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## Father General's Interchapter Letter to the Congregation

Dear Brother Oblates,

Easter joy! The Interchapter is taking place in Bangkok, Thailand from April 22<sup>nd</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>. As you know, this is a time to see what we have done to fulfill the mandate of the 2010 Chapter and on all the work that still remains to be done. During these days we will also begin the remote preparation for the Chapter of 2016.

I am here in Bangkok, Thailand with the members of the Central Government for the Joint Session with the Asia/Oceania Region. About 25 of us have been gathered since Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. The Central Government members visited the various Units of the Asia/Oceania Region before the Joint Session. This is a huge and diverse Region and there is much Oblate history, mission and life here.

The great call of the 2010 Chapter, Conversion, is the substantial work that all of us have been called to embrace. Is conversion an intangible reality that evades evaluation? What have been the signs of conversion in my life? How have Oblate communities grown in missionary zeal and holiness in response to conversion? Have Oblate Units become more united in charity and more faithful to our mission? Has the call to conversion helped us be closer to the poor, more committed to them, more creative and audacious in the proclamation of the Good News? The Oblate Units of the Asia/Oceania Region at this Joint Session reported some of the good fruit of conversion in Oblate religious life (renewed apostolic community life through prayer and meetings; transparency and accountability in

finances) and in the missionary thrust (mission planning and focused priorities).

Please pray for the grace of conversion for all the members of the Congregation. The Holy Spirit has been moving us to embrace a deep conversion, a "second conversion" as Father Jetté wrote in 1981. We have been responding to this call and this is the work of the Spirit. In this Easter season let us ask the Risen Lord to open us to a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I invite us to take the Chapter booklet and allow the calls to question us. We ask God for new minds and new hearts so that we will be that corps of apostolic men characterized by charity, unity, zeal for the poor, holiness of life and a daring spirit.

Please pray for the members of the Interchapter that we may be open to the Spirit's breath of new life and that the service of authority and leadership we exercise will be the fruit of conversion. We have a wonderful example of this in Pope Francis. Wherever I have gone since the Holy Father's election, Oblates have said to me that the Pope is an incentive to our conversion. His witness is a call to be simpler, to be humble, to be poor and to be missionaries close to the poor. Our 2010 General Chapter called us to this and now the striking example of the Holy Father is touching us. This is the movement of the Spirit. Let us welcome this new spirit!

With love and prayer in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, Superior General

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## General Administration

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### INTERCHAPTER 2013

#### **Interchapter Meeting begins in Thailand**

About 70 Oblates have gathered from all over the world for the 2013 Interchapter meeting of the Congregation at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Bangkok, Baan Phu Wan, in Samphran, Thailand. Besides the Central Government and the Provincials, also all the Delegation Superiors of the Congregation and the three Mission Superiors from the Asia-Oceania Region have been invited to attend.

This important meeting which lasts for two weeks began unofficially on April 21, with an opening celebration of welcome and traditional dances, followed by a festive dinner organized by the Delegation of Thailand-Laos.

On the morning of April 22, with an Oblate and Asian flavor, the opening liturgy started the official work. It was centered on the theme of the meeting: Missionary Oblates, what kind of Men? It followed the welcome of the participants by Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, the Vicar General, who, recalling the calls to conversion given at the last General Chapter and the letter written by Father General to the Congregation last February, helped the group to understand better the meaning of this gathering and its theme. As it is stated in our Constitutions and Rules, its main purpose is to evaluate how the mandate of the previous Chapter has been accomplished till the present and also to start the remote preparation for the next General Chapter. It is a time for sharing and listening to the Spirit and to each other.

Later in the morning, the life of the Oblate Martyrs of Laos and of the Oblate Martyrs of Spain was presented to the assembly as a contribution towards the answer to the question of the theme. Although in a diversity of time and contexts, the similarity of their witness was evident. They are all models of the radicalism of the oblation lived in their daily lives and even in the offering of their lives in fidelity to Christ and his Church, for the service of the people entrusted to them. We felt

proud of belonging to the same family and also challenged by the quality of our lives.

The celebration of the Eucharist presided by Father General closed the morning activities. In his homily Fr. Louis Lougen led us deeper in the meaning of the main theme of the gathering.

In the afternoon Fr. Oswald FIRTH helped the group to reflect on the difference between hearing and listening. As a practical exercise of listening, all were invited to share with their peers first and later in small groups, guided by three questions:

1. What is new? What is the Spirit bringing to birth among us?
2. To what and where is the Spirit leading us?
3. How do we respond in a new way to the challenges of our time?

The sharing of the groups was synthesized in short prayers that were offered to Jesus present in the Eucharist during our common evening Oraison. (Claudio BERTUCCIO)

#### **Listening to reports**

The Interchapter meeting has now reached its fourth day. The participants are getting acquainted with the heat of the weather in Thailand and especially with the big changes of temperature every time that one moves from the air-conditioned rooms of the pastoral center to the outside. Finally today, April 25, 2013 all those that were expected to attend have arrived. A few members were indeed late because of problems with flight schedules and visas.

During these past days, the main activity of the meeting was listening to the reports of the Regions and of the Treasurer General in the light of the five calls to conversion given by the General Chapter of 2010. The reports were introduced by a reflection on the theme of the meeting (Oblate: what kind of man?) given by Fr. Oswald FIRTH, who helped us focus on the challenges of our

time in relationship to our identity. A big richness of experiences and diversity of situations has been presented by the five regions; however, for everyone the Chapter message has been a powerful tool in awakening the conscience of the Oblates about the need for conversion in the five areas to which the calls were addressed, namely community life, mission, governance and leadership, formation and finances.

Small group meetings were then tasked with sharing on the reports, trying to focus on common elements with the aim of moving towards a synthesis. Successes, challenges and opportunities were shared among all the members. Many things were said on all the calls, with a particular stress on community life, formation and mission. Generally speaking, awareness about community life has grown in all regions, but the challenge of individualism is still the greatest difficulty all over the Oblate world. The importance of a solid formation, both initial and ongoing formation, was emphasized. The necessity of clarifying our mission in a changing world was also stressed. We must acknowledge that we are still quite far from a synthesis! More work is to still to be done.

This morning Fr. Marc DESSUREAULT, our Treasurer General, presented a report on finances, stressing the efforts made by the Congregation and the administration in answering to the calls. At the same time, he made also clear that many challenges are still in front of us, especially concerning the responsibility of all at the financial level. A new mentality is needed. He finally presented some general concrete proposals for the reflection of the participants towards an answer to those challenges. Group discussion followed.

In the afternoon a new plenary session was aimed at gathering of more commonalities in all what has been shared in these days in order to have a clearer focus in the work of next week.

Tomorrow we are all invited to bring this material to prayer in the presence of the Lord during a day of recollection, allowing the Spirit to work more deeply in our hearts. (Claudio BERTUCCIO)

### A new edition of the CCR

Friday, April 26, was a day of recollection at the Interchapter, and we continued reflecting in the presence of the Lord on our theme: "Missionary Oblate: what kind of man?" Fr. Francis NALLAPPAN helped the group with two talks that gave an answer to that question, looking at the Oblate from an internal and an external perspective. The first one with the title, "The monk in the market place," stressed the importance for the Oblate of a deep experience of God; while the second one, entitled "The missionary in dialogical communion," invited us to discover a new face of God in dialogue with our neighbors of various religions, of various cultures and with the poor with their many faces...

In the evening, the new edition of the Constitutions and Rules was given to each Oblate present at the Interchapter, during a simple but touching community liturgy prepared by Fr. Alfredo FERRETTI. It started in the meeting room with an introduction by Father General, emphasizing that the CCR are for us not a cold law, but a rule of life that tells us who we are today in front of God, the Church and the world. In a context of praise and gratitude to God, we moved in procession to the chapel where, after listening to the Word of God and of our Founder, St. Eugene, we received from the hands of Father General the new edition of the Constitutions and Rules that includes the changes made by the last two General Chapters. It was an occasion to renew our commitment to live them in our life and ministry.

On April 27, we listened to Frs. Oswald FIRTH and Paolo ARCHIATI who, from different perspectives, made a synthesis of the work of this first week of the meeting. Fr. Oswald, in the context of our identity, used a managerial tool to help us match the challenges with the capabilities that have surfaced in the discussion of these days, especially concerning community life, mission and formation. The process could help us towards the practical concretization of the contents of our sharing.

Fr. Paolo, using various images, pulled together the many ideas of our sharing around the theme

of our identity in connection with Jesus Christ and St. Eugene. Quoting the homily of Pope Francis on the occasion of his feast day, he also stressed that the living out of our own identity cannot be separated from the sense of belonging. Both interventions were followed by a sharing of insights and reactions among the participants. (Claudio BERTUCCIO)

### **Father General's report**

Sunday, April 28, was a time of rest for all the participants, an occasion to visit some important places in Thailand and to learn a bit of the culture and history of this country.

Monday, April 29, was dedicated to the report of Father General to the Interchapter. Actually he stressed that it was a presentation, not a report, sharing with us some thoughts that he has developed after almost three years as Superior General.

First of all, he showed his appreciation for the work of the major superiors in the Congregation, a work done with dedication and generosity in spite of the many challenges that they have to face.

Then, after sharing about the many signs of hope that he sees in our Congregation, he shared what he sees as unfinished work for us in light of the call to a profound personal and community conversion to Jesus Christ in each of the five dimensions of the chapter. About community life, he stressed that the entire dimension of our life as vowed men is at risk and the call to conversion, personal and communal, is urgent. Analyzing each single vow, he showed the challenges we are facing in living them out. He pointed out that often our living in faith is eroded by activism and our apostolic community is compromised. He concluded this point with a strong statement: "I believe that one of the reasons the vocation of the Oblate Brothers has diminished among us and sometimes we seem unconcerned about it is because we are losing the sense of what it means to be consecrated men whose lives are based on the evangelical vows, on a life of faith and on apostolic community. We risk being reduced to a loose association of priests".

Speaking of Oblate mission, he emphasized that we need to continue our communal discernment of missionary commitment, preaching Jesus Christ in communion with the Church and full of love for her. A commitment to the ministry of peace, justice and the integrity of creation is a constitutive element of our preaching the Good News to the poor.

About the service of leadership, Father General stressed the importance of continuing in the path of restructuring, consolidation of formation houses, good administration, care for the vocation of Brothers and sharing of personnel at all levels.

Concerning formation, he spoke of the need to work more for the permanent formation of all members, with cooperation among units, especially for first formation, and also adequately preparing formators for their ministry.

Finally, referring to financial stewardship, he emphasized the necessity of preparing treasurers and wisely appointing them to face the difficult days that lay ahead of us.

For almost the whole day, the participants took time to reflect on this input, both in small groups and in plenary session. Father General's intervention was felt as a deep call to renew our commitment to conversion in line with the invitation offered by the Chapter.

On April 30, in the morning we first listened to the Chapter calls on leadership as presented by the committee and we also shared our experiences on the matter in small groups. It was a time of fraternity and encouragement among the superiors.

The members of the Thai-Lao delegation joined us for the Celebration of the Eucharist and lunch in a climate of fraternal communion.

Finally, in the afternoon we were updated on the development of the new community in Aix-en-Provence and the new Administrative Directory and Policies. (Claudio BERTUCCIO)



### **Conclusion and looking to the future**

The last day of our Interchapter has arrived and it was a time for wrapping up all the work of these last two weeks. On Wednesday, May 1, we spent the whole day speaking of the next three years in preparation to the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregation. The Central Government has suggested a Triennium of preparation, in which every year a theme would be stressed in order to lead the Congregation on the way of conversion as requested by the last Chapter, renewing its life and mission.

During the first year, the whole congregation would be invited to stress life in apostolic community; during the second, formation; and during the third, a renewed mission. In each year, we would also focus on one of our vows (chastity, poverty and obedience). A community process would be required on a regular basis with material prepared by the General Administration. After discussion, both in small groups and in plenary, all the participants gave their support to this plan, seeing in it a special occasion for deepening our life as religious and missionaries.

We concluded the day with a time for prayer and faith sharing in small groups, as an opportunity to start experiencing the process that will be proposed to the entire congregation starting this coming December 2013. Many were impressed by the quality of the sharing of our faith in these small groups.

On May 2, after an introduction on remote preparation for the General Chapter of 2016, the whole day was spent on brainstorming on possible themes to suggest to Father General for the next Chapter. Many themes surfaced, but we focused more on about 5 of them. In continuity with the former chapter, all of these themes focus on the renewal of our religious life and our mission, though with different stresses and with a call to return to our roots. It is clear to all that a new life and a new mission cannot be separated. If we don't renew ourselves, our mission cannot be renewed; on the other hand, there is no real renewal of life if it is not shown in a renewed focus for our mission.

On the final day, May 3, we wrapped up all our work and prepared a final statement to share the experience of these days with all our brothers in the Congregation. It was the work of the whole morning. In the afternoon, we gathered in the Chapel for the celebration of the Eucharist presided by Father General, to thank God for all the blessings that we have received in these days. Father General brought to the chapel the Oblate Cross of St. Eugene for the veneration of all the participants and for blessing us all as a sign of unity and continuity with our Founder. (Claudio BERTUCCIO)

### **CENTRAL GOVERNMENT A kaleidoscope of 200 years**

They told me they would give me a kaleidoscope of 200 years. You know, that gadget made of mirrors and crystals which lets you create an infinite number of images at the twist of the wrist. This is very special. They told me that gazing through the hole, one should be able to see the fascinating story of the Oblates in their ministry with youth, since Eugene began it up till today. They want to give it to me on April 25, because that day marks exactly 200 years since the founding of the Association of Christian Youth of Aix. But I could not wait, so I got it and am playing with it. Turn by turn, year after year, until today. Such beauty!

How I would like to turn it forward to see the future! For example, to see how it will go, that next meeting of Fr. General with the youth and the Oblates in Aparecida, Brazil. To see how the Oblates and the youth will celebrate, pray, reflect on and live the charism. To listen to the call to live intensely and as a family the next three years, until 2016. To see the missionary fruits... To see how we accept the challenge Pope Francis gives us to be missionaries, to go to the margins, accepting a life of poverty and with the poor. But I'm told that you cannot do that; if you try to make the kaleidoscope get to the present day, with the next turn, it goes back at the starting point. I tried ... and it's true.

This going back and forth has been fascinating, revealing many details at every turn. I confess also that this exercise has left me with mixed

feelings: joy at what has been done with such generosity, but also concern about what lies ahead, especially if we compare today with that initial momentum. And I continue to be impressed by the daring of Eugene in contrast to our excessive caution, always calculating, perhaps with unwarranted fear.

For Eugene was a risk taker. Two hundred years ago in France, religious youth groups were banned; young people were not educated in Christian values, and within the Church, they felt abandoned. He took a chance and swam against the current of his time... He took the risk, yes, by accepting into his group, youth from all stations in life, trusting them and giving them responsibilities; being a father to them, a brother and friend, loving them, devoting all his time to them, putting his health at risk, leading them to stand with the most poor... Eugene took the risk of presenting them to Christ as a friend and the Gospel as a rule of life, demanding of them a generous life, helping them to grow in human and Christian attitudes, and finally leading them to become saints...

In 1816, Eugene opened his house, the Carmel of Aix, to his youth. When I think about it, it moves me to see how, in the early days of our history, the two groups walked hand in hand, the small group of Missionaries of Provence and the youth of the Association, sharing time and space, sharing life and prayer, sharing the desire to be holy missionaries for the renewal of the Church and the world...

I too wish for more daring in our mission with youth. That we not just be satisfied with what we did in our wonderful history. Let us have the courage to take action. Lots of words have already been spoken! Let us have the courage to fulfill the mandates of the General Chapter of 2004 (it's going on nine years!) Or the suggestions of the Oblate Congress on the mission with youth in 2008. Let us have the courage to devote our very best, like Eugene, to be with the young missionaries to the poor...

I think this gadget, the kaleidoscope, is a bit dangerous because it is making me dream. I dream of a new missionary momentum that is truly our

own, because it comes from Spirit that was given to Eugene de Mazenod as an element of our charism. It makes me dream of so much beauty, so many challenges... Yes, I want to invite the Oblates and the youth to dream. How can we renew ourselves in this mission entrusted to us: to proclaim Christ and his Gospel to the most abandoned and with youth? Two hundred years and still we dream ... (Chicho ROIS, General Councillor)

## GENERAL POSTULATION

### **Brother Anthony Kowalczyk declared Venerable**

Our new Pope Francis gives us one surprise after another. Today, 28 March 2013, the beginning of the Paschal Triduum, he surprised us with a beautiful "Easter egg:" the publication of the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Anthony KOWALCZYK, who henceforth is called Venerable.

Brother Kowalczyk was born in Dzierzanów, Poland, on 4 June 1866 and, known for his holiness, died on 10 July 1947, in St. Albert, Canada.

The process of his Cause for canonization began in Edmonton many years ago. On 1 June 1979, it was opened in Rome and in 1984, Fr. Eszer Ambrosio, O.P., was named its Relator. Fr. Nicola FERRARA, after a long and arduous work as collaborator of the General Postulator, developed the *Positio super Virtutibus* and was able to deliver its second volume in 1993. On assuming office, the current General Postulator was told that this case had been "abandoned." "Abandoned? Who wrote that? We are actually studying an alleged miracle attributed to his intercession!"

The Cause was "revived" and the apostolic process resumed rapidly. The theological Consultors met in Congress in June 2012, and, after the Postulator responded to some objections, they gave their unanimous favorable vote. The Cause went to the Congregation of Cardinals and Bishops, who also gave the green light, and so on 27 March 2013, the Pope signed the Decree.

What is lacking now for his beatification? Only a miracle that endorses what the Holy

See has approved. There are several graces and favors attributed to the intercession of the new Venerable, as seen in: <http://postulationomifr.weebly.com/kowalczyk.html>, but they are not enough. We are studying a supposedly miraculous healing in Minnesota in the United States.

I want to express my gratitude to Fr. Ferrara for his hard work, perseverance and enthusiasm

for this Cause. Thanks also to the Oblate provinces of Assumption and Lacombe who are generously willing to assume the inevitable expenses that all this will entail. Fr. Mirosław OLSZEWSKI of Assumption province has accepted the position of Vice-postulator to complete the process, and with zeal, he has dedicated himself to the Cause. (Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, General Postulator)

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## Latin America

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### BRAZIL

#### **Aparecida, here we come!**

“From July 18-22, 2013, we will celebrate in Aparecida (Brazil) the Oblate program in preparation for World Youth Day, 200 years after the Founder created the Youth Association! We believe this to be a blessed coincidence. The Province of Brazil invites us to participate; they are preparing this program with great enthusiasm and energy.” (OMI Information, No. 523, June 2012) Fr. Miguel PIPOLO now shares with us a bit of Oblate History: **“Eugene de Mazenod and the Youth”** The province of Brazil has also prepared a charming video invitation to the Oblate World Youth Days: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7MmBvG6eVg>. There is also a web site with more details about the event: <http://www.jomibrasil.com/>.

Eugene de Mazenod, ordained in 1811, took on youth as one of his major undertakings. They were his concern and care until 1816, when he founded the Congregation along with Father Tempier. The youth continued to have his attention and energy until 1823 when he moved to Marseille.

After analyzing the situation of youth under Napoleon, Eugene concluded that youth would be his field of action. “I will try to preserve them from the evils that threaten them... Inspiring in them love for the truth, respect for religion, love of piety and the horror of vice.” Youth organizations had become illegal under Napoleon, but Eugene opted for them. “I am not afraid, because I put my trust in God...” he wrote to Father Duclaux, his spiritual director in the

seminary, who answered: “Give all your efforts to it, spend all your zeal to form them well. Give them a rule and regulations.” And Eugene set out to realize his goal.

On April 25, 1813 the “Holy Association of Christian Youth” was started, with seven members, of whom two would become Oblates. Within two years, the association would have more than 100 members; in 1817, it had more than 300. Several of them became religious in other congregations or diocesan priests.

Eugene defined the main purpose of the association: “to form a very pious corps of youth.” Each member would try to fulfill two objectives: to respond to the general lack of religiosity and to achieve their own sanctification. The means were three: a lifestyle that would be an example for others; advising and guiding others; and a life of prayer. Eugene presented them with three principles: grow in appreciation of the holiness of their vocation of belonging to the religion of Jesus Christ; strive to shape their lives after their divine model; profess a tender devotion toward Jesus in recognition of the kindness He had shown them. The meetings consisted of catechesis, prayer and sports, along with a strong Marian devotion. At the end they sang in Provençal: “Jesus be praised forever, and may Mary Immaculate make her Son ever more praised.”

Noteworthy was the incredible number of regulations: more than 500! Eugene boasted to his friend, Forbin-Jason: “I developed for them some regulations that are a little masterpiece, to which they comply with admirable promptness.”

The conditions of membership in the association were very demanding, and expulsion of members happened. Each candidate was asked if he was born to “honest and upright parents;” these qualities were considered necessary in order to profit from the good example that they would receive in the association. The candidate had to give a list of his friends to be considered by the director in deciding whom to keep and whom to refuse. It was forbidden to go to the theater and dances and they had to stay away from bad company. There was a period of discernment on both sides, after which the candidates professed: “By this document, we boldly declare that we acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and

Savior, sovereign Lord and Master, whose faithful disciples we want to be throughout our lives.”

Twenty-six years after the founding the association, Eugene could say: “I surrounded myself with youth.... I formed a good number of them in virtue. I had over 280 of them around me... And they stick to the principles I tried to instill in them.”

In Aparecida, we will celebrate 200 years of the ministry of Eugene with youth. The Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate coming together: Eugene, newly alive!

## Canada-United States

### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

#### The “new evangelization” at St. Paul University

On March 26, about thirty professors of the Faculties of Theology and Canon Law met to discuss the new evangelization, together with four bishops: Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa, Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Roger Ébacher, Bishop Emeritus, and Bishop Chapman of the Anglican Church in Ottawa. To introduce the encounter, Fr. Achiel PEELMAN presented the characteristics, challenges and expectations of today’s world in which the Church is called to communicate the gospel. The discussions made it possible to highlight the vagueness of the concept of the new evangelization, even at the Roman Synod in October 2012; it is too often reduced to “good pastoral care.” We also wondered who will be the ministers of this new ministry and what their training should be like. The bishops and professors seemed very interested and several spoke. We owe this initiative Cathy Clifford, professor at the Faculty of Theology. (Normand PROVENCHER in *INFO OMI*, March 30, 2013)

On the first evening 24 people braved extremely cold temperatures to spend a day together exploring our common faith through a beautiful “Talking Circle.”

The next day we were honored to have Ben and Germaine Little Bear of the Pine Ridge Reservation (South Dakota) share their stories with us. Recognized lay leaders among the Lakota People, they spoke of their own experience of having been raised in Catholic Schools for Native people. Both of them shared struggles and many positive aspects they learned from that experience and during their lives between then and now.

They also shared about their ongoing integration of Native beliefs and ritual. On their journeys, they have learned to embrace and grow because of the goodness which Catholic and Indigenous traditions and faith bring to their lives as people who are both Native and Catholic.

This is an important development for people who are both Native and Catholic. Many folks have been told by Church representatives and Native practitioners alike that they must choose one or the other. However, increasing numbers of faithful people are discovering that the two traditions can indeed enhance one another.

### UNITED STATES

#### Sharing faith with Native Americans

Oblates and lay leaders involved in Native American Ministries in the U.S. province held their annual meeting on January 20 & 21 at King’s House of Retreats in Buffalo, Minnesota.

De Mazenod told us that we must help people to become human, then Christian, and then if



possible, saints. Many of us come from families with some combination of European, Latino, Asian, African or other heritage. The more these are integrated into our human nature, the more whole and therefore “holy” we are.

It is an honor for the Oblates who have the privilege of working with Native peoples to witness and support this integration of their Native identities into the Catholic faith of these fellow “saints-on-the-way.” (*Fr. James BROBST in OMIUSA, March 2013*)

## UNITED STATES

### Award for director of OMI Ecological Initiative

On March 23rd, Sister Maxine Pohlmann, SSND, was awarded the tenth annual “Spiritual Leadership Award” by the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability (CSS). The CSS is an interfaith

home for campus ministries at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. The Oblates can be proud of Sr. Maxine’s leadership at the Oblate Ecological Initiative on the beautiful grounds of our Novitiate in Godfrey, IL. She began as associate director of this JPIC ministry of the U.S. Province in 2005 and has been director for three years now.

Our Missionary Oblate Commitment to a spiritual basis for ecological issues was evident in the award presented and in her own response at the banquet, attended by about 100 leaders in the Metro-East Area. Concern for Earth is a fertile “common ground” for people of many faiths, especially the younger generation. We are blessed to have a recognized, appreciated, expert presence such as Sr. Maxine to represent us in this field with a distinctly Catholic missionary presence. (Seamus FINN)

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## Asia-Oceania

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## KOREA

### North – South: the viewpoint of one who is there

Several friends have asked me news about the situation in Korea. I will try to express in a few words a difficult and complex situation, as I manage to understand it.

The tension between the North and South is real. Every year in the spring, when the American army and that of South Korea carry out joint military exercises, tension rises and is expressed, sometimes in provocative actions: the sinking of a warship, the bombing of the islands near the border, the launch of short-range missiles. What we are experiencing these days, therefore, becomes rather routine. (Vincenzo BORDO)

## THAILAND

### To instill in them some courage

*Excerpts from the Christmas letter of Brother Bernard WIRTH, for more than 40 years a missionary among the poor of Asia.*

Around me, I see much worse... Especially at the Detention Center in Bangkok where I spend two days a week. It is true that last year I was planning to become more involved. In fact, contrary to expectations, I signed up at the college. A new contract for five years! I hesitated and thought a lot about it. The pressure from my confreres was strong: I’ve been working there for more than 40 years, and it also allows me to contribute significantly to the financing of the upkeep of our young men at home...

On the other hand, I could not see myself being full-time at the Detention Center. It is true that there is plenty of work, but being there two days, I already feel overwhelmed and exhausted in this environment where people who are so miserable and so desperate are locked up, with problems that pile up daily and with so few solutions... When I meet with the prisoners, I see how much they need someone who has enough energy to listen to them, share their pain and instill in them the courage to continue to survive... How could I do this myself if I am already worn out! This is why I always try to approach them with a smile, and at every visit to the Centre, my dress is at least that of a uni-

versity professor; I see in that a sign of respect for the prisoners and I always tell myself that they deserve even more respect than my students at the college...

Last week we had permission to celebrate Christmas and the New Year in the Centre. First one hundred prisoners, representing 14 rooms (there are about 1200 of them), came together, Africans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, Pakistanis, Hmong, Sri Lankans and Westerners prayed and sang in their respective languages and religions. Then the police allowed us to enter for ten to fifteen minutes each room to sing with them, wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, give them a sign of friendship and give them a little gift... Whenever I enter one of the rooms where they live on top of each other in terrible conditions, it tugs at my heart and I cannot speak when we shake hands... And my companions were equally moved, especially since it's been two months that they have been denied the right to have visitors... But that is a problem which I hope can be solved...

There is more bad news, such as that of Leonardo, a friend locked in the Detention Center for four years, and whom I had managed to bail out. A political refugee, victim of the genocide in Rwanda, we welcomed him into our home for nine months until he broke down psychologically and was obliged to return to the Centre, totally insane... I also think of Hmong families from Vietnam, locked up for nearly two years, with all their young children who do not understand why they're behind bars day and night... I should also mention my Burmese friends who work in my neighborhood and others across the country: without papers, and therefore cruelly exploited.

Yes, life is not always beautiful for many people and my concern when I'm with the young people here at home or with the students at the university, is to draw attention to this world of misery too easily ignored. But I must stop here: it is true that you, all of you who are my friends, have many worries too. I hope that the year 2013 will fill you with great joy and will afford you the opportunity to relieve the pain

of others. (*Audacieux pour l'Évangile, April 2013*)

## KOREA

### When justice is not just

*Fr. Maurizio GIORGIANNI, of the Oblate Mission in Korea, reflects on a sad experience of mission.*

During the last four months I was going back and forth from Chollado to help a multicultural family. The issue was sad, because the couple was preparing for a divorce. The wife needed someone to help her with translation to understand the questions presented by the courts.

For me it was the first time that I went so many times to the courts. Sometimes there was a feeling that I was not in the right place. As a priest I am supposed to unite people and not divide, but my role at the courts was as translator.

Multicultural families usually belong more to the poorer class of society. After getting to know the story of their marriage, I could understand the pain and suffering each member of the family was going through, especially the mother who has been carrying some physical and psychological wounds. Every time I went to the court, I could know the family better and also their situation. I was thinking more about the children of this family. The last time when I met the family, it was time for the couple to decide their future course and the future of their children too. Before the court would make a decision, every detail of their divorce was discussed.

On the day after the judgment was passed, I went back home deeply sad. I was thinking to myself that surely the problem between the two has been solved; for the wife: from now on no more beatings and screaming. Now that they are divorced, they can live in peace. Love had turned into hatred and selfishness had divided their family.

But was divorce the right solution to their problem? My impression is that the two were so deeply wounded inside that they could not think of anything else but divorce. But again was the

judgment passed right and just? Was justice done to them? I wonder. Human justice to some extent can help change the situation but the justice of God cannot.

It happens that when it is so difficult to solve a problem, we go outside seeking for advice and

a solution. At times we think that if we were to really forgive the other, we may lose our dignity and suffer more consequences. I think the real solution to our problem comes only when we have a change of heart. (*Far East Star: Japan-Korea Newsletter*, March-August 2013)

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### NATAL

#### Responding to AIDS in Southern Africa

About a hundred delegates attended the first academic conference ever organised by St Joseph's Theological Institute, in Cedara. This conference resulted from the establishment of the St Joseph's Collaborative Research Group, an initiative by Fr. Stuart BATE, recently appointed Research and Development officer at the Institute.

The theme of the conference was *Catholic Responses to AIDS in Southern Africa, 30 years after the discovery of HIV*. The conference was held in collaboration with the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference AIDS office.

Delegates included Catholic AIDS activists in the field in Southern Africa as well as staff from the SACBC AIDS office, academics from KZN, Gauteng and the Western Cape, academics from St Joseph Theological Institute, and a number of bishops from the SACBC region.

The conference heard 20 original papers from a variety of speakers. Members of the SJTI collaborative research group presented papers on various subjects including theological education, spiritual direction, theology of HIV prevention, interreligious dialogue and the experience of moral education in the Brazilian church.

Fr. Michael Czerny from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the Vatican described the response of the Catholic Church globally to HIV and AIDS. Fr. Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator from Hekima College in Nairobi provided an overview of the response of the Catholic Church in Africa. These two papers provided the

context for a comprehensive presentation of the Church's response in Southern Africa presented by Sr. Alison Munro the director of the SACBC AIDS office. Cardinal Wilfred Napier, OFM, described the Church's response in an urban Diocese (Durban). Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSsR, described the Church's response in a more rural Diocese (Rustenburg).

A "call to for papers" on the theme elicited a number of other important presentations at the conference. These included the Church's response in Antiretroviral rollout in South Africa; The provision of care for nurses involved in caring for terminally ill patients in hospitals; the issue of condoms and the Catholic church; and the important role of women religious in driving the response of the church to HIV and AIDS in southern Africa.

Some of the more academic articles will be published in a special issue of our Institute Journal, *Grace & Truth*, after going through the peer review process. After that all the articles will be published as a book.

The conference was widely reported by the press, both locally and internationally. This included exposure on Vatican radio and the Vatican Press; at Carlton University in Canada; in Germany at Missio Aachen; in Kenya on the AJAN site; in the *Southern Cross* and in the international *aidsbuzz* network ([www.aidsbuzz.org](http://www.aidsbuzz.org)).

The recently established *Collaborative Research Group* at St Joseph's Theological Institute will bring together academics from SJTI in a collaborative research project every year. We hope to partner with other Catholic NGOs and activist organisations in order to bring an

academic perspective and reflection to the work of the Church. We hope more academic staff will join in 2013 so that SJTI can participate in both aspects of the mandate given to us by Pope Benedict XVI in *Africae munus*:

*Dear brothers and sisters in Catholic universities and academic institutions, it falls to you, on the one hand, to shape the minds and hearts of the younger generation in the light of the Gospel*

*and, on the other, to help African societies better to understand the challenges confronting them today by providing Africa, through your research and analyses, with the light she needs.*

*[Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI To The Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons And The Lay Faithful On The Church In Africa In Service To Reconciliation, Justice And Peace §135] (From Networking Cedara February 2013)*

## Anniversaries for June 2013

### 75 Years of priesthood

1938.06.10	05658	Fr. Valentine Fix	Lacombe
1938.06.12	05739	Fr. Leopold Engel	Lacombe

### 70 Years of religious life

1943.06.29	07628	Fr. Armand Mathew	United States
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### 70 Years of priesthood

1943.06.03	06571	Fr. George Protopapas	United States
1943.06.05	06780	Fr. John Louis	United States

### 65 Years of priesthood

1948.06.04	07344	Fr. Alexander Shahun	Lacombe
1948.06.05	07650	Fr. Clarence Zachman	United States
1948.06.13	07490	Fr. Léo Cantin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1948.06.29	09472	Fr. Antonio Marton	Mediterranean
1948.06.29	07535	Fr. Oliver Mohan	Lacombe

### 60 Years of religious life

1953.06.24	10104	Bro. Lucien Allaire	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1953.06.24	10105	Fr. Robert Godin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1953.06.24	10106	Bro. Fernando Thibodeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

### 60 Years of priesthood

1953.06.01	08380	Fr. Joseph Schwab	United States
1953.06.04	08247	Fr. Francis Kavanagh	Lacombe
1953.06.11	08192	Fr. Anthony Schmidt	Lacombe
1953.06.12	08679	Fr. Joao Bernardo Duhamel	Brazil
1953.06.12	08334	Fr. Germain Ranger	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1953.06.21	08533	Fr. Norbert Dufault	Lacombe
1953.06.24	08523	Fr. Armand Carignan	Philippines

### 50 Years of religious life

1963.06.13	11418	Fr. David Ullrich	Australia
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**50 Years of priesthood**

1963.06.08	10369	Fr. Otto Rollheiser	Lacombe
1963.06.09	10192	Fr. José Devlin	Peru
1963.06.09	10191	Fr. Gerald Guillet	Lacombe
1963.06.09	10538	Fr. Gilbert Mason	Lacombe
1963.06.09	10190	Fr. William Thompson	Lacombe
1963.06.18	10371	Fr. Pablo Feeley	Lacombe
1963.06.18	10219	Fr. Neil Macaulay	Peru
1963.06.24	10297	Fr. Marian Biernat	Poland

**25 Years of priesthood**

1988.06.11	12749	Fr. Martin Moran	Anglo-Irish
1988.06.11	12688	Fr. Andreas Petith	Central European
1988.06.11	12723	Fr. Alejandro Roque	United States
1988.06.20	12732	Fr. Klaus Gajowski	Central European
1988.06.20	12737	Fr. Marian Gil	Assumption
1988.06.20	12738	Fr. Janusz Jajesniak	Assumption
1988.06.20	12729	Fr. Robert Koniczek	Poland
1988.06.20	12736	Fr. Krzysztof Kopec	Poland
1988.06.20	12676	Fr. Kazimierz Koscinski	Cameroun
1988.06.20	12725	Fr. Czeslaw Pantol	Poland
1988.06.20	12735	Fr. Marek Pycka	Poland
1988.06.20	12739	Msgr. Jacek Pyl	Poland
1988.06.20	12741	Fr. Mirosław Skrzydło	Poland
1988.06.20	12731	Fr. Jozef Walkosz	Poland
1988.06.20	12740	Fr. Waldemar Zukowski	Poland
1988.06.25	12702	Msgr. Liborius N. Nashenda	Namibia

## Prayers for our deceased

No. 26-34

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Bro. Raymond Bastin	Belgium/Holland	30/04/1940	Barvaux-sur-Ourthe	19/02/2013
Bro. Jean Caillé	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	05/12/1929	Richelieu	24/03/2013
Fr. Rudolf Rüttinger	Central European	28/11/1921	Hünfeld	30/03/2013
Fr. Gaby Baekenlandt	Belgium/Holland	11/06/1942	Waregem	06/04/2013
Fr. Robert Allie	United States	22/04/1922	St. Paul	06/04/2013
Fr. Albin Hahn	Central European	09/12/1930	Hünfeld	09/04/2013
Fr. Jacques-Émile Monast	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	02/01/1926	Richelieu	17/04/2013
Fr. Jean Lefebvre	Belgium/Holland	22/04/1924	Barvaux-sur-Ourthe	24/04/2013
Fr. Jacques Johnson	OMI Lacombe	21/05/1937	St. Albert	02/05/2013

*“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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