



## **Remember, Reflect, Renew**

**Excerpt from a homily of Fr. Warren Brown, OMI, General Councillor,  
given at the General House on February 17, 2012**

Today is a day to remember the past, reflect on the present and renew ourselves and our community for the future. The word of God we have just heard proclaimed leads us to this conclusion.

The last Chapter chose as one of its themes the story of Emmaus, Luke 24: "Were not our hearts burning within us as He spoke to us on the road?" The Chapter noted that out of the confusion and challenge of the difficult moment of their crucified religious world, the disciples on the road "recognize the risen Jesus and the new reality they are living, and go back into their religious lives with renewed vision, hope and energy." The Spirit of Jesus burns within them. Out of the difficult and sometimes confusing challenge of today, we are invited to renew ourselves for the future. We are invited as a Congregation to be renewed through our communion with Christ and one another and return with renewed vision, hope and energy.

The Founder said, at the time of the second edition of the CCRR: "All I hope for is that this second promulgation of our laws will kindle in the heart of each one of you new fervor that it brings about a kind of renewal of your youth..." 8/2/1853 (Circular Letter)

Are we open to the Spirit? Are we able to renew our spirit of commitment to our Oblate way of life? Are we willing to renew ourselves and truly immerse ourselves in the words and spirit of our Constitutions and Rules? Are they a source of life for us today? Is our oblation in our rule a total commitment in the spirit of our predecessors, such as the martyrs we have celebrated?

Here is a story that came to mind when reflecting on these readings:

A woodcutter one day approached a timber mill owner and he was hired. The salary and the conditions of work were very good. Thus our woodcutter, thankful, proposed to work hard. The boss gave him an axe and showed him the area where he had to work. The first day the woodcutter cut 18 trees. "Congratulations," the boss said, "continue that way." Very motivated by the words of his boss, the woodcutter worked harder the following day but could only cut 15 trees. The third day he forced himself even more but could only cut ten. Day after day, despite his great effort, he could only cut fewer trees. "I must be losing strength," thought the woodcutter. The boss came and the woodcutter asked forgiveness; he said that he did not understand what was happening. "When was the last time that you sharpened the axe?" asked the boss. "Sharpen? I didn't have time to sharpen the axe!"

The axe (not a weapon but a tool!) in the story is what our Constitutions and Rules are to us in our Oblate life. The cutting of trees is like the work of evangelization. We must sharpen the axe, the tool of our life and mission, each day through our remembering, reflection and renewal of ourselves in our rule. [As one of my Oblate confreres reminded me: A dull tool can be the most dangerous one!]

On the day of our oblation, we were told: "Do this and live." But if we have not sharpened our "tool", using our charism and way of life to lead us, will we not find ourselves in the same position as the woodcutter? If we have not opened our Constitutions since the novitiate, what good are

they for us? As expressed in the Chapter, there is a great richness there and perhaps we have only scratched the surface. The Spirit is there, given to us as Oblates and ratified by the Church.

As we remember, reflect and renew ourselves in our Oblate charism, our way of life and our Oblate Rule, we can more effectively do the work the Lord has set before us. As St. Eugene said to Fr. Tempier, our Rule is for us our source of life: "...these are no longer simple regulations, no ordinary pious directions; they are Rules that have been approved by the Church after the most minute scrutiny. They have been judged holy and eminently capable of leading those who embraced them to their destination."

Our efforts and hard work on our own can be in vain, no matter how well intentioned, without the necessary preparation, without the necessary well prepared tools, without fully being open and responding to God's Spirit which is there. Our Rule itself will help to show us how we can respond in the new evangelization in our day and time.

We celebrate today; we remember, reflect and renew ourselves in the great gift we have received. We give thanks today that we have been called to be Oblates and we ask God to continue to bless us, our collaborators and associates to bring the spirit of St. Eugene and the Good News of Jesus to the world today.

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## General Administration

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### GENERAL COMMITTEE FOR OBLATE FORMATION

#### **New edition of the General Norms for Oblate Formation**

A new edition of the General Norms for Oblate Formation was promulgated by the Superior General on May 21, 2011. Thanks to the work of the members of the General Committee for Oblate Formation since 2006, with the cooperation of the various Units, we have this instrument to help Oblate Units to better respond to the calls for conversion which the last Chapter addressed to the whole Congregation. Available in French, English and Spanish, the new edition of the General Norms presents the basic principles of Oblate formation, as well as procedures and resources. It is available on the Congregation's web site. A CD goes with the written version of the Norms and it contains various documents of the Congregation and the Magisterium. Also on the CD is an electronic version of the Norms in three languages.

In the Foreword to the Norms, Father General, Louis LOUGEN, says this: "In presenting the new edition of the General Norms for Oblate Formation to the Congregation, we renew the focus of Oblate formation in Jesus Christ as the center of our life and mission."

The publication of the new Norms is an

occasion for the Oblates in general and for formators in particular to renew themselves in their personal and communal commitment to a profoundly missionary formation. It is desirable, as Father General reminds us in the Foreword, that each Province or Delegation of the Congregation update its own directory in the light of the General Norms, so that our formation might respect and reflect the cultures of the countries where we live and might prepare Oblates to respond to the demands of missionary life.

### GENERAL SECRETARIAT

#### **Our Elder Brothers**

The last time we published the names of our elder brothers who have reached the age of 90 was in 2008. At that time, there were 88 names on the list. As of March 17, 2012, there were 116 names. Since then, four of them have gone to their eternal rest. We publish these names as a sign of our gratitude for the missionary zeal and example these men have been to us in their long lives. The new dean of the Congregation is Fr. Nazaire MORISSETTE of Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province in Canada. He will be 102 years old next December.

## Our Elder Brothers

As of 17/03/2012

Name	OMI Unit	Birth	Ordination	1st Vows	Age
Fr. Morissette Nazaire	N.D.-du-Cap	14/12/1910	11/6/1938	21/07/1932	102
Fr. Robert Victor	France	17/02/1912	9/7/1939	15/08/1933	100
Fr. Engel Leopold	Lacombe	5/9/1913	12/6/1938	15/08/1933	99
Fr. Machinia Engelbert	Central European	21/10/1913	18/06/1939	15/08/1934	99
Fr. Caby Arsène	France	7/12/1913	6/7/1941	29/09/1934	99
Fr. Bolduc Marcel	USA	31/12/1913	24/06/1939	28/08/1934	99
Fr. Pigeon Léo-Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	7/3/1914	15/06/1941	2/8/1935	98
Fr. Fix Valentine	Lacombe	18/05/1914	10/6/1938	15/08/1933	98
Fr. Rzezniczek Alfons	France-Benelux	20/05/1914	31/05/1942	8/9/1935	98
Fr. Wittenbrink Boniface	USA	30/06/1914	20/09/1941	15/08/1936	98
Fr. Payant Roma	N.D.-du-Cap	30/06/1915	15/06/1941	21/07/1937	97
Bro. Rioux Louis	N.D.-du-Cap	9/8/1915		8/9/1937	97
Fr. Laperrière Jean	N.D.-du-Cap	4/6/1916	15/06/1941	21/07/1935	96
Fr. Louis John	USA	15/08/1916	5/6/1943	15/08/1938	96
Fr. Mulligan John	Lacombe	6/10/1916	9/6/1956	8/9/1951	96
Fr. Mouchet Jean-Marie	Lacombe	1/5/1917	18/02/1945	17/02/1942	95
Fr. Montgrain Philippe	N.D.-du-Cap	18/08/1917	18/06/1944	15/08/1939	95
Fr. Lajeunesse Lucien	N.D.-du-Cap	19/09/1917	7/6/1942	21/07/1937	95
Fr. Massé Joseph	N.D.-du-Cap	26/09/1917	19/06/1943	2/8/1938	95
Fr. O'Donovan William	Anglo-Irish	13/11/1917	12/6/1941	8/9/1936	95
Fr. Protopapas George	USA	9/12/1917	3/6/1943	4/9/1937	95
Fr. Ebner Francis	Lacombe	2/1/1918	15/09/1944	15/08/1941	94
Bro. Raymond Robert	N.D.-du-Cap	15/01/1918		11/5/1938	94
Bro. Morin Lucien	N.D.-du-Cap	18/02/1918		9/6/1941	94
Fr. Croft George	USA	2/12/1918	5/6/1944	8/9/1938	94
Fr. Hommer Anton	Central European	5/1/1919	10/7/1949	15/08/1940	93
Fr. Riley James	USA	10/1/1919	9/6/1945	15/08/1940	93
Fr. Sherlock John	Philippines	2/3/1919	29/06/1949	15/09/1944	93
Fr. Turenne Edmond	Lacombe	4/3/1919	10/6/1945	15/08/1940	93
Bro. Wilscam René	N.D.-du-Cap	25/03/1919		19/03/1938	93
Fr. Girouard Jean	N.D.-du-Cap	3/4/1919	15/06/1946	15/08/1941	93
Fr. de Grauw Floor	Belgium/Holland	11/5/1919	14/07/1946	8/9/1942	93
Fr. Gagnon Herve	USA	19/07/1919	24/06/1945	2/8/1940	93
Fr. Nanni Gaetano	Australia	3/9/1919	3/5/1943	15/08/1937	93
Fr. Vreteau Robert	USA	9/9/1919	31/05/1946	29/06/1941	93
Fr. Leising Edmundo	Brazil	15/09/1919	3/6/1946	8/9/1940	93
Bro. Ramón Juan	Spain	7/10/1919		25/07/1956	93
Fr. Lavoie Alexandre	N.D.-du-Cap	19/10/1919	17/06/1945	27/08/1940	93
Bishop Dupont Georges	Cameroon	16/11/1919	9/5/1943	8/9/1938	93
Bro. Mothetsi Dionysius	Lesotho	1/1/1920		6/1/1948	92
Fr. Lechat Robert	N.D.-du-Cap	17/01/1920	1/6/1945	10/8/1943	92
Fr. Nijsten Kees	Belgium/Holland	26/01/1920	21/02/1948	8/9/1939	92
Fr. Hehn Joseph-Etienne	France	3/2/1920	29/08/1943	15/08/1938	92

Bro. D'Orazio Giuseppe	Admin. Gen.	24/02/1920		12/6/1941	92
Fr. Domínguez Olegario	Paraguay	6/3/1920	10/3/1946	15/08/1938	92
Fr. Firtion Joseph	France	12/3/1920	9/5/1943	15/08/1938	92
Fr. Brouillet Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	22/03/1920	15/06/1946	2/8/1940	92
Fr. Colson Jean	France	31/03/1920	6/1/1945	8/9/1942	92
Fr. Heemrood Jan	USA	24/05/1920	25/07/1945	11/10/1940	92
Fr. Rigaud Pierre	Lacombe	29/05/1920	6/7/1946	1/11/1941	92
Fr. Cantin Léo	N.D.-du-Cap	10/7/1920	13/06/1948	2/8/1942	92
Fr. Morin André	France	21/08/1920	15/04/1945	15/10/1940	92
Fr. Janssen Henri	USA	26/08/1920	26/07/1943	29/09/1938	92
Fr. Vaillancourt Joseph	Haiti	30/08/1920	21/09/1946	2/8/1941	92
Fr. Gauthier Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	4/9/1920	31/05/1947	2/8/1941	92
Bro. Comtois Gaston	N.D.-du-Cap	12/9/1920		1/5/1940	92
Fr. Guindon Roger	N.D.-du-Cap	26/09/1920	29/09/1946	2/8/1940	92
Fr. Smalec Edward	Poland	3/10/1920	26/06/1955	14/09/1950	92
Fr. Bève Elie	France	4/10/1920	15/04/1945	15/10/1940	92
Fr. Shahun Alexander	Lacombe	19/10/1920	4/6/1948	8/9/1941	92
Fr. Troncy Jean	France	28/10/1920	6/7/1947	1/7/1945	92
Fr. Goulet Lionel	N.D.-du-Cap	28/10/1920	31/05/1947	2/8/1941	92
Fr. Zachman Clarence	USA	2/11/1920	5/6/1948	15/08/1943	92
Fr. De Cicco Nicola	Italy	21/11/1920	24/11/1945	15/08/1940	92
Fr. Michalak Paul	N.D.-du-Cap	21/11/1920	23/02/1947	08/09/1943	92
Fr. Saison Léon	France	25/12/1920	18/04/1945	8/9/1942	92
Bro. Gaudet Noël	N.D.-du-Cap	25/12/1920		1/11/1951	92
Fr. Mercier Pierre	France	8/1/1921	27/02/1944	15/08/1938	91
Fr. Papion Rogatien	France	10/1/1921	6/10/1946	10/8/1943	91
Fr. Pielorz Jozef	France-Benelux	22/01/1921	2/7/1950	25/01/1946	91
Fr. Van den Eynde Louis	Belgium/Holland	3/2/1921	8/7/1945	10/10/1940	91
Bro. Domergue Albert	France	14/02/1921		1/11/1937	91
Bro. Elsbernd Hermann	Central European	3/3/1921		2/7/1949	91
Fr. Pelletier Ephrem	Lacombe	18/03/1921	31/05/1947	15/08/1942	91
Fr. Baril Joseph	N.D.-du-Cap	21/03/1921	19/06/1949	15/08/1945	91
Fr. Bös August	Central European	26/03/1921	3/7/1949	25/03/1940	91
Fr. Croteau Jacques	N.D.-du-Cap	19/04/1921	31/05/1947	2/8/1941	91
Fr. Langelier Rosaire	N.D.-du-Cap	11/5/1921	16/06/1950	17/05/1943	91
Fr. Healy Patrick	USA	1/6/1921	2/6/1947	8/9/1941	91
Fr. de Nobrega John	Northern S.A.	25/06/1921	4/7/1954	28/02/1949	91
Fr. Cawte Kevin	Northern S.A.	2/7/1921	21/12/1947	15/08/1942	91
Bro. Dutil Jean-Charles	N.D.-du-Cap	20/07/1921		17/02/1940	91
Fr. Vermeire René	Belgium/Holland	21/07/1921	4/7/1948	8/9/1943	91
Fr. Savard André	N.D.-du-Cap	13/08/1921	19/06/1949	15/08/1943	91
Fr. Fuseau Alexis	France	8/9/1921	4/7/1954	8/9/1949	91
Bro. Wilfred Victor	Colombo	12/10/1921		8/9/1944	91
Fr. Careil Adolphe	France	30/10/1921	15/04/1945	15/10/1940	91
Fr. Savina Noël	France	13/11/1921	6/1/1945	29/09/1942	91
Fr. Robitaille Maurice	N.D.-du-Cap	25/11/1921	17/06/1951	15/08/1947	91
Fr. Rüttinger Rudolf	Central European	28/11/1921	11/4/1954	8/12/1949	91



Fr. Choque Charles	N.D.-du-Cap	28/12/1921	8/7/1945	10/10/1940	91
Fr. Chaigneau Henri	France	1/1/1922	4/7/1948	10/8/1943	90
Fr. Crevacore Savio	Italy	4/1/1922	23/02/1947	1/11/1942	90
Fr. Loiseau Jean	Belgium/Holland	18/04/1922	7/7/1946	11/10/1941	90
Fr. Allie Robert	USA	22/04/1922	2/6/1951	15/08/1946	90
Fr. Maboge Jean	Belgium/Holland	13/05/1922	14/07/1946	8/9/1943	90
Fr. Brencklé Lucien	France	21/05/1922	1/7/1951	25/12/1946	90
Fr. McSweeney William	USA	22/05/1922	2/6/1952	8/9/1946	90
Fr. Sun Stanislaus	China	17/06/1922	8/6/1952	1/3/1965	90
Fr. Pizet Georges	France	20/06/1922	3/7/1949	15/09/1944	90
Fr. Dumont Lionel	Lacombe	20/06/1922	19/06/1949	15/08/1943	90
Fr. Mohan Oliver	Lacombe	26/06/1922	29/06/1948	15/09/1942	90
Fr. Béliveau Elzéar	N.D.-du-Cap	8/7/1922	19/06/1949	17/02/1943	90
Bro. Thirion Charles	France	4/8/1922		19/03/1940	90
Fr. Paradis Robert	Lacombe	31/08/1922	24/06/1950	2/8/1945	90
Bro. Van Hecke Arthur	Lacombe	23/09/1922		17/02/1950	90
Fr. Kuchcinski Mieczyslaw	France-Benelux	10/10/1922	8/7/1956	26/09/1951	90
Fr. Guiziou Marc	France	14/10/1922	29/02/1948	8/9/1942	90
Fr. Buteau François	N.D.-du-Cap	17/10/1922	16/06/1950	2/8/1946	90
Fr. Mathew Armand	USA	21/10/1922	24/02/1949	29/06/1943	90
Fr. Montalbano Francis	USA	31/10/1922	14/02/1947	29/06/1941	90
Fr. McMahon Maurice	Lacombe	25/11/1922	19/06/1949	15/08/1943	90
Bro. Audet Oscar	N.D.-du-Cap	27/11/1922		15/08/1947	90
Fr. Montpetit Gérard	N.D.-du-Cap	1/12/1922	20/12/1947	2/8/1942	90

## Europe

### FRANCE

#### Death of our Oblate Dean

The oldest member of the Congregation, Fr. Alexandre KAYSER, chose the season of Lent for his paschal journey to the Father. He died on March 16, 2012, at the age of 108, in his 89<sup>th</sup> year of religious life and his 83<sup>rd</sup> year as a priest. Three days before his death, he had said: “I love the Good God; I love the Virgin Mary; I love the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

He did most of his formation as an Oblate in Belgium. Ironically, his health was fragile during his scholasticate years and at other points in his life. He had the privilege of being ordained to the priesthood in 1929 by the Oblate Superior General, Archbishop Augustin DONTENWILL.

Having lived through two World Wars, he was twice conscripted into the army. He also served as a scholasticate formator and teacher; a parish priest; a preacher of missions and retreats; and

a hospital chaplain. He finally retired at the age of 93 to the Oblate house in Strasbourg. There, he gave witness to faithful Oblate life by his prayer, his regular life, and his correspondence with people seeking spiritual direction. He was a missionary to the very end.

On the occasion of his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood, he had said: “Brothers and sisters, believe me, it is good to have consecrated one’s whole life to the Lord and to stay faithful to him. I assure you, if I had to start over, I would do nothing different.”

### ITALY

#### Learning about Sri Lanka

Each year, the Province of Italy sponsors a celebration of cultures and peoples served by Oblate missionaries. This year, the focus of “Mondi Riemersi” (“Emerging Worlds”) was Sri Lanka. The objective of “Mondi Riemersi” is to teach Italian youth about the values of the

global community. Schools in the area bring their students to experience the richness of a different culture. For some time now, there has been a large community of hard-working Sri Lankan families who have immigrated to Italy.

The eleventh edition of the event took place last March in Frascati, not far from the Italian provincial headquarters and the Italian scholasticate, just outside of the city of Rome. Partners with the Oblates in organizing the annual event are the various surrounding towns and villages.

The participants were able to learn about the culture of Sri Lanka through poetry, music, photographs, paintings, costumes and crafts. They also learned of the Oblate presence in that island nation.

## ITALY

### St. Andrew, the church of the elderly

The real soul of the neighborhood that surrounds the parish of St. Andrew is the community of fishermen with their little houses. The changes of recent years which have impacted the seacoast of Pescara and the slow transformation of small family businesses in a modern society, grappling with the crisis of the market economy and with the erosion of the city's port, have led to a reversal of the age pyramid. The extremely low birth rate in fact stands in contrast with the high rate of mortality.

The pastor of the church of St. Andrew the Apostle, Fr. Costante BARON tells of a community of about five thousand inhabitants, composed mostly of elderly who need constant care and assistance. The neighborhood north of the marina has, in recent years, undergone profound changes which have had a decisive effect on the way of life of the old families of fishermen. "Every year we note 70-80 deaths in the parish register," says the priest of the church built by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. "That's an impressive number when compared to 3-4 weddings and 20-25 baptisms in the last twelve months."

Over the past two years in particular, the whole economy linked to the sea has undergone a radical collapse: the failure to dredge the port has short-

circuited the sailors, the owners, the contractors, the ship operators, and the restaurateurs. Last month, this slow decline induced the priest to take paper and pen to write to the mayor, Luigi Albore Mascia, and the prefect, Vincenzo D'Antuono, asking them to cancel the traditional night of fireworks on Monday evening and the civic celebrations in honor of St. Andrew, patron of fishermen, as a sign of solidarity with the problems along the coast. "This raised a fuss," stated Fr. Baron, smiling and shrugging his shoulders. "The mayor was shocked; he contacted the newspapers and there was also a committee formed. In the end, we decided to have the feast as usual, but it will be different from previous years: more restrained. And fireworks? Of course there will be some, but briefer: a half-hour compared to the one hour of the summer of 2011."

Directly interested in the issue of the port and the difficulties of the fishermen is one of the pillars of the St. Andrew community, Fr. Aldo D'OTTAVIO, 68 years of age in December, a native of a northern seaside neighborhood of Pescara and the son of fishermen. After an experience as a worker-priest and union member at the Fiat plant in Turin, he returned to his own city to deal with problems that are closest to his heart: the lack of jobs, the environmental risks in an area around the sea and the river and the transformation of the seacoast of the past. "The soul of the marina has changed in recent years and it has lost its identity somewhat," states Fr. Aldo. "The fishermen are fewer and fewer; for the most part, those who go out on the boats are foreigners. In conjunction with the socio-economic transformation of Pescara, fishing too has changed. The small family-run operations of the past have now become modern businesses, dealing with the concrete problems of the marketplace, from the price of fuel to the introduction of more advanced machinery."

Also, the attachment of families to the parish and the values of the Church has gone missing. There are few young people who flock to the church that rises in the midst of the piazza. Yet the five priests -- besides the pastor and Fr. Aldo, there are also Fathers Fernando GARBANTINI, Fiore PAGLIONE and Domenico VITANTONIO -- they can count on four affiliated groups (catechism, liturgy, missionary and charity) and

on Caritas. "Slowly, we are trying to renew the way of understanding Christianity," says Fr. Baron, "because here there is still a somewhat magical approach to the faith and a still traditional

way of understanding religion. But that's greatly due to the fact that our community is, for the most part, made up of elderly persons." (*Ylenia Gifuni in Il Centro: Pescara*, 15 April 2012)

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## Latin America

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### GUATEMALA

#### Three years later

(*Fr. Gerry LESTRAT was a missionary in Guatemala for several years before returning to OMI Lacombe Province in Canada.*)

In January, I had the joy of visiting Guatemala again after being away for three years and was pleased to find some progress despite the hardships these people face. I found that not much had physically changed in the City of Guatemala and the interior of the country. January is a good time to visit because the rains and the hurricane season are over and everything is still beautiful and green in the countryside.

Violence, however, remains a large part of their lives. With the tragedy that it generates, people are tired and afraid. They feel the violence seems to be increasing. The causes are gang and drug related. Because of lack of employment and poverty, there is much robbery, kidnapping and outright killing for insignificant reasons. When I was there a priest was murdered on the highway because he bumped a pickup truck that stopped in front of his car. No damage was done but a short argument occurred, then the two in the truck shot the priest in cold blood. They were later arrested because the whole scene was videoed by a service station on the side of the road.

Another aspect that did not change is the friendliness and warmth of the people. Of course the majority are good people; they are a jolly people despite the poverty and the hardships they have to endure. The churches are full and the participation in the liturgies is fully alive.

I visited our Oblate missions in the city and in El Quiche. I arrived at Cunén, my first mission, and the reception was fabulous. A college was built there with the help of Canadian donations. They now have 450 students in that high school where they train students to become teachers.

It is a beautiful place set in a valley by a small river. They have decorated their college of 15 classrooms with beautiful Mayan colors and flowers. The students and teachers are very happy there and are so thankful for the Canadian support. They graduate 50 students every year and have been in operation for 10 years.

I found the municipality of Cunén did change over the years and the director of the college said it is because all those young teachers, men and women, have been working as teachers in the remote villages and return home to help the economy of the family. Small hotels, restaurants and new homes have been built in town. Vehicles or motorbikes are used to travel to the schools or for home businesses. There are new fleets of vans for public transport, replacing the big, old chicken busses that used to compete on the country roads for more passengers and every so often caused accidents.

During my three weeks in Guatemala I had the chance to visit my old parish of Chicaman. I was pleased to spend the night in a beautiful room of the new priest's residence. The building of a new house was necessary because water was coming through the roof of the old one that was built 50 years prior. When I was there, we had 70 villages in that parish, and now there are 76. The population is growing constantly at a high rate, and half the population is under 20 years of age.

I also had the joy of visiting Playa Grande in the northern part of Quiché. It is in a jungle area. Three Oblates are assigned there, and three congregations of sisters also work in that parish. There are 125 villages formed by a variety of Mayan people speaking different languages. There is a clinic run by the Sisters of Charity, a large social pastoral centre, a radio station and a centre for training catechists. This area is also conducive for the production of drugs, so this brings on another aspect that the church ministers have to deal with.

It gives me great joy to say the Oblate family is growing in Guatemala. We now have three young Guatemalan priests active in the missions. Ten Oblate seminarians from Guatemala are studying in Mexico and shortly one more will be ordained to the priesthood. Others are in the novitiate, still others are in the pre-novitiate and there is also a group preparing to enter pre-novitiate. I thank the Holy Spirit and the Oblates who are attending to this development of new missionaries. Hopefully, in the future, some of these Guatemalan Oblates will ask to come and minister in Canada to spread their joy and the Gospel among us. (*Oblate Spirit*, April 2012)

## PERU

### A letter of solidarity

“On behalf of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, based in Rome, Italy, I would like to express our support to the President of the Department of Justice and Solidarity of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), Mgr. Pedro Barreto Jimeno, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Huancayo and Vice President of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, and to the technical team of the Project ‘Mantaro Revive’ for the death threats received over the telephone on March 2, 2012”. This is how the letter of solidarity from the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) to Archbishop Pedro Barreto begins. It is signed by Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN GAYTÁN, Second Assistant General, and is addressed to the “public opinion, political and civil authorities of Peru”.

The text of the letter, sent to Fides, recalls that the threats arrived 2 days after the statement, “In the face of evil, one cannot remain silent” on the activity of the Metallurgical Complex of La Oroya. The Archbishop had said in a press conference that he was in favour of the resumption of the work of the complex, provided it guaranteed the life, health and decent work for workers and the population of La Oroya. “Faced with this intimidating fact - the letter continues - that we have learned through different media, and after receiving the official declarations of the Archdiocese of Huancayo, we express our concern for the life of the Archbishop and all those involved in the project ‘Mantaro Revive’,

who fight for truth, peace and justice. We therefore call upon the political authorities and police forces to carry out their investigations to identify the perpetrators of these acts that denigrate the image of Peruvian democracy. We hope that the competent authorities will restore peace and the free development of civic and ecclesial organizations in Peru”. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 13/3/2012)

## PARAGUAY

### Living one's vocation in the confessional

He was 31 years old when he was sent from the cold of Germany to be a missionary in the “green hell” as they used to call the Chaco area at that time. Today, Paraguay has become “my land,” says Father Norberto SCHLECHTER, signaling that he is not thinking of packing his bags for a final trip to old Europe. This is something that hundreds of people appreciate who come each week to the simple chapel of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, at Villa Morra, to receive advice, hope, and above all, the so necessary sacrament of pardon.

The silence in the lovely chapel is frequently interrupted. The sharp and creaking sound of hinges share the space and mark the coming and going of young people and adults to this place in Villa Morra. All of this is due to this man of 78 years, who behind a discrete, light-colored door, daily and for several hours, fulfills his task, “his mission,” as he would say: hearing the confessions of those who wish to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

Fr. Norbert lives his vocation primarily in a tiny space in this chapel, ventilated by a simple wall fan. He has been a priest for 48 years, but he does not remember at what age he entered the seminary. “When you get old, the memory fails you,” he adds, as he gives his quirky smile, a gesture that transforms his rigid features into expressions of warmth and tenderness.

His humor is constant, like the serenity and peace that he transmits by speaking with his legs resting on a bench -- due to the “infirmities of old age,” as he likes to say -- sitting in the little confessional, daily hearing the confessions of young persons and adults, including seminarians, priests and sisters who come to the place to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.



“It’s a good service (confession), but it is also tiring when you are there all day, but I am the only beggar who has time for that,” he laughs. And as he settles into his chair, he adds that he has never thrown anyone out. “You just have to hope,” assures the religious who was born to a family of coal miners.

Besides the confessions, he takes communion to the sick of the barrio and celebrates Mass in this chapel, known for its celebrations in the German language, and sometimes also in French, for the Catholic foreigner communities.

“Paí Norberto,” as some like to call him, says that in the matter of the sacrament of Penance, one cannot speak of feelings but of a reality: it is God’s pardon, beyond what “we feel”, when there is repentance and a desire to change, trust in God and confession of sins, states the German priest, born in 1933 in a city in the area of Dormund. (*Comunicaciones*, Easter 2012)

## PARAGUAY

### Oblates given care of a shrine

The provincial of Paraguay, Fr. Francisco CARILLO has announced that the Oblates have accepted the responsibility of ministering to the faithful at the Shrine of the Virgin of Itacuí in the diocese of Encarnación. Fr. Francisco stated further that the mission of the Oblates will be

to “...advance the pastoral plan of the diocese, especially in reference to the Continental Mission and the Permanent Mission of Paraguay: To evangelize the family.

“We want to give this privileged place of nature a sacred character where the pilgrim can have a living experience of Jesus the Savior and Son of Mary and can praise the Creator in the midst of this blessed land.”

The director of the Shrine is Fr. Andrés CZEKAJ; he will work closely with the pastor of the neighboring parish of St. Michael the Archangel, Fr. José ORZECOWSKI. Closely collaborating with the Oblates in the Shrine will be the diocesan auxiliary Bishop, Claudio Silvero.

According to *Wikipedia*, the shrine is the site of “...one of the most important Marian devotions in the region, known also as the ‘Virgin of the poor.’

“As the story goes, the Virgin appeared to people as they crossed by the place, helping them to avoid colliding with the rocks of the riverbed which are very numerous in that part of the river and which constitute a danger for the safety of the boats. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the efforts of Divine Word Missionaries, a small statue of the Virgin, brought from Europe, was placed in a grotto. From then on, the custom of pilgrimages to the place grew.”

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### CHAD

#### Challenged by hope

*In his Christmas circular, Philippe ALIN tells of some of the issues the mission is facing.*

We are challenged by Hope, in the North as well as in the South. Here in the South, and especially in Chad, the present and the future are at risk by so many problems.

- Trees are being uprooted, so precious up till now, in order to extract laterite.
- An agreement signed with the Chinese by the Prime Minister has been annulled by the President.

- A presidential decree decides to suddenly increase the minimum wage by 110%: is there confusion between 10% and 110%? The employees obviously need the 110%
- The exercise of justice is also a big joke where money is king. How much is a judge paid to make an unfair ruling?
- We imprisoned innocent people who came forward to testify in the dark tale of the murder of a village chief. Ten of them died of asphyxiation in the small dungeon where they were locked.
- A member of parliament protests against such acts; then he is charged for defamation of the State, after his parliamentary immunity is revoked. A frame-up against an opponent...

All of this is very depressing for the Chadians since they feel that their country is going down the drain. The rule of law is gradually disappearing. Everyone is suspicious of everyone else. Our Justice and Peace Committee denounces all these things in its newspaper; so far, it has not been questioned.

At Torrock, I just turned the parish over to two Burundian religious, young and full of get up and go. Two Togolese nuns, active and close to the people, just arrived as well. They have all begun to study the Moundang language and are joyfully beginning in this world that is so new to them.

It was time for them to come since I could no longer provide. I have had one bout of malaria after another. And the influx of young people and women is constant: again more than 600 newcomers this year and 500 catechumens will be baptized at Easter. The daily Mass at 5:30 a.m. gathers about a hundred Christians! There are not enough hosts!

The question remains, nevertheless: how does their faith change their behavior and their lives? And what new life style do they bring to this “world” of generalized deception? The big concern for the young team will be the animation of this multitude and its accompaniment.

At Torrock, there is a surplus of crops. Many people are getting organized: groups and communities are stockpiling grain; they are renting bins for it. That’s something new.... bravo! (*Audacieux pour l’Évangile*, April 2012)

## **SENEGAL**

### **Lent in Koungheul**

The Church in Senegal is trying to live faithfully the season of Lent, with parish retreats, the “Way of the Cross” every Friday, and more generous gifts from the faithful for those who are poor. Personally, I began Lent with the *Sereer* Christians of Lwanga, a village out in the country, almost “cut off from the rest of the world.” From Ash Wednesday until the first Sunday of Lent, I was there, living in my little room attached to the church and visiting families. I am grateful to God, because the rather “Spartan” life in those days helped me in my prayer, fasting and penance. I

ate and drank what some families generously offered me; for personal hygiene, I had a 15 liter container of water per day; in the evening, I read, prayed and meditated by candlelight.

Since I love the countryside and simplicity, I adapted rather well to the circumstances. So I took advantage of these days to live the words of Luke’s Gospel: “Blessed are those who keep the Word of God in a good and noble heart and who bear fruit by their perseverance.” I am not sure that my heart is yet a “noble” one, but I hope at least it’s somewhat good. In any case, I hope it’s not “of little good!” (P. Pier Francesco PURPURA)

## **GUINEA BISSAU**

### **The Oblates, before and after the coup d’état**

Fr. Celso CORBIOLI, from the Delegation of Senegal, after having spent a period of eight months in Italy for health reasons, recently returned to his mission in Guinea Bissau.

The bishop has asked the Oblates to take care of the parish of Antula, which is located between the outskirts and the center of the city. Their responsibility, therefore, besides the Spirituality Center of N’Dame and their work in the diocesan office, now includes this new pastoral service. Although it’s a rather old parish, there is still no church; the Oblates hope to be able to build one soon. All of the functions take place outside. There are numerous Christians and many catechumens: at the Easter vigil, there were about a hundred baptisms.

On the evening of Thursday, April 12, Father Celso, Father Giancarlo TODESCO and Father George Pascal NDOUR, returning from a few days in Senegal with their confreres, encountered a surprise. As they arrived at around 20:30 at the outskirts of Bissau, some soldiers told them to go back: “riba pas tras!” There was an attempted coup d’état in process. Indeed, the missionaries were obliged to turn back and they went to the mission of Safim (10 km away), run by the Sisters of Saint Joseph, of Angolan origin. Father Celso recounts: “The sisters, who had seen just about everything in Angola during the civil war, did not seem too worried. They prepared supper for us and some rooms to sleep in. Joking, we said we were refugees.”

The next day, the news was rather confusing. Someone said that the military had arrested the ad interim President, Raimundo Pereira, and also the Prime Minister, Carlos Gomez Junior. A few days later, they heard of the arrest of the Army Chief, Antonio Ndjai.

In any case, Guinea Bissau is still trying to find its way through an unstable political and social situation. They need new faces and the Oblates believe that the Church can contribute to the formation of new leaders if it will be able, also within the structures, to proclaim the Gospel.

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## Canada-United States

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### UNITED STATES

#### Texas honors the Oblates

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) has recognized Immaculate Conception Parish in Houston as a significant part of Texas history by awarding it an Official Texas Historical Marker. The designation honors Immaculate Conception as an important and educational part of local history. A dedication ceremony to commemorate the event was held on February 20.

The U.S. Provincial, Fr. William ANTONE, the pastor, Fr. Kevin COLLINS, and local and state legislators spoke at the ceremony. "The Official Texas Historical Marker program helps bring attention to community treasures and the importance of their preservation," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the THC.

An excerpt from the inscription on the marker reads: "Adhering to their motto as Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the priests of Immaculate Conception ministered to the needy and conducted extensive missionary work in Southeast and Central Texas. For decades, the priests were assigned the ministry for the state penitentiary system in Huntsville...At least nine parishes in Harris and surrounding counties can trace their histories to the missionary efforts of Immaculate Conception. Entering its second century of existence, Immaculate Conception continues to be an influential institution in the Magnolia Park community and beyond."

### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

#### Basotho Missionaries in Canada

*Excerpts from interview which Fr. Patrick MATSAU had with the editor of **Aide à la Promotion Missionnaire (APM)** bulletin:*

**APM comment:** Missionaries are accustomed to adverse conditions and work in far away and isolated places...as are certain parts of the Canadian territory. A native of Lesotho, Father Patrick Maboe Matsau, OMI, is the pastor of Moosonee, on the Ontario side of James Bay. An "exotic" ministry in which he is slowly taking root in order to proclaim the Word.

**APM:** First of all, Father Patrick, which way has led you from Lesotho to Ontario...?

**Patrick:** I was completing my theological studies in Rome when I heard that Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province had made a request that they needed missionaries for the First Nations. So I started considering that possibility, and when I arrived back home, I volunteered for the mission, together with a colleague of mine.

**APM:** And...the cold?

**Patrick:** It is not as bad as we had thought. In Lesotho it can also get bitterly cold during winter time. So, cold climate is not a totally new experience for us.

**APM:** Do you find adaptation difficult?

**Patrick:** It's difficult, yes - and for many reasons. The environment is far different from whatever I could have imagined. But generally, I think we have well adapted to the conditions.

**APM:** Is the local Catholic community very alive?

**Patrick:** According to what I have been told, there is a decline here, as elsewhere, in the number of the faithful; but those who come are truly devoted. The main challenge is how to attract the youth. Some of them are given to drugs – and one of the sad consequences is a high rate

of suicide. In our parish we have established a committee which is particularly concerned with the youth and how we can establish a link with them.

**APM:** Your mission is, therefore, in part, a communitarian one?

**Patrick:** Yes, that's true. We are trying to build a living Christian community.

**APM:** What elements of your former training are the most useful for you?

**Patrick:** Everything is useful, for sure, particularly when we find ourselves in a world so much different. The Gospel message is universal and our first obligation is to live that message ourselves. Secondly, Christians here are experiencing radical transformations like other people on the planet. So, many of them really find comfort and direction from the Christian faith. Finally, I have become aware that many people here understand that we have something precious to share with them. So, with patience and perseverance, things are gradually taking shape. (*Maoblata* - April 2012)

## Asia-Oceania

### PAKISTAN

#### Grief and joy in Quetta

Feelings of grief, fear and consternation, mingle with the joy and hope in the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, a Christian outpost in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. The two episodes that generate mixed feelings, reported to Fides are: Tuesday 17 April, a Christian, Hyrak Maseeh, was shot dead by unidentified men as he was walking the Samungly Road. The man was taken to hospital but died. His family is in deep mourning, while the reasons for this murder are unknown and police investigations are in progress. According to Fides sources in the local Church, "it is very likely that the episode is due to an attack by Islamic extremists."

On the other hand, in the chapel of St. Joseph Convent School in Quetta, a historic event will be celebrated tomorrow, 21 April: the first ordination of a Catholic priest in Baluchistan: Deacon Gulshan BARKAT, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who completed his formation after studying in Rome. Gulshan Barkat will be ordained by the Vicar Apostolic of Quetta, His Excellency Mgr. Victor GNANAPRAGASAM, who leads the Vicariate entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Missionary Oblates -- currently 10 in Quetta, over 30 in all of Pakistan -- began a mission in Quetta in 1982 and, after thirty years, the local Catholic community is thriving with schools, pastoral activity, catechesis in the villages, counting over 50 thousand faithful

Catholics, to which are added other 50 thousand Christians of other denominations.

The gift of the first priest ordained in Baluchistan, Deacon Gulshan told Fides, "has a high symbolic value: it intends to give a Christian witness and promote priestly vocations and religious life in this province," shaken by sectarian violence and by an old rebellion of local people against the government. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/4/2012)

### THAILAND

#### A nice surprise for some prisoners

*For 40 years a missionary in Thailand, Brother Bernard WIRTH tells us about one of his ministries with the poor.*

I am still working at the Detention Center and last year, I experienced some things that merit mentioning. Generally, I am used to finding nothing but problems and trouble... but in 2011, surprise! some things finally happened...

On June 1, after my return from France, at first there was misery. I found the Rohingya at the end of their rope (*the Rohingya are Burmese refugees*). They were exhausted. For more than two years, they had been confined for the simple reason that no one wanted them anymore. Considered foreigners in their own country, Burma, and without papers, legally they do not exist and no other country wants them. Except during my absences in France, I met with them



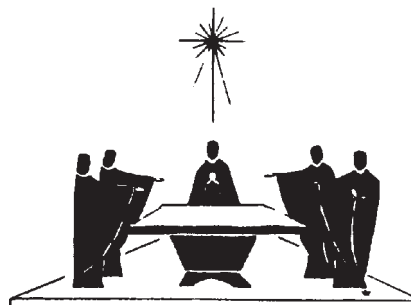
twice each week. I shared many of their concerns and their misfortunes. I had some difficult Friday evenings. I was aware of my total inability to respond to their needs and to keep up their courage to go on living. "Why are we locked up? Why don't we have the right to a normal life? Is this going to last forever?" Their questions still ring in my head.

Today, this calvary has ended... Finally the authorities have decided to let them go back home as they desired, so that they can return to their families, their villages. It's not paradise, but at least they are with their own people to bear the problems together. And besides, it cannot be worse than staying locked up within four walls with 100 persons in a cell built for 20!!! Their liberation touched me deeply and relieved me. For once, there has been action; for once a group has succeeded. I must share that with my friends. Too often -- I could say almost always -- I am engaged in an endless struggle.

Everything had begun on a Friday morning in March 2009. Ninety-five persons crammed on a truck ended up at the Detention Center in Bangkok. Most of them wore just a sarong and an tee-shirt; fourteen of them were handicapped and could not even move around. Most of them

were young. They had spent six months in a camp in the south, in atrocious conditions. Upon arrival here, they had red cards, meaning prohibition of contacts or visits. They were considered terrorists!!! Fifty-one came from Bangladesh and the rest from southern Burma. I got permission to meet with them...

Standing at the bars of their cell, for a long time I was their only visitor. I tried some Thai and English words with them. At the beginning, I was not successful; they were suspicious. I understood their difficulty in trusting a stranger for they had already endured so much. It took a few months for me to be accepted; then I became their big brother, their uncle, their father. In other words, they brought me into their family. I became their confidant, their intermediary with the police at times of revolt, hunger strikes, etc. When I arrived, I was mobbed. Everyone wanted to greet me, to shake my hand. "Is there something new for us?" An awful question repeated tirelessly for two years. And a terrible ordeal for me who saw all the exits blocked. After eight months, thanks to international pressure, the first miracle happened! The Bangladeshis could leave, but for the others, they would have to wait two more years!!!  
(*Audacieux pour l'Évangile*, April 2012)



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**Anniversaries for June 2012**


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**70 years of priesthood**

1942.06.07	06520	Fr. Lucien Lajeunesse	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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**65 years of priesthood**

1947.06.02	07348	Fr. Patrick Healy	United States
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**60 years of priesthood**

1952.06.02	08208	Fr. Francis Bagan	United States
1952.06.02	08215	Fr. Richard Harr	United States
1952.06.02	08033	Fr. William McHugh	United States
1952.06.02	08196	Fr. William McSweeney	United States
1952.06.07	08183	Fr. Paul Hurtubise	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1952.06.07	08378	Fr. Hendrik Laenen	United States
1952.06.08	11615	Fr. Stanislaus Sun	Australia
1952.06.11	08188	Fr. John Doetzel	Lacombe
1952.06.12	08327	Fr. Adhemar Deveau	United States
1952.06.12	08344	Fr. Jean-Marie Lacasse	Lacombe
1952.06.15	08341	Fr. Laurent Alarie	Lacombe
1952.06.15	08368	Fr. Jean Louatron	France
1952.06.22	08242	Fr. Cyril Canning	Philippines
1952.06.22	08394	Fr. Anthony Carroll	Anglo-Irish
1952.06.22	08393	Fr. Peter McCluskey	Anglo-Irish
1952.06.29	08437	Fr. Virgilio Baratto	Lacombe

**50 years of religious life**

1962.06.13	11242	Fr. Richard Beck	United States
1962.06.13	11244	Fr. John Franko	United States
1962.06.13	11243	Fr. Edward Ward	United States

**50 years of priesthood**

1962.06.16	10035	Fr. Mauricio Schroeder	Peru
1962.06.24	10539	Fr. Soichiro Michael Yamasaki	Colombo

**25 years of priesthood**

1987.06.05	12621	Fr. Janusz Blazejak	Assumption
1987.06.06	11990	Fr. Julien Campagnat	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1987.06.07	12764	Fr. Félix Njoku	Cameroun
1987.06.09	12622	Fr. Slawomir Trzasko	Assumption
1987.06.13	12716	Fr. Daniel Gagnon	Mexico
1987.06.17	12713	Fr. Tomasz Ewertowski	Poland
1987.06.17	12623	Fr. Kazimierz Jedrzejczak	Poland
1987.06.17	12674	Fr. Leon Kler	Lacombe
1987.06.17	12673	Fr. Leszek Kwiatkowski	Lacombe
1987.06.17	12681	Fr. Leon Niescior	Poland
1987.06.17	12677	Fr. Jaroslaw Rozanski	Poland
1987.06.17	12671	Fr. Edward Ruszel	Poland
1987.06.17	12680	Fr. Tomasz Sajdak	Poland
1987.06.17	12678	Fr. Andrzej Serwaczak	Poland
1987.06.20	12635	Fr. Roberto Villa	Italy

## Prayers for our deceased

No. 22-30

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Joseph Smith	Northern Prov. South Africa	18/02/1919	Pretoria	21/03/2012
Fr. Alfred Rozynek	Poland	10/12/1910	Lubliniec	26/03/2012
Fr. Denis O'Connell	Anglo-Irish	11/06/1925	Dublin	26/03/2012
Fr. Marcel Ayrinhac	France	15/11/1915	Lyon	28/03/2012
Bro. Jean-Guy Chartier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	08/08/1935	Richelieu	28/03/2012
Bro. Francis MacDonald	OMI Lacombe	20/04/1924	Vancouver	06/04/2012
Fr. Charles de Campigneulles	OMI Lacombe	01/11/1926	Saskatoon	08/04/2012
Sch. Bro. Thabiso Elliot Manatha	Lesotho	25/01/1988	Roma	09/04/2012
Fr. Paul Maher	United States	23/06/1932	Los Angeles	25/04/2012

*“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](mailto:information@omigen.org)  
<http://www.omiworld.org>  
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