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The Oblate Madonna restored

Sixty-two years have passed since the statue of the Oblate Madonna arrived in the chapel of the General House at via Aurelia 290 in Rome. Bro. Giuseppe D'ORAZIO remembers that he entered the house along with her.

On Monday, December 10, the 180 cm tall statue was removed from its niche over the main altar of the chapel to be brought to the Domus Dei workshop in Albano Laziale where it will be restored. In fact, lesions have been found in the face, hands and feet; there is flaking and abrasion of the gold leaf on her mantle and gown. Furthermore, a thick layer deposits covers the entire painted surface of the statue. It will also be disinfected of wood-eating insects and the wooden frame will be strengthened. It is expected that the statue, which probably dates back to the 19th century, will be back home before next January 25.

What follows is an excerpt from an article by Fr. Yvon BEAUDOIN in the first volume of the Historical Dictionary:

The statue, the altar of the vows and the heart of the Founder were transported to Rome after the religious expulsions from France in 1903. On June 8, 1908, Father Eugène Baffie, the vicar general, blessed the “family shrine” in the back part of the scholasticate chapel in Rome in which were placed these three important souvenirs of the Founder along with the statue of the miraculous Virgin. (Missions O.M.I., 46 (1908), P. 272-301). In his photo album on Bishop de Mazenod which appeared in 1913, Father Marcel Bernad referred to Father Lamblin's narrative and added: “We do not know the basis of this tradition.” The tradition as handed down to us by Father Lamblin

subsequently appeared several times in Oblate literature, especially in the testimonies of Father Edmond Dubois, o.m.i., and of Sister Veronica of the Sacred Heart of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux given in the course of the ordinary process of the Founder's cause in 1928 (*Positio super introductione causae...* Rome, 1935, p. 705 and 716), in the review *La Bannière de M.I.*, Ottawa, 41 (1933), p. 31 in the work of Father Léon Hermant, *Le Serviteur de Dieu C. J. E. de Mazenod*, 1936, pp. 64-65, etc.

The tradition has plainly enriched with details that which Father de Mazenod termed “a special experience that I felt today, I will not go so far as to say more than ever, but certainly more than usual. I cannot describe it too well because it comprised several things but all related, however, to a single object, our dear Society...” (Oblate Writings I, vol. 6 no. 86, p. 93) This communication on the part of the Founder was made to Father Tempier who was always discreet beyond measure and certainly did not share with others this letter of the Founder. This letter, it seems, was found in Father Tempier's papers after his death in 1870. In 1889, Father Monnet added the first detail: the Virgin smiled at the Founder; in 1904, Father Lamblin completed it by saying the statue opened its eyes and nodded its head in a sign of assent...

In a note on the Virgin of the miracle written up in 1956, Émilien Lamirande concluded: “We are totally justified in speaking of an extraordinary grace received that day. As for the “miracle” properly speaking, however, we have no choice but to relate it to a much later tradition that is rather uncertain [...] Whatever one can say about this matter, this day of August 15, 1822 marked

an important moment in the life of the Congregation and the fact remains that the statue before which our Venerated Founder returned to pray so often has become for us, as Father Rey says: “one of the most precious souvenirs concerning the origins of our family.” (Rey, I, p. 280)

On February 2, 1933, this statue which was in the sacristy of the scholasticate was transferred to the General House chapel on via Vittorino da Feltre. Since 1950 it is placed above the main altar in the chapel of the General House on via Aurelia.

Holy See

VATICAN

A new Oblate Bishop

The Vatican News Service made the following announcement on November 23, 2012:

The Holy Father Benedict XVI has named as Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese of Odessa-Simferopol (Ukraine) Reverend Father Jacek PYL, until now the pastor of the parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Tyvriv in the diocese of Kyiv-Zhytomyr, giving him the Titular See of Novasinna.

Father Pyl was born on August 17, 1962, in Garwolin, in the diocese of Siedlce, Poland. In 1977, he entered the Minor Seminary of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In 1981, he began his novitiate in the same Congregation. He professed his perpetual vows in 1986 and was ordained a priest on June 20, 1988.

From 1988 until 1990, he was Assistant Novice Master on his Congregation at Swiety Krzyz in Poland. Since 1990, he has been in pastoral ministry in Ukraine where, from 1997 until 2003, he had three consecutive terms as Delegation Superior of the Missionary Oblates.

The Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol was erected in 2002 as a suffragan to the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Latins, erected in 1412. Odessa-Simferopol is the second largest diocese of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine. The Catholic Church was almost totally destroyed by the USSR. Many Latin rite churches were confiscated and destroyed or converted to secular uses. During Stalin's regime, it was a serious crime to adhere to the Catholic religion.

VATICAN

Another new Oblate Bishop

The Vatican News Service made the following announcement on November 29, 2012:

The Holy Father Benedict XVI has named as Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese of Kamyanets-Podilskyi of the Latins (Ukraine) Radosław ZMITROWICZ, Superior of the Delegation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, giving him the Titular See of Gissaria.

Father Zmitrowicz was born on September 2, 1962, in Gdansk, Poland.

He began his novitiate with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1981 at Święty Krzyż. He pronounced his perpetual vows in the same Congregation in 1987. He was ordained a priest in 1987. For a few years, he exercised his priestly ministry in Poznań. Then he was a formator at the minor seminary of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates at Markowice.

From 1997 until 2000, he was sent for pastoral ministry in Turkmenistan. In 2000, he was transferred to the Delegation of the Missionary Oblates in Ukraine where he has exercised pastoral ministry in various parishes. From 2006 until the present, he has been the Superior of that Delegation, and on May 15, 2012, he was confirmed in his third consecutive term.

The diocese of Kamyanets-Podilskyi of the Latins was established in 1918 when it was split from the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Latins. It is suffragan of that same archdiocese. There are about 250,000 Latin Catholics in the diocese.

VATICAN

Bibliographia Missionaria for the Pope

On December 12, Father Marek A. ROSTKOWSKI, Director of the Library of the Pontifical Urbania University and Doctor Tiziana Selvaggio presented to the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI the 75th

volume of the annual publication, "*Bibliographia Missionaria*." The volume contains 4,615 bibliographical entries, 40 reviews, indexes of authors and subjects, and a list of about 300 cited periodicals. The work offers a wealth of documentation (books and magazines) covering all

missionary activity in its various forms. Occupying much space are studies about religions and about interreligious dialogue. All documents are cited in the original languages. The publication is unique in the world for its ecumenical character and its unbroken history that began in 1935.

General Administration

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Fr. General on his visit to Haiti

Fr. Joe Corriveau wrote (OMI WORLD 14/11/12) about the effects of hurricane Sandy in Haiti. When I was there (Nov 6-15) life was struggling back to a somewhat normal mode in the storm-battered regions. I witnessed flooding from heavy rains in Cap Haitien where people were running from their houses, children in arms and whatever could be carried in plastic bags. It was pouring rain and the people were crowded together, seeking shelter under any covering such as awnings of bars, small shops, etc. The suffering servant of Isaiah came to mind as I saw the people trying to get through the near-to-waist-deep water flowing through their houses: "Is there any suffering like my suffering?" Later I heard that a retaining wall near the Oblate rectory of Sacred Heart Church in Cap Haitien collapsed and another wall near the church itself was about to give way due to the pressure of the water in the earth.

One of the most prevalent images I have while visiting Haiti was the groups of school children dressed neatly in their uniforms, carrying their books and walking to and from school everywhere throughout the country. The hunger for education, the desire to study and to learn and the sacrifice of parents to send their children to school is outstanding. The Oblates are heavily engaged in this effort to bring education to the poorest children.

If the difficulties of the country were known before the earthquake of 2010, and aggravated afterward making news all over the world, it is impressive to see that the challenging reality of Haiti is permeated with faith and gratitude. In the streets and roads all over Haiti the buses and trucks are colorfully painted with stars and stripes, zigzags and polka dots. These vehicles

often have as a centerpiece a large painting of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Saint Peter or Saint Anthony and scripture citations. In large letters on the vehicles are most often phrases of gratitude, such as "Merci mon Dieu" "Merci bon Dieu" "Merci l'Eternel" "Merci Jesus" and expressions of faith like, "Patience" "Providence" "Paix" "Esperance" "La Grace de Dieu". It is a great gift that the Haitian people express so frequently and loudly such deep faith and gratitude even in the face of so much suffering and many difficulties.

I found the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the midst of the people, always close to the poor. They bear the same faith and gratitude, hope and patience that the people have.

JPIC COMMITTEE

Annual meeting in Rome

Oblate representatives from the Regions gathered in Rome for the OMI JPIC committee meeting November 12-16, 2012. Upon arrival, Fr. Didier ZANADRAFARA representing Asia-Oceania, joined Fr. Emmanuel MOSOEU to attend the annual general meeting of the Africa-Europe Faith-Justice Network promoting equity and economic justice between Europe and Africa.

Frs. Miguel PIPOLO, (Latin America & Haiti), Joseph GOMES, (Asia-Oceania), Tomas VYHNALEK (Europe) and Walter BUTOR (Canada-United States) attended, together with Daniel LEBLANC (UN), Jeevendra PAUL (OMI Development) and Kennedy KATONGO (Zambia), invited by the Superior General. Francisco O'Conair, OFM, was facilitator. Previous to the meeting, Francisco and Camille met the Central Government to address the meaning of JPIC in the Oblate Mission.

One clear directive from the CG: JPIC is the responsibility of all Oblates; we are all involved in building right relationships, living among the poor and adopting a simple lifestyle.

Reports revealed growing JPIC activity in the Regions. Since 2005, the Comision Oblata Latinamericana de Justicia, Paz y Integridad de la Creacion elaborated statutes and Brazil has incorporated OMI JPIC statutes in its Vade Mecum. In Europe, Poland reaches out to people living on the margins of society, teaching human rights, civic freedoms and democracy. Ireland has chosen JPIC as a priority with the involvement of lay people. Africa is totally dysfunctional with illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, family breakdown, plundering of natural resources, religious fanaticism, civil war and corruption at all levels. Working for peace and justice is our only hope, said Didier, and is the responsibility of all the baptized. There are plans to organize a JPIC commission in each parish, district, province and Oblate unit. Listening to Kennedy's passion for justice and reading Zambia's 3-year plan, we can say with John the Baptist: "The axe is already at the root of the trees" for changes in Africa.

In Asia, the Philippine Province works for social transformation in all four districts. The vision statement suggests their line of action: *respecting human dignity and human rights, living truth and love, promoting justice and peace and acting as stewards of God's creation*. Also dealing with Christian-Muslim relationships, it was good to see an Oblate following the live coverage of the Universal Periodic Review of Pakistan at the Justice and Peace Commission centre in Multan. At the Centre for Society and Religion in Colombo and the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Jaffna; exchange programs between North and South Sri Lanka are being held with discussions on the violation of human rights and efforts at building peace and reconciliation. With a committee organized at the regional level, they hope to set up a regional desk to coordinate activities in the Region. They also wish to incorporate JPIC in the formation programs.

Heavily involved on a continuing basis in truth and reconciliation action for the past 20 years, Canada has added a focus on environmental issues. Lacombe Province has a committee working on mining and Notre-Dame-du-Cap on eco-spirituality. St. Peter's Church in Montreal has become a beacon of hope for persons affected by HIV/AIDS. In the United States, there is a well-organized JPIC Office with a strong focus on lobbying, ethical investments, organic community gardening, offering internships, and a host of activities in many countries where Oblates are present.

Revising the statutes was a two-day work, with time off for the funeral of Fr. Theophile LE PAGE. We then saw a PowerPoint presentation on the spirituality of JPIC and a short history on JPIC in the Church and in the OMI Congregation. The committee chose three new internal core priorities to better integrate JPIC into the life and mission of our Congregation. They are:

- 1) That all Oblates have a clearer understanding of what Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and Catholic social doctrine entail for our life and mission.
- 2) That in every Unit and Region there be a trained JPIC animator and committee and who are given enough sufficient time and resources to fulfill their ministry.
- 3) That concrete JPIC values and praxis be integrated into all initial formation programs and centers where our men pursue their academic studies.

Responding to the invitation to participate in the "Triennium of Preparation" for the 200th anniversary of the Congregation, the Committee chose the "Spirituality of JPIC and how it relates to community" as its theme for 2013-2014, and "Catholic Social Teaching as it relates to OMI documents" for 2015-2016. (Camile PICHE, Director of the JPIC General Service)

Asia-Oceania

COLOMBO**Raising Awareness of Social Justice in Sri Lanka**

Fr. Ashok STEPHEN, an Oblate lawyer, spent three months in the JPIC Office in Washington, connecting with human rights and advocacy groups. His presence gave the staff an opportunity to learn more about the situation in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, as well as efforts there to combat corruption and promote human rights. Fr. Ashok came to Washington after a three-month internship in New York at the UN, where he was ably hosted by Fr. Daniel LEBLANC at VIVAT International. In the JPIC Report, Fall-Winter 2012, he tells of one the work of the Citizen's Forum to promote justice.

Nugegalayaya is a remote farming village in the District of Monaragala, roughly 300 KM from Colombo. Most of the farming families occupy their land under a government license. There are some who have held a license since 1971, which should entitle them to clear ownership of the land and a title deed. Still, many do not have this, despite their having been registered as 'voters' in every electoral list from 1971, proof of continued occupancy.

Recently, the people of Nugegalayaya have been given notice to evacuate the area, as the government has planned certain development projects for the 'public'. The candid truth behind this notice is that the huge "rock stone" that surrounds this area is being sold by a local government official (divisional secretariat) to a politically powerful businessman of the area.

In spite of a court order given by the magistrate court of the area upholding the people's right to reside on their lands, they have been continually harassed by the local government officials, as well as the businessman who stands to gain from the project. Citizen's Forum (which fought earlier for the people's rights at the judiciary and won a favorable court order) is watching this developing situation closely, and is waiting for public officials to take the next step. Citizen's

Forum has already planned to file a writ against the divisional secretariat if any action detrimental to the people is taken by him.

So far there have been only verbal threats, and nothing in black and white opposing the court order. On 29th of September 2012, a meeting was called at the Nugegalayaya village to educate people regarding the future plans of Citizen's Forum on this issue. About 60 villages gathered to share their view on this matter. They were also legally instructed as to what steps needed to be taken next should the threats be serious, possibly affecting their lives and property. They are placing their hopes on the Citizen's Forum as the defender of their rights, and will cooperate fully to act in a united fashion.

"Social inability" is widely recognized and accepted today as a root cause of poverty. Empowering people to think for themselves, and stand on their own, offers a solid and a permanent way out for people from poverty and social misery. The philosophy that it is better to teach a person to catch a fish than to offer him one is the philosophy behind "The Citizen's Forum"(CF), which takes a "rights-based approach" and is successfully operating in Sri Lanka under the direction and guidance of the Centre for Society and Religion (CSR). CSR is the Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) institution of the Colombo Province of the Missionary of Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI).

KOREA**Christmas: listen to the cry of the poor**

Christmas is the loving response of a compassionate and merciful Lord who has heard our cry of pain.

I hear the doorbell and go to open it. In front of me there is a man with well-groomed features; hanging from his belt are a pair of pruning shears and a small saw. He asks me if he can cut and tend to the trees in our garden. I don't see the need so I refuse. In reply, he says to me: "I need to earn my daily living. Give me this opportunity." At these words I let him in

and he begins his work. In a moment of rest, I offer him a cup of coffee and we start talking. He tells me about his painful experience: "I was a manager of a large industry, I lived comfortably and had a nice house with a small garden just like this. As a hobby, I would spend the weekend taking care of my lawn and flowers. Thus, little by little, I learned this skill. When the factory went bankrupt, I was fired. Suddenly I found myself without a job and with three young children to support. I made many job inquiries, but no one took me on because I am no longer young. Needing to support my family, I started to do this work. Sometimes I can earn my daily living; on others, I encounter only closed doors. Those nights, I do not want to go home ... I am ashamed of not being able to offer anything to my loved ones."

Every morning, leaving the house, I predictably encounter the lady who delivers milk door to door in our neighborhood. For years, we've known each other and always exchange a warm

greeting. Once she started to tell me about her sad story: "My husband was working and earning a salary that allowed us to live in dignity. But one morning, he was suddenly struck with paralysis. Then followed months and months of pain and costly treatment to recover only, in part, his motor skills. In the meantime, I looked for a job, but to take care of my sick husband and work were two realities that cannot be reconciled. So I found this unsteady employment which helps me live and support my family."

I think of my friends who with their little carts roam the streets of the city all day long, collecting only poverty, loneliness and scorn.

How many real life afflictions surround us and perhaps we do not realize it! Christmas can become for us an opportunity to open our hearts, to see and hear the cry of so many men and women who are suffering around us. (Vincenzo BORDO)

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity

Oblates in Washington, DC, and San Antonio, Texas, joined the Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity, a cross-country tour of the U.S. led by renowned Mexican poet Javier Sicilia last August and September. The poet, who lost his son in drug related violence in 2011, has joined with other families suffering losses to advocate for a stop to the bloodshed in Mexico and for new government policies and reforms in both countries to combat the violence. The caravan recognized five interrelated areas: drug war policies, arms trafficking, money laundering, U.S. foreign aid policy, and immigration. About 70,000 people have died in Mexico's drug war since 2006 and as many as 10,000 have disappeared.

In Texas, Fr. William DAVIS led the prayer at the morning Caravan event in Laredo. In Roma, Fr. Robert WRIGHT encouraged people to greet the Caravan as it passed through at midday, and about 100 people gathered at the center of town

to do so; Fr. James ERVING, the newly arrived pastor of Roma, led the people in prayer after the Caravan passed. Although the Caravan had no planned stop in Roma, Javier Sicilia and about a dozen others with him turned back and visited with the people still remaining. Fr. Wright helped plan the vigil event that evening in Brownsville, at which Fr. Armand MATHEW led the prayer and gave a reflection. (JPIC Report, Fall-Winter 2012)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Fr. Roger Guindon, OMI: 1920-2012

For 20 years, Fr. Roger GUINDON was the rector of the University of Ottawa. The current President and Vice-Chancellor, Allan Rock, published the following statement about Fr. Guindon who died at Richelieu on November 17, 2012 at the age of 92.

Our Chancellor, the Right Honorable Michaele Jean, joins me in expressing sadness and a sense of loss on the death of Father Roger Guindon at the age of 92. The Board of Governors and the entire university community mourn the loss of

one of the University of Ottawa's iconic figure.

Father Guindon was a remarkable man who will be remembered with deep respect and affection for his many qualities and achievements. Perhaps more than anything else, however, his name will forever be associated with the astonishing transformation he brought about at our University.

Roger Guindon was nothing less than the founding father of the modern University of Ottawa. Under his remarkable leadership, a small private institution owned by the Roman Catholic Church transformed itself in 1965 into what was to become one of Canada's leading public universities. Working with the talented team he assembled, he managed the complex transition with consummate skill and then became president (then called "rector") of the new university. He remained in office until 1984, and during those 20 years of inspired and unceasing work, he laid the foundations for the world-class institution that "his university" has become.

Father Guindon's affable and unassuming nature concealed a powerful intellect and a keenly strategic mind. Bill Davis, who was Ontario's Minister of Education during the University's early post-transition days and later, of course, was our premier for many years, once recalled the experience of negotiating with Father Guindon. According to Mr. Davis, "it was a daunting task." Whenever he saw a meeting with Father Guindon on his agenda, he began immediately to calculate just what it was going to cost him!

During his 20 years of selfless service as rector, Father Guindon presided over an era of rapid growth and expansion, managing profound institutional change with unpretentious wisdom and a light touch. In direct dealings with others, and especially with students, he was always warm and welcoming. He was, however, no pushover. In 1969, during my time as president of the University of Ottawa student association, I presented him in his office with our demands for student seats on the University's Board of Governors and Senate—a rather radical notion at the time! These steps were long overdue, I

insisted, and must be taken immediately. He made it clear in no uncertain terms, though, that reform would come on his timetable, not ours. I discovered only later that Father Guindon had already begun paving the way for the changes. He simply needed the time to bring others around, and he succeeded. Within the year, student representatives were welcomed into the membership of both bodies.

Father Guindon was a modest man and a person of deep faith. He would, I know, recoil at the idea of an elaborate memorial or commemoration in his name. But in a very real sense, the University itself is the most enduring monument possible to his extraordinary work.

As an Oblate priest in the Catholic Church, Father Roger Guindon devoted his life to the service of others. He lived simply and accumulated no material possessions. But he leaves a rich legacy of achievement, of which we are all the grateful beneficiaries. (www.uottawa.ca)

UNITED STATES

Famous composer had Oblate connection

On December 5, 2012, famous American jazz pianist and composer, David Brubeck, died on the day before his 92nd birthday. He was considered a pioneer of American music. Jazz obviously would come to mind, but he also composed opera, choral works, and religious cantatas. He claimed he was simply a composer who played the piano.

Twice, Mr. Brubeck performed at the Oblates' National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. When the Catholic periodical "*Our Sunday Visitor*" commissioned him to compose a Mass, the Public Broadcasting System planned to make a documentary on the composition and its performance. One of those performances was at the Shrine. It involved St. Louis symphony musicians, the St. Louis chorale, a famous African-American dance troupe, and the Dave Brubeck Quartette.

Mr. Brubeck joined the Catholic Church in 1980, shortly after completing his "To Hope" Mass. He believed that what he saw during his time

as a soldier during World War II contradicted the Ten Commandments; the war evoked a spiritual awakening in him. About his joining the Catholic Church, he stated: "I didn't convert to Catholicism, because I wasn't anything to convert from. I just joined the Catholic Church." In 1996, he was awarded University of Notre Dame's *Laetare Medal*, a most prestigious honor given to American Catholics. (Fr. Allen MAES)

UNITED STATES

The latest on Cardinal George's health

In several television and print interviews in early December, our former Oblate Vicar General, Cardinal Francis GEORGE, Archbishop of Chicago, spoke with a degree of optimism about the prognosis of the treatments for cancer found in his liver and kidney last August. Since September, he has been undergoing chemotherapy, a treatment which will conclude in January 2013.

Midway through the chemotherapy series, doctors have told him that they did not find evidence of cancer cells where they had previously found them. There will be further tests and scans at the conclusion of the chemotherapy.

For the most part, he has been able to continue much of his duties as archbishop, although at times, he experiences greater than usual fatigue. And because of the effect of the chemotherapy on his immune system, he has had to cancel some of his contact with the faithful, especially at Christmas time.

Cardinal George expressed his deep gratitude for the many prayers that have been offered on his behalf. On the website of the Archdiocese of Chicago (<http://www.archchicago.org/>), the Auxiliary Bishops have asked the faithful to pray for the Cardinal through the intercession

of Father Augustus Tolton, the first Black priest in the United States and whose cause for beatification has begun. Father Tolton was born a slave in 1852 and died in 1897.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Regional meeting of vocation directors

On November 13-14, 2012, Réjean VIGNEAULT and Rémi LEPAGE attended a meeting in Buffalo, New York, of vocation directors of the Canada-United States Region. The aim of the meeting was to further develop cooperation between all those responsible for vocations in our Oblate Region. Among the items discussed, there were two that could affect us more closely: what concrete actions could be suggested to the Oblates of the Region so that they play a role in the calling of youth to their Christian vocation, and perhaps an Oblate vocation? Given that there are houses of first formation in the United States (pre-novitiate, novitiate, scholasticate) and there is none currently in Canada, could a house for first formation be established in Canada, for the formation of both Canadian and U.S. candidates?

Since this meeting took place at the Bishop Fallon residence where seven Oblate pre-novices, aged 18 to 33, reside, Réjean and Rémi were able to meet with them and hear their vocation stories. What encouraged their Oblate vocation? It was often an invitation by an Oblate, or their desire for religious life as priests or missionaries, or even the context of their Christian family. It should be added that about three quarters of the candidates currently in formation in the United States are Latino. The missionary vocation raises a major issue for our Oblate Region: how to enter into dialogue with the many people in our culture who are influenced by secularization, a dialogue in which we are all committed to participate, so as to hear those new calls given by the Spirit today? (INFO OMI, November 27, 2012)

Latin America

PARAGUAY

Denunciation of violence against indigenous peoples

On the occasion of the novena in preparation for the feast of the Virgen de Caacupé, the main

Marian devotion in Paraguay celebrated on December 8, in the Basilica of Caacupé (about 30 km from Asuncion) where the faithful go in pilgrimage from all over the country, on Sunday,

December 2, the Year of Faith began. According to information sent to Fides Agency, the Bishops of Paraguay chose as the theme for this Year of Faith: "The Permanent Mission in Paraguay: To evangelize the family."

The celebration was presided by the Apostolic Vicar of Pilcomayo, Oblate Bishop Lucio ALFERT, who focused in particular on the serious situation of the families of indigenous peoples of whom he is Pastor. On their behalf he denounced the difficult reality in which they live and the violence carried out on behalf of those who take away land from these peoples. Many of these areas have become contaminated by agro-toxins and have been declared non-inhabitable land. Bishop Alfert reported that this situation does not allow an indigenous family to lead a normal life, since they are forced to flee in search of other lands. Unfortunately, many indigenous people end up living in tents along provincial roads, begging in order to survive.

Indigenous ethnic groups such as Nivaclé, Guaraní Ñandeva, Tobas Qom y Maka attended the celebration held on December 2. The Vicariate of Pilcomayo is located in the western region of Paraguay, in the area called the South American Chaco, an area of about 125,000 square kilometers with a population of about 84,500 inhabitants, of which 28,000 are indigenous. The Chaco is one of the least populated due to its environmental and climatic conditions: high summer temperatures up to 50 ° C, and very low in winter, up to 7 degrees below zero. Among the main ethnic groups in the area: Nivaclé, Guaraní, Guaraní Ñandeva, Enenlhet (Toba Maskoy) Enlhet (Lengua), Ayoreo, Sanapaná, Manjui and Angaité. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 04/12/2012)

GUATEMALA

The harvest begins

On July 11, we celebrated in Playa Grande the perpetual vows of our first Ixcán Oblate, Brother Darío PÉREZ ESCALANTE.

Ixcán has been an Oblate mission since 1994, a mission that takes care of 120 communities with 14 different languages, but with only one faith! It could not have been any other way.

Ixcán has given us much: 11 Oblate vocations in our various houses of formation. But we have also given them much: our best team of young missionaries is in Ixcán to take care of so many people with their different needs; a people that has suffered much during the internal armed conflict and which still suffers today the results of that war. With Dario, the harvest is beginning.

In accord with our Oblate tradition, the family received an image of our Immaculate Lady. They are part of our Oblate family. The whole village was present. (*Ser misionero hoy*, august 2012)

PERU

The Oblate Presence on the Rio Napo

In mid September, I was able to fulfill a promise made, and a dream long harbored, to visit the Peruvian Amazon where the Oblates have a missionary presence. The mission of Santa Clotilde on the river Napo in the vicariate of San Jose de Los Amazonas reaches north some 450 km to the border with Ecuador, and south almost to the city of Iquitos. The principal transportation routes for the people living in the region are a network of rivers, motor bike paths and well-trod footpaths. The mission center is located in the town of Santa Clotilde. The "Santa Clotilde Health Centre" that was established by Fr. Maurice SCHROEDER some thirty years ago, provides health care to people living in roughly 100 villages along the river. Frs. Roberto CARRASCO and Edgar NOLAZCO, are the respective leaders of the parish and the ministry to the indigenous. They are joined by Norbertine, Fr. Jack McCarthy O. Praem, who heads up the health ministry in the region and directs the work of the health center today. Suffice it to say that the expanse of the mission keeps all of them and their many collaborators extremely busy. This vast region that stretches from the mouth of the Amazon across its tributaries to its point of origin in the Peruvian jungle, which we frequently refer to as the "lungs of the earth", is so much more than that. For centuries, it has been, and continues to be, home for thousands of small villages and communities scattered throughout the region.

While the challenges and pressures of daily life have always been more than enough to occupy the time and energy of the people who live there, the numerous and expansive oil and gas concessions granted by the government in recent years have brought a host of additional concerns. According to recent studies, the Peruvian Amazon is being overrun by the intrusive operations of oil and gas industries. It is estimated that 41% of the Peruvian Amazon is covered by 52 active oil and gas concessions. This is more than five times as much land as was devoted to such activities in 2003.

Nearly all of the issues on the agenda of development agencies are being played out on a daily basis in the region. Among these concerns is the quandary about facilitating the entrance of modernity, including its ideas, services and products into the lives of peoples who have lived in virtual isolation for centuries. In addition, the penetration of large oil and gas corporations into the region places standards like “free prior and informed consent” on display and on trial. The tools for assessing the impacts of exploration and production on the environment, health and ways of life are also being tested.

One day in the village of Lagarto Cocha - where we traveled by boat for two hours, walked for thirty minutes, took another boat ride, and completed our journey with a ten minute trek - we visited the local school and heard about a project organized by the primary school children to address the problem of garbage in surrounding villages. They organized themselves into teams

and were advised by teachers who helped them to develop the needed resources and organize their strategies. We were privileged to be there to hear each group of students report on their experiences and to listen to their assessment of what seemed to work, and what proved less successful. Another morning, we met with the multi-sectoral committee from the region as they wrestled with different challenges and gathered to consider what changes they expected to encounter in the coming five to seven years. Was it time for more roads, a small airport or at least a heliport? How can electric power be extended beyond the present four-hour-a-day period? Is solar power an answer? Should they try to develop a tourist industry? Can food production for export be expanded? Do they have raw materials or products or services that can be exploited to create jobs or engage the growing number of young people, especially those who are migrating from rural communities? How can the intrusion of globalization, especially through telecommunications and mass media be a positive influence? The institutional presence of the mission and the health center provide a framework, a space and an environment where the people and communities (indigenous and settlers) are able to gather and talk about the challenges and opportunities that they face. They are also an important part of the global network that is a needed resource to protect human rights, safeguard the environment and promote sustainable and appropriate development. (*Séamus P. FINN in JPIC Report, Fall-Winter 2012*)

Europe

SPAIN

Meeting of European Oblates

Pozuelo, Spain, the city of our young Oblate Spanish Martyrs, was the site for a meeting of young Oblates from the Region of Europe on November 19-23, 2012. The theme of the encounter was “Revitalizing Oblate life and Mission in Europe.” Invited were Oblates who have been in ministry for five to twenty-five years.

The stated aims of the meeting were the following:

- Provide a space to share faith and life, listen, reflect and discern together how and where God is calling us as Missionary Oblates in a rapidly changing Europe.
- Provide an opportunity for Oblates to explore and identify common and particular needs, projects and priorities that could bring us together in community for mission.
- To commit ourselves to the ‘non-negotiable’ aspects of our life as Oblates in Europe and our commitment to mission.

- Be renewed and encouraged in our life and mission as Oblates in Europe

The featured speaker and official “listener” at the gathering was the former Vicar General, Fr. Daniel CORIJN, now the Rector of the Pontifical College of St. Paul in Rome. His role was to provide a framework from our Oblate Charism, Church documents and other resources to reflect our lived experience: What are the calls and the specific challenges for conversion, as Oblates, in such a situation? “What do we have to do?” (Acts 2,37).

There was also time to dialogue with Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the Superior General, and Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN, Assistant General. Also taking part was the General Councilor for Europe, Fr. Chicho ROIS.

In one of his interventions, Fr. Corijn addressed the challenges that face the Oblates in Europe, but he did so with a note of hope: “The Oblates in Europe should not be afraid of diminishing

numbers and regret the ‘good old days’. Perhaps, these good, old days were, in fact, not so good. The past surely was not all positive. In any case, today we live in a new context and a new culture; so we have to readjust ourselves and ‘be salt and light’ in this new world. Even with less people, we still can do a great ministry in Europe. Surely, we have to relinquish certain apostolic works, but that can be the best opportunity to take on new ones with courage and enthusiasm, and to focus better our missionary involvement in this continent.

“You, the younger Oblates of Mary Immaculate, have the capacity to bring about a renewed missionary outlook, creating optimism and joy within our ranks. Fired by the Holy Spirit with missionary zeal and enthusiasm, like St Eugene de Mazenod, you are asked to commit yourselves to a new evangelization in Europe. This will be a great sign of hope for the future. The mission depends on you. The Oblate Congregation depends on you!”

Africa-Madagascar

SOUTH AFRICA, CENTRAL PROVINCE Farewell to Bishop Verstraete

On November 27th sixteen Oblates of Mary Immaculate gathered at Good Shepherd Retreat Centre, Hartbeespoort, to bid farewell to Bishop Daniel VERSTRAETE, OMI, who is returning to his native Belgium for good. The ceremony began with a celebration of the Eucharist at which Fr Donaat BOHE presided and shared some of his experiences of his more than twenty years working closely with Bishop Verstraete as Vicar General of the Klerksdorp Diocese.

Fr. Verstraete arrived in South Africa 1950 and commenced his long missionary apostolate in the present Archdiocese of Johannesburg where he served in different parishes in Soweto. Monsignor Verstraete was appointed Prefect Apostolic on November 9, 1965, when the former Prefecture of Western Transvaal was established by Pope Paul VI; he was named the first Bishop of Klerksdorp when it was established as a diocese on February 27, 1978.

He continued as chief pastor of the diocese until he retired for health reasons 1994.

In retirement, he acquired the property which is today Good Shepherd Retreat Centre and which he built up to be what it is, a place of prayerful quiet where people of all denominations come to be renewed in body, mind and spirit.

In the many stories retold on the occasion of this thanksgiving Mass, he was reminded of his two mottos, one chosen before his ordination as Bishop, “Spiritu et Ambulemus,” and the second, acquired during his years of ministry, “We go flat out”. Both characterise his years as Bishop and his years of retirement. He believed that everything done for the Kingdom of God was under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This was evident not only in his public ministry but the influence of the Holy Spirit in his own personal spiritual journey.

His commitment to the Catholic Bible Foundation is a living monument to his dedication to the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit

in his personal life. So many phrases from Oliver Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" could apply to the man and his ministry;

"To relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to virtue's side,
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all."

Those who worked closely with him could not but be touched by his contagious enthusiasm. He worked flat out for all and at all times.

Bishop Verstraete is the last surviving South African Bishop who attended the Second Vatican Council. His personal memories of that historic event may not be recorded in the annals of Church documents but they do reflect that even on such auspicious occasions, he was conscious of the working of the Spirit of joy and humour even among the hierarchy. (Michael MORRISSEY)

MADAGASCAR

An expanding mission

In his Christmas letter, Father Marek OCHLAK, Delegation Superior, spoke about the continued growth of the Oblate mission in Madagascar. Here are some excerpts.

We are all well here in Madagascar. Despite the difficulties that our country is going through, we try to keep to our work for the sake of the Malagasy people. We are still in the transition period, the political situation is not stable and the country is in a huge crisis affecting the poorest part of the population. Many people have lost their jobs and the number of poor, especially in the city, has steadily increased. While the Government is doing its best, yet without the full recognition of the economically powerful, it is difficult to meet the needs of the population and reduce the cost of living.

We are also pleased to announce that as of November 25, 2012, Feast of Christ the King, we have officially opened a new mission in the Diocese of Morondava, thanks to His Excellency Bishop Fabian Raharilamboniaina. Fathers Mariusz and Riri are the pioneers

involved in the organization of the Parish of Blessed John Paul II. We can say that our mission in this region is starting totally from scratch, except for a 4x4 offered by Assumption Province in Canada and 1 empty hectare of land offered by the diocese. The first thing to build is the small chapel so as to organize the parish and then the Fathers' house so they can be closer to the Christians. We rely heavily on your spiritual and material help, but also prayer, which is necessary for the spiritual foundation.

The Diocese of Morondava is located on the west coast of Madagascar, in the Mozambique Channel. It is a town of 24,000 inhabitants, but with the surrounding villages, it has about 70,000 inhabitants. Our Mission in Morondava is beginning first in the city as a base and then we'll go into the bush. The Oblates have received several invitations to work in many parts of Madagascar but we chose Morondava because of its obvious poverty on the material and spiritual levels.

Additionally, regarding our mission in La Reunion, the pastoral work that our colleagues on site are carrying out is making good progress. Seeing this, His Excellency Bishop Gilbert Aubry, Bishop of La Réunion, has decided to give us yet another parish at Champ Borne.

Regarding our formation programs, we thank God for having given us candidates on all levels. In the prenovitiate, we currently have 11 pre-novices. In the novitiate, we now have nine novices. Our delegation has 27 scholastic in formation (9 scholastics are studying outside of our scholasticate in Fianarantsoa).

In short, that is the news that we wanted to share with you; we hope it will help you know our Delegation better and the work we do in Madagascar.

In closing this letter, we would like to already wish you on the eve of Christmas and the New Year, all the best. May the magic of these feasts guide each of us in light, peace and universal love for the glory of God. In this Year of Faith, we ask the Virgin Mary to guide us further towards her Son Jesus Christ.

Anniversaries for February 2013

70 Years of Religious Life

1943.02.17 07594	Fr. Elzéar Béliveau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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65 Years of Religious Life

1948.02.17 08451	Fr. Eric Boule	Natal
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65 Years of priesthood

1948.02.15 07464	Fr. Renato Ciccone	Mediterranean
1948.02.21 07004	Fr. Kees Nijsten	Belgium/Holland
1948.02.22 07525	Fr. Henri Gillet	Belgium/Holland
1948.02.29 07585	Fr. Marc Guiziou	France
1948.02.29 07619	Fr. Martin Quere	Colombo

60 Years of Religious Life

1953.02.17 09681	Fr. Andres Leenders	Belgium/Holland
1953.02.17 10077	Bro. Gerhard Wiesenmuller	Central European

60 Years of priesthood

1953.02.08 08596	Fr. Carlo Mattiussi	Mediterranean
1953.02.15 08408	Fr. Félicien P. Labat	Lacombe
1953.02.22 08387	Fr. Paulin Van Eeghem	Belgium/Holland

50 Years of Religious Life

1963.02.17 11374	Fr. Allan Moss	Natal
1963.02.22 11500	Fr. Raúl Castro	Argentina-Chile

50 Years of priesthood

1963.02.02 10485	Fr. René Laberge	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1963.02.02 09971	Fr. Jean-Marie Pépin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1963.02.02 10002	Bishop Reynald Rouleau	Lacombe
1963.02.17 10367	Fr. Leo De Visscher	Congo
1963.02.17 10356	Fr. Gerard van Kempen	Belgium/Holland
1963.02.23 10211	Bishop Gerald Wiesner	Lacombe
1963.02.24 10373	Fr. Yalai Carlo Bertolini	Indonesia
1963.02.24 10389	Fr. Patrick Carolan	Anglo-Irish
1963.02.24 10228	Fr. Eugene Clerkin	Anglo-Irish
1963.02.24 10386	Fr. Donal Madigan	Australia
1963.02.24 10227	Fr. John Nolan	Central S. A.
1963.02.24 10092	Fr. Angelo Pelis	Mediterranean

Prayers for our deceased

No. 95-98

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. André Tanguay	United States	30/09/1927	Tewksbury	02/12/2012
Fr. Jean-Marie Ribaucourt	Belgium/Holland	06/11/1927	Bruxelles	03/12/2012
Fr. André Savard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	13/08/1921	Richelieu	13/12/2012
Fr. Antonio Ghyselen	Argentina/Chile	01/09/1939	La Pintana	15/12/2012

"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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