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Letter from Father General for the Feast of Saint Eugene

May 21, 2013

Dear Brother Oblates,

Blessings on the feast of our Founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod! As we celebrate the life of this charismatic man who dedicated himself to Jesus, to the Church and to the poor, I ask God to grace us with a profound personal and community conversion as called for by the 35th General Chapter of 2010. Our work at the recent Interchapter broke open new depth and significance around the Call to Conversion and we recognized it as a prophetic, transformational call, leading to greater missionary availability and renewed commitment to religious life.

It was during the Interchapter that the Central Government proposed a special “Oblate Triennium,” a three year period, **“To fan the flame of Oblate life and mission in anticipation of the 36th General Chapter and the 200th Anniversary of the Congregation.”** This was welcomed by the Provincials and Superiors present. We have committed ourselves: to foster the ongoing work of the Spirit in us for a profound personal and community conversion; to prepare for the 36th General Chapter of 2016; and to create a revitalized spirit among us as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Missionaries of Provence.

The Oblate Triennium is made of two pillars to help us respond to the Spirit’s call to conversion. The first pillar is sharing our faith in community. This is not discussion or debate about ideas, but an invitation to conversations on the level of faith; opportunities to enrich each other by witnessing our experience of God; faith–story telling to

deepen our communion with one another; and occasions to talk about what really matters. The second pillar of the Oblate Triennium is to express conversion through concrete gestures creatively discerned and owned by each Oblate, local community, Unit and Region. These practical actions may be small or large, significant and transforming, personal and communitarian signs of conversion: recycling refuse; doing Oraison together each day; leaving good ministries for a new ministry that is closer to the poor; simplifying our lifestyle; etc.

The themes for each year of the Oblate Triennium are the following:

Year I: 8 December 2013 to 7 December 2014
“A New Heart”: Life in Apostolic Community

Year II: 8 December 2014 to 7 December 2015
“A New Spirit”: Formation

Year III: 8 December 2015 to 25 January 2017
“A New Mission”

The Oblate Triennium will begin this year on December 8th. The themes for each year are taken from the Calls to Conversion. Each year a series of 24 reflection encounters will be available to help animate the sharing of our faith in communities once or twice a month, as decided by the local community. The Word of God will be the basis for these encounters along with Oblate texts. At the Interchapter we had some time for faith sharing and it was a deep and rich experience. Individual Oblates, communities and Units will decide on concrete gestures of conversion according to

their situations. These signs are an invitation to move from sharing faith (hearers of the Word) to practicing faith (doers of the Word). It would be enriching to share these gestures of conversion with the entire Congregation.

A new edition of the Constitutions and Rules was given to each Oblate in a prayerful celebration during the Interchapter: "Do this and live." I have invited each Major Superior to animate similar celebrations throughout the Units to help us, under the grace of the Spirit, to come in touch with this privileged expression of our charism. I ask that in these months before December 8th we do a prayerful reading of our CCRR, individually and in community, praying to the Spirit to renew

our desire to live the Oblate charism more faithfully. (The celebration for giving the CCRR is available in three languages for use throughout the Congregation).

I would like to thank all the Major Superiors for their commitment to the Oblate Triennium. Let us dedicate this kairós event to Mary Immaculate and Saint Eugene in order "**To fan the flame of Oblate life and mission in anticipation of the 36th General Chapter and the 200th Anniversary of the Congregation.**" I wish you a happy Feast of St. Eugene!

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I.

General Administration

Interchapter 2013 – Final Message

Dear Brother Oblates,

Having arrived at the end of this Interchapter 2013 in Bangkok, we want to share with you in all simplicity a bit of our experience of these two weeks spent together and tell you about some of the fruits of our deliberations. Formally, an Interchapter meeting is of course the focal midpoint between two General Chapters (cf. R 128), but it is still much more than that. As we truly experienced here, an encounter among Oblates is an always powerful and joyful time of fraternal life, of prayer and of reflection; a time also for experiencing the richness of the Congregation, its life and its worldwide missionary commitment. And even if the flow of information and interventions sometimes overwhelmed us and prevented a more in-depth dialogue among us, we leave the meeting happy and encouraged in our service of leadership and authority among you.

What dynamic did we follow? Listening so as to better discern. Attentive listening, a necessary step for any discernment, occupied much of our time: listening to the Lord and His Word; listening to the reports of the Regions; to the various interventions; to our confreres; listening to what is happening in the Congregation in response to the calls for conversion of the last General Chapter. This listening helped us discover or

recall the various contexts of the mission today and their demands: secular societies where Christians are only one voice among many other; situations of injustice and violence, of misery and despair; but also a world where the thirst for love, justice and truth is developing. It is from these multiple contexts that we asked ourselves: *What kind of men do we Oblates need to be and to form in order to be missionaries in such a world?*

Invited as a resource person, Fr. Oswald FIRTH helped us in this discussion by reminding us, among other things, of some expressions describing Oblates as "men of the human encounter," "men of Advent". We believe that ultimately, by our becoming humble like Jesus and faithful to the charism of St. Eugene, we must take the path that leads to attentive listening to the signs of the times and to the people; to empathy and to prayer that allows us to walk together towards the Truth.

Does evangelizing not amount, therefore, to accompanying others in their encounter with Christ and helping them fulfill the commandment of love which leads to God? In this regard, three areas appeared to us to be priorities in our effort to constantly pursue conversion: community life, formation and mission. To which should be added: the essential role of spirituality, especially an Oblate spirituality.

Which events and which fruits of this meeting shall we share with you? Within the limits of this brief message, we chose four things which seemed to us to be the most important for the future:

- The official presentation of the new Constitutions and Rules by the Superior General to each participant at the end of a day of recollection. In a very well organized liturgy, each of us could hear these words resonate within him, “Do this and you will live”. And we hope that in each Unit, this book will be welcomed, read and studied and that its contents will be practiced, personally and in community. There is a treasure in it from which one can always draw, a companion on the path to holiness on which we are all committed to live, with Christ as the center of our life, after the example of St. Eugene and our martyred brothers, especially those of Spain and of Laos.
- The invitation to solidarity, indeed with the poor with whom we must always strive to live as closely as possible, but also solidarity among us, among the Units of the Congregation. Solidarity in personnel and material solidarity. And that is why we welcomed the prospect of a new campaign of solidarity throughout the Congregation as was suggested by our General Treasurer.
- The year 2016 will be the 200th anniversary of our founding. It will be a time of thanksgiving, of return to our sources and renewal for all of us. A *Triennium* of preparation is being proposed by the Central Government in response to a request of the Major Superiors. We totally welcomed it and we want to give it our full support. As an extension to the calls to conversion of the General Chapter, this preparation over three years will be for all of us a time of grace. It is an invitation to allow ourselves to be renewed in our apostolic community life; in our willingness to let ourselves be formed (first and ongoing formation); and finally in our apostolic zeal, as well as our missionary priorities.

- The 36th General Chapter appears on the horizon of 2016. We realized how important it is to begin preparing now for this “special time of reflection and community conversion.” (C 125) But what should be its theme? Some expressed their hope for a reaffirmation of our religious identity and in particular, that the vow of poverty as a life choice in service of the Kingdom be strengthened. But many also expressed the urgent need to set a common direction for the missionary work of the entire Congregation in a rapidly changing world and Church. This orientation, it is true, would be consistent with the theme of the last stage of the *Triennium* ending on January 25, 2017.

A Gospel passage especially spoke to us during this Interchapter. It’s that of the multiplication of the loaves from the five loaves and two fish generously given and by which Jesus fed a multitude (Mt 14, 13-21): the poverty of our means; confidence in Christ Jesus; joy at the banquet offered to all!

Finally, we want to thank all those who made it possible for this meeting to take place in such a good and fruitful manner. In a particular way, we extend our warmest thanks to our brothers of the Delegation of Thailand-Laos for their hospitality and care for us during our stay among them.

For each of us, we implore the protection of the Virgin Mary and of Saint Eugene!

Your brothers at the Interchapter
Bangkok, 3 May 2013

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT **Joint session with AORC in Bangkok**

Prior to the holding of the Interchapter meeting of the Congregation, twenty-six Oblate leaders from the Central Government and the Asia-Oceania Regional Conference (AORC) gathered for a Joint Session at the Pastoral Training Center of the Archdiocese of Bangkok in Samphan, Thailand, on April 14-19, 2013.

The theme of the session, “Call to conversion in the pluralistic context of Asia-Oceania,” was aptly introduced by Gerard DE ROSARIO of the Colombo Province. He spoke of new signs emerging that have to be considered in an Asian response to the 2010 General Chapter's “call to conversion”: (1) popular religiosity outgrowing established and institutional religions in Asia; (2) the huge work to be done on multi-faith integration; (3) the need to prioritize formation of laity over that of the clergy; (4) the need for networking as the way to integrate spiritual/Gospel values into the wider political and economic culture; and (5) the need to challenge the formal Church to go beyond settled foundations.

The Joint Session was preceded by visits by members of the Central Government to the various Oblate missions in the region. These visits offered the Congregation's leaders a first-hand encounter of the Oblate mission in Asia, which now has a 150-year history to it.

Key leaders of the Central Government led by Father General, Louis LOUGEN, engaged the AORC in conversations on the main challenges put forward during the 2010 General Chapter,

particularly in the areas of Community, Leadership, Formation, Mission, and Finances.

The top priority challenges in Asia-Oceania emerged from their conversations: (1) the challenge to form Oblate communities that are places of prophetic witnessing to apostolic religious lifestyle, dialogue, healing and mutual support; (2) the challenge to offer sound, professional, intercultural, and adaptive formation for future Oblate missionaries; (3) the challenge to communally discern, prioritize, and strategize missionary involvements according to the Oblate charism; and (4) the challenge to be effective leaders in formation and in the stewardship of temporal goods.

In the concrete, the AORC, under the leadership of its President, Fr. Francis NALLAPPAN, Provincial of India, vowed to collaborate more, particularly in the revitalization of quality formation programmes and personnel, the program for preparation for final vows, in the training of local superiors and formators, and in sharing personnel and resources to help the diminishing Units in the region. (Francis Nallappan)

Europe

IRELAND

An inter-parish ecology group

An eco-group made of up of members of three parishes in the Inchicore area of Dublin received an award in recognition of their work in raising environmental awareness in their local area. The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) group was founded in 2008 and consists of 12 people made up of members of the laity, Sisters of Mercy and priests from three Oblate parishes – Mary Immaculate and St Michael's in Inchicore and Our Lady of the Wayside in Bluebell. Sr. Agnes Coll says the group was set up “to work for justice, peace and the good of creation”, not just to preserve the planet for the sake of the human race but because it is a “creation of God given to us and we need to treat it with care”.

The group has worked hard to raise awareness of the interconnectedness of life through various

projects that run throughout the year. For example a ‘knitting circle’ is held each year during Lent where participants knit hats, scarves and rugs etc. for Oxfam. Before Christmas each year ‘Alternative Shopping’ days are held to raise awareness of the needs of the developing world and products are sourced from Madagascar, Central America and the Philippines. “We sell the goods on that day but it is more about raising awareness than about selling,” Sr. Agnes says. “Someone speaks at Masses and explains what it is about and encourages people to look away from the commercial side when buying gifts and to think about helping people in the developing world.”

Each year during Fair Trade Fortnight the parish sells a range of Fair Trade products and the local parish primary school has become involved in creating awareness of how our actions can affect producers in developing countries. The group also hosts workshops and

talks with guest speakers, and has arranged a 10-week gardening course to encourage people to grow their own vegetables, which proved a big hit with local children in the parish school who also have a garden.

Last autumn, JPIC had their annual 'Creation Time' celebration with a special Mass in Mary Immaculate church in Inchicore. Each year, Creation Time runs from September 1 to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on October 4 (St Francis is the patron saint of nature lovers and ecologists). The Creation Time programme is organised by an ecumenical body called The Churches Together in Britain & Ireland. This year's theme was 'Sustainable Energy in Creation - Time for Prayer & Action', and people were encouraged to examine the use of energy in their lives and in all God's creation. At the start of Mass, a range of gifts was brought to the altar to represent different elements of creation: potatoes to represent crop harvests, flowers from the community garden, Fair Trade products and some of the goods handmade in Madagascar that the parishes sold at Christmas.

Sr. Catherine Brennan, SSL, chairperson of Eco-Congregation Ireland spoke at Mass and presented members of JPIC with an award in recognition of their work. (*Oblate Connections*, May 2013)

FRANCE

Youth ministry in Lourdes

An international community of Oblates is in charge of international ministry and youth ministry. Fr. Wojciech KOWALEWSKI and Fr. Saverio ZAMPA tell about this second aspect: youth.

"Youth Service" This is the name of the service entrusted to the Oblates. It is our task to receive each year more than 100,000 young people. It's a mission of welcoming and listening. Some of these young people are already engaged in the life of the Church; others are seeking, or are simply non-believers. Often these young people surprise us: they are at least looking for meaning and hope. The challenge we face is to welcome them as they are, and to show our trust.

For service: All young people share the same project: service. The natural generosity of youth presses them to serve others, and in particular to serve the sick and the disabled.

A Church of old folks? Young people have from the start an unappealing idea of the Church. They have noticed that at home, the churches are empty and that participation in Church movements and services is declining. Their first impression here can also be negative: the water at the grotto and the pools, the rosary recited monotonously and without life, the devotional gesture of touching the rocks of the grotto: all this may seem unintelligible and confusing. But then there is Bernadette...

In the footsteps of Bernadette: For many of our young people, shrines are the only places where they attend church. How do we help them discover the message of Lourdes? We invite them to follow in the footsteps of Bernadette, the paths she walked in Lourdes, but also her spiritual journey. And we notice that they easily see themselves in her questions, her desires, her searching, and her discoveries.

Volunteers: During spring break and in July-August, we invite young people who will be, for a fortnight, our helpers in animating the Youth Village: in service to their peers. These are the "volunteers." At the end of their stay, they leave changed. They all discover that their generosity has enabled them to receive more than they have given.

Individual encounters: At Lourdes, when we meet individually with some of the youth, we see beautiful things, even if sometimes they are born from the ashes of despair and pain. They are true miracles. Some youth then make important decisions: marriage, religious life, priesthood...

Celebrations for Youth: The preparation and animation of focused celebrations are an important part of our mission. The young people have the right to celebrate Christ the Lord with their own values and their own culture. Among the most important celebrations are international youth Masses, Masses for children, prayer vigils, Reconciliation services, liturgies of water, of the Stations of the Cross, of light, of reconciliation, of symbols...

And afterwards? Relationships among the youth often extend beyond their volunteer time. As for us, we are happy to see people return home with

rediscovered hope and a flame of rekindled love. (*Audacieux pour l'Évangile, April 2013*)

Latin America

BRAZIL

Deadline for JOMI registrations: 17 May 2013

“There is a time for everything ...” (Eccl. 3:1) We learn this from the Word of God which, in a special way, serves as a source of inspiration for this mission and also the future commissioning at the end of the OMI Youth Days (JOMI): “Go and make disciples ...” (Matt. 28:19). The initial time for inviting all to be present at JOMI 2013 began in January 2012, with the sending of the first letters and images of Our Lady of Aparecida to the countries of Latin American and to the continents where the Oblates are present.

Since then, much preparation was needed, but during this period, essential was prayer, individual and communal, which must continue so as to ensure that all future events in Aparecida, São Paulo, might be successful, for the good of the Church and for a significant increase in the commitment of our youth to a life project in the power of Jesus of Nazareth, following the admirable path our patron, Fr. Maurice LEFEVRE.

At this moment, “a time for everything” invites us to close the entire process of admitting new members at the event. On this coming 17 May, registrations officially close for everyone everywhere and the time begins for scheduling arrivals, the welcoming process, the arrangements for buses from the Guarulhos-SP Airport, the general organizing for hotels, etc..

Remember that all those registered will be recognized as such only upon the official payment of the registration fee through contacts available in each country concerned. Arrival is scheduled for this coming 18 July and the closing of JOMI is on the 22nd. For those who will go to Rio de Janeiro with our beloved Pope Francis, that event will start the next day; all registrations for that event should be handled separately.

May everyone feel very welcome, but with a special welcome for our beloved Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, who will share with us the opening of the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the activities of St. Eugene de Mazenod with youth, in what will be mainly a big Oblate family celebration in the house of Our Mother of Aparecida.

For more information: <http://www.jomibrasil.com/en> (Fr. Rubens Pedro CABRAL)

URUGUAY

Oblates: available and ready to welcome

Excerpts from a letter from the Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, Fr. Alberto GNEMMI, after a visit to the Oblate Delegation of Uruguay.

For us Oblates, it all began in in October of '29, when Father Theodore LABOURÉ, superior of the Province of Texas, which then also encompassed the territory of Spain, and future Superior General of the Congregation (1932–44) traveled to Uruguay to assess the possibility of an Oblate presence that could especially involve the Spanish Oblates. He remained there for about a month, living at the bishop's house in Salto, capital city of the northwest region of the country, home to one of three dioceses that then existed in Uruguay ... In the report which Fr. Labouré wrote for the General Chapter of 1932, he states: “*The result of my observations was that Uruguay is what our missions of the Rio Grande (the border between Texas and Mexico) were thirty years ago: a shortage of priests, the situation of the country folk is miserable to say the least and we could hope for a work more consistent with the spirit of our Venerable Founder.*”

In 1935, partly as a result of difficulties in the work of evangelization, some Oblates moved

to Argentina, finding a religious and cultural context favorable to the Church. In fact, back in '56, Argentina, together with Uruguay, became a vice-province, thanks to the growing number of Oblates active in apostolic ministry, while the Uruguay, few Oblates remained. ...

On October 30, 1971, the General Administration, in response to a request from the Provincial of Italy, Father Remigio SALZILLO, to be able to establish an Oblate mission in Uruguay, issued a rescript which welcomed this proposal.

The birth of the Italian Delegation of Uruguay began officially on December 12, 1977, after the arrival of (several) Fathers... In that year the Spanish Oblates left Uruguay.

Since then, about 30 Oblates have passed through this mission, even for a brief period of ministry or for regency, as happened for a number of Italian scholastics.

The Delegation has just turned thirty five years of age. That is not insignificant, nor is the work done by our men in the ministry of evangelization

insignificant. Without a doubt, the two-centuries-old process of secularization of this country makes it different from any other Latin American country and makes society particularly headstrong vis-à-vis the pastoral and missionary activity of the Church. To be commended are the spirit of unity of the Oblates and their fidelity to the Gospel, as they never cease to give witness with their lives and their ministry. One Oblate of the Cerro told me: *"Not many people come to church, but many people know that we are here, and we are here with them and for them, available, ready to welcome everyone to experience the adventure of faith. Here there is a lot of violence and a lot of poverty, but there are also many good people who know how to live in hope, how to give hope."*

Indeed, the mission feeds this spirit, it sustains the journey of so many, practicing and non-practicing; it becomes a beneficial presence for all. Of course the Delegation, numerically speaking, has not grown in recent decades; it has always remained modest in size (10 Fathers), although the presence of a novice and two scholastics give us hope for the future.

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE

God's blacksmith draws closer to sainthood

Brother Anthony Kowalczyk, an Oblate who spent much of his life in prayer and service in Edmonton and is buried in St. Albert, is just a miracle away from being beatified. Kowalczyk, known as God's Blacksmith, was among a handful of Catholics recognized by Pope Francis for their heroic virtues March 27 as well as three martyrs murdered by the Nazis and Soviets. He is now eligible for beatification if a miracle can be attributed to his intercession. If a second miracle can be proven, Kowalczyk would become Western Canada's first saint.

"This is a proud moment for all of us here in St. Albert," says Oblate Father Andrzej STENDZINA of St. Albert Parish. "Brother Anthony is a beloved figure here; people are always coming to his grave to bring flowers and

to pray." For the Oblates at large, Kowalczyk's recognition is also recognition of the order's missionary work in Canada and around the world, said Stendzina.

Kowalczyk, a native of Poland, died in Edmonton on July 10, 1947, having spent the last 36 years of his life working as a gardener and handyman at Collège Saint-Jean, now the French faculty of the University of Alberta.

Kowalczyk is the second Albertan to be declared venerable. Bishop Vital Grandin of St. Albert received the recognition in 1966.

"We are very happy about this," said Father Garry Laboucane, the Oblate's district superior for Alberta and the Northwest Territories. "He models for us what it means to be an Oblate; he was very humble and was devoted to the Blessed Mother."

The vice-postulator of Brother Anthony's cause, Oblate Father Mirosław OLSZEWSKI of Toronto, told *The Catholic Register* that he will soon begin investigating the case of a young American man who has inexplicably been healed of a potentially lethal blood disease.

To those who knew Kowalczyk, he was the very definition of piety. In a 1997 interview, the late Oblate Father Anthony Duhaime, vice-postulator for Brother Anthony's cause for 17 years, described Kowalczyk as a "very saintly man who structured his life upon love, patience and service." Duhaime, who as a young college boy cut Kowalczyk's hair for a few years, said he is to the Church what Wayne Gretzky is to hockey. "Gretzky is the hero of hockey. Brother Anthony is the outstanding hero of the Catholic Church."

Brother Anthony was the first Polish Oblate to come to Canada. He arrived in 1896 at age 30 and spent his remaining 51 years in Alberta. After spending several years in Lac la Biche, he worked as a handyman at Collège Saint-Jean for the rest of his life. Despite having only one arm, he served as the college's maintenance man, janitor, blacksmith, stoker, laundryman, bell ringer and sacristan. He also tended its large garden, and was caretaker of his flock of 300 chickens, pigs and horses.

Born in Poland in 1866, Brother Anthony was the sixth of 12 children in a peasant family. Following his apprenticeship as a blacksmith, he worked in factories in Hamburg and Cologne, Germany. He went blind from working in the factories but it is said his sight returned one day while he was praying the Stations of the Cross. In 1891, he left Germany to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Holland.

In May 1896, he traveled to the Oblate mission at Lac La Biche. After his right hand was crushed while sawing lumber and amputated without anaesthetic, he was sent to Saint Paul-de-Metis. In 1911, he was transferred to Collège Saint-Jean in Edmonton's Bonnie Doon area.

A friend of the students, he helped them fix their hockey sticks, sharpen their skates, repair their watches and mend the frames of their eyeglasses.

He also comforted new students who had left home for the first time and were lonely. His favourite prescription for homesickness was "Say an Ave," that is, a Hail Mary.

Duhaime, who died in 2002, said many people asked Kowalczyk to perform small miracles for them. The miracles came. Once a boy lost his return ticket to Winnipeg and asked Brother Anthony for help. The brother immediately dropped on his knees in prayer. When the boy went outside, the ticket was waiting in the snow. Another time the skate-sharpener stopped working while two boys waited impatiently for their skates. Brother Anthony and the boys knelt in front of it, made the sign of the cross and began to pray. The skate-sharpener suddenly started on its own.

Father Maurice McMAHON, who studied at Faculté Saint-Jean and befriended Kowalczyk, once described the brother as "a very holy man who had only one arm and worked like four men." He said Kowalczyk was "always praying" to the Virgin Mary. He built a grotto in her honour with rocks from the nearby Mill Creek ravine. The grotto still stands in excellent condition behind the college. According to McMahon, who helped Kowalczyk with tasks such as laundry, cleaning and gardening, the saintly brother was always happy and wanted others to be happy as well.

"One day I was working with him and I was in bad humour, grouchy and cranky. He said to me, 'Go away; the Lord doesn't want unhappy people working for him.'" Those words transformed McMahon into a more patient and accepting person. "It was a good lesson."

Local legend has it that Kowalczyk was found battered and covered in blood in his room one day in 1945. Sitting on the edge of his bed, "his face was bruised and swollen, his eyes blackened and bloodshot," wrote Father P.J. Klita in a short biography of Kowalczyk. The Oblate brother later revealed he had been fighting with the devil all night. He was never the same after this trauma and his health declined until he died two years later. *(By Ramon Gonzalez, Reprinted with permission from the Western Catholic Reporter [www.wcr.ab.ca], issue of April 15, 2013.)*

UNITED STATES**Building enthusiasm for social justice**

Following a recent sermon on social justice by Bro. Lucio CRUZ, over 120 parishioners of Santa Rosa parish in San Fernando, California, signed up to join a parish social justice committee. Bro. Lucio has been working with parishioners at Santa Rosa, Mary Immaculate and St. Ferdinand parishes in San Fernando to promote social justice ministry in line with the Oblate charism of working with the poor.

Knowing that social justice work can take many forms, Bro. Lucio and a team of enthusiastic lay people have been organizing different gatherings to address felt needs in the community. In early March, they held a successful healthcare

enrollment workshop where people from county clinics and a local hospital were available to enroll people in the healthcare system. In May, they are planning citizenship classes to help people apply for citizenship, providing help to people in filling out the forms and in learning what is needed to obtain citizenship.

Social Justice Ministry is an umbrella term that Bro. Lucio's team sees as including many issues from immigration to Integrity of Creation, domestic violence and human dignity. The team works with existing organizations in the area that can offer resources to help address the problems surfaced by the team. Bro. Lucio is hard at work building a core team in each parish to address social justice issues, and dreams of someday having an office for this work. (*JPIC Report, spring-summer, 2013*)

Africa-Madagascar**GUINEA BISSAU****A growing Church**

Fr. Celso CORBIOLI sends his annual Easter greetings from his mission in Guinea Bissau.

Looking at my journal, I see that the last letter I managed to write was sent a year ago. Time really does pass quickly! In the time since then, precisely on 12 April 2012, there was a coup d'état that led to the removal of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the whole government. At the end of the letter, I wrote that there was hope that there would be some rapprochement between the army that were behind this coup and the politicians. Something has been done: a provisional government was formed, a temporary President was nominated and there was the promise of elections etc. However, much remains to be done. The ex-President and the ex-Prime Minister are still in exile, and no one knows when they might return; nor do we know when the elections will take place. The country is not rated highly at an international level, not only because of the various real or imaginary coups that have occurred (in nine years I have seen 7 Presidents already, including the temporary ones), but also because of the implications of the drug trafficking from Columbia that passes

through Guinea. The country really does need help from the international community to escape from this situation.

Apart from all this, I must say however that life goes ahead in a normal way with a kind of peace. The Church in general is well thought of and we do not have any grave problems.

As I wrote last year, the Bishop of Bissau, Bishop José Camnate, asked us to look after a big parish which includes a large section of the city and many suburbs. The district of this parish is called Antula. More and more people arrive and as a result, there are more and more dwelling places. We have a large number of pre-catechumens and catechumens, more than 2,500. There are 120 catechists; there are more than thirty small communities; there are twenty or so groups and I could go on.... If you stopped to think you might take fright, but we know the Holy Spirit is leading his Church. Thanks be to God, we are in four in the community: Fr. Giancarlo TODESCO, Fr. Georges NDOUR and myself, and one student preparing for ordination, Brother Simon Peter BADJI. Two Congregations of nuns are also present in the parish: the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, who do great work pastorally and in teaching, and

the Oblates of the Sacred Heart, who look after the Diocesan Spiritual Centre of N'Dame.

In this Year of Faith, we went on pilgrimage from Antula to N'Dame. It is only six kilometres away but under a baking hot sun, it can be a good penance. Many people came; we divided the people into four large groups, with about a distance of 300 metres between them. The people whom we met by their homes, or along the way, watched us sympathetically. Apart from being a spiritual experience, it was a way of witnessing to our faith and a means of evangelisation.

On Holy Saturday night we had the joy of baptising 85 adults; there were lots of people present. At the end of the liturgy (which lasted more than three hours), all the streets were full of the crowds. It was truly a "happy and holy night" as Fr. Giancarlo sang in the Exultet of Easter. In June we will baptise a hundred of so young people.

Apart from the spiritual Church we have to deal with the material one, which doesn't exist yet. We have the biggest liturgical celebrations in the open air. We have a plan to build a church and soon we will begin the work; Antonio Fortunato, an engineer from Foggia, Italy, designed it. Despite the good will and hard work of our people we don't have enough money for it. Every bit of help would be welcome. For now I send you all my good wishes and hoping you enjoy the best of health and everything that is good. May the risen Christ always be our light and our strength.

NATAL

Oblate reunion at Ngome Shrine

What was meant to be a pilgrimage for one Johannesburg parish turned into an unexpected Oblate reunion as four groups ended up at Ngome on the same weekend.

Pilgrimage leader Sandi Ngongo of St Anne's parish in Belgravia, Johannesburg, said she had not planned the pilgrimage with any other parishes. "It was a coincidence that all the other parishes met at Ngome and were being led by Oblate priests!"

The Marian shrine (www.ngome.co.za) in the diocese of Eshowe is a popular pilgrimage destination for South Africans. "The pilgrimage was arranged for the parishioners' spiritual growth and revival of prayerfulness," said Ms Ngongo.

Many of the St Anne's pilgrims had travelled to Ngome in 2012 and wanted to return "to thank Our Lady for the intentions that have come true and believe that it was through their intentions placed at Ngome".

Ms Ngongo had arranged the pilgrimage for 29 people led by Fr Ron HURELD, but was surprised when they met with a group from Durban led by Fr Donovan WHEATLEY, and a vigil group from Pietermaritzburg led by Fr Vusumuzi PENYANE.

The groups met with the shrine's resident priests Frs. Wayne WELDSCHIDT, Nkululeko MEYIWA and Andrew KNOTT.

Ms Ngongo said it was an "unexpected" and "exciting surprise" for the Oblate-led pilgrims. She said it made the pilgrimage even "more special" than they had expected. "Ngome has grown to be a special place of prayer, a message from Our Lady which challenges pilgrims to be tabernacles as she asked to be called Tabernacle of the Most High.

"Travelling to Ngome shuts a person off from the busy schedules of the city. This is a weekend where people concentrate on their spiritual journey and some make certain promises from the benefits of the journey."

Ms Ngongo said the St Anne's pilgrims have already asked to return next year. (By Claire Mathieson in *The Southern Cross*, 24- 30 April 2013)



Asia-Oceania

PAKISTAN**Oblate Bishop slightly injured in bombing**

The suicide bombing that, after the elections in Pakistan, hit the police station in Quetta, capital of the troubled province of Baluchistan, also had a major impact on the small Christian community. As reported to Fides by the local Church, the car stuffed with 2,000 kilograms of explosives, detonated in the evening of May 12 at 10:45, causing eight deaths and 97 wounded. It also damaged the nearby structure of the Catholic Church.

The Apostolic Vicar of Quetta, Bishop Victor GNANAPRAGASAM, who was sleeping in his room, was hit by the glass from the window and suffered minor injuries. The doors and windows of the convent's chapel were broken. The doors, windows and walls of the Bishop's house, of the Caritas office, the schools and the convent of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are badly damaged. Catholic schools run by missionaries and nuns are currently closed and will remain uninhabitable for about a week, to remove debris and check the stability of the school complex.

The Bishop is back to work, but the missionaries expressed to Fides great fear and asked for help in the restoration of the damage. Oblate Fr. Renard LAWRENCE, who lives and works in the structure affected, explained to Fides that "the attack was linked to electoral violence. Now we hope to return to a peaceful and constructive climate for the development of the society in Beluchstan." (Fides News Agency, 15/05/13)

JAFFNA**A new library**

A state of the art library in Killinochchi, North Sri Lanka was officially inaugurated in February of 2013. The library center was a wonderful initiative of Fr. Jeevendra PAUL, Grant Director at the Oblate General House in Rome, and the Oblates of Jaffna, in partnership with Lebara

Foundation, UK. It is a vitally important development in the rebuilding of the north after a devastating civil war.

The Lebara Library will maintain an important collection of books, journals and reference materials for the use of the children and adults of the community. A language lab will assist the children and adults to become competent in English as a second language. Other foreign languages will be added according to need.

The Information Technology (I.T.) Unit consisting of twenty-eight computers offers access to the Internet and web, an essential element in meeting the demands of a globalized world.

I.T. Professionals will be available to assist students to learn the basics and advanced skills required for proficiency in computer technology. The Library facility includes an auditorium and two lecture halls that will be utilized for tuition, seminars, lectures and interactive programs with social relevance.

The Centre will also be utilized for mentoring and guidance to enable the children and adults to facilitate progress in their studies and integrate within their resettlement communities. A bus is provided for access to ERC to children of remote villages, schools and institutions.

Additional meeting rooms will be available for organizations for conferences, workshops and interactive programs for the betterment of the community. (*OMI JPIC Outreach*)

PAKISTAN**Caritas in Quetta aids earthquake victims in Baluchistan**

Caritas in Quetta, charitable arm of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, capital of Baluchistan province, has sent a team of volunteers in the district of Mashkail, an area hard hit by the earthquake on April 16 which devastated the southeast of Iran and

the southwest of Pakistan. The Apostolic Vicar of Quetta is Oblate Bishop Victor GNANAPRAGASAM.

As reported to Fides by missionary Fr. Renald LAWRENCE, Procurator of the Vicariate, Caritas has prepared a first shipment of humanitarian aid consisting of 150 tents, 150 hygiene kits, 150 food rations that will reach 150 families, including 1,500 internally displaced persons. "The city of Mashkel, on the border with Iran," the missionary told Fides, "is deserted. Nearly all the houses collapsed or were damaged. In a few seconds a dust storm covered the entire city, which had 4,500 inhabitants. More than 1,500 people are homeless in Mashkel. There is an acute shortage of doctors and medicines, as there is no hospital in the area. The people engaged in the removal of debris are in difficulty due to the lack of machinery and labor. There are many wounded, many of whom have been moved to other districts."

In the area dozens of villages were destroyed. According to the "Disaster Management Agency" there are about 40 confirmed deaths and 200 are wounded, but the toll is set to rise: 25 people are missing. The Civil Protection of Pakistan has sent rescue teams, with food and medicine. The displaced are spending the night outdoors. Immediate needs are drinking water, tents, blankets and food. (*Fides Agency*, 22/04/13)

INDONESIA

20th anniversary of the province

The missionary zeal planted by St. Eugene de Mazenod in his children's heart has brought the Oblates to preach Jesus Christ in many difficult places around the world – including Indonesia.

The first delegation of Australian Oblates arrived at the Diocese of Purwokerto, Central Java, on 25 October 1971. Frs. Patrick MORONEY, David SHELTON, Patrick SLATTERY and John Kevin CASEY started working in the Diocese of Purwokerto in 1972, then in the Archdiocese of Jakarta in 1975. Seeing the chance of developing Oblate vocations among Indonesian youth, in 1982 the Oblates opened a seminary; in 1985,

they opened a novitiate. Both formation houses are located in Yogyakarta.

The first delegation of French Oblates arrived in the Diocese of Sintang, West Kalimantan (Borneo), on 25 January 1977. Frs. Andre HEBTING, Jean-Pierre MEICHEL, Rene COLIN, Bernard KERADEC, Jacques CHAPUIS, Jean SUBRA and Lucien BOUCHARD were missionaries expelled from Laos when the country fell to the Communists. On 30 August 1977, these Oblates began their work at the Diocese of Sintang, West Kalimantan, breaking through forests and traveling down the rivers to find souls who longed to meet with our Lord.

The first Delegation of Italian Oblates reached the Diocese of Samarinda, East Kalimantan (Borneo), on 25 April 1977. Frs. Giuseppe REBUSSI, the Superior of the Delegation, Fr. Pietro Maria BONOMETTI, Natalino BELINGHERI, Antonio BOCCHI, Angelo ALBINI, Mario BERTOLI and Pancrazio DI GRAZIA were also missionaries expelled from Laos. They were entrusted the development of the northern part of the Diocese of Samarinda. On 09 January 2002, The Holy See announced the birth of a new diocese, the Diocese of Tanjung Selor. This was a great grace from God to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Oblates' work in East Kalimantan.

Three delegations of Oblates from 3 different provinces worked in Indonesia, in the unreachable parts of the country. A good communication was established among the 3 delegations, but there was a yearning to be united – to be one in their work, to be one Oblate Missionary Community, especially as the number of Indonesian youth who would like to be Oblates was increasing. The yearning to be united was proposed in a meeting in the Philippines, which attended by Father General, Marcello ZAGO, members of the General Administration, the provincials of the Asia-Oceania Region, and the superiors from the 3 delegations who worked in Indonesia. An encouraging response was given by Father General who then visited the mission fields of the Oblates in Indonesia. The positive results of the visit made the desire for unity more realistic.

In August 1992, a Congress for all Oblates in Indonesia took place in Sanggau, West Kalimantan, resulting in a final decision to be united as the OMI Province of Indonesia. The Father General and his Council officially received the result of the Congress and prepared for the birth of a new province in the Congregation. Father General officially appointed Fr. Mario BERTOLI as the first Provincial of the Province of Indonesia, and Frs. John Kevin CASEY, Bernard KERADEC, Natalino BELINGHERI and Gregorius Basir KARIMANTO as the first Provincial Council.

During a Mass in remembrance of the Founder's anniversary of death, on 21 May 1993, The Province of Indonesia was inaugurated by Fr. Marcello Zago, at the chapel of the Sisters of Charles Borromeo at Yogyakarta. At the same time, 3 scholastics professed their perpetual vows before Father General: Scholastics Dominikus

PARETA, Yakobus PRIYATNA, and Antonius Andri ATMAKA.

In his homily, Father General said, among others things: "The main reason for which the Oblates came to Indonesia is the same: to preach God's love to the people of Indonesia and to save those who need salvation. Today, by the formation of the Province of Indonesia, we declare our permanent commitment to preach to the poor in Indonesia and from Indonesia, as an expression of sharing God's love with His people. God the Father so loved the world that He sent His Son to save the people. We are sent to do the same mission: to share the compassion and love of God with the people who needs salvation."

One important step began 20 years ago. A dream of unity has been realized. Together we have a dream; together in unity we make the dream come true. (Caraka Team)

Anniversaries for July 2013

65 years of priesthood

1948.07.04	07787	Fr. Henri Chaigneau	France
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60 years of religious life

1953.07.25	09466	Msgr. Ramiro Díaz	Mediterranean
1953.07.26	09504	Msgr. Denis Croteau	Lacombe
1953.07.26	09508	Fr. Robert Michel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1953.07.26	09501	Fr. Justin Trudel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

60 years of priesthood

1953.07.05	08306	Fr. Yvon Beaudoin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1953.07.05	08590	Fr. Christian Gilles	France
1953.07.05	08493	Fr. Marcel Glintzboeckel	France
1953.07.05	08560	Fr. Bernard Lavoine	France
1953.07.05	08556	Fr. Hugo Van den Bussche	United States
1953.07.12	08496b	Fr. Clemens Kubitzka	Central European

50 years of religious life

1963.07.25	11434	Fr. Vidal Fuente	Mediterranean
1963.07.25	11919	Bro. Ernesto Magan	Mexico

50 years of priesthood

1963.07.14	10068	Msgr. Bernard Mohlalisi	Lesotho
1963.07.28	10439	Fr. Alfred Schellmann	Central European
1963.07.28	10436	Fr. Pio Stock	Paraguay

25 years of religious life

1988.07.02	12860	Bro. Joseph M. Lasowski	Lacombe
1988.07.24	13229	Fr. Andri A. Atmaka	Indonesia

Prayers for our deceased

No. 35-43

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Francis Bagan	United States	12/05/1925	Tewksbury	04/05/2013
Fr. Boniface Patrick Bastian	Colombo	05/06/1947	Rakwana	10/05/2013
Fr. Richard Harr	United States	29/01/1926	Lowell	13/05/2013
Fr. Kevin Casey	Indonesia	10/06/1936	Cilacap	15/05/2013
Fr. Rudolf Hohmann	Central European	01/12/1934	Vienna	16/05/2013
Fr. Denis Buliard	OMI Lacombe	05/04/1924	St. Albert	16/05/2013
Fr. Piet Palm	Belgium/Holland	03/09/1923	Nijmegen	18/05/2013
Fr. Lucien Brencklé	France	21/05/1922	Strasbourg	21/05/2013
Fr. Claude Morency	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	09/08/1927	Richelieu	21/05/2013

“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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