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Thank you, Father Théophile Le Page, 1927-2012

On the morning of November 10, 2012, Fr. Théophile LE PAGE, long-time member of the General House Community, joined the Oblate community in heaven. There is probably no living Oblate who has not been touched by his ministry of service, because, for many years, every posted edition of our Oblate bulletins, every copy of the Oblate Constitutions, every Oblate publication coming from Rome passed through his hands as "Mailer General" of the Congregation!

We do not know the motives that led the good-looking young Breton, Théophile Le Page, to begin the novitiate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in La Brosse-Montceaux (France) on September 7, 1946. Just under 19 years earlier, on September 21, 1927, he had been born in the small town of Bolazec (diocese of Quimper), which then had less than a thousand inhabitants.

We do know, however, what he wrote to Father Léo Deschâtelets, Superior General, on October 28, 1953, shortly before his departure for Cameroon, his first obedience: "From Marseille, where so many memories remind us of the great figure of our venerated Founder, I come, before embarking for Cameroon, to ask you for one last blessing so that my ministry in this Oblate mission where you have destined me might be fruitful and according to the heart of Bishop de Mazenod. Notre Dame de la Garde who has seen the departure of so many of her Oblate sons will protect us and sustain us." He had been ordained priest on February 15 of the same year.

In 1964, following a serious illness, for which he was treated in France, the doctors gave a negative opinion concerning his return to Cameroon. However, he would spend a few more months there as the personal secretary to Bishop Yves

PLUMEY who, on June 4, 1964, wrote to Father Jean DROUART, Assistant General: "Father Le Page will soon complete his stay in Africa, in Garoua. He should return to France around June 20. He withstood the climate with great difficulty, but he held up bravely through strict discipline."

On January 15, 1965, therefore, he received an obedience for the General House, accompanied by these words from Fr. Deschâtelets: "By sending you today the official document of your obedience to our General House, I am pleased to offer you the warmest welcome among us... This change, I understand, asks great sacrifices on your part because it takes you away from your apostolate in Cameroon that you loved so much, but I pray for heavenly graces for you so that, in your new role, you might find great consolation for your religious, priestly and missionary life. Keep alive your missionary ideal and longing for the mission, because coming to work in the center of the missionary Congregation, you are still a missionary..."

At the General House, he would be first of all, Secretary General and then, Archivist. Later on, he who never had a great love for computers, would be part of the so-called "Computer Committee." In recent years, he would take care of mailings, especially the bulletins of the General Communications Service, while keeping a very close eye on correctness of the French texts.

Personally I had known him the end of the 70's, when I was at the International Scholasticate. He seemed to me, in the great corridors of Via Aurelia 290, to be a very shy man, sometimes even grumpy, lonely. The notes from the Scholasticate of Solignac in December 1952 in fact present him as: "polite and well mannered..."

sensitive; energetic and determined” but also “... excessively shy ... he is very well adjusted.” For my part, I always suspected he carried a hurt from some point in his life, one that never fully healed.

In the last nine years of my presence in the Service of Communications, I spent much time with him, either for work or for friendship: many times at the same table together with other brothers who prodded him, forced him to smile, and made him show that intelligent and vivacious part of himself, challenging and impartial, able to bite before being bitten, but in fact always in search of the truth. Father Le Page read -- one of the few who did -- most of the Oblate publications; he knew the writings of the Founder, the history of the Congregation and, more particularly, that of the General House, of which he was an icon for more than 47 years. After so much time, anyone who met him in our day found him changed, more open.

Before the beginning of summer this year, he had an operation for stomach cancer. During the long and painful days in the hospital, he showed a surprising patience and endurance of pain. In the following months spent at home, he was not well, but he tried hard not to be a burden.

Permit me to mention a personal memory which still touches my heart. On October 2, because of a bile duct obstruction, Théophile had to

be brought again to the hospital. Fr. Mauro CONCARDI and I thought that the superior, Fr. Roberto SARTOR, was going to go with him alone, and we said we would go to meet him there when “it would be helpful to be of company.” While working in my office, I got a call from him: “So, I am going.” I sensed a plea for help and I decided to go to the emergency room of the San Filippo Neri hospital as well; there, he had to wait for 26 hours on a stretcher before being admitted. He would come home no more; he spent his last days at Villa Speranza, a clinic for palliative care. The members of the General House ensured a constant and faithful presence there. Fr. Fabio CIARDI celebrated Mass for him there several times. He died there on the morning of November 10, smilingly uttering a last sigh, in the presence of the superior and in the arms of Joelle Laure, a woman from that French family that had become his real family.

The whole General House community gathered around his coffin for a final farewell on the morning of November 13. An atmosphere of deep prayer and the beautiful words of Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, Vicar General, made it a sacred moment.

Thank you, Théophile. Your story reminds us that at the end of life, we will be judged by our love. *(Fr. Nino BUCCA, Director, General Service of Oblate Communications)*

General Administration

HOLY SEE

Bishop Lampon named to Pontifical Council

Pope Benedict XVI has appointed former General Councillor for Asia-Oceania, Bishop Angelito LAMPON, as a member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The appointment was announced by the Vatican Information service on October 27, 2012.

Since 1997, Bishop Angelito has been the Apostolic Vicar of Jolo, an area where vast majority of the people are Muslim. Prior to his ordination to the episcopacy by Blessed Pope John Paul II, he was elected to the General Council in 1992.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Fr. General: a visit to India

While visiting the Province of India in October, I had the opportunity to meet with the scholastics at Samarth Krupa (Grace of the Almighty) in Pune where Fathers Peter SAKRA and Antony SAMY are formators. Brother C. Solomon, a third year scholastic, explained to me a three-day program named “BOSOM” which will be held in December for all the men who are in the various levels of Oblate formation in India. BOSOM stands for “Bharath (India) Oblate Students on Meet.” This gathering will bring together about 120 young men who are Juniors, Philosophers, Regents, Novices and Scholastics.

A very thorough process of consultation was carried out among all the members of the various stages of formation to come up with the theme for this meeting which will be held from the 27th to the 29th of December at the De Mazenod Philosophy Institute (DIP) in Gnanalayam. The theme selected after this process is: "Faith Formation towards Oblate Mission." The talks which will form the central reflection of these days are the following: "Faith Formation in the light of the Aix experience of Saint Eugene"; "The sense of belonging, a challenge in community life"; "Oblate community life is witnessing apostolic community life." There will also be panel discussions on the General Norms of Oblate Formation, Formation Today, Oblate Mission in India; and Devotion to Saint Eugene in the Formation Houses. Fr. Francis NALLAPPAN, Provincial of India, is the chief invited guest and will be present with all the formators.

Besides these highly formative aspects of BOSOM, the men will have significant times for prayer and Eucharistic celebrations, songs and games, meals and cultural events in the spirit of a Christmas gathering. Congratulations to the animator, Fr. CHINNAPPAN; to the guide and host, Fr. David KUMAR; president, Bro. C. Solomon; Bro. Rabul; and Bro. S. Joseph. The coordinators for the program are young men from each level of formation and the organizing team is comprised of seven of the formandi accompanied by Fr. Antony Samy. We wish the very best for all those participating in the BOSOM-2012 gathering. (*Fr. Louis LOUGEN*)

STANDING COMMITTEE OF OBLATE BROTHERS

A meeting in Rome

From November 1-5, 2012, the Standing Committee of Oblate Brothers met in Rome. In spite of the absence of some regional delegates, the meeting began with a look at past events. It is to be noted that this was the first meeting since the Chapter of 2010.

We discussed the Oblate vocation and more particularly the role of the Oblate Brother. We

also highlighted the work done by the team that developed the new General Norms for Oblate Formation. We worked on the proposal of the General Formation Committee, following the resolution of the General Chapter of 2010 requesting that we work on a 'core curriculum' for the formation of the Oblates Brothers.

Father General met with us upon his return from India and before departing for Haiti. He shared his own experience with the Oblate Brothers and reiterated the importance of the role of the Oblate Brothers in the Congregation as a reminder to us of the most important aspect of our religious life. We also shared on some issues in preparation of the Congregation's 200th anniversary.

We opened the final day of our meeting with Eucharist in the chapel dedicated to the Founder, where our prayer focused on the nature of the Oblate vocation.

Fr. Joaquin MARTINEZ shared with us the progress of the postulation service and especially the cause of Brother Anthony KOWALCZYK; Fr. Fabio CIARDI encouraged us to collaborate with the "Oblatio" review.

We ended our meeting by proposing some recommendations and establishing the Committee's plans for years to come. The committee would like to thank Father General and the members of his Council, especially Fathers Paolo ARCHIATI, Gilberto PIÑÓN and Emmanuel MOSOEU for their presence and encouragement.

Happy to have experienced all these encounters during these few days, we invite you to consider the image of the Samaritan woman mentioned by the Synod on the New Evangelization (cf. Jn 4, 5-42). The Samaritan woman could have kept busy and left as quickly as possible for the village. She stopped at the well to find the deepest longing that gave meaning to her existence. The essential of our Oblate vocation, is it not a stopping at the well to give witness in our life as Oblates of Mary Immaculate? (*Bro. Benoît DOSQUET*)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE For faithful service

Fr. Thomas CASSIDY was awarded the papal medal of “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” for his service of seventeen years as the English secretary and canonical counsel to the Apostolic Nunciature in Ottawa. During that time he served under four papal nuncios: Archbishops Carlo Curis, Paulo Romeo, Luigi Ventura and Pedro Lopez-Quintona.

Most people are unfamiliar with the work of the office of the papal nuncio but about twenty-percent is the representation of the Holy See to the Government of Canada (the role as ambassador) and about eighty percent to the Catholic bishops of Canada. This is a bilingual country and there is a French and English secretary to the Nunciature.

Tom relates in correct order that when he first received the phone call from the Nuncio asking that he come for an interview he was leery. Was this a practical joke? But he did not know any of his Oblate confreres who could imitate such a heavy Italian accent. When he informed the nuncio that he would first have to ask his Oblate Provincial, who was Gerry Morris, he was given the green light: “Go for it!” Tom was one of seven Oblates who have served the Nunciature over the decades and probably has served the longest term.

When he began the test period on September 8, 1994, he had to ascertain that this was actually going to be Oblate ministry. As he checked the Oblate principals he could see that Mazenod always wanted his men to be at the service of the bishops. This work was very much at the service of the bishops of Canada. He admits that when he began he had ‘jumped in at the deep end’ but has only received one or two negative comments about his work as secretary and canonical counsel.

There are some very memorable moments to his career. One such time was when he represented the Papal nuncio at the departure of the first Black ambassador from South Africa. In proper diplomatic procedure all the ambassadors are

invited to the reception where you greet the ambassador at the entrance, say a few words, and then proceed to the coffee and food table, stay as long as you want and then depart. It can be a very brief visit is one so chooses.

Tom relates that this man was a very big man. When he saw the Roman collar he grabbed Tom, gave him a very strong bear hug, and boasted to all the people around him. “This is the representative of the Holy See. This is the only institution that has been with the anti-apartheid movement right from the beginning.” Tom stood there and thanked him. As he stood there he was very much connected with Archbishop Denis HURLEY and his fellow churchmen who were strong supporters of the resistance to the apartheid movement within South Africa. (*Nestor GREGOIRE in www.omilacombe.ca*)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Honoring Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

On Sunday, October 21, 2012, a few hours after Roman time, Notre-Dame-du-Nord celebrated in its own original way the canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

The initiative was from the parish priest who had invited the parishioners of the five parishes to come together for the occasion, while Fr. Rémi CADIEUX had invited the Algonquin communities of Winneway and Notre-Dame-du-Nord to join the “Whites”.

It was a first for Temiscamingue! The people responded well to the invitation. The mayors of the municipalities and the two Amerindian chiefs spoke to the assembly and there were some symbolic gestures to show how the new saint could be a source of reconciliation and coming together.

Rémi Cadieux presided at the liturgy, accompanied by the pastor, Rénal Dufour and the author, with the support of a “mixed” choir and an Amerindian guitarist. In the afternoon, in the Amerindian Hall, there was a small exhibit of photos, publications about Kateri and a slide show, attracting some

200 persons. (*René GAUTHIER in INFO OMI, 29 October 2012*)

OMI LACOMBE

Frontier Apostles' reunion

In 1956, a man of great vision, Bishop Fergus O'GRADY (aka Bulldozer O'Grady), sent an appeal out to men and women throughout the world. He asked them to come as volunteers to the missionary Diocese of Prince George, in beautiful British Columbia, to help build and staff schools and serve as house parents, nurses, cooks, bus drivers, maintenance men, secretaries and grounds-keepers. The need for volunteers was due to the fact that there was no government funding for parochial schools in B.C. at the time. Those responding to the call and challenge to sacrifice came from all parts of Canada, the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Mexico, Japan and Africa.

In return, the volunteers received room and board plus a monthly stipend of \$35. More than 4,000 generous folk of all ages and walks of life answered Bishop O'Grady's invitation over the 35 years of his Frontier Apostolate movement. He called these volunteers his Frontier Apostles. Twenty-five of those former Frontier Apostles assembled in Amprior, Ontario, at the Galilee Retreat Centre on the shores of the Ottawa River, in the hot summer of 2012, to celebrate a special reunion, sharing memories of their time together back then. Except for one senior who had left Ireland at age seventeen to be among Bishop O'Grady's first recruits, most were from the 1971-78 era. The heat outside was nothing compared to the fire of the Spirit alive, as all embraced, laughed and cried, while viewing the PowerPoint presentation of the "good ol' days" and shared stories of their lives since their time with the FA's.

The bonds forged many years ago were evidently still very strong. Some continue to work in their chosen profession, while others are retired. Though all have faced their share of life's challenges raising families, coping with illnesses, struggling in relationships, and changing employment, they have all continued to work with passion and commitment in their respective

parishes and other volunteer services. The highlight of the weekend was a mass celebrated by Fr. Roy BOUCHER (Founder and First Director of the Galilee Retreat Centre).

Acknowledging the response of the original call to serve and recognizing the life experiences of those present as they rekindled their relationships, Fr. Roy re-enforced the commission to "go forth into the world" yet again, with that same passion and dedication! Following mass, Fr. Roy gave a special blessing to three couples who had celebrated their 35th wedding anniversaries this year. All had met in Prince George while serving as Frontier Apostles, proving Bishop O'Grady's promise: "Come to the FA and I'll find you a husband/wife." Among those present was Michaela Marques, who after serving as a teacher, then houseparent, became a Domano Sister of Mary Immaculate, the order founded by Bishop O'Grady in 1979.

This had been another of his dreams: to establish an order of Sisters to work in his diocese. In the small cross-section of former Frontier Apostles assembled over this amazing weekend, there were those who had served as teachers, cooks, nurses, secretaries, house parents, bus drivers, recruiters, writers and photographers. All agreed it was a privilege to be part of such an enterprise and to have known "The Bulldozer"! After the incredible spirit-filled weekend of fun, music, good food and company in our superb setting, it was hard to say 'good-bye'. (*Mary [Knox] Locke in www.omilacombe.ca*)

OMI LACOMBE

Mission consciousness in large parishes

Fr. Andrew STENDZINA is very involved with his fellow parishioners in developing a mission consciousness within the very large parish of St. Albert, in St. Albert, Alberta. This has been an Oblate parish since its founding one hundred and fifty one years ago.

He summed up this developing mission sense within the parish. "An Oblate parish is not determined by its location. It is not only a parish up in the sticks but you can have an Oblate parish

anywhere if you do what the Oblate charism says we should be doing. The people are getting excited about this. The bottom line is to help others. This is what St. Eugene was doing.”

In his scholasticate days Andrew was preparing to join the Polish Oblates in Madagascar by learning the French language. He came out to cold Northern Canada in 1988 to learn English. His first mission was to the Dene people in Fort Simpson, NWT, where he was ordained a priest by Bishop Denis CROTEAU in 1990. His parish office in St. Albert carries many signs of his connection with the First Nations peoples. He has a well-used beaded stole and a hand built lamp all done with bead work from the North.

“It was Fr. Gerry LESTRAT that first gave us the idea of twinning our parish with the Oblate parishes in Guatemala. We have moved beyond just being twinned to our support of the orphanage in Sumpango, Guatemala. This is an orphanage of sixty children, all of whom are HIV infected. We are involved in a sponsorship program where a family here in Alberta will sponsor one child in Guatemala.

“Our people also do a mission experience and they go to Guatemala for two weeks. We have had roughly thirty parishioners who have made such a mission experience. I myself went there first to prepare things. On this first trip the Oblates in Guatemala showed us all their works. We saw how they lived and worked in Guatemala.

“For these Canadian people and for myself, it is a life-changing experience. This is always beyond imagining what it could be when you see it on the TV screen. Canadians appreciate what they have a lot more when they come back home.

“We also have a scholarship program in St. Cecilia in Mixco (just outside of Guatemala City). There are around eighty children that our scholarships help put through school. The local people are very involved in deciding which families should receive the scholarships. These people give us pictures and a report back on the children we are sponsoring.” Andrew opened his computer to show the photos of the children who were in school and the Oblate Associates who are very involved in this project.

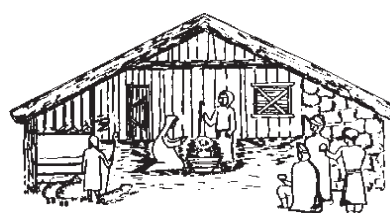
“Here in St. Albert we ran a collection through the St. Albert School system to collect backpacks and school supplies for the children of Chicaman (a town in the middle of Guatemala). In Guatemala education is free but the children have to be able to provide their own school supplies. Here in St. Albert we collected two thousand backpacks and additional supplies for these children.”

The mission experience is never a one way affair. “Every second year we (people of St. Albert parish) visit their twin parish in Guatemala and every second year they come here. This is all about building relationships.”

It is never sufficient to focus only beyond the borders of Canada. St. Albert Parish has looked towards the Canadian North. At the present moment efforts are being made to link up with the Toktoyaktuk (affectionately known to Canadians as ‘Tuk’) parish with the Arctic circle. Canada also has its mission stations.

“We are asking them what they need. It is not our idea to tell them what they need but to listen to these people.” The people in this very northerly community are identifying their needs. “They need expertise. They need professional workers and people who can supervise construction.

“Last February our people ventured on an experience of the North. About eight parishioners made a trip to Tuk. This is the first part of our mission experience. Now we have to do the follow up about what can be done in the Tuk community. We are hoping to have an exchange and have these people come down to visit us. As with other communities in the North there are a lot of social issues. We want to help them out but this is first of all about building social relationships.” (by Nestor GREGOIRE in www.omilacombe.ca)



Europe

FRANCE**Again, the death of an Oblate dean**

Fr. Victor ROBERT had the distinction of being the dean of the Oblate Congregation for a very brief period of time, less than three weeks. He went to his eternal reward in Lyon on the Feast of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, November 2, 2012. He had celebrated his 100th birthday on a day sacred to the Oblates, February 17, 2012. The title of “dean” is now held by Fr. Leo ENGEL of the OMI Lacombe Province in Canada. Fr. Engel celebrated his 99th birthday last September 9.

POLAND**Uniting a continent...thanks to the youth**

Europe always represents a great challenge. No matter where one looks, to unite Europe has been a major preoccupation for many individuals and for many different groups throughout history. We Missionary Oblates are also trying to unite our continent, thanks to youth who vibrate with Christ and with Saint Eugene de Mazenod.

The OMI European Youth Ministry and Vocational Commission met from November 5-9 in Kokotek, Poland. Oblates Antonio D'AMORE (Italy), Bartosz MADEJSKI (Poland), Vincent GRUBER (France), Piotr WROBLENSKI (Ukraine), Peter CLUCAS (Ireland) and David MUÑOZ (Spain), accompanied during the entire meeting by

Radosław ZMITROWICZ (delegation superior and liaison for the Commission), and, on the last day, by Chicho ROIS (General Councillor for Europe), spent these four days sharing experiences and planning common prospects for the youth who live the Oblate charism.

We talked about religious vocations in our respective provinces and how to respond to the challenge of this moment when the response is so rare in Europe. We took steps in order to coordinate participation in the next World Youth Day 2013 in Rio de Janeiro. We concretized some points concerning the Oblate Youth Encounter of Europe in Aix on August 12-18.

The work was accompanied by prayer and fraternal sharing, and a final visit to the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, to put the youth into the hands of our Mother. The excellent reception of Polish Oblates helped us feel at home.

The commission's work ended, but I had the opportunity to stay another day in Poland and briefly participate in one of the annual meetings of the NINIWA (Nineveh) group. Some 200 young people, accompanied by 16 Oblates, with Fr. Thomas, the founder of the group at the head, gathered in one of the Oblate parishes to continue their journey of faith and grow in their experience of the charism. (*Fr. David Muñoz Medina en www.nosotrosomi.org*)

Latin America

URUGUAY**“Christ has called me”**

We would like to share with all the friends of Catholic music “*Cristo me llamó*” (*Christ has called me*). It is a CD and virtual DVD recorded live in Buenos Aires. The lyrics, music and principal vocals are those of Fr. Jesús Antonio NUÑO LOPEZ, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Spaniard, born in the city of Malaga and currently working as a missionary in Uruguay.

“Cristo me llamó” tells of the life of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; it tells also of the importance of the mission for all the baptized. It was done in honor of the 150th anniversary of the death of this saintly French Founder.

Fr. Jesús Antonio was ordained 11 years ago and has incorporated music into his ministry, through guitar workshops, children's choirs, concerts and festivals with various contemporary Catholic composers. He also manages a blog “[Cristo](#)

con amigos” which reflects various aspects of contemporary Catholic music, news related to the life of the Church and to the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates. Currently he is finishing a course in film direction done through the virtual classroom at the Camilo José Cela University and his next project will be the creation of a short film.

He combined these activities with his role as pastor in Buenos Aires (in the area where the concert was held) from 2001 to 2006. He was in Jimena de la Frontera, a town in the province of Cádiz from 2007 to 2012 and has just arrived in Uruguay on a new mission project at San José Obrero in Ciudad del Plata, about 40 km from Montevideo. These days, he has put the concert on the internet via YouTube. (www.trovador.com)

HAITI

Another hurricane

The late October hurricane “Sandy”, which caused much damage and loss of life in the heavily populated areas of the Northeastern United States passed through Haiti before striking the USA. It did terrible damage in Haiti where people have not yet recovered from previous earthquakes and hurricanes. Over 50 people lost their lives; crops were badly damaged. On October 27, Oblate Missionary in Haiti, Fr. Réal CORRIVEAU, wrote an e-mail to Brother Augustin COTÉ about the latest devastation.

Today was a nice sunny day for a change after 3 full days and nights of rain and wind. Believe me it was time for a change in the weather. After so many years in Haiti, it is still a mystery for me as to how the poor survive through all these tough times. News from my parish in the mountains is that the crops, bananas, corn, congo beans and coffee trees are all on the ground. It's going to be hard for the parents to pay tuition for their children who are in school. The small meeting hall at the front of the church was knocked down. The kitchen near the rectory lost some of the roofing. The wind was so strong that it pushed some rain into the rectory. The Sisters lost the roof of their chapel and also one of their houses. I just called Fr. Michard at Fond Oies. He says that the tin roofing of the buildings has been picked up...

for further use when possible. He had to make a hole in one of the walls of the church to let the water out. A few trees that blocked the road have been cut up and removed. A mudslide near the school has now been cleared and so there will be a wide-open road tomorrow to travel for Mass.

Our Rectory at Mary Magdalene Parish in Sibert was a victim of flooding again. It was the second time this year. Luckily the Fathers and people of the parish were able to find shelter in the parish school. As far as I know no one was hurt. Now it's time to clean up and start all over again. It seems that hurricane Sandy caused a lot of flooding in Les Cayes, and on the Southern Coast where we take care of 10 Parishes. The wind, and waves did much damage to houses on the oceanfront.

It was great to see the people get help from the government and other organizations. This time they were prepared for the hurricane and its aftermath.

That's about all from here this afternoon. I'll be back from the mountains tomorrow evening.... if all goes well. I do pray that Sandy will not hit too hard in the States.

Fr. Louis LOUGEN arrives here for a visit on the 6th of November. His visit will include all of our Oblate Missions except 3, which are hard to get to for the time he stays in Haiti.

We are now getting reports by the Government (Health Department) and cholera is making a big comeback along with malaria. My best wishes to all. (*Gus News Notes*, November 2012)

HAITI

Fr. General visits the John Paul II Institute

During the visit of the Superior General of the O.M.I., Fr. Louis LOUGEN, to the St. Eugene de Mazenod Province of Haiti, the John Paul II Institute community of Ouanaminthe had the honor and the happy privilege of welcoming him on November 8. It was an occasion for his getting to know this Oblate educational establishment in the northeast of Haiti, often referred to by His Excellency, Bishop Chibly Langlois, president of the Episcopal Conference of Haiti, as the “Work of the Future.”

Through education -- the best tool in the fight against extreme poverty, inequalities, trafficking, prostitution, drug abuse, violence, delinquency -- the John Paul II Institute, through the generosity of people of good will and Oblate solidarity, is making its contribution to the rebuilding of a Haiti that is more just, more humane; a Haiti that will transform itself into a land of opportunity for its ten million (10,000,000) inhabitants. Hence, its motto: "The quest for excellence for an integral human development."

The students of our Institute were happy to listen to and welcome the wise and valuable advice of the one who symbolizes the unity of our religious family. "I bring you the blessings of Peace and Love from Pope Benedict XVI." These were the first words of the Father Lougen to the students. Having extolled the merits of a good education, a quality formation, he urged the students to take their studies seriously: "You are the future of Haiti, the future of the Church!"

The courteous exchange between Father Louis and the students showed us that they had understood the message. They promised him to put into practice his advice to become what they are called to be, that is to say, well developed minds, Christian citizens, free and enlightened

citizens, men and women who are mature, honest, upright, creative, productive, competitive, respectful, tolerant and responsible.

He asked the teachers who were present to see their profession as a sort of priesthood and to use wisdom and patience with the students. The warm handshakes exchanged with teachers demonstrated their adherence to Father Louis' message of encouragement. For Fr. Nathaniel SERMEIL (assistant director) and me, this visit was comforting, encouraging and edifying. Together we discussed the challenges of the Oblate mission in a world in crisis, a changing world and our commitment to this portion of God's people in Ouanaminthe.

The discussions were fruitful. In this year dedicated to the faith by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, we promised to pray for one another so as to find our joy in our choice to live our lives after the manner of Christ the Savior, while working diligently like Eugene de Mazenod for the salvation of the souls of the poorest, the most neglected, the most despised, the most abandoned. Father Louis, a thousand times thank you for your visit and have good stay in our beloved Haiti! (Fr. Jean Luc BOURDEAU, Director of the John Paul II Institute)

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES

A Ministry of New Evangelization

A few years ago, Fr. Phil ESTRELLA launched the Adult Lay Spirituality Program. He began with the OMI lay co-workers and mission partners. Two sessions were conducted – one for the Metro Manila area and another for the Cotabato area. The positive response and the palpable thirst of a lay spirituality among our lay co-workers and mission partners led to the fine tuning of this new attempt to become a Ministry of New Evangelization for adult lay people.

Fr. Phil has so far developed two stages under this new ministry of New Evangelization for adult lay people also known as the Adult Lay Spirituality Program.

The first stage begins with the foundation of the Adult Lay Spirituality. It deals with the recognition of the various stages of faith; confronting the burden of the past and grappling with the thorns of the human heart. Stage one of the journey hopes to promote a mature spirituality for modern lay people often characterized as 'under-catechized, 'inactive' in the life Church, and 'alienated' from the many 'official' church positions on crucial issues.

The second stage presents the inward journey that is always a 'venture into the unknown'. Here, the participants are led to take inventory of 'landmarks' in life's journey. They become conscious of the patterns of these landmarks, which are keys to the discovery of the deepest desires of their hearts.

The program is meant for adults, in fact for people who are at least 40 years old and thus facing many of the mid-life questions and issues, including the question of faith and values. This is a very fragile and critical stage in spirituality. In fact, all religious beliefs consider the mid years as the most critical in addressing the issues of the Spirit. This is the period when illusions are already shed; the early interests in life lose their fascinations and a search for wisdom and enduring personal values and more intimate relations begin.

Fr. Phil has already conducted several sessions for the first stage of the ALSP to several groups that include people who are in the corporate world and have long been alienated from the church. 'Graduates' of the first stage are now being invited to go more deeply in their journey. So far, he has conducted one session in the Metro Manila area. Hopefully in May 2013, he will be able to organize one for the 'graduates' of the first stage in the Cotabato areas. (ERM) (*OMI Philippines*, October 2012)

JAFFNA

International Peace Day in Vavuniya

The Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (Jaffna) with Fr. Praveen MAHESAN as Director, organised a special program at Vavuniya to commemorate the International Peace Day, on 25th September.

The District Secretary of Vavuniya, the American Ambassador to Sri Lanka, the Provincial Secretary (Northern Province), Bishop Norbert ANDRADI, Mayor Ilangakoon (C.C.O Nadunkerny), 120 youth representatives from Jaffna, Kegalle, Matara, Gampaha, Puttalam and Vavuniya districts and a group of officers of NPC participated this program.

Bishop Andradi, in his peace message, called to mind the noble words of Pope John Paul II, that "Violence is no solution to free from violence," and said that we must forget our mistakes of the past and correct ourselves for the future.

The District Secretary (Vavuniya) said that we get this opportunity to commemorate such days

happily because we follow the philosophies of noble people like Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi.

Along with this program, a youth camp was held on 19th and 20th September with the participation of 120 youths from North and South Sri Lanka. Moreover a cultural program with Tamil and Sinhala cultural items was conducted to foster resilience and to lessen the mental stress of those people affected by war. This was followed by a lecture on "How reconciliation can build a sustainable peace".

Interreligious representatives from the South who are connected with NPC visited the Mullivaikkal area where the final stages of the war was fought. When they visited a nursery school of this area conducted by the Sri Lanka Christian Society, the school children welcomed this group with a Sinhala song and on this occasion the Buddhist priests delivered short sermons on peace and unity. This was followed by a party for the small children. It provided an occasion to develop friendly attitudes towards Buddhist priests among those children. (*Administrator, International Peace Council in Sri Lanka*)

PHILIPPINES

A parish among the Muslims

Datu Piang, a municipality considered as the "heart of Moroland" where Muslim assertions of identity and ancestral sphere of influence have resulted in armed struggles has contrarily encouraged the Oblates and community members to put Christian evangelization into action.

The parish under the patronage of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus was created on January 9, 1955 with Fr. Cyril CANNING as first resident priest. Inter-religious dialogue among Muslims and Christians initiated by the Oblates in the past was comprised of home visits, a community-based health program, literacy programs and socio-economic programs.

Today, Sta. Teresita Parish is using the human and material resources of the parish to reach out to the wider community. It has developed into an ecclesial community that looks at the needs of

other sectoral groups and parochial lay leaders under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Ruben “Ben” Ma. GOMEZ have come up with a newsletter.

The involvement of the parish in community services truly becomes a setting for spiritual growth or self-evangelization as affirmed by Ma. Angelita Kim. The visit made by their group with Fr. Ben last June 9, 2012 to the leprosy patients of Cotabato Sanitarium showed her how faith in God remained fervent and a source of strength for the patients when the Sta. Teresita Parish members, Christians, Muslims and Lumad joined hands and sang the “Lord’s Prayer.”

She also saw the leper patients bravely facing the future with hope and a smile despite the loss of limbs and sight; on the other hand, she saw that her own problems were minor in comparison to those of the sanitarium patients.

Additionally, Hapag-Asa, a supplementary feeding program was organized by parish volunteers. Together with the clienteles’ mothers, they serve food augmented with vitamins and minerals to malnourished Muslim and Christian children. A Mothers’ Class is also being held for the children’s parents to engage them in health awareness programs.

Concern and love within the Sta. Teresita Parish Christian community has not been overlooked. They celebrate birth anniversaries with a serenade at dawn or *mañanita*, with prayers and messages for the honoree, followed by a “salu-salo” [get-together meal].

The active involvement of the parishioners becomes a resounding response to make each day a living Christian witness in the heart of Moroland ala *mañanita*, “How beautiful is the morning, when we come to waken you. With God’s early morning blessing...”. (*OMI Philippines*, October 2012)

PHILIPPINES

Pastoral worker murdered

The Catholic Conchita Francisco, 62, pastoral worker, a widow and mother of two children,

was shot to death by unidentified men in front of the Catholic Cathedral of Bongao, in the Philippine province of Tawi- Tawi in the south of the archipelago. This is confirmed to Fides Agency by Fr. Eliseo MERCADO, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a professor at the Notre Dame University of Cotabato, who was visiting the province, saying that the murder took place on November 13 while the woman had just left the church where she had led the recitation of the Rosary and participated in the Holy Mass.

The province of “Tawi-Tawi” (near the island of Jolo) is made up of a small ring of islands which, together with Sulu, are in the extreme south of the Philippines. This is an area where the presence of Muslim rebels, pirates, terrorist groups and criminals for years have held in check the Philippine military. The islands are infested by the cells of the “Abu Sayyaf” terrorist Islamic group, responsible for numerous attacks and murders. As reported to Fides, the Catholic community, which has 2% of the local population, predominately Muslim, is in shock over the incident.

The Apostolic Vicar of Jolo, His Excellency Bishop Angelito LAMPON, OMI, has expressed his bitterness about the murder that “deprived the community of an authentic witness of the Gospel.” The Apostolic Vicar celebrated Conchita’s funeral. She was called “Ching” and was a pillar in the pastoral activities of the small local church.

Conchita’s husband had died ten years ago, also killed in a violent manner. The woman was a Headmistress and according to some sources, the murder could be linked to questions concerning her work on the university campus. Police are investigating and have not yet shed light on the crime.

Fr. Mercado recalls that two other people working in the Mindanao State University (MSU) were killed on the campus in Marawi City (Mindanao) on 25 October: Prof. Othello Cobal and his assistant Erwin Diaz, 24 years of age. A gang of thugs entered the campus,

shot them and set fire to offices. “The culprits of these crimes are on the loose and continue to threaten the civilian community with impunity,” the missionary stated to Fides.

The MSU, often compared to a “microcosm of the emerging Muslim region Bangsamoro”, has become “a laboratory of crime” and that is why students and teachers have asked the government to intervene to ensure legality. The Jesuit, Fr. Albert Alejo, SJ, engaged in civil society in Zamboanga City, told Fides: “Violence in

Mindanao and the Sulu islands is a widespread reality. The province of Tawi-Tawi is militarized, there are many soldiers and too many weapons among civilians. Violence and murder at times can be reduced to electoral reasons, in other cases to the claims of groups and Muslim factions. For example, a very strong group in the area, the “Moro National Liberation Front”, did not accept the recent peace agreement with the Philippine government from the “Moro Islamic Liberation Front”, and this creates further tension”. (PA) (*Agenzia Fides* 16/11/2012)

Africa-Madagascar

LESOTHO

Mater Jesu Scholasticate: 50th Anniversary

The Provincial of Lesotho, Fr. Joseph SEPHAMOLA, speaks about a significant anniversary in the Oblate story of Africa.

The grand jubilee which is currently underway in the Catholic Church in Lesotho is actually a three-fold celebration: It is the 150th anniversary of the Catholic Church in Lesotho. It is also the celebration of 150 years of Oblate presence and missionary endeavor in our Mountain Kingdom. Thirdly, it marks the 50th year of the establishment of Mater Jesu Scholasticate at Roma, here in Lesotho. It is on this third and final point that I would like to make a note of appreciation, today.

This house of Oblate formation was officially opened on 19th July 1962, and was given the name of Mater Jesu Scholasticate. Before its establishment, Oblate scholastics used to be accommodated at St. Augustine’s Major Seminary. Evidently, the challenges that led to the idea of establishing a scholasticate in Lesotho in those days, and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of such a project, could better be imagined than described.

This year, it is with great joy that we celebrate the golden jubilee of our beloved Mater Jesu scholasticate, whose history has been, in spite of challenges and set-backs, one of constant excellence.

Fifty years is certainly a long and significant period in the life of any religious establishment.

Through the course of this half-century, both formators and formandi have shown themselves to be men whole-heartedly devoted to their respective tasks, men truly zealous and efficient, and men of whom both the Church and the society can justly be proud.

As Oblates of Lesotho Province, we have every reason to stand tall and express our admiration and gratitude for the wonderful work of formation carried out at our Mater Jesu scholasticate over this 50 year period. Hundreds of young men have received in this house a genuine, complete and deeply Christian formation. Today, a great majority of them exercise the most beneficial influence in the Christian communities and in various spheres of social life. Indeed, we are all pleased!

We are equally grateful to the pioneers of this wonderful achievement: devoted missionaries, responsible before God and humankind for the foundation and capable direction of Mater Jesu scholasticate through its first most challenging years of existence. The mandate which they received from the Church, they carried out generously and with admirable dedication.

The zeal, generosity and commitment displayed by the pioneers of Mater Jesu scholasticate have been handed down to their successors. They also have known days of trouble, suffering and hard labor. Yet they have always discharged their duty with courage, determination, and success. On behalf of the Oblate Province of Lesotho, I thank them and congratulate them most sincerely.

Congratulations to all the formandi of Mater Jesu scholasticate, past and present. They are always the joy and the crown of our scholasticate whose 50 years of existence we celebrate with pride. Together with everyone of them we are united in prayer and in thanksgiving to the Lord for all the blessings granted to our beloved scholasticate over this 50 year period.

We wish Mater Jesu scholasticate success upon success and many happy returns of the day. *Ad multos Annos!* (Maoblata, November 2012)

GUINEA BISSAU

Running with Albino

In August, Fr. Pasquale CASTRILLI, an avid runner and the director of the magazine, Missioni OMI, accompanied a group of Italian youth for a missionary experience in Guinea Bissau. In his blog, he wrote about a young man who became his friend during this sojourn in Africa.

With Albino we made some real strides these days. One half of the approximately 140 km. of running I've done in Guinea Bissau, we ran together.

I met Albino after the first week of our stay in this country. He's 23 years old, with a sincere smile and a look that hides his story. He also has lots of friends, many of whom we meet on the street; he smiles and waves. He prides himself for running

with and "showing off" the white man (me) with whom he is running. He grew up without a father and mother; he always got by with a thousand odd jobs. He is currently the doorman and caretaker of the missionaries' house in Antula. He grows beans, zucchini, watermelon, corn and other things in the garden; he opens and closes the gate when people arrive; he cleans and he cuts the grass and weeds. In the kilometers that we ran together on the streets of Bissau, we spoke English because, in his desire to get ahead, the study of the English language can open a few more doors for him.

At my request, we run several miles on dirt road and one day, we go up the hill behind Antula. It's the area of the capital's big cemetery. A few kilometers before that, there is a small neighborhood of apartments built by the Chinese that are now inhabited by war veterans. As we approach the cemetery, I realize that he is very quiet; I understand his discomfort and even his grief: that place inevitably reminds him of his family that is no longer.

Albino always ran with questionable rubber shoes and no socks. When we say goodbye, I give him my running shoes. They're rather old but I cleaned them well. They still have a few kilometers to go before the completely fall apart. Albino is happy. We embrace. (<http://pasqualecastrilli.blogspot.it/>)

REJOICE... *for our Saviour is born!*

Anniversaries -- January 2013

65 years of religious life

1948.01.06	08437	Fr. Virgilio Baratto	Lacombe
1948.01.06	08965	Bro. Dionysius Mothetsi	Lesotho

50 years of religious life

1963.01.06	11370	Fr. Francis Ntoane	Lesotho
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50 years of priesthood

1963.01.20	10319	Fr. Leo Guilmette	Paraguay
1963.01.20	10320	Fr. Roger Hallée	Haiti
1963.01.20	10318	Fr. John Louis Henault	Haiti

25 years of religious life

1988.01.17	13203	Fr. Guillermo Siles	Bolivia
1988.01.25	13150	Fr. Frans Van Wyk	Namibia
1988.01.25	13086	Fr. Thomas Mpiyamanga Zondi	Natal

Prayers for our deceased

No. 85-94

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. John Fitzgerald	OMI Lacombe	21/02/1930	Vancouver	25/10/2012
Fr. Alois Gappmeier	Central European	29/07/1947	Steyr-Münichholz	26/10/2012
Fr. Henri Janssen	United States	24/08/1920	San Antonio	28/10/2012
Fr. Victor Robert	France	17/02/1912	Lyon	02/11/2012
Fr. Maynard Kegler	United States	26/11/1924	Sun City	03/11/2012
Bro. Victor Wilfred	Colombo	12/10/1921	Colombo	03/11/2012
Bro. Alain Paugam	France	01/10/1931	Orly	08/11/2012
Fr. Théophile Le Page	General Administration	21/09/1927	Rome	10/11/2012
Fr. Roger Guindon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	26/09/1920	Richelieu	17/11/2012
Fr. Jean Loiseau	Belgium/Holland	18/04/1922	Moresnet	18/11/2012

“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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