Eucharistic procession. The faithful walked with the Eucharist carrying lighted candles.

The installation Mass on September 30 was held at the Immaculate Conception Church in Lokhipur. Nine bishops, including the Apostolic Nuncio and Archbishop Paulinus Costa of Dhaka, as well as several hundred priests, nuns, and brothers joined about 3,000 Catholics who attended what was a historic event for the local Church.

Archbishop Marino read out the Apostolic Letter from the Holy Father that canonically erected Sylhet as the country's 7th diocese on July 8 this

year. Sylhet, which covers four civil districts -- Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj and Moulvibazar -- was carved out of the Dhaka archdiocese, making it a suffragan of the same metropolitan Church. "The Catholic church in Lokhipur shall be the temporary cathedral under the patronage of the Divine Mercy," the apostolic letter said. The new diocese has seven parishes and 11 mission centers with about 17,000 mostly tribal Catholics, served by 21 priests and 33 religious.

Bishop Bejoy had served as Bishop of Khulna before his appointment to the new diocese.

"The faithful in Sylhet have waited for autonomy for so long, and today their dream has come true," Archbishop Paulinus Costa said in his homily. "I would like to call upon Bishop Bejoy to look upon education, financial independence, participation in social activities and evangelization, as well as promoting religious vocations as the major challenges for Catholics in the diocese," he added.

In an interview with *AsiaNews*, Bishop Bejoy spoke about the challenges he faces. First of all, there are big differences from his previous diocese in Khulna.

"The situation is very different, especially in terms of culture. In 2005, when I was appointed bishop of Khulna, I had a diocese that had been created 60 years earlier and so was already well established. It had a bishop's residence, secretariat, hospitals, schools, institutions devoted to other communities. Beside, the diocese's Catholics were Bengali, not tribal. Finally, people and other communities already knew about the diocese of Khulna, especially Muslims who respect a lot the Catholic Church and use its services, which are available to everyone.

"Here, people are tribal and I am Bengali. They do not have real schools, nor any big hospital. There are some dispensaries run by the sisters of Mother Teresa, and other small organizations that help people. We have different cultures but I have worked in the diocese in the past. Thus, I know these people and they know and trust me. They want me to be their bishop and I am happy to do it."

He also spoke of his primary objectives: "As a bishop in a Muslim country, I want to preach

the word of God, evangelize my people and let other communities know about Christ. However, evangelization is difficult and Muslims and Hindus often refuse meetings with the Catholic religion. The Catholic Church, in Bangladesh is known for its services which are open to all communities. Education will be my first goal. I also want to focus on health care: dispensaries, doctors, nurses . . . Tribal people are very poor and often cannot visit village doctors. They must be educated about health care. For this reason, I am going to ask Caritas, which is present in the area, to provide essential services." (Fr. Pius POHDUENG; www.ucanews.com; www.AsiaNews.it)

COLOMBO Basketball and St. Eugene

During the month of October, both print and electronic media in Sri Lanka begin to talk of a basketball tournament named after St. Eugene de Mazenod.

The basketball tournament is a brainchild of former Oblate seminarians, who formed St. Eugene's Association of Former Oblate Seminarians in the year 1999 under the guidance of Fr. Irwin MORAIS

Given St. Eugene's concern for youth, the Association looked at ways to bring young people in the country together. Since most of the ex-seminarians were basketball players, conducting a basketball tournament was suggested.

Negotiations with the Sri Lanka Basketball Federation (SLBF) proved to be successful and the success in the inaugural St. Eugene's Trophy tournament in 2009 prompted SLBF to write to St. Eugene's Association, asking them to conduct the event annually.

The third edition of the tournament was held on the 15th and 16th of October this year and St. Eugene's Trophy by now has become the number one Inter-Club Five-a-Side Basketball Tournament in Sri Lanka.

The main sponsors of the event also have been ex-seminarians, with three past students of St. Joseph's Juniorate, Kohuwala serving as the main sponsors of the event on the three occasions.

The funds generated from the first tournament were utilized to upgrade the computer lab at St. Joseph's Juniorate. The association also has undertaken to help several underprivileged but talented students, both Christian and non-Christian, to continue their studies.

A unique feature in the tournament is that it encourages sportsmanship and fair play; the 'Spirit of Basketball' award was introduced at the inaugural edition of the tournament. This award has been much praised among the basketball fraternity and it is heartening to see other basketball tournaments imitating St. Eugene's Trophy, presenting 'Spirit of Basketball' awards to honour fair play.

Wattala Basketball Club won the inaugural tournament in 2009 and retained the cup in 2010. They were chasing a grand triple in 2011 and that prompted a national newspaper, on the morning of the final day of the tournament, to ask the question, "Will St. Eugene remain at Wattala?"

This year however, their hopes were shattered as Moratuwa University won the trophy for the first time.

This year St. Eugene's Trophy saw the introduction of the 'Fr. Hebert Medal' to recognize outstanding services to Sri Lankan basketball. The medal is named after Fr. Eugene John Hebert, an American Jesuit priest who arrived in Sri Lanka as a missionary in 1947 and was the champion coach of the all-conquering St. Michael's College, Batticaloa, basketball team which dominated school basketball for over three decades.

Fr. Hebert had produced countless number of basketball players, who had gone on to represent the national team, including three former Sri Lankan captains. Fr. Hebert disappeared during the height of Sri Lankan civil war in 1991. In the Eastern part of the island, where he served, Fr. Hebert is considered a martyr.

The recipient of the inaugural 'Fr. Hebert Medal' was veteran basketball coach Francis de Almeida, who has served the sport with distinction. (Bob RODRIGO)

CHINA

Sister Faustina's writings in Cantonese

Maria Faustina Kowalska, commonly known as Sister Faustina, was the Polish nun who promoted the Divine Mercy devotion, which is now followed by over 100 million Catholics. In her diary, Faustina predicted that her work would be suppressed for some time, and then accepted again. Two decades after her death in 1938, the Divine Mercy devotion was banned by the Vatican, but was approved again in 1978 and she was declared the first saint of the 21st century in April 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

At the height of the SARS epidemic in 2003, Fr. Slawek KALISZ, brought the first relic of St. Faustina to Notre Dame Parish, the first in China. For ten years Slawek, worked on translating Sr. Faustina's writings from Polish into Cantonese. After years of work and meetings with the diocese of Hong Kong and other collaborators, the book was publicly introduced at Notre Dame Parish on October 5, the anniversary of St. Faustina's death. The book will also be published in Mandarin for distribution in the Chinese mainland. (China Oblate Delegation Newsletter, October 2011)

PHILIPPINES

A crime that cries to heaven

Archbishop Orlando QUEVEDO served as the first Bishop of Kidapawan when it became a diocese in 1982. Since 1998, he has been the Archbishop of Cotabato.

When Fr. Fausto Tentorio, a missionary of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions (PIME), was murdered by unknown assassins in North Cotabato, in the diocese of Kidapawan, on October 17, the Oblate archbishop issued the following statement:

"The death of Fr. Fausto is unadulterated murder. I totally condemn this act as a crime that cries to heaven. If the perpetrators think that this killing will silence the priests, religious Brothers and Sisters, and bishops from proclaiming the justice of the Reign of God, they are mistaken. The blood of martyrs such as Fr. Fausto bolsters the courage and daring of those who are interested in

peace and justice enough to sacrifice themselves as they walk the road of active non-violence. I launch a strong appeal to the authorities to look for the perpetrators and deliver them to justice.”

PHILIPPINES

13 priests killed in 40 years

On October 29, the Vatican news agency, Agenzia Fides, reported the following:

There are 13 priests who have been killed on the island of Mindanao since 1970 to date: four Oblates of Mary Immaculate; three from the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME); a Claretian; a Jesuit; a member of the Society of the Divine Word; a missionary of St. Columba; and two diocesan priests. The killings took place under the governments of Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, Gloria Arroyo, and Benigno Aquino. Twelve crimes remain unpunished; only that of Fr. Tullio Favali was resolved. The priests killed were all engaged in pastoral care and witnessed the love of Christ, dedicating themselves to the promotion, development and protection of human rights and to the evangelization of the poorest and most marginalized of the island.

Here is the list of murders processed in chronological order by Fides, on the basis of data provided by local churches:

- November 3, 1971: Fr. Nelson JAVELLANA, OMI, director of Notre Dame in Maguindanao.
- April 13, 1981: Fr. Godofredo Alingal, SJ, pastor of Kibawe in Bukidnon.
- April 11, 1985: Fr. Tullio Favali, PIME, assistant pastor of Tulunan, North Cotabato. Killed by a paramilitary group led by the Manero brothers.
- July 1, 1988: Fr. Mario Estorba, SVD. Pastor of Loreto, Agusan del Sur, killed in Butuan City.
- April 16, 1989: Fr. Dionisio Malalay, 32, assistant pastor of Tabina, Zamboanga del Sur.
- October 14, 1991: Fr. Nerylito Satur, 40, pastor of Valencia, Bukidnon.
- May 20, 1992: Fr. Salvatore Carzedda, 49, PIME, who was killed in Zamboanga City
- February 4, 1997: Bishop Benjamin DE JESUS, OMI, Apostolic Vicar of Jolo, killed

a few meters from the Cathedral.

- May 3, 2000: Fr. Rhoel Gallardo, Claretian, kidnapped and killed in Basilan.
- December 28, 2000: Fr. Benjamin C. INOCENCIO, OMI, Chancellor of the Vicariate of Jolo.
- August 28, 2001: Fr. Rufus Haley, the Society of St. Columban, 57, killed in Malabang
- January 15, 2008: Fr. Jesus Reynaldo RODA, OMI, Director of Notre Dame of Tabawan, Tawi-Tawi islands.
- October 17, 2011, Fr. Fausto Tentorio, PIME, 59, killed in Arakan, North Cotabato.

THAILAND

And the floods came...

Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO, the superior of the Delegation of Thailand, wrote on October 27 about the floods that the Oblates in that country are suffering together with their people.

The flooding this year in Thailand has very unusual proportions. They say that last time that there was something similar was about 70 years ago. I don't know if I should feel lucky to be in such an historical event!

The flooding is not due to heavy rain. The rain actually has already stopped. It is due instead to too much water running down towards the sea from the North. Rivers and dams were too full to keep all the water of this very abundant rainy season. While the rivers have come out of their beds, the dams were opened to avoid their breaking. As a result, water has been inundating many provinces for almost 500 km while travelling towards Bangkok, which is the natural place where all waters would come on their way to the sea. In some places, the flood was even three meters deep. Houses were destroyed and people left with nothing. The rice paddies and all other crops have been destroyed too. Many industrial areas were flooded resulting in the closure of the factories for many months. About 300,000 workers are left without employment, bringing even more poverty. In few months, we will feel even more the shortage of food and other products.

About ten days ago, water has reached the outskirts of Bangkok, almost from all sides. Our delegation house is about 25 km northeast of the

city. At present, the road is closed because there is more than one meter of water and in some areas, even two meters. It is surprising to see boats travelling on this usually very busy road! For most people, water has filled the ground floor of their houses. Those who have a two-story houses have moved whatever belongings they could upstairs and they live there. Luckily the electricity and the tap water were not cut off in many areas, allowing the people to cut the electricity by themselves in the flooded houses. There is a lot of discomfort, because in the flooded areas, the toilets are not working anymore. It is difficult to find drinking water and food, because the markets and the shops are also under water. Even if some try to their business open, the delivery of goods is very difficult. Prices are soaring.

In this terrible situation, the majority of the people try to help each other in facing the crisis. Solidarity among neighbors is striking. People share the little they have (food, drinking water...) or the raft they have made to move the elderly or their things. Since many are blocked at home without much to do, conversations can be heard shouted from one house to the others. Some could not stay in their house anymore, so they moved in with their neighbors. Rescue units bring food and offer other services in the most urgent cases, but there are too many people to be attended. They do what they can. The people affected by the flood in the entire country are already more than 10,000,000. The number is growing fast now that the water is entering the city that has about 10,000,000 people in itself.

The Oblates share the same situation of the people. I am writing from the second floor of our delegation house because on the ground floor we have 75 cm of water. We had to cut off the electricity downstairs and we risk being forced to cut it off in the entire building, because water is still getting higher and the main electrical board risks being flooded too. We moved what we could to the second floor and we are now camped on this floor. All rooms are storerooms except for the one I use and one used by the couple working for us. Our kitchen is on the stairs; our toilets are not working and we have to manage in other ways. We have enough food and drinking water for

about two more weeks; then eventually we will have to find ways to leave the place. According to forecasts, this flood will last at least one month. I am the only Oblate left at home. The others were abroad when the flood started. Now water outside is about 1.50 meters. We cannot go out as the area is practically isolated. Without a boat, it is dangerous to move because of snakes and crocodiles. Everything is destroyed. Our house will need repairs for many months. It is the same for the houses of most people. Sometimes I wonder where we shall find all this money, but I am learning to let go. God will provide!

Yesterday the flood has reached the parish we run in the city. Water is still just a few centimeters, but it might increase. Our formation houses are under threat. Water is all around. We hope that when it will reach them, it will not get too high, but no one can be sure.

Please keep us and the people of Thailand in your prayers, that this big crisis might pass soon and that all will have the strength to start again from what will be left.

THAILAND

Update on flood

Fr. Claudio Bertuccio, Superior of the Delegation of Thailand, sent an e-mail on November 5, 2011, updating us on the situation of the Oblates around Bangkok.

Just a small update to let you know that now almost all our houses in Bangkok area are flooded. About 5 days ago, our parish in the city was flooded. Water is about 50 cm deep. The hospitality nearby house for migrants, run by the Oblates, was also flooded at the same time. From these two places, the Oblates try to offer some help with the limited resources we can find. Bags with food and drinking water are distributed to those who have nothing left. They use a small boat to deliver it to the people.

Last night our juniorate was flooded. Water is now about 1 meter high in the garden and in the buildings, about 70cm. Their telephone lines and internet are cut off, but they still have electricity upstairs. We communicate through cell phones. Water has almost

reached also our prenovitiate. We expect it to be flooded by tomorrow. I am still isolated since last October 19, but thanks be to God, water has started receding. During last week, it lowered about 10cm. There are still 150cm more to go.

We try to do what we can to help the people around us, but now we share in their same

situation: we no longer have a dry home to stay in or a place to welcome the victims of the flood. Even if we cannot do much, at least we can be witnesses to hope in this terrible disaster. Easter is a mystery of suffering, death and resurrection. According to the official news, we will have to bear this situation at least for one more month. Please continue praying for us

Africa-Madagascar

ZAMBIA

Even the animals said goodbye!

Before Bishop Paul DUFFY died in San Antonio, Texas, on August 23, he asked that his body be returned to the diocese he had founded in Mongu, Zambia. To fulfill his wishes, the former Delegation Superior, Fr. Joseph PHIRI accompanied the bishop's remains by air to Lusaka on September 2. After an emotional celebration of his life at the Cathedral of Lusaka, presided by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Nicola Girasoli, the body was taken on its final journey to Mongu. The present Delegation Superior, Fr. Freeborn KIBOMBWE, describes the event.

On September 4, a convoy of seven vehicles accompanied the bishop's body. We had received word the day before that there would be points at which we would be required to stop as people would be waiting to pay their last respects to their beloved bishop. The drive through the Kafue game park was spectacular, something I have never seen before; it was almost as if the animals knew that someone important had passed away. We saw buffaloes, impalas, elephants, antelopes and kudu near the road. My brother Oblates and I said to one another that whether it was providential or coincidental, this picture spoke to us, especially as Africans!

From the game park our first stop was an outstation called TBZ. We stopped for about 10 minutes as people cried and prayed. From TBZ, our next stop was Kabanga outstation; the same happened there as people mourned and prayed. From Kabanga, we went to Kaoma the biggest town before Mongu. We spent close to 30 minutes as people, led by their parish priest, prayed and sang. The children from Holy Childhood group had beautiful posters speaking

about their beloved Kuku (grandfather). Their poems dedicated to Bishop Paul were touching: "Bishop Duffy, why? why? why? Did you have to leave so soon when we needed you most?" We all broke down at such powerful messages! We bade farewell to people in Kaoma as we went to the next station, Nalwei.

Nalwei is where the newest church in the diocese is located: St. Peter the Rock. People showed that their faith was indeed as firm as the Rock. They had worked hard with Bishop Duffy to build the priest's house and also managed to complete a convent for a group of sisters who will come soon. We had a decade of the rosary and a beautiful tribute by the church leaders. The theme was "Bishop Paul, a man of love, justice and truth". It was about 13 hrs when we started off for the last 100 kms to Mongu. Thirty kilometres before reaching Mongu, there was a lone vehicle that crossed in front of us and three men jumped out, almost at attention. When we got closer, we realized that it was the then leader of the Opposition Patriotic Front, Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata (who would be declared winner and become Zambia's 5th Republican President, sworn in exactly one month since Bishop Duffy's death).

After 10 kms, we were met by the first contingent from Mongu Diocese at Kande. Vehicles were parked; people danced and expressed praises in welcoming their bishop. From there, the convoy grew; we drove till we reached Kambule Secondary School where Bishop Paul Duffy's successor, Bishop Evans CHINYEMBA, was awaiting to receive and walk with the body to the cathedral. The Cardinal from Lusaka was on hand. Bishops from other dioceses were also waiting to receive Bishop Paul Duffy.

We immediately proceeded to have a service in the cathedral, led by Bishop Chinyemba.

After the service, the body lay in state till the following day. At 20 hrs, we had a vigil Mass which was well attended. The chairperson of the Episcopal Conference spoke. Viewing of the body continued till the early morning hours.

On Monday, September 5, the Mass of Requiem was held in a stadium filled to capacity. Catholics, evangelicals, political parties and European Union and SADC observers for the elections in Zambia all gathered to pay their last respects. The mass was celebrated by His Eminence, Medardo Cardinal Mazombwe, attended by bishops, priests and laity. The then Vice-President was present to represent the government. The Mass was simple but touching, attended by a sea of people in their respective church uniforms and chitenges (traditional women's wear). From the stadium, we took Paul home for burial at the Cathedral of our Lady of Lourdes. Singing the Salve Regina as an Oblate tradition when the body is being lowered into the grave, people cried; some waved. Bishop Paul had finally touched the ground – to end a several thousand mile journey from San Antonio to Mongu. May the soul of God's faithful servant, the voice of the voiceless rest in peace. (OMI Zambia, July-September 2011)

ZAMBIA

Sanitation problems abound

The frequent flooding, poor drainage and lack of toilets in Kanyama, sprawling poor villages in Lusaka, force most residents to use plastic bags during the night rather than go to the toilet which are more than 200 meters from homes. The situation in Kanyama is a national problem. According to a 2008 study conducted by a local NGO, only 58% of Zambia's population has

access to adequate sanitation, while 13% do not have any kind of toilet. The government has taken steps to improve water and sanitation systems in urban areas, leaving semi-peripheral urban settlements with a high population density, as for example Kanyama, without spaces, with poor land, not suitable for the construction of latrines and with precarious road network which has contributed in seriously aggravating the problem concerning water drainage. The existing latrines not only are overcrowded, they attract worms, too and during the rainy season, the overflowing sewage pollutes the wells, feeding diseases such as diarrhea, cholera and dysentery. The precarious drainage system in Kanyama has made the area particularly exposed to the proliferation of cholera. For the poor outskirts of the city, the government had promised a project, partially completed, which was abandoned in October 2010.

Oblate Bishop Evans CHINYEMBA of the Diocese of Mongu in the impoverished Western Province, said he was alarmed and said in a statement released by the IRIN agency that "we must pay close attention to water problems". "There are many rivers in the province, and I think that we have not exploited our resources in order to provide water to our people". The Bishop added that the government digs wells in some areas, without covering the whole province. Unfortunately there are no funds in the country and therefore diseases continue to spread favored by poor drainage and polluted water. Malaria and diarrhea are among the main diseases: according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), malaria causes 50 000 deaths each year (23% of all deaths in the country) and diarrhea about 7% of all diseases reported. (Agenzia Fides 09/09/2011)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE

Appreciating and celebrating the Associates

Armelle and Louis Molin from Manitoba, Canada, have been Oblate Associates for many years. Here, they tell their own story.

We have been in contact with the Oblates since 1973. In 1986, we participated in a workshop on "Personality and Human Relations" directed by Father Lomer LAPLANTE. Through personal

reflection and sharing with the other members of the group, we discovered a profound and nearly urgent desire to live a "missionary experience." This led us to our first trip to Bolivia in 1987. We remained in Bolivia during 10 out of 15 years, because we also wanted to spend time with our family in Canada.

In 1989, when we were in Bolivia, we received a letter from Fr. Alain PICHE who was at the time Provincial in Manitoba, inviting us to become associates of the congregation. This was

a surprise and an honor which we took seriously. Fr. Louis JOLICOEUR guided us during a time of preparation and on October 9, 1989, we made our first commitment in the Oblate chapel in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Armelle remembers that she felt as on her wedding day; she was entering a new phase of her life, a phase filled with promises and challenges. She felt privileged to belong to a missionary congregation and her wish was to always be worthy of such an honor. On the other hand, Louis felt more of an affiliation with the Oblates, a partnership where he would seek example and orientation.

We worked with abandoned children who entered the Amanecer institution. As associate, Armelle became responsible for the preparation of the boys who wished to receive the sacraments; she was able to listen to their suffering and to accompany them on their young life's path. Louis' responsibility was the maintenance of the 10 homes of Amanecer, inviting the boys to give him a hand, teaching them a few tricks of the trade but most of all, the importance of a job well done. We also learned that very little is required to make a child smile; few words or actions are needed to make him feel protected and valued.

During our time in Bolivia, we had been invited to accompany Fr. Roberto LACASSE as well as two other associates and a few Oblate scholastics who regularly went to the distant rural communities. There, we discovered a totally unknown universe: roads that were barely passable even by jeep, the stinging cold on the high plateaus of the Andes, the meager vegetation, the poorly nourished sheep, the people who were so destitute, but we also saw their smiles and visible friendship the next morning as we shared the breakfast we had brought especially for them. We then appreciated the courage of the Oblates to maintain this mission, bringing to these far away people some comfort and hope.

It is also with F. Lacasse that we organized a series of encounters for married couples, encounters which proved to be beneficial for the Bolivian participants as well as for ourselves. The same Fr. Lacasse was the first pastor of the Saint Eugene de Mazenod parish inaugurated in 2001 on the outskirts of Cochabamba. It is with enthusiasm that we gave him a helping hand in the areas of electricity, making of

window curtains, refurnishing etc. Back in Canada, with the contributions of our benefactors, we were able to financially help in setting up a Pastoral Centre for the formation of catechists who would be called to teach in the remote sectors of the parish.

In July of 2009, Fr. Lacasse was visiting his family in the state of Maine, USA. Since it was our 50th wedding anniversary that year, we invited him to come and celebrate with us. The presence of a missionary Oblate at our anniversary was a special gift from Heaven.

Back in Canada, it has become easier for us to approach those who are lonely, hurt, handicapped, to listen to them, to accompany them on their sometimes difficult path. That is surely one of the benefits of our time in Bolivia. (www.omilacombe.ca)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

A medal and a diploma

Living in France for almost a year, Fr. Paul MICHALAK writes us. The French government has given him an honorary diploma in recognition of what he did during the war. He also received a medal reserved for the "Insubordinates" who, during the war, lived in hiding and refused to work for the Germans. Fr. Michalak states: "It's a beautiful medal with a text close to what St. Paul wrote to Timothy: 'I have fought the good fight.' The fight against evil is always current." And he adds with humor: "Mind you this: on the day of my burial, one can drape my coffin with the tricolor: a privilege for the insubordinates according to a law of the French Ministry of Defense." (*Jacques LALIBERTÉ in INFO OMI, 20 October 2011*)

UNITED STATES

The "Undocumented Christ"

In 2004, a mysterious life-size and perfectly preserved statue of Jesus Christ was found in a sandbar in the middle of the Rio Grande River in an area where four Mexican immigrants later drowned. The statue was found by the US Border Patrol while watching from the air. The agents, accustomed to seeing countless bodies of Mexican immigrants in the river, thought nothing and radioed to ground

units to investigate. Border Patrol agents on the ground were surprised to discover the striking figure of Jesus, minus his cross.

Because no one claimed it and because of its mysterious discovery in the river where so many undocumented Mexican immigrants have died, Christians in Piedras Negras, Mexico, across the river from Eagle Pass, Texas, embraced the statue as a religious message from God. Eagle Pass Police Chief Juan A. Castaneda, a very religious person, said that he is embracing it as "The Christ of the Undocumented." "Faith has led me to believe that this is a sign," he said.

Fr. James LOIACANO, pastor at Our Lady of Refuge, Eagle Pass, where the Oblates are in charge of three parishes, agrees. In an interview

on illegal immigration aired on the public broadcasting television network program, "Religion and Ethics," he reflected, "I think in a real sense perhaps we could see this as God's message to our nation. How shall we treat those who come to our border, and what does the wall really mean? What is it saying?--Jesus, stay out?"

The statue now resides in Our Lady of Refuge Church in a small chapel where there is constant flow of people adoring the Blessed Sacrament and praying the "Divine Mercy" devotions. As Fr. Loiacano says: "This is our *Cristo indocumentado*." People come for hundreds of miles to see it; they pray before it. No one knows where it came from... But it reminds us that Christ, too, is a refugee and that every stranger who comes to our door is a child of God."

Europe

FRANCE

Hidden apostles

In 1967, the "juniorate" of the Oblates in Pontmain became the "Le Bocage Family Holiday House." Thanks to the Brothers.

One could never sufficiently emphasize the place the Brothers had at Le Bocage. They are no longer there to speak about it. Furthermore, they were not very much inclined to "speak." They "were." They "did."

The Brothers were not employees of Le Bocage. For their very important labor, there was a modest sum paid by Le Bocage to the community. This allowed Le Bocage to have competitive rates. Families that did not have the means to go to the sea, especially large families, were thus able to take lovely vacations. Vacations with fewer tans, but about which they still speak. Vacations of three weeks or even a month. They could do this thanks to the Brothers (and thanks to the "happy vacations" of their Family Allowance Fund). So these families came to Pontmain; and often, they came back, so inviting was the atmosphere.

Brother LE RAY maintained the grounds. He said not a word unless vacationers went to speak with him; then he could express his sense of humor. Then one could detect at times a well hidden, deep spirituality.

Brother LEBOUCHER, our cook, got up very early. Before going to oraison, he had to stoke the ovens with charcoal and boil the milk, milk from his cows. How did his heart, sick as it was, withstand for all those years the regime he imposed on it? For him, that was unimportant; he was offering his life.

Brother GOURMELEN, the handyman (known as "Tintin" by everyone) was from a very humble background. So he was right at home with most of the vacationers. He would talk football with them and with them, he would very willingly go to drink his Ricard at the sports bar. Among the Oblates at that time, it was the fashion to be a worker with the workers, worker priest or sometimes worker Brother, engaged in the world of work. One spoke seldom of the presence of workers on vacation. But that did happen.

In the evenings, José DUVAL could make everyone laugh. In the carpentry shop, everyone could see the professionalism of Brother COURONNE: he was not, however, a carpenter, but a cabinet maker. And everyone in Pontmain admired the garden of Brother RIPOCHE, another great professional. Each day, he weighed his produce and looked in the newspaper for the prices at the big Rungis market; thus, le Bocage was able to pay off its debts to the community.

I failed to mention a few others, even more in the background, such as Brother HAMELIN, our electrician.

If very soon after my arrival in Pontmain, I became “Brother André,” it is surely by osmosis. José lovingly treated me as a fake Brother. But Le Bocage could not have existed without the real Brothers. (Brother André GRIMONPONT)

ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCE

Archbishop Denis Hurley returns to Kilburn

Wednesday, the 5th of October, 14 Quex Road, London, became ‘Denis Hurley House’. The naming ceremony was part of a Service of Blessing led by the Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province, Fr Willie FITZPATRICK and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor, together with the former Bishop of Leeds, David Konstant, and the Administrator of Durban Cathedral in South Africa, Fr. Stephen Tully.

The terrace house is home to the Oblates’ Partners in Mission programme, through which people of all ages are invited to share in the Oblate mission by witnessing to the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and proclaiming his Kingdom to the most abandoned. A key focus of the project is to provide people with a variety of opportunities both at home and abroad to experience mission among the poor and marginalised.

And soon, the Denis Hurley Association, currently being set up in Britain as a charitable trust to raise funds for alleviating poverty and destitution in Durban, will be based here too. In his word of welcome, Fr. Lorcan O’REILLY, Director of the Partners in Mission project, expressed gratitude for the presence of the patrons of the Denis Hurley Association.

It is fitting that 14 Quex Road will be known as ‘Denis Hurley House’ to honour the late great Archbishop of Durban, who was an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Archbishop Hurley was a Father of the Second Vatican Council, a distinguished liturgist, a courageous and unflappable foe of the apartheid system, a dedicated prophet of justice and reconciliation in his native South Africa and a revered pastor in the Province of Natal.

In his homily, Fr Fitzpatrick said that St Eugene de Mazenod had challenged his followers to “leave nothing undared for the Kingdom of God” in the service of the poor and abandoned. “Archbishop Denis Hurley was one such man”. Bishop David Konstant reflected that Denis Hurley grew to greatness by his refusal to accept injustice, his ability to take risks in the course of doing what was right and his cheerful respect for the underdog.

Bishop David said: “He had huge courage. I met him when he had been taken to court, accused of undermining the police. Bishops from around the world came to his defence and the case was dropped, but instead of going quietly, he stood and spoke at length, to great effect, condemning the corrupt, cruel apartheid system.”

Robina Rafferty, chair of the Denis Hurley Association, described the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban, which provides food, medical care, an employment service and other support to hundreds of poor people and refugees in Durban. Many collect food from the centre but stay outside, because they are undocumented migrants. Robina explained that the Denis Hurley Association aims to raise funds to support the work and to provide new premises while also working to keep the vision of Denis Hurley alive today. She also spoke of her delight that the association now has a place to call ‘home’ in London.

In reflecting on why the new name resonates with the members of the Partners in Mission team, Ronan Lavery said, “While I feel very proud that we have adopted Denis Hurley as the patron of the Partners in Mission house, I also feel slightly nervous! For it falls on us, in collaboration with the vowed Oblates of our Province, to continue the mission handed down to us by St Eugene and through Denis Hurley. We, the Oblate Partners in Mission team, have some big shoes to fill. We are called, everyday, to strip away the layers of prejudice which many people in our society today are forced to wear. We are challenged to look at all those whom we meet through the eyes of Christ, and to call others to do the same. This is a difficult task, but one which is made so much easier when we have the inspiration of great men such as Eugene, Denis, and many other great Oblates, to guide us in our work.”

Denis Hurley's audacious ministry was a faithful witness to that challenge in the second half of the 20th century. All those who call 'Denis Hurley House' their home in London are pledged to embrace that same challenge in the 21st century. (*Lorcan O'Reilly*)

ITALY

Oblate Associate honored by Franciscans

Lady Giacoma of Settesoli, a noble woman, radically changed her lifestyle after meeting St. Francis of Assisi, becoming a witness of faith and charity and the inspiration of the "Third Order of St. Francis." According to tradition, when the saint was near death, he dictated a letter to her whom he affectionately called "Frate Jacopa", asking her to bring him her bridal veil and some *mostaccioli* (a type of pasta). But she had anticipated his wishes and arrived with what he wanted, even before the letter was sent.

The Franciscan Fraternity of the Friars Minor of the Porziuncola, along with the city of Assisi and other groups, each year awards the "Silver Rose of Frate Jacopa." It honors women who in our own day exhibit the same values as the friend of St. Francis. This year's recipient was Mrs. Maria Grazia Frezza, an Oblate Associate

from Marino where the Oblate novitiate of the Italian Province is located.

Maria Grazia, wife of Marco and mother of Emanuele and Chiara, is a teacher and formator of youth. In 2004, Emanuele was killed in a motorcycle accident. Because Emanuele had spoken of his desire to become a medical doctor and spend some time in the missions, Maria Grazia and her husband decided to work with the Oblates in founding the "Emanuele House" in Farim, Guinea Bissau. The foundation is a Pediatric Nutrition Center to help sick and malnourished children from poor families. This project led to another one, the construction in Farim of the "House of the Sun," a kindergarten and elementary school. Its founders are convinced that the teaching and formation of the adults of tomorrow is an essential step in providing the future with men and women capable of loving other people. The "House of the Sun" is scheduled to open in January 2012.

In a *YouTube* presentation of the October 3, 2011, award ceremony, Maria Grazia speaks fondly (in Italian) of her association with the Oblates and the role that the charism of St. Eugene has played in her own life and that of her family. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEgLcDiCG34>)

Beatification of the
Oblate Spanish Martyrs
17 December 2011
Madrid

Anniversaries for December 2011

65 Years of religious life

1946.12.25	08262	Fr. Lucien Brencklé	France
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60 Years of religious life

1951.12.08	09845	Bro. Josef Overkämping	Central European
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60 Years of priesthood

1951.12.08	08212	Fr. Luc Lombart	Belgium/Holland
1951.12.22	08272	Fr. Léon Canelle	France
1951.12.22	08331	Fr. Gustave Pelletier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

50 Years of religious life

1961.12.08	12338	Bro. Raymond Bastin	Belgium/Holland
1961.12.08	11600	Bro. Maurice-Ernest Bélanger	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1961.12.08	11599	Bro. Deacon Joseph Dujmovic	Belgium/Holland
1961.12.08	11601	Fr. Emilien Nadeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1961.12.08	11603	Bro. Willibald Raab	Central European

Years of priesthood

1961.12.03	10217	Fr. Francesco Arrigo	Italy
1961.12.03	10214	Fr. Stefano Ferrara	Italy
1961.12.16	09870	Fr. Anthony Colbert	Australia
1961.12.21	10029	Fr. Wendelin Rolheiser	Lacombe
1961.12.23	09794	Fr. Richard Wolak	Lacombe

25 Years of priesthood

1986.12.05	12750	Fr. Inayat M. Gill	Colombo
1986.12.06	12698	Fr. Felix Pokane Molumeli	Lesotho
1986.12.19	12706	Fr. Ouseph Simon Vadakoot	India

Prayers for our deceased

No. 81-89

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Francis Duffy	Natal	11/09/1919	Durban	23/03/2011
Fr. Patrick J. O'Reilly	Australia	30/12/1932	Mulgrave	09/10/2011
Fr. Arthur Saint-Sauveur	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	04/10/1920	Richelieu	18/10/2011
Bro. Paul Hoemeke	United States	27/12/1939	Willimantic	19/10/2011
Fr. Duncan Mackenzie	Natal	07/08/1928	Durban	21/10/2011
Fr. Nestor Factora	Philippines	15/10/1929	Makati	27/10/2011
Bro. Alfred Ganser	Central European	25/11/1933	Düsseldorf	31/10/2011
Bro. Aleksander Maniak	Poland	01/12/1924	Nysa	05/11/2011
Fr. Leo Miller	United States	22/10/1920	Belleville	05/11/2011

"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)

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C.P. 9061, 00100 ROMA-AURELIO, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
<http://www.omiworld.org>
Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Nino Bucca
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