



OMI INFORMATION OMI INFORMACION OMI INFORMAZIONE OMI NACHRICHTEN OMI WIADOMOŚĆ OMI

OMI Information No. 539 (English)

December 2013

The Triennium begins: Inviting new members to join us

Letter from the Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2013

Blessings to all my brother Oblates and Associates on this Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary! We begin our Oblate Triennium with this wonderful feast, and enter into a time of expectancy and preparation as we look toward the year 2016 and the bicentennial of Saint Eugene's decision to bring together a group of missionaries to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned people in Provence.

A vital ministry

As we open the Oblate Triennium, I would like to draw attention to the vital ministry of inviting new members to join our Congregation as priests and Brothers. I do this because, aside from the importance and urgency of continually drawing new life into our Congregation, I have been frequently and insistently asked to speak to the Congregation on this matter, especially by young Oblates from different parts of the Congregation during my visits. Also, the two International Oblate Youth Encounters in which I participated (Malaga, Spain 2011 and Aparecida, Brazil 2013) brought this request to me, as did a letter from the young Oblates of the Conference of the Region of Latin America (CIAL) in February, 2013.

An important charism

It is with real joy that I respond to these requests and affirm the need for this ministry in every Unit of the Congregation. I promise my full support and that of the Central Government and the General Administration to everyone engaged in inviting young people to become Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Brothers and priests. I do this not just because I am concerned about declining numbers in the Congregation,

but especially because I have seen who we are in the Church and how vital our presence is for the poor. We are fired by a charism that is unique and special in the Church, one that makes us very close to the poor, the rejected, the forgotten, the people that society ignores, and the people who don't feel accepted in church. We show a very human face of Jesus to the world, one full of compassion and solidarity. I would go so far as to say that our charism lies at the heart of the Church and indeed at the heart of the Gospel itself. We would be remiss if we did not enthusiastically and boldly continue to invite young people to live as consecrated religious missionaries, priests and Brothers, within our charism. Hasn't Pope Francis captivated the world by doing what Oblates have done for 197 years?

It does not diminish the importance of other vocations

There are, of course, concerns I sometimes hear from Oblates. First, some feel that by highlighting the uniqueness of a vocation to religious life we are somehow denigrating the vocation of the laity. However I do not see that danger in our situation. As Oblates we have always worked for vocations in the widest sense. We have a long and proud history of working with laity and helping them discover and have access to their rightful ministry in the Church and society. We have worked with couples, single people, lay missionaries, and Oblate Associates. I do not believe it is a question of one vocation somehow opposing the other, religious life versus laity. I invite us to think and to act as "both/and." Oblates have always been dedicated to both, the formation and participation of lay

people in the Church and to our Congregation's ministry and future by specifically inviting new members. These are complementary vocations; they are not competing with each other. Our ministry includes both helping lay people discern their specific vocation and also working to invite young people to become missionaries in the charism of St. Eugene as priests and Brothers.

Some Oblate vocation promoters have emphasized that their ministry is to help everyone find his or her vocation, but so far no one has chosen to become an Oblate! It would be a great omission on our part to reduce vocation ministry only to helping young people prepare for marriage, single and/or professional life without actively encouraging them to consider the option of priesthood or brotherhood as Oblates. We owe it to the young people we work with to help them to see clearly how their baptism ordains them to minister in Jesus' name, even outside the canonical structures of priesthood and religious life; but we also only serve them truly and fully if we invite them to consider whether perhaps they are called to a vocation inside religious life or priesthood. Religious life and priesthood are a call, an invitation. That has been true from the time of Jesus to this very day. We must invite, freely and graciously, but we must invite. An invitation is not coercion; it is a gift for which one is grateful.

It is not to the detriment of the mission with the poorest of the poor

A second concern some Oblates give voice to is the danger that in putting energy and personnel into seeking vocations, we are forgetting the mission and the needs of the poor, and turning unhealthily inward. While it is understandable that any energy turned in upon ourselves can seem self-serving, reality demands that we take a longer-range view: Without new members we will not survive for long and the poor will no longer be served by our charism. Also, to work specifically to invite new members to our religious family is to believe in our future and the importance of our work and ministry. It is when a family no longer believes that it has a worthwhile future that it stops welcoming new life into itself. We believe we have a family worth welcoming people into. We believe that we are worthwhile.

And we believe that we have a future. We need to welcome in new life – with joy and confidence. This is another instance of both/and: We need to spend ourselves for the mission to the most abandoned, even as we dedicate some energy and some personnel to seek young men to continue this mission which is so needed in the Church.

Do we still have faith?

There is an axiom that says: *Every congregation gets the future it deserves!* I believe we have a future as a Congregation and that our death is not something ordained by God or by circumstance. We will die to the extent that we no longer believe that God's Spirit is able to move the hearts of young people and to the extent that we no longer believe that our charism has relevance to the poor, the Church and to the world. We will die to the extent that we no longer believe in the generosity of young people and their desire to serve, to give of themselves, and to be willing to sacrifice. We will die when we stop believing – in the power of the Gospel, in the generosity of young people, in the value of our own charism, and in ourselves. I believe it is a sign that we have become overly-secularized and lost faith when we say young people are unable to be attracted by the power of the Word and by Jesus' life.

I believe we are weak in faith when we too glibly cite "demographics" and "secularization" as the causes for so few young people responding to the call to be missionary priests and brothers. Do we no longer believe in the power of the Spirit to raise up new members? Do we believe that the Gospel no longer works? When we cease to invite young people to join our family because of demographics and secularization, we unwittingly help fulfill our own prophecy that there are no longer any youth interested in our way of life. Then we will get the future we deserve. But, our faith calls us to see more deeply, to act differently, and to choose to be prophetic rather than despairing. We, each and every Oblate, are called to challenge the dogmas of demographics and secularization and step out in faith to invite young people to an alternative and radical way of life. Let us meditate on the words of Constitution # 52: "Jesus never ceases to call people to follow him and to proclaim his Kingdom."

Even in the Units where vocations are numerous

I write to you, not only concerned about the Units in which vocations are very sparse or non-existent. Where vocations to the Congregation are abundant in certain places of the world, we cannot take this gift for granted. We must also have a solidly organized vocation ministry which is proactive, inviting and helping young people discern their vocation and be formed in their faith. At times I worry that we are too passive and content in simply admitting those who come to us without an organized pastoral ministry of vocations which actively seeks out, invites and then accompanies these men in their discernment to become missionaries. The Units blessed in attracting new members could become complacent and even be forgetful about prayer for vocations. These Units also must be strong in prayer, expressing their gratitude to God for the new members who come to them and asking the Lord for vocations in solidarity with the Units who are facing serious challenges.

“And what did our Lord Jesus Christ do?”

What do we learn from Jesus? Jesus' life incarnated a full integrity: His life witnessed to the Good News that he preached. Jesus was a prayerful man: living out of a deep communion with his Abba, impelled by the Spirit, he prayed before choosing his disciples and told us to pray for laborers. Jesus called others by name to be with him, to follow him, and he formed them. Might that not be a template for our own ministry of Oblate vocations? Our lives must witness to the Good News we preach as we were so powerfully called by the 2010 Chapter on “Conversion.” We must be men of prayer, contemplatives in loving communion with the Father, the Son and the Spirit. We must pray for vocations. (Recently Pope Francis said that vocation ministry is a ministry of the knees, of prayer, rather than programmatic strategy.) We must invite young men by name to follow Jesus as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The way is not easy and there are no fast solutions. We need a great deal of patience, faith, prayer and Oblate perseverance. Units need to develop a permanent community outreach to young people that is respectful and careful of the whole person,

courageous in inviting and proposing our way of life, and the common commitment of the all the Oblates in the Unit. We need to invite young people into our communities for experiences of life and mission. We need to invite them to pray and share faith together with us. Whether we are in an environment in which there are few young people choosing a religious vocation or in one that is favorable and conducive to vocations, it is necessary to dedicate full-time personnel and financial resources to a serious, intentional and organized vocation ministry.

The reality of young people who are different from us

Sometimes the present reality of young people is very different from what it was for us who are older. For instance, they might arrive asking about our particular religious clothing, the habit. They might ask about saying the Rosary or having Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. They have their own unique way of uniting concerns for the poor, for justice, and for the environment with devotions and more traditional signs of Catholicism. This can make some of us feel uncomfortable with these young people. But our personal comfort is not of paramount importance here: we need to rise above our own preferred ecclesiologies and welcome these young people, listen to them, learn from them, and humbly help them journey in the spirit of the Church today. We cannot demand of them our spirituality, especially right from the beginning. It is crucial to welcome and walk with them, beginning with where they are, looking at them with love as Jesus did.

Mission with youth and the vocation apostolate

When we speak of our responsibility to invite young men to consider our Oblate life, we must also remember the crucial connection between our ministry with youth and our ministry with the laity. Both of these instances are natural places where we find active Catholic young men to whom we may propose the option of our missionary religious way of life. We do not “use” these ministries simply to find vocations, but these are the logical places to encounter young men who participate in the sacraments, actively live their faith and seek to grow it. Oblates who are involved in education and formation ministries with youth and laity should always be interested and happy to extend an invitation to a Catholic young man to spend some

time in community with us, to make a vocational retreat or to invite them on mission with us, etc. Like Jesus, we must be proactive and call others to follow the Lord as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Our need to convert, to pray and to hope

As we begin the Oblate Triennium, I ask you to contemplate and follow Jesus' vocational ministry. We need, all of us, to work on conversion in the five areas of our religious missionary life (see the 2010 Chapter document, "Conversion") so that we live with more faithful integrity the following of Jesus. Hence, we need to give substantial effort to prayer in our local communities and in our Units, asking God to send us men whom we might receive and welcome as new members. I invite you to discuss the vocational reality of your own Unit. Please do this not as victims of statistics, demographics and secularization, but as men of faith. Hope, as you know, does not look at demographics and then form a judgment. Hope rather looks at the Gospel and waits for the demographics to change!

For an organized approach to this ministry

I invite each Unit to organize a pastoral ministry

of outreach for new members, insisting that every Oblate has responsibility for vocations and designating an Oblate priest or Brother as full time coordinator. The **General Norms for Oblate Formation** is a helpful instrument to begin to organize a vocation ministry and discernment process for welcoming new members into our midst: "*There is an urgent need for a well-planned vocation apostolate in every Unit of the Congregation. It consists of two ministries: 1) that of making known the Oblate charism, and 2) that of accompanying a prospective candidate until he enters a pre-novitiate program. While each of these two ministries has its specialists, every Oblate is called to perform the first and any Oblate may find himself called upon to exercise the second (cf. R. 53a).*" (GNOF, p. 19 # 79). This is a very concrete appeal to conversion in the spirit of the Chapter of 2010.

Mary Immaculate is the model and guardian of our consecrated life (C#13). We entrust our renewed efforts toward inviting new members to join us through a prayerful ministry of vocations to her intercession and tender care for us.

General Administration

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The Triennium and youth

In early November, General Councillor Fr. Chicho ROIS ALONSO, the Central Government's liaison for youth ministry, wrote to all of the Congregation's major superiors a letter encouraging them to invite the young people of their Units to take part in the celebration of the Triennium we are about to begin. On December 8, 2013, the Oblates around the world will begin a three-year period of prayer, reflection and celebration of the 200th anniversary of the 1816 founding of the Missionaries of Provence who ten years later would become the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

In his letter, Fr. Chicho wrote: "*In fact, in 1816 our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, began to live in common with the first group of his companions in the house in Aix. From the beginning, our first Fathers shared life, faith and mission with the youth of the Christian Association which St. Eugene had created **three***

years earlier. We are convinced that we cannot celebrate the 200 years of the beginning of our community and missionary life without the presence of youth; furthermore, we cannot make our "three-year pilgrimage of preparation" without accompanying and being accompanied by young people who are somehow living our charism. We believe that moving through this Triennium together with youth will be of mutual benefit for the Oblates and the young people. So it was in the beginning and so it has been every time Oblates and youth have walked together, sharing life and mission, over the almost 200 years of history. The young people themselves have shown their enthusiasm and have suggested many ideas during the Oblate pre-World Youth Day in Aparecida, Brazil."

Included with his letter was a document that contained a number of suggested activities that Units could adapt to their own circumstances in order to engage young people and Oblates to live the Triennium together. He also invited the Units

to share with the whole Congregation some of their own initiatives in this regard

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The Triennium will begin soon!

As you may have read in the last *Communiqué*, on December 8, 2013, we will begin a three year period of preparation and of celebration of our 200 years of history, since the time the first Oblate community gathered around Eugene in Aix-en-Provence on January 25, 1816.

“This – we read in the Communiqué – will be a period of three year intense listening to the call of conversion in our Oblate lives 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”.

The resources that are meant *“to assist the apostolic communities in sharing the faith and choosing signs of conversion relevant to their lived situation”* are ready for translation. We aimed at assisting you for two community meetings per month. Therefore, for the first year of this triennium, we will offer you 24 schemes that can be used, as they are or adapted according to the different situations and needs, for community meetings. They will be made available five at a time through our website and the usual channels that we use to send out our newsletters. We hope that every Oblate and every member of the larger Oblate family will be able to receive this tool for animation. We hope to be able to make available the first five schemes by the end of November.

For the same purpose, the Superior General has also prepared a letter for the whole Congregation for December 8, the feast of our Immaculate Mother and the day of the beginning of the triennium. We would like to invite the whole Oblate family to live these few weeks as a time of preparation for these three “years of grace” that the Lord is offering us as a very special gift.

GENERAL HOUSE

The community prays for its deceased

Every year, the Oblates at Via Aurelia 290 have two permanent prayer appointments outside of the house. The first is in the month of February

at the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli to commemorate the Founder’s long wait there for the approval of the Rules. The second is in November, in the immense Roman cemetery of Campo Verano, where, in an underground chapel, there repose the remains of 62 Oblates (two others died in Rome but we don’t know where they are buried).

During a trip to Rome in 1884, in order to buy the property for the scholasticate near the Colosseum, Fr. Aimé MARTINET, Assistant General, also concluded the purchase of the Oblate crypt at Campo Verano. Fr. SOULLIER, in a 20 November letter, writes: “We did not have a cemetery plot, and several French communities were in the same situation as we were. Mr. Captier, procurator for the Sulpicians, took the initiative to bring together these communities in a confraternity (it was necessary to purchase jointly).” The construction work began immediately for a cost of 30,000 francs to be divided among 8 religious families.

This first crypt had only 24 niches. After the Second World War, it was necessary to find a bigger one. The Archconfraternity of Charity for the Dead was building in those years a large multi-story building in the same cemetery. On 1 April 1955, Fathers Edmond SERVEL, General Treasurer, and Gaetano DRAGO, Superior of the General House, signed the purchase contract for the new chapel within this large building. It was the Father Drago who took care of the planning and decoration. Thirty-two deceased Oblates were moved there on 9 November, while it was dedicated on the 28th of the same month.

We read in the *Codex historicus* of the General House: “During a solemn Mass, sung by Very Rev. Fr. General, in the presence of the whole community and representatives of the scholasticate and the General Studium, we dedicated the new chapel of the Oblates in the Verano cemetery [...] It contains 62 niches: complete tombs; eight vaults capable of about holding 200 reduced remains; and an underground repository that can hold a dozen coffins. Such capacity ensures perpetual use. The chapel cost five million lire; we added the iron gate at the entrance, bearing the arms and title of the Congregation, and a travertine altar

surmounted by a mosaic depicting the Virgin of the “*Cemeterium maius*” (ed. *Sometimes called the St. Agnes Catacomb*) flanked by two bronze catacomb-style lamps and a mosaic inscription below: *Signum certissimum nostrae salutis o Virgo Immaculata. [...]* ”

The celebration this year took place on 9 November and it saw the extraordinary participation of almost 50 Oblates living at Via Aurelia, among them, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, Superior General. The Mass was presided by Fr.

Paolo ARCHIATI, Vicar General, who, in his homily, recalled that the deceased who lie there represent the whole Congregation: there is a Superior General, Fr. DONTENWILL; there are Assistants, Fathers, Brothers and scholastics. Fr. Archiati also recalled some texts of Saint Eugene de Mazenod about our family in heaven.

It was a touching moment when all who were present, in an air of recollection and silence, were invited to remember one or two Oblates who had an important role in their lives. (Nino BUCCA)

Latin America

MEXICO

The community of Christ, Savior and Lord

“Every community needs to have a memory and a vision that allow it to examine and determine from where it eventually emerged and where it wants to go.” Thus began the prologue of the book “*Some men say...*” one of the only historical resources documenting the history of the province of Mexico, written by Fr. William WATSON.

Quoting these lines from the foreword, written by Bishop Michael PFEIFER, I would like to share the story of a community to the east of Mexico City.

To beautify the main roads to the city center, many families had to leave their homes and were forced to live in a region known as “Ejidos de Santa Cruz Meyehualco”. Many of them arrived in garbage trucks.

The area was almost a desert, with much dust and yellow soil, without water and with plenty to do. It is said that around 10 May 1979, at one of the only trees that existed in the region, the people embraced as a sign of solidarity, which is why this place is called the “10 May” and the tree became known as “The Friendship Tree.” People say that this tree was watered more with tears than with water, and at that time, it provided shade and was a meeting point where they also made decisions.

Soon there arose the normal problems of a new settlement with some not accepting their new reality, and with the rivalry of people coming

from different parts of the city; besides that, it was coupled with the frustration of the people of the town of Meyehualco who were reclaiming their land that was seized by the government for this new settlement.

This was the community that the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate encountered. Around 1986, the people say that Frs. Ricardo JUNIUS and Carlos KRZEWINSKI arrived. They were from the United States. Fr. Junius began inviting people to the Eucharist by walking through the streets of the settlement with a bell. They taught the community to work together. For this, they founded evangelization communities throughout the parish. The Oblates encouraged people to organize themselves so they could live with the dignity that they deserve, and in fact they sometimes protested to the authorities about the poor quality of the drainage pipe installed in the new colony.

Then came Fr. Yvan TREMBLAY, of Canadian origin, who concerned himself especially with the women struggling alone or, if they had a partner, could not count on him. He founded the Center for Poor Women “CEMPO” with the purpose of getting the women trained for the workplace with a trade so they could take care of more of their needs at home.

Many Oblates have passed through this community and with the enthusiasm of the parish priests, they have built the parish church called “Christ the Savior and Lord.” Today the faces of the poor have changed; now the streets are paved and the delegation offers many services. The small houses are now made of concrete, and

condominiums have also appeared. But there are still many needs, and there is now a vast region of unplanned settlements where people live in very poor conditions. However there are many groups and communities in the parish that give life to the parish in its various sectors, chapels and communities. The Friendship Tree no longer exists, but in its place there is now a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe. But the parish community never forgets its missionaries and with gratitude they say: "How can we forget that the Oblates came to keep us company and stay with us when we were alone and abandoned." (Roberto P. TOLENTINO)

BOLIVIA

Honoring the dead

On November 1, Fr. Roberto DURETTE, a longtime missionary in Bolivia, wrote to Brother Augustin COTÉ in the USA about the remembrance of the deceased in November.

Here in Bolivia on this 1st of November everything comes to a halt... the feast of Todos Santos. The accent is put more on the dead than on the saints. In fact according to customs, the dead return to earth at noon time to visit with family and friends and the next day, they return to their resting place. To receive the souls or almas, families, who have had a member die during the year, are busy putting up a very decorated table (tumba) on which is deposited a picture of the dead, his or her favorite food, flowers etc. A week before, family and friends are invited to come on this day to pray for the deceased and share the food and drink that the family has prepared. The invitation comes with a plate of small breads called tantawawas. Today the streets are full of people going from house to house, visiting the tumbas, to pray and eat. The belief is that the dead stay until tomorrow (2 November) at noontime. Then it's time to visit

the cemetery where a fiesta is prepared next to the tomb where the dead have been placed: time to put aside the mourning period and rejoice. It is common to hear bands playing the favorite music enjoyed by the dead during their lifetime. We could call it a celebration of life. It's a far cry from the U.S. where people are not prone to visit cemeteries and the dead are hardly remembered. I have come to the conclusion that we could learn something from these ancient Andean cultures that are closer to the human realities of life and death.

As for my work in this mining district of Siglo XX, I continue being involved in communication. As I told you in my last letter, we are setting up small radio stations in some important villages of our region, promoting the participation of the indigenous people in the process of their awareness and development, thus creating a small network that we think will help diminish poverty, discrimination etc...

As we live in a mining region where there are several small mines, contamination of the air and rivers is a major problem affecting the health of our people. We have organized meetings, workshops to create awareness in the people so that government, local authorities and organizations get together to take measures to diminish the pollution and thus protect the lives of our people. This is not an easy task but one that is worthwhile. It's very frustrating at times because the economy of the region is involved. Opposition is strong. But it is our commitment to Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.

My best to all the Oblates, especially to those who are still spending energy and effort in spreading the Gospel of Jesus in different parts of the world! Take care. (*Gus' News Notes*, November 2013)

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Symposium on the Oblates and First Nations

Thursday, October 31 and Friday, November 1, at Saint Paul University, there was a symposium as part of the project: *History of Oblate missions with First Nations*, a project developed nearly two years ago by Fr. Pierre HURTUBISE, who

currently holds the research Chair in the religious history of Canada at Saint Paul University. The purpose of this symposium was to review what has been achieved so far in this area in terms of research and publications, and what remains to be done. Seven papers were presented on various aspects of the ministry of the Oblates with First Nations. Among the speakers were

two Oblates, Fr. Pawel ZAJAC from the Polish Province and Bishop Claude CHAMPAGNE, Bishop of Edmundston. There were also many Oblates among the participants, including our provincial, Luc TARDIF and his counterpart, the provincial of Lacombe, Ken FORSTER. The meeting resulted in very interesting and especially rich exchanges.

The texts that were presented and some elements of the mentioned exchanges will be published as a basis or starting point for the next steps of the project. The majority of speakers were lay men and women who, from the outset, have expressed interest in the project and are now involved. It is probably and especially on them that we will need to count, so as to ensure success in the coming years. And for this, we can only rejoice. (INFO OMI, November 15, 2013)

ASSUMPTION

The Unveiling of the Monument in Honour of Brother Anthony

On a cold Sunday afternoon, October 27th, 2013, a monument of Brother Anthony Kowalczyk OMI was unveiled in Edmonton. Due to low temperatures and first snowfall of the season that morning, the Liturgy of the Word and speeches were held in the building of the former St. John's College, where the Venerable Brother Anthony lived and worked for 36 years. In 1976, the Oblates sold the land to the University of Alberta, which opened it as an affiliate. Since 2005, it is known as the Campus Saint-Jean.

The celebration was organized by Dr. Frank McMahon, a past student of Saint-Jean College and the first rector of Saint-Jean University. The Liturgy of the Word was led by Archbishop Richard Smith. In his homily, he emphasized the heroic virtues of Venerable Brother Anthony, which were confirmed in March of this year by Pope Francis. He also spoke about the contribution of Oblates in evangelization and in the development of francophone education in Western Canada. The liturgy paid homage to the Oblates who, in 1908, founded a juniorate to shape young candidates for religious life. Fr. Jacques Joly OMI, a graduate of the college,

spoke about the vision and method of operation. Deputy Premier Thomas Lukaszuk represented the province of Alberta; he commented on the importance of this event that brought together two ethnic communities. Following the speeches, the crowd moved outside.

Mr. Danek Mozdzeński the artist and sculptor from Edmonton, unveiled the statue. As a child he had heard about the holiness of Brother Anthony from his father and even visited his grave. The artist explained that in the statue he tried to portray Brother Anthony as a young man, shortly after his tragic accident at the sawmill in which he lost his right forearm. In this way, he hoped the sculpture would better relate to youth and students. In the 1980's, Danek created a carved relief 6 meters long, which depicted the life of Brother Anthony. This relief was done for a Catholic school named after Frere Antoine.

Archbishop Richard Smith blessed the statue. The ceremony was attended by Oblates and parishioners from Holy Rosary Parish and Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish, Oblates from Assumption Province and religious Sisters. Also in attendance were graduates of the College with their families, some students, the university choir and many francophone residents of Edmonton. Knights of Columbus from Brother Antoni Kowalczyk Assembly 3367 kept guard. The ceremony ended with the singing of the hymn *Salve Regina*. (Fr. Miroslaw OLSZEWSKI OMI)

UNITED STATES

Oblate trains for his sixth marathon

Fr. Andy SENSENIG, has run more than 130 marathon miles (209 km) and he is going to add another 23.2 (37 km) in the spring. It was his time spent at the novitiate where he found his motivation to start running. Fr. Bill SHEEHAN, his novice director, stressed the importance of holistic spirituality. "Body, mind, spirit are interrelated, so physical exercise is part of the process of developing a healthy spirituality," said Fr. Bill. He was also a runner and Fr. Andy followed in his footsteps, literally.

After Fr. Andy's time in Godfrey, he continued to run while studying at the Catholic Theological

Union in Chicago. “People think they can’t do it [marathons] but that’s because they are looking at the big picture, when really they just need to take it a day at a time.” He ran his first marathon in California.

Fr. Andy has run a total of five marathons and will begin training for number six in Los Angeles next spring. His current workout regime consists of 30 miles a week and smaller races in the meantime. Within the last month he participated in the Fargo 10K.

Fr. Andy loves participating in races, but he says that there is value in the training process too. “It’s a ministry of modeling good health. Hopefully when people see me running daily, it will grab their attention.” Fr. Andy has caught the attention of the Ogema community in Minnesota, and he has recruited some runners for smaller races. In his last race, Fr. Andy ran with eight parishioners from St. Ann Church in Wauburn, MN.

At the age of 52, Fr. Andy says he plans on running for a while. “A lot of people are surprised that I’m a runner because I’m a priest. Their assumptions are that priesthood is for old men and they are active.” He hopes to bring the ministry outside of the church and meet people who are religious and even those who are not.

His goals for the future are to run in an ultramarathon (any event that is longer than 26.2 miles) and to start a running club at the parish. Fr. Andy says before he can start a running club he must prove it to others. “It’s one thing to tell people to do something, but if you lead by example they are a lot more willing to do it. So I need to show them what I’ve been doing.”

Fr. Andy isn’t the only Oblate taking the “holistic spirituality” approach on life. There have been several Oblates who follow in the healthy mind and body mantra, like Fr. Dwight HOEBERECHTS, who likes to push the importance of portion control in meals.

“My faith links into my health. I know that my life and body are an incredible gift from God. I try to do my best to take good care of it so I can be strong and healthy to do the ministry I am assigned to do. I also like to take time for my daily prayer and then just sitting in silence for an hour a day to stay in tune with Jesus. My prayer time just slows me down from what can be a busy day's schedule.”

Fr. Andy isn’t just running for himself, but to address a national issue of obesity. “If we take care of ourselves a little each day then we might be able to turn around the idea that its normal to be obese or overweight.” (By Becky May in www.omiusa.org)

Africa-Madagascar

KENYA

Kisaju: a bold new ministry

In January 2012 the Oblate Mission Community in Kenya met to discuss and discern our future.

What’s next? While there were many suggestions and possibilities, the community overwhelmingly favoured taking on a second parish; preferably close to our formation house in Karen. Initial overtures were made to the Archdiocese of Nairobi. With no positive response we approached the Diocese of Ngong. We have been welcomed. The bishop is ecstatic. At Christmas last year, we visited one of the parishes that was being offered to us. It certainly met all our criteria but one: it is not close to the formation house. The

bishop then suggested we look at another place that is much closer. We have said yes to Kisaju.

Ngong Diocese is probably the largest diocese in Kenya. It is also one of the poorest both in terms of finances and personnel. There are approximately 29 parishes in the Diocese most of which would have 20 – 30 outstations.

In the parish we visited last Christmas, it took us three and a half hours to get to the parish centre and then another two and a half hours to get to the furthest outstation. The people are economically poor, poor, poor. The Oblate mission is to be with the poor and those least touched by the Church. It is becoming very clear that if the Oblates belong anywhere in Kenya this is the place. I

know our Founder would be very happy with this development.

At a meeting in Kitengelia on May 23 the bishop introduced us to the new parish committee and we were invited to begin ministry immediately even if the parish is not officially erected.

On the morning of Tuesday June 11, Fr. Mario AZRAK left for Kisaju. While his leaving was not marked by any significant fanfare it was nonetheless a very significant and historical moment in the life and ministry of the Oblate Kenya Mission. A proper commissioning later on will take place in the context of our retreat. We have expanded! We have begun a new undertaking in a new area of Kenya.

Kisaju is about an hour and forty minutes south east of Nairobi. It is about the same distance from the Tanzanian Boarder. There are no signs, no markers and no buildings to identify the location. This is the reality we start from "with nothing." There is no water or electricity. Oh there are lots of people!

At the place being proposed as the parish centre there is not much: a very small chapel that was intended as a kindergarten and a tin shack they use for the kindergarten. That's it!

It is semi-arid land. Like for Jesus, there is no place for the missionary to lay his head. There are six or seven outstations that are intended to be part of this parish but only one of them has a church.

Many of the people are Maasai, one of the tribes that is least touched by the Gospel. There is much first evangelization to do.

In a few weeks two other Oblates will join the undertaking: Father Gideon RIMBERIA and Scholastic Brother Dionisius ANANUA. Before any construction can begin, the first priority must be to build the Christian Community.

A house has been found in Kitengelia that we can rent. With a place to stay, the Oblates can come together as a community and begin the great work of making known the Good News. (Jim FIORI in www.omilacombe.ca)

ZIMBABWE

Parish celebrates 30 years of Oblate presence

Each year, the parishioners of St. Luke's Mission celebrate their patronal feast day around October 18. This year's celebration was unique because they were celebrating the 30th anniversary of Oblate presence. The people assembled on October 19 to prepare themselves spiritually with a day of recollection, led by different priests who presented topics related to the Year of Faith and the charism of the Oblates.

Parishioners began streaming into the Mission on Friday evening, 18th of October, in order to be fresh for the recollection on the next day. It was the image of an emaciated, hungry looking yet happy people, sun baked by the unremittingly scorching African sun, stubborn and resiliently meeting with joy to share the marvels the Lord has worked in their midst for the past 30 years, despite this year of famine due to a serious drought and marked by economic uncertainty as an aftermath of the recently held elections. They were happy to come to rejoice and especially express their gratitude to the first Oblate Missionaries.

The whole Saturday was spent in recollection. Archbishop Alex Thomas, SVD, of Bulawayo graced the occasion and came to officially close the Year of Faith with his input that summed up the presentations of the day.

On Sunday, the Church was packed by early morning, so much so that extra benches had to be borrowed from the hospital to accommodate late parishioners. Present for the celebration were Archbishop Thomas who had been invited for the occasion for the conferral of the sacrament of Confirmation, together with Oblate Frs. Augustine MAKHOKOLO, Christopher RICHMOND (pioneers), Charles RENSBURG (parish priest emeritus), Charles NABWENJE (incoming Mission Superior), Siphon KUNENE (outgoing Mission Superior) and Jeffrey MADONDO (current parish priest). Also present were former Oblates with whom we share cordial relations and who attend our Oblate feasts.

During the Eucharist, a praise singer chanted praises of the pioneers as well as of the Oblates who have worked and are working in the parish. In his thanksgiving, Fr. Makhokolo, the first Oblate to work in the Mission, remarked at the growth of the parish since his time. He thanked the priests who came after him for taking up the Oblate legacy which the pioneers had instilled and for taking it a step further. He also thanked the people for their responsiveness to evangelization, which made the expansion of the parish easier. He recounted how difficult it was then to work in the Mission, given the post-independence disturbances in the area as well as a strong missionary thrust in the Church at that time which made it difficult for poor black Oblates to evangelize people who saw the Church as an NGO which came primarily to address people's social needs. He ended on a positive note of the growth of the Church and encouraged

parishioners to grow in faith and move towards being fully self-sustainable.

Archbishop Thomas congratulated the jubilarians and thanked them for the sterling work they had done. He also thanked the Oblates for their hard work in that part of the diocese and hoped that Insuza Mission will be a reality soon. Presently, the Southern part of the parish is poised to become another Mission called St. Kizito. Because of the growth of the parishioners, and prospects of opening new outstations further inland, the Archbishop has officially called for the establishment of the new Mission and construction of toilets has already been done. Plans of drilling a borehole as well as build a hall/church are already underway. The archbishop gave us a mandate to ensure that by next year, we celebrate our St. Luke's Day at the new Mission. (Jeffrey F. Madondo)

Europe

UKRAINE

Commission for Youth and Vocation Ministry

The European Commission for Youth and Vocation Ministry (CPJVE) met in Ukraine, at Obuhiv and Trivriv, on 21-25 October.

Frs. Bartosz MADEJSKI (Poland), Jens WATTEROTH (Central European Province), David MUÑOZ and Antonio D'AMORE (Mediterranean Province), Piotr WROBLEWSKI (Ukraine Delegation), Vincent GRUBER (France), Pavlo WYSZKOWSKI (CIE representative) and Luis Ignacio ROIS (General Councillor) participated.

We prayed together, enjoyed the time and worked, of course. We evaluated the Oblate World Youth Days in Aparecida, before Rio and GECO 2013 (the second European gathering deepening the Oblate charism for youth from all our units). The GECO 2013 theme was: "Passionate for Christ – Eugene, in his family and his youthful experiences and our own experiences today." We discussed many important issues like celebrating the Triennium for the 200th anniversary of the Congregation together with youth from Europe; plans for the coming years;

increasing of the communication between Oblates and Oblate youth...

Future projects:

- **2014:** a gathering in the local Unit or with another Unit but in line with the 1st year Triennium theme: *A new heart: Life in apostolic community*
- **2015:** A European pilgrimage to Aix in August with the Brazilian Oblate cross. For young people from 20 to 26 years old, working with Oblates and according to the 2nd year Triennium theme : *A new Spirit: Lifelong formation*
- **2016:** Oblate pre-WYD in Wrocław, Poland, and WYD in Cracow, taking into account the subject of the 3rd year Triennium theme : *A new Mission: Zeal to leave nothing undared.*
- **2017:** 3rd GECO somewhere in Europe (N.B., GECO from the Italian: *Giovani de l'Europa per il Carisma Oblato* [Youth of Europe for the Oblate Charism])

We listened to interesting speech of Fr. Pavlo WYSZKOWSKI about the Oblate and youth community. At the same time we visited a bit of Ukraine and know better the situation of the Church

there. We stayed 2 days in Tivriv where Oblates together with youth and with the help of qualified workers are renovating the huge old monastery and church, preparing those buildings to be the center of the youth movement. The reconstruction of the monastery has already been supported by many Oblate Units and gives hope for the future on our European cooperation. (*Bartosz Madejski, CPJVE President, and Vincent Gruber, Secretary*)

SPAIN

The "Misioneras Oblatas" celebrate

It has been 16 years since the new congregation of the "Misioneras Oblatas de María Inmaculada" was founded in Spain -- five years earlier, there was a foundation in Paraguay. With the passing of time, they have also become international: candidates from Germany, Poland and Ukraine have come forth with the same attraction: they desired to be "Misioneras Oblatas," fulfilling the charism of St. Eugene as women religious.

November 1, 2013 was a milestone in the

history of this young congregation, which is of diocesan right: the first non-Spanish juniors celebrated their perpetual oblation. They are Katharina RAMRATH of Germany (the first of four Germans) and Iuliia VENGLOVSKA (Ukrainian). Many relatives and friends came from their countries to this celebration. The Mass was presided by the Bishop of Madrid, Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouca Varela who has always been very supportive of them. The Mass had parts in the 3 languages: Castilian, Ukrainian and German - a language also used by the Cardinal.

Concelebrating were the Oblate superiors of the Central European Province and of the Delegation of Ukraine, Stefan OBERGFELL and Pawel WYSZKOWSKI. Miguel FRITZ represented the Central Government.

There are now 22 sisters in vows, besides several candidates. In all, they represent four different cultures; they live and work in three communities. The Mazenodian Family continues to grow! (Miguel Fritz)

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES

OMI Provincial appeals for help

With an estimated 10,000 people feared dead due to Super typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) that ripped through Central Philippines, coupled with thousands of injured Filipinos, flattened communities, no power, no potable water in at least four provinces, starvation is waiting to happen as food supplies could hardly reach the affected areas.

The full extent of the devastation was not known until more than 24 hours after Yolanda made landfall in Central Philippines. Actual casualty figure is still being ascertained but media estimated that the death toll could reach 10,000 or more.

The whole world was horrified with what television networks have shown.

Mountains of debris greeted the people of Samar

and Leyte the morning after, in areas where the typhoon first made its landfall.

As shown on television, bodies of children and adults were strewn across both sides of the roads, fallen century old trees, electric poles and almost everything lying in the middle of roads, blocking motorists and survivors. Almost all houses and buildings had lost their roof.

Many were walking in daze described by reporters as doing the "zombie walk," trying to salvage anything in areas where their houses used to stand.

People need food and water. Medicine too. Local government units failed to function as government workers were also victims. Looting by desperate Filipinos was reported and seen on national television. Prices of gasoline, with stocks running out, rose 10 times higher.

Philippine President Benigno Aquino placed the

entire country under state of national calamity to expedite rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts and ordered the release of emergency funds.

Seeing this on television and other news organizations, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in Philippine Province through Oblate Missionary Foundation, Inc. (OMF, Inc.), the OMI social development arm and the Oblate Media have quickly organized a fund drive aimed sending assistance to calamity victims.

Dubbed “Operation Tulong Yolanda Victims,” the Oblates have appealed for help from the people of Central Mindanao region where its media ministry operates.

“With the heart breaking situation of our fellow Filipinos in Central Visayas, I am appealing to all to extend whatever assistance you can provide,”

Father Larry DE GUIA, OMI Philippine Provincial Superior, said over Notre Dame Broadcasting Corporation, the OMI’s leading media organization.

“Faith without work is dead,” he said in urging Oblate Media listeners to share something for calamity victims.

“We were spared by calamities and we are thankful not only through prayers but through sacrifices and by extending assistance,” he said. “Rest assured your assistance will reach the needy in the affected provinces.”

On the day the appeal of Fr. Larry was on November 12, aid that includes food and used clothing started to arrive in OMI run radio stations in Kidapawan City, Cotabato City and Koronadal City. (Edwin Fernandez in www.omiphil.org)



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

Anniversaries for January 2014

65 Years of priesthood

1949.01.30	07722	Fr. Joseph Pirson	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
------------	-------	-------------------	-------------------

60 Years of religious profession

1954.01.09	10240	Bro. David du Preez	Northern S. A.
------------	-------	---------------------	----------------

50 Years of religious profession

1964.01.15	11814	Bro. André Deprez	France
------------	-------	-------------------	--------

50 Years of priesthood

1964.01.19	10507	Fr. Donald Arel	United States
1964.01.19	10492	Fr. Richard Bolduc	United States
1964.01.19	10154	Fr. Andre Dubois	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1964.01.19	10501	Fr. Charles Héon	United States
1964.01.19	10495	Fr. Paulo Medeiros	Brazil
1964.01.19	10496	Fr. Paul Nourie	United States
1964.01.19	10505	Fr. Norman Parent	United States
1964.01.25	10350	Fr. Ben-Awis Benoit Kabongo	France

25 Years of religious profession

1989.01.06	13208	Fr. Ajit Victor Costa	Colombo
1989.01.06	13279	Fr. Raymond Matete Leuta	Lesotho
1989.01.06	13280	Fr. Constantinus Lekhotla Nthethe	Lesotho
1989.01.06	13278	Fr. Norbert Seabata Pepenene	Lesotho
1989.01.06	13355	Fr. Cletus Tsepe Ranthamane	Lesotho
1989.01.06	13210	Fr. Robi Robert Rozario	Colombo
1989.01.22	13225	Fr. Jorge Albergati Tejera	Mediterranean
1989.01.22	13211	Bro. Rubén Cayo	Bolivia
1989.01.22	13226	Fr. Mardones Jaime Cereceda	Argentina-Chile
1989.01.22	13417	Fr. Marcos José de Lima	Brazil
1989.01.22	13366	Fr. Luiz Antônio de Melo	Brazil
1989.01.22	13133	Fr. Alberto Montiel	Mexico
1989.01.25	13696	Fr. Peter Joseph Foley	Natal
1989.01.25	13196	Fr. Sibusiso Benedict Gumede	Natal
1989.01.25	13263	Fr. Benedict Mzwandile Mahlangu	Northern S. A.
1989.01.25	13209	Fr. Patrick Mohohlo Maselwane	Northern S. A.
1989.01.25	13265	Fr. Tom Mogorogi Segami	Northern S. A.

25 Years of priesthood

1989.01.29	12897	Fr. Subash Anthony Costa	Colombo
------------	-------	--------------------------	---------

CORRECTION, DECEMBER 2013**50 Years of priesthood**

1963.12.26	10557	Fr. Gerard van den Beuken	Belgium/Holland
------------	-------	---------------------------	-----------------

Prayers for our deceased

No. 77-89

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Albert Martineau	United States	30/05/1931	Tewksbury	29/10/2013
Fr. John Lewis	United States	15/08/1916	Lebanon (USA)	31/10/2013
Bro. Erich Wieland	Central European	23/07/1929	Hünfeld	04/11/2013
Fr. José Devlin	Peru	10/10/1937	Ottawa	05/11/2013
Fr. Walenty Zapłata	Poland	11/02/1928	Poznan	06/11/2013
Fr. J. Lorne MacDonald	OMI Lacombe	18/04/1928	St. Albert	08/11/2013
Fr. Robert Vreteau	United States	09/09/1919	San Antonio	12/11/2013
Fr. Hans Peter Nagels	Namibia	24/01/1926	Mariental	15/11/2013
Fr. Jean Lerayer	France	01/04/1926	Saint-Brieuc	15/11/2013
Fr. Francis Ebner	OMI Lacombe	02/01/1918	St. Albert	17/11/2013
Fr. Angelo Dal Bello	Mediterranean	25/09/1926	Frascati	20/11/2013
Fr. Walter Winterstein	Central European	25/03/1938	Hünfeld	21/11/2013
Bro. Berthold Burschel	Central European	26/07/1934	Hünfeld	23/11/2013

“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)

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
via Aurelia 290, I 00165 Roma, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
<http://www.omiworld.org>
Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Nino Bucca
Printing & circulation: Nino Bucca