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Sacred Triduum of the Martyrs

Day 1: 16 December 2011

The Oblate Province of Spain has lived three days of intense celebration of the beatification of the Oblate Martyrs. Oblates, Oblate Sisters, Lay Associates and friends of the Oblates and especially, the families of the 23 martyrs (22 Oblates and a layman committed to the faith) came from different parts of Spain and the world. Of particular note was the visit of Father General, Louis LOUGEN, who took the opportunity to make a visit of all the houses in the Province of Spain, traveling in a few days many kilometers of Spanish geography.

He was joined by several members of the General Administration: Frs. Gilberto PIÑÓN, Warren BROWN, Clement WAIDYASEKARA and Miguel FRITZ. Also present were the Spaniards, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, General Councillor for Europe and formerly the provincial of Spain, during whose mandate the postulation's work in the diocesan phase was completed in Madrid; and Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ VEGA, the present General Postulator who so ably managed to bring the Cause to completion in Rome. Also, provincials from different parts of the globe have come (Italy, Lacombe-Canada, the United States and Poland; there are also representatives from many other provinces, delegations and missions of the Congregation (France, Italy, Poland, Germany, South Africa, Cameroun, Lesotho, Brazil, USA, Canada, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, the General House in Rome and the International Roman Scholasticate), along with the Superior General of the Oblate Sisters, María del Mar GÓMEZ MAÑAS. Many Spanish Oblates stationed in missions in other parts of the Oblate world have come for this event with their Older

Brothers, since all of them had done their formation in this martyrs' house in Pozuelo. The Spanish Province, lead by its provincial, Fr. Otilio LARGO MACHO, were good hosts for everyone, in an atmosphere of brotherhood.

The days leading up to the event were for logistics and preparation: organization of the liturgy at the Cathedral of Madrid, Nuestra Señora de la Almudena; meeting pilgrims at the airport and at the train and bus stations; lodging them at the Provincial House of Pozuelo and in the Diego de León community (the former Provincial House of the martyrs); printing papers, brochures, etc.; and distributing materials and pilgrim packets, as well as many other tasks. Fr. Eutimio GONZALEZ, the coordinator of organization, responded generously and efficiently to the task given him.

The Oblates of Spain did not overlook the spiritual preparation: in the houses and the parishes, there were prayers, vigils and meditations about the martyrs. Basically, they used the materials that had appeared daily on our official web page.

On the 16th of December, there began a sort of Sacred Triduum for those who would experience these events in person; it began with preparatory vigil. This took place in the auditorium of the school of the Sisters of Our Lady of Cluny, located in front of the convent of the martyrs in Pozuelo de Alarcón.

The vigil began at around 22:00 and filled the auditorium with 400 persons. For an hour and a half, two Oblates, Fr. Javier MONTERO and Fr. DAVID MUÑOZ MEDINA, together with laity from various Oblate parishes in Spain and friends of the Oblates, led us on a tour of the history

of the martyrs, through a clever combination of prayer, drama, music, meditation and narration of how the story unfolded.

At the end, the audience could not contain their excitement and they cheered the team that had organized the vigil. Tears could be seen in the eyes of many. And they all felt the enthusiasm caused by the example of fidelity left by the martyrs and the desire to live fully this experience of the Holy Spirit which the Congregation and the Church hopes that this beatification will be for each one of us. (Diego SÁEZ MARTÍN)

Day 2: 17 December 2011

It began at noon on December 17, the ceremony of beatification of the Servants of God, Fr. Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL and 21 Oblate companions, plus the layman, Cándido Castán San José. It took place in the Cathedral of Santa Maria la Real de la Almudena in Madrid. One had to be there at least an hour and a half or two hours ahead of time to get a seat. Even that was not enough. By 10:30, most the pews were filled. Needless to say, later on, others would be arriving until all of the seats in the Cathedral were filled. Notable among those attending were the families of the newly beatified: brothers, nieces, nephews, great-nephews and nieces, and even a brother and several grandchildren of the layman, Cándido Castán.

Not less amazing was seeing the group of priests and bishops, almost 200 of them. There were about 20 bishops. Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presided at the celebration. Joining him were the Cardinal-Archbishop of Madrid, Antonio Maria Rouco Varela, and the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, Antonio Cañizares. There were two Oblate Bishops: Michael D. PFEIFFER of San Angelo, Texas, and Ramiro DIAZ, bishop emeritus of the Apostolic Vicariate of Machiques (Venezuela). There were also bishops from the dioceses of origin of the new martyrs and some auxiliary bishops.

There were more than 150 priests, but half of them were Oblates. Many of them had arrived on the 16th, coming from various parts of the world.

The rest were diocesan, friends of the Oblates or of the families of the newly beatified.

There were many moving moments. Of course, one of them was when Cardinal Amato read the decree of Beatification from Benedict XVI. At that moment, they uncovered the image of the newly beatified, and their family members carried in procession some palms, one for each newly Blessed, which they placed around the image. There were many emotions and more than one tear welled up in the eyes of many of those present.

The homily, quite heartfelt and simple, spoke of the new martyrs' faithfulness to God. "When we ignore God, we lose our humanity," Cardinal Amato stated, referring to the savage murder of the Oblates and Cándido Castán, as well as many thousands of Christians in Spain, land of saints and martyrs, as the Cardinal Prefect called it. He also stressed that all Christians are called to give their lives, although not in such cruel circumstances as the martyrs had to suffer; he presented us with the martyrs as examples of fidelity.

Fr. General, Louis LOUGEN, at the end of the celebration, spoke some words of thanks to the bishops, religious, priests and laity, especially the family members who were present at the celebration and who, in different ways, had helped make the event to take place.

Afterwards, we had a lovely and joyful family gathering: the Oblates, the Oblate Sisters, family members and lay associates had a festive lunch, together with the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid and members of the diocesan curia. The time of fraternal sharing lasted for several hours. Joy filled the room and there was much laughter, sharing, storytelling and jokes, all in a relaxed atmosphere.

There remained in each one present a feeling of thanksgiving to God which on the next day, December 18, would be a shared feeling: there would be a Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification in the Parish of the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima, part of the Oblate community of Diego de León (the former Provincial House of the martyrs). (Diego SÁEZ MARTÍN)

The cry of a thousand mothers

Excerpts from the homily of Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, during the celebration of the Beatification of the Oblate Martyrs and a Layman, December 17, 2011. After briefly telling the martyrs' story, the Cardinal said:

The cry of a thousand mothers cannot silence the pain of the Church at the loss of these her sons, killed because of hatred of God. Unfortunately, history shows that when man erases from his conscience the commandments of God, in his heart are also broken all ties to goodness, thus leading him to committing monstrous deeds. In losing God, man also loses his humanity.

We might ask ourselves: were our martyrs ready for the ultimate sacrifice? The answer, based on witnesses and on their own words, is affirmative. They were aware and they were getting ready, through lives of prayer and sacrifice, for their surrender to their executioners. They certainly knew of the antireligious sentiments of many of the locals who were angry because the Oblates openly wore the cross on their chest and welcomed into their house meetings of Catholic railway workers.

Just four days after the outbreak of the civil war, the anti-Catholic hatred, which had burned and destroyed many churches in Madrid, arrived in Pozuelo de Alarcón, came down upon the scholasticate of the Oblates with unprecedented cruelty. They occupied the building; all the religious were arrested, without questioning, without a trial, without proof, without the possibility of defending themselves.

A priest, six young students and Mr. Cándido Castán San José, husband and father of two children, were killed at once, on the day following their arrest. The others endured four months of suffering, following their painful Way of the Cross: fear, life in hiding, the constant risk of being discovered, arrest, prison, ridicule, humiliation of all kinds, torture, mutilation and death.

It's good not to forget this tragedy. It is also good not to forget the reaction of our martyrs. To the wicked actions of their murderers, they responded

with kind words, prayer and forgiveness for their persecutors, accepting death with fortitude, for love of Jesus Christ. Their behavior gave light to the darkness of evil.

We are touched by the words of the young, eighteen year old Oblate, Clemente Rodriguez Tejerina, who, months before his martyrdom, had told his sister, Josefa: "If we have to die, I am ready; I am confident that God will give us the strength we need to be faithful."

We seem to hear the words of the apostle Paul who wrote these words to the Christians in Rome: "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? [...] No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us." (Romans 8:35, 37)

The Lord Jesus himself was hated, persecuted, condemned and killed. And he warned his disciples, saying: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first." (John 15:18) Persecution is one of the beatitudes of the Christian: "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt. 5:11-12)

The martyrs teach us that our witness to the Gospel involves not only a virtuous life but also, at times, martyrdom. Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Letter of Beatification, says that the 22 Oblate Martyrs and the layman, father of a family, "while remaining faithful to their vocation, relentlessly preached the Gospel and, by shedding their own blood, bore witness to their genuine love of the Lord Jesus and of his Church."

This is the message which the martyrs offer us. Society has no need of hatred, violence and division, but only of love, forgiveness and brotherhood. In a world weakened by wounds of every kind, the Christian is called, even today, to give a strong testimony of God's providential presence and the effectiveness of his grace which, in a way so mysterious but real, changes evil thoughts into thoughts for good.

Let us imitate the strength of the martyrs, the strength of their faith, the immensity of their love, the greatness of their hope. As we prayed in the Collect: “O God, through the merits and the intercession of the Blessed Martyrs, let us bear witness of faith and truth to the world.”

May the new Martyrs be, above all, life teachers for their brother Oblates of Mary Immaculate; may they, in the school of these martyrs, strengthen the love of Christ and of the Church, and be generous and eager missionaries of the new evangelization in the whole world.

Last October 29, the Archdiocese of Madrid celebrated the Beatification of Sister Maria Catalina Irigoyen Etchegaray, a woman rich in faith and love, a sublime example of faithful and joyful consecrated life. Today, Madrid has lived, with renewed joy, the glorification of the Blessed Oblate Martyrs and Blessed Cándido Castán San José, exemplary father of a family and model of the Christian worker.

Glorious Archdiocese of Madrid and glorious Spain, fertile land of saints and martyrs, who offer the world the vision of the good life of the Gospel, practicing the love they preached! As long as there are righteous people in your land, Divine Providence will never abandon you and the blessing of the Lord will come down, full of grace and of gifts, upon civil society, your families and each of you.

May the Immaculate Virgin Mary, mother and help of Christians, help you celebrate Christmas with a pure and holy heart.

Day 3: December 18, 2011

On December 18, there was a special aura about Madrid. Most people did not realize it. Those of us who the day before were at the ceremony for the Beatification of the Oblate Martyrs knew what it was and why: we have we more intercessors for our pilgrim Church on earth. And we wanted to thank God for this.

In the parish of the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima, home of the Oblate community of Diego de León, several hundred people gathered to give

thanks for this gift of the beatification. There were some 90 Oblates. On the previous night, some had left for their own missions. At the main altar, together with Fr. General, Louis LOUGEN, there was the retired Oblate Bishop of Machiques (Venezuela), Ramiro DÍAZ; Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ VEGA, General Postulator; Fr. Otilio LARGO MACHO, Provincial of Spain; and a priest who is a grandson of Blessed Cándido Castán.

Fr. Joaquín Martínez Vega preached the homily. He read some messages received from various places around the world, giving witness to the impact this beatification has had for the Church and the whole Oblate world: messages ranging from as far away as Vietnam to the Vatican to Mallorca (Spain). He spoke from the heart and was filled with emotion at times as he showed his joy at the beatification of our brothers.

As at the Mass of Beatification, there was a procession with palms at the time of the offertory. After communion, the Region of Asia-Oceania honored the Provincial of Spain by giving his a lotus flower. The lotus flower is born in stagnant water and when its stem pierces through the water, it blossoms clean and immaculate in the light of the sun. Such were the martyrs: they were not defiled by the evil of their time but they lived and bloomed for God.

At the end of Mass, there was a very special moment. Fr. Olegario DOMÍNGUEZ, of Spanish origin, was one of the Oblates who personally knew the martyrs. Over 90 years old, he has been a missionary in Paraguay. But, as he himself told those present, for all these years he has been hoping for the beatification of his former juniorate companions with whom he shared secrets, hopes and dreams; so he could not help but come. At the age of 90, he kept the appointment! And how could one not ask him to share some of his memories? So at the end of Mass, with tears, he told us of his feelings of great joy. He recalled the strong and demanding, yet at the same time understanding, personality of the provincial, Blessed Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL. “With one look,” he said, “he put us on the path on which he wished to steer us.” He also told of several

facts that show his strong-minded personality, motivated by the faith. While studying in Rome at the International Scholasticate, Fr. Olegario found some letters from Fr. Esteban. Between 1932 and 1935, several times he wrote to the Superior General saying he did not believe he possessed the qualities necessary to be provincial and he asked to be relieved of his office. In 1935, seeing the escalating persecution, he wrote to Fr. General: "This time, I do not ask you to relieve me of the office of provincial: in the present circumstances, that would be cowardice." Thus, he faced his mission with courage and accepted the will of God. In another letter, he told of the death of the first 7 martyrs. In coded language to avoid censorship, he said to the Superior General: "Mr. Theodore Labouré: Vicente [BLANCO, superior of the scholasticate] has just lost seven of his own. Signed: Esteban." Several times, Fr. Olegario wept as he recounted his memories and

his feelings and just as many times, he made those of us present cry. We all thanked God for having these precious intercessors.

After the Eucharist, we Oblates had a fraternal meal in order to celebrate, as a family, the gift of having these giants of the faith, our Older Brothers, the Blessed Oblate Martyrs of Spain, Fr. Francisco Esteban Lacal and his companions. After the meal, it was time for goodbyes for those who were returning to their missions. We were all renewed at the end of this Sacred Triduum.

And to end this chronicle, there are some videos about the beatification on the internet. At this link, one can find the ceremony of December 17 in the Cathedral: <http://goo.gl/PRlx1>

Te Deum laudamus! (Diego SÁEZ MARTÍN)

General Administration

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Orientation Session for new Major Superiors

From November 21 to December 3, fifteen Major Superiors of Provinces and Delegations participated in the Orientation Session for Major Superiors at the General House in Rome. This was an intense period of introduction into Oblate leadership for those who have recently been appointed as Provincials or Superiors of Delegations. The participants were: William ANTONE from the United States; Lauro DE GUIA from the Philippines; Marian GIL from Assumption Province; Wenceslao LAGUIDAO from Japan-Korea; Francis Vusumuzi MAZIBUKO from Natal; Loudeger MAZILE from Haiti; Francis NALLAPPAN from India; Raymond NANI from Cameroun; Habel NSOLO from Congo; Antonius RAJABANA from Indonesia; Mokone Joseph RATHOKOA from Central Province South Africa; Dilip SARKAR from Bangladesh; Joseph SEPHAMOLA from Lesotho; Rohan Jude SILVA from Colombo; and Luc TARDIF from Notre-Dame-du Cap.

Coordinated by the Vicar General, Paolo ARCHIATI, and closely assisted by Clement

WAIDYASEKARA and Andrzej JASTRZEBSKI, the session presented all the aspects of the Congregation's life and mission from the vision given to us by the 35th General Chapter in its Call to Conversion.

The content was given by members of the General Administration as well as some outside resources in the area of leadership models in governance. The session began with each Major Superior sharing about himself and the Unit which he has been called to lead. This began an experience of sharing and bonding that deepened as the days passed. Each day sought to bring an awareness of the Chapter Calls to Conversion: Community, Mission, Formation, Leadership and Finances.

While the message of the Chapter was constantly the background theme, the new Provincials and Major Superiors came with some hands-on experience from their time in office. There were many practical questions and specific challenges they wished to address and find solutions for, in dialogue with members of the General Administration. The in-put sessions, the shared wisdom among the leaders present and Congregational documents all contributed to

make the orientation program a rich experience. None of this would have been possible without the able assistance of Daniel LEBLANC in the translation booth.

The times for meals together, a trip to Assisi, the prayer and Eucharist celebrated in common each day made this a renewal experience. Three intense moments of prayer characterized the session: one was prepared and animated by the community of the International Roman Scholasticate on the Oblate devotion and love for our Mother Mary; one was prepared by two Oblates of the General House community and animated by the community of the Italian Scholasticate on the theme of the heart of Saint Eugene and his testament to the Oblates; the last one was prepared and animated by the graduate students that are here in the General House, on the theme of the Oblate Cross at the heart of our mission. All those present appreciated the creativity and intercultural expression that characterized each prayer service. They were real celebrations and profound moments of communion with God and with each other.

The final evaluation of these two weeks together was highly positive. The content had both theoretical and practical dimensions and especially the practical aspects were most appreciated. Those present mentioned some ways to improve the content for the next time with very concrete suggestions. Perhaps one of the most frequently mentioned suggestions was to begin with a good tour of the General House so that newcomers can find their way around! The evaluation highlighted the fraternal and international spirit that was built up among everyone. Perhaps the greatest value of the two weeks was in the brotherhood that was established among the Major Superiors present and with the members of the General Administration and the sense that together, we are responsible for the Congregation. The sharing together, the prayer and the Eucharist each day created deep bonds of faith that we are one Congregation of brother Oblates. The Major Superiors shared how they witnessed a spirit of joy, dedication and happiness in the warm welcome by the community of the General

House. For the community at 290 via Aurelia, we also witnessed in these Major Superiors who were among us for two weeks a spirit of happiness, readiness to serve the Congregation and generosity. We are really so very blessed to be Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate! (Louis LOUGEN, Superior General)

AIX EN PROVENCE

Marking a transfer

The feast of the Immaculate was anticipated in order to allow the greatest possible participation. So it was that on Wednesday, December 7, a good number of the faithful, the local community, and representatives of the communities of Marseille, Lumières and Nice gathered in the Church of the Mission, led by Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, Vicar General; Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS, General Councillor for Europe; and Fr. Yves CHALVET DE RECY, provincial of France.

In his homily, the provincial spoke of Mary's closeness, her faithfulness to everyday life, and her presence at the key moments in the life of Jesus. He also recalled the enthusiasm of Fr. de Mazenod upon adopting our current name and in taking part in the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

After communion, there was a little celebration meant to serve as a symbolic transfer of the community of Aix from the Province of France to the General Administration. By way of thanksgiving, a slide show recalled the variety of current ministries in the community. Fr. Archiati then took the floor to compare the present moment to the passing of the baton in a relay race. He spoke of how important it is to see this action as a service to the life of the Congregation, but also of the local Church of which the Oblates have been a part for so long a time.

During this Mass, we also inaugurated the new lighting system in the church; it lights up beautifully the congregation and emphasizes the harmony of the sanctuary with its large, modern cross, as well as the grace of the pillars and the beauty of the oval dome, one of three oval domes in all of France.

The assembly then gathered in the beautiful cloister around a big bowl of hot soup and some cold meats, with a Yule log cake for dessert. It was an opportunity to chat, to get to know one another and to live brotherly and quality time.

Thus, the Founder's house continues to be alive, to develop and respond to new situations, with the help of the whole Congregation. St. Eugene was probably very attentive to what was happening in his house that day. May his intercession, united to that of Mary, obtain for us a smooth and completely missionary transition. (Jean-Pierre CALOZ)

AIX-EN-PROVENCE

The work of restructuring

The General Administration is filled with hope as it begins a process that will see the international community in Aix-en-Provence become one of its priorities for the good of the whole Congregation. It is more than appropriate that we express our sincere gratitude towards the Oblates of the Province of France for their service over these many years and for the collaboration with which the province has participated and continues to participate in this project. Through the Congregation's web page as well as through the Communiqués of the last plenary sessions, we have kept the Congregation abreast of what was happening in this regard. So we are sure that this step comes as no surprise.

We have begun discernment in order to identify the members of the new international community to whom we will try to give the needed help to prepare them for this new mission. During the transition period, the following will remain in Aix: Fr. Jean-Pierre CALOZ as temporary superior; Bro. Benoît DOSQUET who will oversee the work together with our project manager; as well as Fr. Léon KENNEDY who serves as vicar of the cathedral parish.

To facilitate the restructuring work that will extend throughout the year 2012, all of the activities which normally take place in this house will be either suspended or held in another place for the duration of the work. Only regular service

in the Chapel of the Mission, along with related activities (e.g. confessions), will continue during the construction period.

Receiving Oblates and other visitors or pilgrims in the house will also be impossible during this period. By the second half of 2012, we hope to be able to give the date when activities and receiving guests can resume at their normal pace. We thank you for your understanding and ask that you bring this to the attention of the entire Oblate family in your Unit. (Paolo ARCHIATI, Vicar General)

OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

Updated Constitutions and Rules online

Prior to the 35th General Chapter in 2010, Rule 165a stated that: "*Any change in existing Rules which is approved by the Chapter is effective immediately. If the subsequent Chapter maintains the decision, the amendment is then inserted into the printed text of the Rule.*" On October 1, 2010, the 35th Chapter maintained the first sentence of this rule but suppressed the second sentence.

The rationale for this change was that it would have taken until after the 36th General Chapter in 2016 to permit a newly printed edition of the *Constitutions and Rules*. Since there were a number of changes adopted in both the 2004 and 2010 Chapters, a new edition was considered appropriate at this time.

The Central Government will soon take up the project of printing this new edition to replace the one published in the year 2000.

In the meantime, Oblates will find the updated version of the CCR on the Congregation's website at www.omiworld.org. It is given there in the **reserved section** (*requiring an OMI ID and a password*), under the "Documents" link, in English, French and Spanish



Asia-Oceania

LAOS**Diocesan Process for the beatification of 15 martyrs declared valid**

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has judged to be valid the diocesan process for the beatification of 15 martyrs, among them, religious and lay catechists, killed in Laos “in hatred of the Christian faith” between 1954 and 1970. The Process therefore enters its second phase and its progression within the Vatican Congregation officially begins.

The news, say Fides sources, was welcomed with great joy by the Bishops and the Catholic community in Laos, but also by the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) and by the Society for Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP), which have their religious missionaries in the list of the 15 martyrs, composed of 5 French religious OMI, 5 religious MEP and 5 secular Laotians. The Bishops of Laos, promoters of the Cause, have entrusted the realization of the process to the diocese of Nantes, where one of the missionaries came from, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Malo, MEP. The diocesan process was officially closed in the spring of 2010 in the diocese of Nantes. The Oblate who is Postulator of the Cause, Fr. Roland JACQUES, will now have to write the “Positio”, which will then be examined by the Relater of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

There is another Oblate Cause of beatification of a missionary killed in Laos already registered in the Congregation: Fr. Mario BORZAGA and the

Laotian catechist Paul Thoj Xyooj. For this Process, the “Positio” has already been formulated for about a year and we are waiting for the Relater to examine it. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 16/12/2011)

COLOMBO**Oblate defends jailed Missionary of Charity**

On November 23, 2011, police barged into Prem Nivesa, a home for unwed young mothers and their children as well as other “street children”, and arrested the superior of the Missionaries of Charity, Sister Mary Eliza. An anonymous phone call accused the religious of trafficking in infants.

Former Assistant General of the Oblates, Fr. Oswald FIRTH, quickly came to the defense of the persons and ministry of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Blessed Mother Teresa. He called the accusations “pure garbage.” He went on to say: “I have known the Sisters for a long time and they are doing marvelous work. Out of respect for the Word of God, they pull off the streets abandoned children; they offer a home to young mothers who don’t know where else to go, without distinction of religion, language or race.”

The first judicial hearing of the case was postponed from December 1 until December 15 so that the police would have more time to conduct further investigations. The news media, especially the tabloid press, has used the arrest as an opportunity make useless speculations. In fact, the judge urged the media to do their work responsibly. (*Taken from AsiaNews.it*)

Africa-Madagascar

NATAL**Constitutions & Rules translated into IsiZulu**

Since their arrival in Kwazulu-Natal in 1852, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate have tried to live up to the desire of their Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, to evangelize the Zulu people. The Bishop of Marseille often reminded the Apostolic Vicar, Bishop Jean-François ALLARD, of the task he had sent his missionaries to accomplish on African soil.

After many frustrating failures to convert the Zulus, eventually the Holy Spirit worked miracles of grace and many of these people became Catholic Christians. Over the years, many also became Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Recently, Fr. Phumlani Charles NDLOVU from the Oblate Province of Natal has succeeded in translating the *Oblate Constitutions and Rules* into the IsiZulu language. He himself

was born in Pietermaritzburg where Oblate roots run deep. For more information, one may contact the translator at this e-mail address: frphumlanicharlesndlovu@gmail.com .

MADAGASCAR

Canadian scholastic in regency

Deacon Marcin SERWIN from Assumption Province in Canada is serving his regency in Madagascar. In June 2011, he completed his studies at the International Roman Scholasticate.

I have commenced my fifth month in Madagascar and before I leave for the next part of my experience in the southern missions, I wanted to share with you how I am living this time.

As of September 2011, I have been mainly doing “tournée,” visiting Christian communities in the eastern bush. Since these Christian communities are very young, there is a lot of work in all areas of life and faith: catechesis, organization of basic Church structures, managing their efforts, as well as aiding, where possible, with healthcare and formation. (I have received probably as many “missionary doctor visits” by the people in the villages as sacraments conferred.) At the same time, I have many opportunities to exercise my deaconate, through everyday liturgy, both with the local priests and without them, when we divide ourselves into different sectors. Most of the adult members of the Christian communities are in catechumenal preparation for the sacraments so there are exams to admit them to different stages before their baptism. There are also many children’s baptisms, thanks to which to date I was blessed with the possibility of baptizing over 60 Christians, both young and old. In many of these villages, I will only be once or twice throughout this year, but the moments spent with these people are very meaningful and enriching.

Even though my capabilities of the Malagasy language (and the Betsamarakana dialect) are still quite modest I have begun doing short catechesis in the villages I visit, of course first written then read. This helps me have direct contact with the preaching ministry in the deaconate and priestly ministry. Since the stages of the faith vary

immensely, even among people of the village, as is the case in every Christian community, I mainly speak about God as Love and the consequences this truth has in our everyday lives as well as in our relationships with our neighbor.

When it comes to my health I am doing well. My body is steadily adapting to the tropical weather and to the diverse bacterial flora Madagascar has to offer. As many missionaries here, I did get the plasmodium type malaria, but with the needed prudence and medicine at hand, it is not dangerous for me. In a way I see it as a blessing because it lets me live out this time more fully, letting me experience the troubles these people have to live with, often without the needed care I have. For the remaining time of November until mid-January I shall be in the south-central part of the island in the two furthest missions the Oblates have here, Ambinanindrano and Marolambo. This is also the part of the Island that is least developed, thanks to which I will be able to have a new experience. I shall participate in two tournées around these missions, one among the rivers of Ambinandrano and the other, during Christmas, in the mountains of Marolambo. I ask for the needed prayer and graces for this time. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! (*Assumption Province News and Views*, November 2011)

SAHARA

The Church in North Africa

Fr. Mario LEÓN, as Apostolic Administrator in Western Sahara, was recently in Tunisia for the meeting of the CERNA (Episcopal Conference of the Bishops of North Africa). The meeting was held on November 12-17 in Tunis, the capital, in the house of diocesan bishop of that city.

There were four bishops from Algeria with their four vicars, one from Tunisia with his vicar, two from Libya and one vicar, two from Morocco with two vicars, the bishop of Mauritania, the secretary of CERNA who is a priest from Casablanca and Fr. Mario.

The bishops are all foreigners (which reflects the reality of the Churches since all the Christians are foreigners). One bishop is Jordanian; another

is Palestinian; then there are French, Spanish, and Germans, all of whom have been in these countries for years. Many were even born in these countries and have a lot of experience. The Churches of North Africa are simple, humble and even poor in resources, although they conduct schools, cultural and aid centers (especially for immigrants), libraries, but with fewer and fewer members: men and women religious, priests. This is the great challenge and hardship they now face: the diminishment of vocations in the Churches of Europe from which, a short time ago, they received help. More and more priests and religious men and women are coming from Africa, Latin America or Asia.

It was very interesting to listen to the testimony of the bishops and see what is happening in their countries and how their respective Churches are experiencing different changes, especially in Libya, but also in Tunisia itself. There were even tanks in the streets, but the people seemed content.

One bishop would say: “How beautiful freedom is!” They also held a press conference at the end of the CERNA meeting, something unheard of in North Africa.

It is interesting to see how the Church in Algeria is doing: they have a problem with visas. For the past three years, Algeria has not given a single worker’s visa for religious men and women or for priests. We can go to visit, but not to work in a church. For this reason, they are slowly suffocating. All of the dioceses have 2-3 or more priests, religious men or women awaiting permission to enter and settle down, and the average age is ever increasing!

In Morocco, there’s not much going on; changes are happening, but very slowly.

It seems that things are finally calming down in Libya. The Christians, mostly foreigners, in the country for work, do not yet dare to go, but the country needs them because now is the time to rebuild. The bishops told of amazing experiences. They were assaulted more than seven times; their homes were robbed; people with guns followed them when they went out in their cars. It was the

law of the jungle there. It seems that all families had guns in the house, but not so many priests. Of course, they were easy victims. More than once, neighbors, hearing their screams, came out to defend them. But it was not a religious issue – it was robbery. They stole their cars, televisions, computers, clothing, furniture – everything – incredible! They have given a simply amazing witness.

Fr. Mario acknowledges: “The truth is that, in all this, I have been a witness, simply watching. I speak very little in the meetings, but I really learn a lot.”

SENEGAL

The plague of Casamance and cocaine trafficking

Tension is increasing in Casamance, the region of Senegal wedged between Gambia and Guinea Bissau, a “low intensity” theater of war since 1982 because of the presence of an independence movement. On December 13, an armed group attacked the village of Kabeum, causing a number of victims. The historical *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC), which has been fighting for years for the independence of the territory, is now divided into different armed groups, dedicated more to banditry than to the political guerrilla warfare.

“There are many armed groups operating in Casamance,” Fr. Giuseppe GIORDANO explains to Fides. He is a missionary who has been working in Senegal for many years [and is superior of the Oblate delegation there]. “The clashes in recent days took place near the border with Gambia, but there are also occurrences of banditry on the border with Guinea Bissau. In these cases we cannot exclude that we are talking about banditry originating in that country, where, among other things, poorly paid military are not new to such acts”. With regards to the possibility that the increasing flow of cocaine passing through West Africa from Latin America and towards Europe can play a role in increasing the instability of Casamance, the missionary says, “It cannot be excluded. Drugs certainly come from Latin America to Guinea Bissau, especially to the islands of the archipelago. From Guinea Bissau, however, it is not easy to transfer it directly to Europe, because

the country is poorly connected to the rest of the world. For example, links with Europe are limited to two weekly flights to Portugal”.

Fr. Giordano continues: “So if you create an unstable border area between Senegal and Guinea Bissau, one can assume that this will facilitate the transfer of loads of cocaine to the airport

through the territory of Senegal to the airport in Dakar which is rather well connected with the rest the world -- with the whole of Africa, with Europe and North America. Much of what goes on in Senegal has been spoken of many times, but it is really hard to know what the situation is really like”, warns Fr. Giuseppe in conclusion. (L.M.) (*Agenzia Fides* 15/12/2011)

Europe

UKRAINE

Blessing of new “Media House”

On November 24, 2011, the Provincial of the Polish Province, Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, blessed a new Oblate residence in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. Unique about this house is that all of its residents are involved in media ministry.

Present for the blessing was the General Councillor for the Region of Europe, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS. He blessed icons of the 22 Spanish Martyrs; the images are in the house chapel where the newly created community will take their inspiration and support for proclaiming the Gospel on television. Before the blessing, Fr. Rois expressed how touched he was by the event: that he, born a Spaniard, could bless icons of Oblates who were cruelly murdered for their Catholic faith and for being religious during the time of communist and socialist persecution in Spain in 1936, and who have been chosen as the patrons of the new community. The Spanish Oblate Martyrs will be beatified on December 17, 2011, in Madrid.

Oblates of the Ukrainian Delegation were able to hear the story of these martyrs’ lives during a

meeting in Obukiv on November 21-24.

Fr. Pavlo VYSHKOVSKYY, the superior of this new religious community, expressed his gratitude to Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the Oblate Superior General, who offered a gift of icons for the new community; to Fr. Ryszard Szmydki, who with his Council donated money to enable the purchase of the kitchen for the new Oblates house; to Fr. Tomasz VYHNALEK and Friends of the Missionary Oblates from Austria, who helped with decorating the new Catholic Media Center building; and to Fr. Radoslaw ZMITROWICZ, Superior of the Ukrainian Oblate Delegation, for the courage to create a new Oblate community dedicated to media work, truly a “first” in Ukraine, and indeed, in the whole history of the Oblate Congregation.

Among the guests were Archbishop Tomas Galickson, Papal Nuncio to Ukraine; the Auxiliary Bishops of the Kyiv-Zhytomyr diocese, Bishops Stanislav Shyrokoradyuk and Vitaliy Skomarowsky; the Oblates of Mary Immaculate working in Ukraine, Belarus and Turkmenistan; and all who came that day to share this great joy. (Pavlo Vyshkovskyy)

Canada-United States

ASSUMPTION

Dedication of John Paul II Square

The origin of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish in the Archdiocese of Toronto dates back to 1990, when it became clear that St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish could no longer accommodate the needs of the large Polish Roman Catholic community living in Mississauga. This fact, coupled with the

desire of Brampton’s Polish community to build an additional church, convinced Fr. Stanislaw BAK and members of the lay community that the project was a necessity. Bishop Terrence Prendergast concurred with these observations during his 1996 pastoral visit. Soon thereafter, Fr. Adam FILAS was named pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish and took on the task of planning the new parish in Brampton. Fr. Peter

NOWAK speaks of the dedication of a large statue of Blessed Pope John Paul II in a square in front of the new church.

This celebration can be considered as the capstone of the Millennium undertaking in Brampton. Over the last twelve years, the statue of John Paul II, the “Pilgrim of Peace”, has seemingly been on a pilgrimage of its own.

When it first arrived on Canadian soil, it stood for a while on our “holy ground” upon which we have constructed St. Eugene de Mazenod church. Then it watched over us, standing near the parish rectory. It did not stand idle, for it kept on reminding us how blessed we are to have had the gift of Pope John Paul II. After his death, it challenged us to continue living his earnest desire to see the world open its doors to the hope that comes from accepting Jesus as Our Lord, King, Teacher and Healer.

Now the statue of John Paul II welcomes pilgrims to our parish from the John Paul II Square, blessed through the toil of so many of our faithful, kept strong in prayer and commitment to Catholic values by our pastor, Fr. Adam Filas. It was only right that the John Paul II Square opening ceremony was conducted by none other than Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, the right hand man of our beloved pope. We honoured him by naming the road leading to the square from Polonia Avenue “Cardinal Dziwisz Street”. In turn, the Cardinal blessed us with an unparalleled gift, the first-class relic of the blood of Blessed John Paul II.

Through the intercessions of the faithful, God blessed us with a beautiful sunny day and with the presence of Bishop Matthew Ustrzycki and many dignitaries (both on the federal and civic level of the government, Polish and Canadian alike). A prayerful atmosphere permeated all who gathered for this celebration and there was not a dry eye among those who witnessed the moment when, at the steps of John Paul II Square, we venerated the relic of the blood of our Blessed Pope. (*Assumption Province, News and Views, November 2011*)

OMI LACOMBE

Making a difference in New Orleans

The OMI Lacombe Province’s Oblate Youth Ministries Team tries to encourage our young people, teachers, parents to recognize how blessed and fortunate we are, and so to be more attentive and responsive to those in need. In February 2011, and again in March 2011, the Oblate Youth Ministries Team, along with several teachers, organized two groups of high school students to respond to the “Katrina Klean-up” in New Orleans, Louisiana, following the terrible hurricane and flooding of August 2005. Six years after the catastrophe, neighbourhoods of New Orleans are still a mess. The youth of École Secondaire Ste. Marguerite d’Youville and St. Albert Catholic High School went to New Orleans... to make a difference!

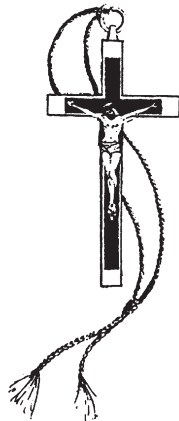
- We shared in the stories and joys and laughter of Cathedral Academy, an elementary school in the French Quarter.
- We helped to rebuild two houses in St. Bernard Parish.
- We planted several 1000 cypress trees in the swamp area outside the city.
- We painted Ms. Ava’s house, and were blessed to enjoy her children.
- We helped renew an outdoor “Interpretive Center” depicting the early history of the slave trade and immigrants coming in New Orleans.
- We cut grass and cleaned up over-grown yards, so that the absentee owners would not be heavily fined by a city ordinance.
- We planted gardens.
- And we also played and enjoyed the sights and sounds, the culture and tradition of New Orleans.
- A definite highlight was to share the Sunday Eucharist with the parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish – praying to the hospitality and joy and energy of a Jazz Mass.

The hospitality of Fr. Tony RIGOLI and Fr. John MORIN and the people of the parish was overwhelming, leaving many of our youth in tears and heart-felt gratitude. We went “to make

a difference”, and I believe we did. However, the greater difference was the “change of heart” for us. The love and acceptance, (and stories) of the people of New Orleans impacted us... they made a difference in us.

This coming Spring Break, 21 students and 3

staff members from Morinville High School, along with the Oblate Youth Ministries Team, will be participating in another mission to New Orleans. Again, our young people will have an opportunity to meet and work with the people of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. (*OYM newsletter, Christmas 2011*)



Anniversaries for February 2012

70 Years of religious life

1942.02.17 07403 Fr. Jean-Marie Mouchet Lacombe

65 Years of religious life

1947.02.17 08272 Fr. Léon Canelle France
 1947.02.17 08798 Bro. Raymond Des Chênes Lacombe
 1947.02.17 08446 Fr. Jean Lerayer France

65 Years of priesthood

1947.02.14 07294 Fr. Francis Montalbano United States
 1947.02.23 07568 Fr. Savio Crevacore Italy
 1947.02.23 07773 Fr. Paul Michalak Notre-Dame-du-Cap

60 Years of religious life

1952.02.17 09861 Bro. Antoine Dominique Haiti

60 Years of priesthood

1952.02.02 08166 Fr. André Houle United States
 1952.02.17 08257 Fr. Benoît Bonduelle France
 1952.02.17 08150 Fr. Tommaso Campagnuolo Italy
 1952.02.17 08421 Fr. Yvon Filippini Notre-Dame-du-Cap
 1952.02.17 08255 Fr. Georges Laudin France
 1952.02.17 08296 Fr. Lucien Le Calvé France
 1952.02.17 08504 Fr. Marino Merlo Italy
 1952.02.24 08226 Fr. Joseph Meeùs Lacombe
 1952.02.24 08205 Fr. Valentin Nelissen Belgium/Holland
 1952.02.24 08219 Fr. Oscar Pauwels Lacombe
 1952.02.25 08149 Fr. James Datko United States
 1952.02.25 08136 Fr. Carlos Krzewinski Mexico

50 Years of religious life

1962.02.17 11193 Fr. Rodney Boyd Natal
 1962.02.17 11192 Fr. Mario Ceruti Natal
 1962.02.17 11372 Fr. Brian Duffey Natal
 1962.02.17 11194 Bishop Barry Wood Natal

50 Years of priesthood

1962.02.03 10085 Fr. Kevin Casey Indonesia
 1962.02.03 10089 Fr. Bernard O'Brien Australia

25 Years of religious life

1987.02.02 13013 Fr. Dilip Sarkar Colombo

25 Years of priesthood

1987.02.27 12715 Fr. Gregorius Basir Karimanto Indonesia

Prayers for our deceased

No. 99-105

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Johannes Beringer	Central European	24/05/1930	Koblenz	08/12/2011
Bro. Pierre Dizier	Belgium/Holland	08/07/1930	Moresnet	11/12/2011
Fr. Kazimierz Świtała	Poland	14/10/1930	Leszno	17/12/2011
Fr. Christopher Dunne	Anglo-Irish	05/06/1930	Bodelwyddan	18/12/2011
Fr. Liguori Belzile	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	25/02/1929	Montréal	19/12/2011
Fr. Joseph-Gilles Brossard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	05/04/1924	Richelieu	21/12/2011
Fr. Francis X. Gorham	United States	02/05/1931	Lowell	25/12/2011

“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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