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Discerning new Directions in Ministry Address of Father General to the OMI Lacombe Province Convocation

(Over the following issues of OMI Information, we will be publishing excerpts from this talk given by the Superior General at on November 16, 2011.)

Part I

I am very happy to be here among you at the OMI Lacombe Canada Convocation: *Fanning the Flame: Discerning New Directions in Ministry*. Thank you, Father John Malazdrewich, Provincial and Ms. Sandy Prather, Convocation Chair, for inviting me. I come to this great Province which has its origin in many former Oblate Provinces, each of which contributed significantly to the history and development of the Congregation and of Canada through more than 150 years of intense missionary activity. It is a great honor for me to be here with you and I am very grateful for this opportunity.

I have been asked to speak on our sense of Oblate mission and the Call to Conversion in the context of your theme: *Fanning the Flame: Discerning New Directions in Ministry*. I believe that all of us are growing into understanding and participating in what the Spirit is asking of us in this Call to Conversion from our last General Chapter.

I would like to speak about the **Call to Conversion** as the dynamic process by which we strive to participate in God's mission. This process makes it possible for OMI Lacombe Canada to discern new directions in ministry, participating as a community of consecrated men and Associates in God's mission.

I understand the Call to Conversion made by the General Chapter of 2010 as nothing less than the

very call to embrace anew the Gospel itself. The Gospel of Mark begins immediately with John the Baptist preaching a change of heart and then Jesus himself arrives, calling us to repent and believe the Good News (Mark 1:1-15). The 35th General Chapter has invited us to accept the same Gospel invitation to repentance, to open wide the doors of our lives to receive the Good News, Jesus Christ, to receive one another and the poor and marginalized. This Call is prophetic (Mt 16:21-23) and we realize it may take us where we might not want to go (Jn 21:15-19). It may be the call to go from an area of sinfulness in our lives to a life more open to grace. This Call to Conversion also may be the call to go from a good life to a holy life. In some way, all of us are challenged by the Call to Conversion. If we dare respond to this Call, and the very Gospel, Saint Eugene and the General Chapter demand it of us, our participation in God's mission will be full of power and our lives will truly be at the service of the Gospel, of the Church and of the poor.

How is the Call to Conversion a real part of our lives at the service of God's mission? There seems to be a four-fold movement through which we move many times in our life, deeper and deeper into the mystery of grace. These four movements are: (I) Repentance; (II) Meeting Jesus; (III) Deciding; and (IV) Crossing borders.

I - First of all, conversion involves repentance. Conversion, this grace from God, brings us to

recognize where we are bound by weakness and sin in our lives and stirs us up to desire to be changed and renewed. Repentance leads to growth in the freedom necessary to follow Jesus and live the Gospel. We must take a hard look at our way of living and our ministry in light of the Gospel, our CC & RR, and most recently, the General Chapter's Calls to Conversion in the various dimensions of our lives: mission, community life, ongoing formation, leadership and the use of finances... In these areas we find so much that needs growth, change and repentance in our lives.

I will mention three particular areas for us to consider in this area of repentance: first, we need **inner freedom** to do God's will; second, we must **live for God alone**; third, we are called to create, nourish and deepen **communion** among us.

A – FREEDOM

We are here together as missionaries to speak of God's mission and our place in that mission. We must ask ourselves **whether or not we are free for God's mission**. A theologian in Brazil once reflected with those in formation about the vow of obedience and freedom. He said we are capable of doing God's will only when we are interiorly free. He went on to explain that only a free person can be obedient in the fullest sense. Religious who lack inner freedom cannot be obedient because when they obey it is mere conformity to directives.

Jesus points to radical inner freedom in his teachings. He teaches that we must lose our life to save it. Can I let go of my life? He told us that if we are forced to walk a mile, freely go more: go two! If we are hit on one side of the face, we should offer the other side. If our overcoat is taken by force, generously we offer our suit coat, sweater, etc. Jesus' radical freedom is most strongly expressed when he says: "The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely" (John 10:17-18). (Recall the gesture of the Bishop in Les Misérables when the police brought in the man who had taken the silverware.)

We have come together as a Province to discern how best we might participate in God's mission. It is essential that we be on the road to freedom to be able to enter this conversation. We have come together as an apostolic community asking the Holy Spirit how we can be at the service of God's mission. This is a grace-filled search to do God's will. To pray, to listen to God's Word in one another, in the Scriptures, in the Church and in the poor, and to come to decisions demands great interior liberty, integrity and honesty with oneself and with others.

I believe this is an *area of repentance* we need to consider. Our lack of inner freedom and not being aware of that lack of freedom can make our discernment less than it should be. We are called to conversion from individualism to the communion of Oblates seeking God's Will. To come together to ask God "What should our priorities be?" and to discern in freedom how we should respond to God's invitation to mission is a tremendous grace of the Spirit. You have chosen well to do this.

Questions:

- How free am I; are we?
- Have I come with my plans, my attachments and my non-negotiables?
- Am I free to listen to God's voice speaking in many ways?
- Am I capable of communion, respecting, listening to and accepting the other?

Certainly we come with passion and convictions about where and how we, as Oblates, should serve the poor today. It is important that we share our convictions with the group as part of the discernment. There is a difference between sharing openly and honestly our convictions and passions on one hand and stubborn insistence on getting our way on the other hand.

Gospel freedom is required to participate in the discernment with trust and openness and then when a decision is made, to lay down my life and be available for what has been decided.

(To be continued...)

General Administration

OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE St. Eugene and St. Alphonsus

On an Italian website, we found a bit of history perhaps unknown to many Oblates (<http://www.santalfonsoedintorni.it/>).

In January of 1828, there appeared for the first time the Life of St. Alphonsus, Founder of the Redemptorists, in French. In order to spread the devotion and the works of Blessed Alphonsus Ligouri, Fr. Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and later Bishop of Marseille, had gathered the necessary documentation for composing a biography of the great Servant of God. Burdened with much work, Fr. De Mazenod confided the task to Fr. Jeancard, a talented young priest who had just entered the Congregation.

The press was full of praise. Especially noteworthy were the chapters on moral theology which were evidently written, not by the young, inexperienced priest, but by his

esteemed superior. One reads there: “His moral theology was received with great applause by a multitude of bishops and distinguished theologians, in Germany, in Spain, in France: in a word, in all of Christianity.”

Bishop de Mazenod had founded his institute to work at evangelizing the poor. He was present at the beatification of Alphonsus. The new founder chose him as patron of his Missionaries of Provence. It was he who erected, in 1818, in his church in Aix, the first altar dedicated to this Holy Doctor in France. Later on, with Cardinal Gousset, he was the most eager promoter of his moral theology.

The first public tribute to Blessed Alphonsus, pronounced on his feast day, led to the miracle of an instantaneous healing. The solemn octave of the feast attracted a huge crowd of people. Fr. de Mazenod wrote: “Soon, there will be more candles glowing on the altar of this Blessed than on that of the Madonna.” (Vita di S. Alfonso del P. BERTHE, II, p. 671-72).

Africa-Madagascar

LESOTHO 150th anniversary of OMI arrival

The year 2012 marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Lesotho. It also marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Mater Jesu Oblate Scholasticate at Roma.

All was not a smooth sailing from the start! Indeed, it is always difficult to explain the Catholic Church’s popularity in Lesotho, despite its late arrival, and being looked at and treated as an intruder by the church that had been in Lesotho long before. It is equally difficult to explain the high percentage of people adhering to the Catholic faith – which is about 45% of the population.

The missionary personnel was also peculiar in more ways than one: First, Bishop Allard was a difficult personality. He was criticized from all

directions. Some said he was naïve. At times, even Bishop de Mazenod seemed to have regretted his choice: “My dear Bishop, I hesitate before sending someone to you... you should realize that not everyone has the skin thickness of Father Gerard...”

But 150 years later, seeing the amazing vitality of the Church in Lesotho, one cannot help but wonder: maybe he was the right man after all! He had faith, and he was a man of prayer. That was sufficient.

What about Father Gerard? “Wise people” had some comments to make about him: “He is a bad organizer... He has no sense of time... He is always shabbily dressed...” On face value this was hardly a recipe for success. But how do we explain the huge impact that he has made, both in Lesotho and elsewhere? Surely, the dynamics of his popularity are not of this world – he is a saint!

The pioneer missionaries in Lesotho were followed by a strong contingent of Canadian Oblate priests and Brothers. They started arriving in Lesotho from 1930 onwards. The new Oblates were well prepared in many aspects of their missionary endeavor: studies, technical skills, medical certificates, etc.

Even though they strongly opposed some customs and vehemently fought against certain practices which they found incompatible with the Christian faith, our predecessors in the work of evangelization did not waste their best energies complaining about the shortcomings. Indeed, they could have spent their whole lives observing whatever was out of tune with an upright life!

On the contrary, they chose to disseminate the treasure they possessed by spreading it with a joyful heart and testimony of life; serving all Basotho through innumerable initiatives in the areas of evangelization, social life, education, health, agriculture and many others.

Our work of evangelization today is a continuation of that same work undertaken by our predecessors, and still uses the same means – prayer, good example in private and public life, friendship, sharing other people's concerns, showing an authentic desire for their happiness, along with the conviction that there cannot be peace for the individual, family or society, without God.

Like our predecessors, let us open our eyes to the good and, following Saint Paul's advice, learn how to conquer evil with an abundance of good (Rom 12:21). (*Maoblata*, January 2012)

NIGERIA

OMI Mission and the prevailing violence

Since the first bomb explosion on 1st October 2009 at the Eagle Square in Abuja, one can no longer count how many other bomb explosions the country has witnessed. Responsibility for most of these explosions, if not all, has been claimed by the extremist Islamic sect tagged *Boko Haram* (Western education is forbidden).

Generally based in the north-east of Nigeria

(Borno State), the activities of the Islamic sect have now spread to the north-central states of Kaduna, Kano, Jos and Abuja and to the north-west states like Adamawa among others.

In Plateau State where the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are working in the archdiocese of Jos, the very volatile situation that has prevailed since 2001 has now been compounded by several bomb explosions on relaxation centres, Christian churches and other nocturnal attacks on local and rural communities essentially of non-Muslim extraction. Plateau State is in the north-central region of Nigeria and 90% of the population is Christian. The neighboring states are essentially Muslim. Conflicts between Christians and Muslims have claimed several lives and destroyed property worth millions of naira.

The strategic location of our two Oblate communities in Plateau State perhaps is shielding us from having a direct sad experience of this mayhem. We live in Jebbu-Bassa and Bassa which are located about 20 km away from the city centre and in the same vicinity as a big military barracks. Often victims seek shelter in our area and in the barracks since military personnel are deployed from the barracks to areas of violence. Some consider the military barracks as the proverbial biblical wall of Jericho for us, the inhabitants of Jebbu-Bassa and Bassa! How long will this last? As it is said in Plateau State, it is not where you live that matters but where you were when the crisis started: one could be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Despite this situation, our Oblates have continued to work with the Christians and non-Christians including Muslims. In our work in the parish and at the Oblate Centre, we encounter Muslims and non-Catholics. We collaborate in the areas of peace talks, education, community building and social development. Our Mission has drilled wells for the village communities where Muslims and Christians live together. We have just opened a nursery-primary school in the parish premises where children of different religious backgrounds attend. We have encouraged and organized several meetings with members of the different religious communities to ensure a

peaceful cohabitation amongst them. Muslims have always come to visit and work in our communities whenever necessary. While this remains possible in our small communities, the situation is more delicate elsewhere.

The state security seems to be overwhelmed by the gravity of the sad and heinous attacks and counter attacks. On several occasions, the security agents have themselves been targeted and are still one of the major targets of the sect, the reason being that the security agents arrested and extra-judicially killed their leader in 2009.

The Church is not spared this ugly situation. The climax came on Christmas day, with coordinated attacks on five churches across the north, including a Catholic church in Madalla, Niger State, near Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory and a Mountain of Fire church in Jos, Plateau State. These accounted for several deaths and numerous injured persons.

Before then in Plateau State, measures had been taken around the churches and in the cities to ensure some safety of the worshippers and the inhabitants. People are no longer allowed to enter the church building with bags or hand bags. Church members and all who enter the church premises are screened with gadgets. Those who own vehicles can no longer park them near church buildings. Improvised security men (mainly the youth) mount guard around the church premises before, during and after Church activities. Most of the night activities in churches

are cancelled in some more exposed and volatile areas in the north. There are security check-points everywhere in the city and along major highways. But of what efficacy are these measures in the face of a suicide bomber who forces his way into a crowd of church members as they enter or leave the church and detonates his improvised explosive device)?

What is more worrisome in the present situation is the fact that the President of the country has openly confirmed that this Islamic sect has infiltrated the government, the judiciary and the security. What else could be so disturbing? Just recently, the presumed master-mind of the Christmas day bomb blast at St. Theresa Catholic church in Madalla (over 43 people died and over a hundred wounded) was arrested in a Borno State government house in Abuja, the capital. But unexplainably, he escaped police custody! And to think that most of the government’s plans to eradicate this group have often been revealed, even before there execution!

As it stands now, one of the options for a lasting solution is for the authorities to promote dialogue among all the ethnic and religious groups that form the Nigerian state, in order to draw a road map for our continued corporate existence as a nation. Our founding fathers had a vision for the country; we must revisit that vision and ascertain if it is still valid and applicable for all the components of the Nigerian nation. (George Chidi IHEANACHO)

Europe

FRANCE

The Oblates and the Roms

Some “small things” are “bearers of hope.” Marcel ANNEQUIN, stationed in Orly, tells us of one which, for him, is worth more than all the gold in the world.

Since October 2008, I am part of a support committee for Rom families, in conjunction with the association “Romeurope.” Actually, in Orly, there are five families (20 persons) on land where

they have built huts. A request for their removal was filed by the city. In June, the High Court issued its decision, deferring the enforcement of the eviction notice for one year in order to give them time to find a suitable alternative.

With the support committee, in negotiation with the mayor’s office, we made some progress: schooling, residence at the Communal Social Action Centre, job seeking, access to showers, rat control, access to a health center, and family aid.

I have become close to the families who are super-friendly.

In one family, Mugurel is in fifth year of high school. With two other Rom teens from Sucy en Brie (Madalina and Ancuta), Mugurel recently received, in the context of the 2009 Stockholm Junior Water Prize, the first prize, called "Land Action," for having cleaned the banks of the Seine several times with the association, Organization of Ecological Rescue. Since 1990, the organization conducts collection operations on the banks of the region of Paris, pulling in tons of garbage, from a supermarket trolley to the carcass of an automobile.

Mugurel and two other Rom teens were selected for this award, given by the Swedish Embassy. The three teens, in France for three years, were all proud to receive their prize of a thousand Euros in the elegant salons of the embassy.

The person who presented the award spoke from the heart. "These Rom people live without running water, without electricity, sometimes, as at Orly, close to the largest water plant in the Paris region. The school children are also good examples to their French comrades. They sort the waste; they have forged ties with their local townships. They have made sculptures with plastic bottles and scrap metal, and they have shown them publicly."

Mugurel is proud to tell me: "We climbed down on ropes; we gathered everything we found and put it into garbage bags. I do this so that things will be clean for everyone. For receiving the award at the embassy, there were the consul and journalists. We told what we had done. We were even on television.

"What I would like to have now is a real house for the whole family. We are five families here. What we need most is running water." The paradox: the encampment is a few steps from the water treatment plant! And it would be enough to have a pump for a waterline at the entry into the street where they live.

"What I would like to say to everyone is this: don't throw away anything on the banks of

the Seine or in nature. It is important to keep the earth beautiful." (Marcel Annequin dans *Audacieux pour l'Evangile*, janvier 2012)

BELGIUM/HOLLAND

Remembering the "Uncle Fathers"

In the sixties almost every Flemish family had an "Uncle Father": bearded men with many tall tales to tell in homes, schools or parish halls. They told about a life in the 'missions', inspired by the ideal spreading the Good News. Most of them worked as missionaries in the Congo. *Canvas*, a Flemish television station, is presenting "Uncle Father", beginning on January 24; the series allows the missionaries to tell their story in eight thematic episodes. Among the missionaries taking part in the series are two Oblates of Mary Immaculate: Fr. Daniel DELABIE and Bro. Hugo VAN DEN BROECK.

Most of them left by boat from the quay in Antwerp. They took leave of their fathers and mothers, wondering whether they would ever see them again. And after a long journey, they wound up in a country that they knew about only from books and photographs.

Between 1950 and 1960, there were over 2500 missionaries active in the Congo: Missionhurst (CICM), Jesuits, Oblates, White Fathers, etc. They worked among people, many of whom had not previously seen a white man. They built roads, schools, churches, hospitals and their own houses. They found themselves living among wild animals and they were bewildered by unfamiliar rituals and customs. Flanders seemed so far away; they were homesick and they looked forward to letters from home.

But they did help to change the Congo, sometimes at the risk of their own lives. When they finally returned to Belgium, the former colony had become an independent but impoverished country.

Father Daniel Delabie was born on August 7, 1933 in Marke, the son of a flax merchant. Fascinated by the stories of missionaries working among the Indians in Northern Canada, in

1952, he entered the Oblates. He was ordained a priest in 1958 and one year later set out for the Congo. He worked primarily in Central Congo, in the region of Idiofa. During the struggle for independence, he had to deal with the growing distrust of whites, but despite this, he remained at his post. In 2002, he returned to Belgium. Now he lives in the Oblate house in De Panne .

Brother Hugo Van den Broeck was born on April 3, 1927 in Ekeren. His father was an official at the port of Antwerp. He joined the Oblates as a Brother in 1949. In May 1954, he went to the Congo. He taught for ten years at a technical school, but when that school was sacked by riots, he took on other work, especially building dams, hospitals, schools and churches. Because of problems with his eyesight, he had to give up that work. In 1997, he returned to Belgium and he too lives in the Oblate community of De Panne.

ITALY

A new province being born

Fifty-six Oblates (37 Italians and 19 Spaniards) met on January 16-18 for a joint assembly in view of the unification of the Oblate provinces of Italy and Spain.

Most of the work was devoted to the discussion and approval of the “Statutes of Unification” which will govern the new “Mediterranean Province” to be born from the coming together of the Spanish and Italian provinces. The statutes have now been sent to the Central Government for their approval and will be then returned to the new province for an experimental term of three years.

The two presidents of the Assembly were the two provincial superiors: Fr. Nicola PARRETTA (Italy) and Fr. Otilio LARGO (Spain); the moderator was Fr. Salvatore DEGEORGE from the United States. Also present was Fr. Yves CHALVET, provincial of France and president of the provincial superiors of Europe, as well as some members of the General Administration.

Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the Oblate Superior General, presided at the concluding Eucharist; also present were laity and youth from the Roman Oblate family.

The official beginning of the new religious province, the “Mediterranean Province,” will happen at some time in 2012. The new province will comprise 253 Oblates involved in the evangelization of eight nations. (P.C.)

CZECH REPUBLIC

First Oblate house inaugurated

Since January 27, 2012, the Oblates in the Czech Republic (part of the Central European Province) have their own house. Previously, they had lived in parish rectories.

Located in Tabor Kolokoty, the house has seven rooms for Oblates and guests, as well as all the other facilities for community life. It is only a few hundred meters from the Shrine of the Virgin Mary of the Assumption which is under the care of the Oblates. There are four Oblates in the community, coming from the Czech Republic, Austria and Poland. Three of them are in engaged in ministry to the parish and to pilgrims; one of them is engaged in another ministry.

In his homily, the provincial, Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, stated that with the inauguration of the new house was not the completion of a project but an opening to the future. “When missionaries build a house,” he said, “then the work begins.” (*Nachrichten*, February 2012)

POLAND

Relic of Blessed John Paul II in Koden

On December 26, 2011, feast of the martyr St. Stephen, a relic of Blessed John Paul II – a drop of his blood – was solemnly received at the Basilica of St. Ann in Koden. Presiding at the Eucharist was the local Oblate Superior, Fr. Bernard BRIKS.

The relic is a gift of His Eminence, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Archbishop of Cracow, to the Discalced Carmelite Monastery in Koden. It was brought into the basilica by Sister Anna Kosinska from the Carmelite community.

At the beginning of the Eucharist, Fr. Briks read the documents attesting to the authenticity of the relic. He also thanked the Carmelite Sisters for allowing

the faithful of the Koden shrine to venerate this precious relic of the beloved Polish Pope.

In his homily, Fr. Roman NISIEWICZ recalled important events in the life of John Paul II. After the Eucharist, the many faithful present came forward to venerate the relic.

At the basilica, the faithful also venerate an image of the Virgin Mary, believed to have been painted by St. Augustine of Canterbury at the request of Pope St. Gregory the Great. The icon

was brought to Koden by Nicholas Sapięha in the seventeenth century. In 1946, Karol Wojtyła was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Adam Sapięha, Archbishop of Cracow. Pope John Paul II gave the Marian Shrine of Koden some vestments and liturgical vessels.

In the future, the relic of Blessed John Paul II will be honored in the basilica during important celebrations and during the pilgrimage season from May to October. (www.oblaci.pl)

Latin America

BRAZIL

Preparing for OMI + WYD 2013

At the end of World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid, Pope Benedict XVI announced that the next international celebration of youth will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 23-28, 2013. As in the recent past, prior to the "main event," there will also be a gathering of Oblate youth on July 18-22. In a letter addressed to the Oblate family, the provincial of the Province of Brazil, Fr. Rubens Pedro CABRAL, has invited us to begin planning for this celebration.

Recently, we celebrated World Youth Day in Málaga and Madrid. It is bearing many fruits for the animation and organization of the youth in our various ministries. Now we have begun some important and necessary activities so that WYD of 2013 in Brazil will also be a moment of joy; that we might enhance our commitment to youth in our youth ministries and with our vocation candidates; and that as Oblates, we might serve the marginalized in our various areas of Church activity.

From Brazil, we are sending to various groups a small symbol that has much meaning for us, *Aparecida*, the Mother and Patroness of Brazil, which will host youth from different parts of the world, especially our dear neighbors from Central and South America, as well as from Europe, Guyana, Japan and Africa. Together, they will, along with the Superior General, make up the great Oblate Family which, nourished and motivated by the

charism of St. Eugene, will gather to embrace his mission with renewed vigor.

In part, this communication should serve as a formal and special invitation to all, so that from this moment, they might begin the process of motivation and commitment to the grand event which we hope to promote. But it also contains some practical requests:

In the short term, as early as possible, we need to know if there are music and songs, known or not known, as well as singers or bands that wish to be present. These songs, in Spanish, French or English, should be sent ahead so that we can include them in the book of prayers and songs for the animation of the gathering.

We also need to know if there are persons who speak Portuguese sufficiently to be part of hospitality teams, translators, etc. With much joy and enthusiasm, they should arrive before the gathering, on a date to be determined, so that we can direct them.

Finally, registrations will last from May 2012 until May 2013. It is a long time, but we need to take advantage of it so that people know what is possible and can promote the attendance of everyone.

There are also some informative articles about the event that can be found at the web address: <http://www.omibrasil.com>. The site will be inaugurated on February 12, 2012, with a special

celebration that can be seen on the internet, beginning at 10:00 a.m., Brazil time (UTC -3).

Receive this information as a sign of our desire to see you and meet you here next year. Among ourselves, our symbol will be the Oblate Cross with the motto "Embrace this mission!", in line with the challenge of the general theme: "Go

into the world and make disciples of all nations." (Mt 28:19)

Perhaps the presence of Mary and the Oblate Cross among us, as it passes through all the available communities, will produce conversions and commitments for the next Oblate World Youth Day, as well as the later events in Rio de Janeiro.

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP
Death of the former "Sacristan General"

For 35 years, Brother Jean-Paul BEAUDET faithfully and quietly saw to it that everything necessary for the celebration of liturgies at the General House was ready, not only in the main chapel but also in several smaller chapels. He came to be known by many Oblates as the "Sacristan General." On February 2, 2012, he entered eternity in time to celebrate the Presentation of the Lord with some of the many Oblates he had known and served in Rome. He had returned to his native Canada in December of 2006 and spent his last days with the Oblate community in Richelieu.

In 1950, two years after his first vows, he joined a team of Canadian Brothers who would help maintain the new General House via Aurelia, 290. He had a respite from the traffic of Rome from 1965 until 1971 when he served at the Oblate "Procure" in Paris. He dealt with the traffic in Paris on a motor scooter. Returning to the General House in 1971, he took over the role of "Sacristan General." In that role, he took pride in the fact that he was the only keeper of the key to the reliquary where the relic of the Founder's heart is kept.

Outside of the sacristy, he served the community in many other quiet ways. And the General House usually had a supply of maple syrup in the refectory since visitors from Canada knew that this was something greatly enjoyed by Brother Baudet.

Brother Jean-Paul Baudet was one of a long list of Oblates whose generous hearts led them

to be missionaries, not on a dog sled in the Arctic nor a river boat in Asia or Africa, but in quiet service to the entire Congregation at its administrative center.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP
Fr. Laurent Roy, o.m.i. (1924-2012)

It was with great regret that the Province of Notre-Dame-du-Cap learned, on January 10, that it had just lost a much esteemed confrere in Ottawa, Fr. Laurent ROY, age 87. For ten years, he lived at Maison Deschâtelets where he had retired after 22 years as a missionary in Chile and 27 years at the service of the General Administration in Rome.

Born in Quebec in 1924, Laurent Roy studied at the diocesan Minor Seminary, one of the most prestigious high schools in the city, when, after careful discernment, he applied for entry into the novitiate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1945. He said that he had been attracted by both the missions and community life. After two years of philosophy at St. Joseph Scholasticate in Ottawa, in 1948, he was called to the International Scholasticate in Rome to join the post-war community and study theology at the Athenaeum Angelicum. He made his perpetual oblation on July 16, 1949, at the summer house in Roviano, where he was ordained a priest on July 8, 1951.

Having joined the Oblates to respond to a call to the foreign missions, Laurent was part of a group of Canadians who were chosen at the beginning of the 50's for a new mission in Chile. Soon, he became superior of the Oblate Minor Seminary in Antofagasta (1956-58); then, superior of the Inter-American Scholasticate in Santiago (1958-

68); and then, provincial superior of Chile (1968-1974). At the end of his term, since he was known for his vast knowledge, his concern for order and his gift of writing, Laurent was called back to Rome to be Secretary General of the Congregation (1974-1986). In particular, he collaborated in the preparation of the unanticipated General Chapter of 1974. So many meetings in Rome and beyond, so many letters, reports, translations as a result of his talent, his knowledge of languages and his great availability! The works of Fr. Roy have always been known for their precision and their presentation.

When he had completed this mandate, the General House would not, however, be deprived of his services and of his much appreciated fraternal presence. Laurent accepted therefore to continue, for another 15 years, his exceptional service to the government of the Congregation as administrative assistant to the General Council. Finally, in spite of his failing health, before returning to Canada, he wanted to celebrate his 50 years of priesthood and experience the Holy Year which celebrated the passage into a new Millennium.

Laurent spent much of his retirement as a volunteer at the Deschâtelets Archives, revising texts that they submitted to his careful and expert attention, in particular articles to be published in the journal, *Vie Oblate Life*. He is remembered for his vast knowledge, his openness to the Church and to the world, nurtured in great part by his life experiences, first in Chile and then in Rome, and by the contacts and travel required by his service. An avid reader, he kept an ongoing interest in religious and political issues. Close to his heart was the Church, in its past history and its present day, as well as a desire to understand better how the world of our day was evolving. Finally, he relished those works that were known for their literary quality, as a way of improving the quality of his own writing and to enrich his conversations.

At the beginning of January, Laurent had taken from the library a recent book entitled: "I believe in the resurrection of the body;" they found this book on his bedside stand after his death. Now he is contemplating forever the God of his deep

faith and of his hope. Faithful servant, honorable, generous, beloved: may he repose in joy and peace, assured of the gratitude and fond memories of the Congregation. (*Alexandre TACHE*)

OMI LACOMBE

New icon of Blessed Joseph Gerard

In response to an article about the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Lesotho, Fr. Jack LAU, director of the Galilee Centre in Arnprior, Canada, sent news of a new icon of the great apostle of Lesotho, Blessed Joseph Gerard. The iconographer is an Oblate Associate, Suzanne Manchevsky.

She explains the process and the nature of this icon: "The process of designing and creating an icon begins and ends with prayer. Through prayer, readings of Scripture and reference materials and contemplation, the iconographer seeks to enter into relationship with the subject, to walk with them, to be in communion with them and to "get to know and love them" and pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire an essential, visual summary of their life, story, and faith.

"The icon depicts Father Gerard as a young missionary in Southern Africa. He wears his black cassock, the distinctive Oblate crucifix and wire-rimmed glasses. His dark eyes gaze directly and unwaveringly at the viewer. His ears are exaggerated denoting one who listens for God's voice. Physically, he is strong and sturdy and with very powerful hands for doing the Lord's work. A prayerful and holy man, his left hand holds his prayer book close to his heart. His right hand is extended to the viewer, even protruding into the border and cradled in his palm is a single Protea, the national flower of South Africa. The flower represents a baptized soul, offered in love to the Father and perhaps will challenge viewers to ponder our own offerings and witness."



Anniversaries for April 2012

60 Years of religious life

1952.04.25	09229	Fr. Gustav Grosse-Venhaus	Central European
1952.04.25	09227	Fr. Albin Hahn	Central European
1952.04.25	09223	Fr. Wilhelm Henkel	Central European
1952.04.25	09228	Fr. Walter Lange	Central European
1952.04.25	09226	Fr. Johannes Terhorst	Central European

50 Years of priesthood

1962.04.01	10257	Fr. Franz-Josef Michels	Namibia
1962.04.07	10110	Fr. Santiago Rebordinos	Argentina-Chile
1962.04.13	09932	Fr. Philip P. P. Fernando	Jaffna

25 Years of priesthood

1987.04.06	12653	Fr. Nhlanhla Daniel Nkosi	Natal
1987.04.22	12639	Fr. Vincenzo Severo	Italy
1987.04.25	12765	Fr. Vincenzo Bordo	Colombo

Prayers for our deceased

No. 9-12

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Alphonse-Liguori Taele	Lesotho	01/01/1926	Reitz	02/02/2012
Bro. Jean-Paul Baudet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	23/12/1919	Richelieu	02/02/2012
Fr. René Bechet	Belgium/Holland	06/01/1923	Namur	10/02/2012
Fr. Simon Ponoane	Lesotho	24/04/1933	Mazenod	11/02/2012

“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>
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