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## Stir up “a common desire to revitalize our apostolic communities”

By Fr. Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

A few years before the Congress on the Founder’s charism, held in Rome in 1976, Oblate reflection on the theme of community had produced a small but interesting document, born of a precise mandate of the General Chapter of 1972, to emphasize the “common desire to revitalize our apostolic communities.” In response to that mandate, Father General and his Council developed this brief document, having among their objectives “to reestablish confidence in Oblate community.” We read in the introduction that mission and community were inseparable in the beliefs and plans of the Founder. These realities have remained closely linked in the entire history of the Congregation. The Chapter of 1972 reaffirmed it: “without the apostolic community, the missionary vision remains only an illusion.” A sociological inquiry conducted at that time had shown that from 75 to 90 percent of Oblates believe that community life was essential to our kind of life and to our apostolic commitment.

The document begins by situating Oblate community in that particularly difficult moment in history, marked by insecurity because of the changes taking place and by the search for new ways of living the reality of community life. In this situation, characterized by confusion and discontent, and therefore unfavorable to the missionary life, the Oblates had felt called to respond through “a sustained and constant effort that requires the personal and collective participation of all.” The difficulties that touched the Oblate community at that time were a reflection of a wider phenomenon that encompassed society and the Church herself. Against this background, the Oblate community was trying to “rediscover” its place. In a society

characterized by the pursuit of material goods and social, illusory prestige, the Oblate was searching once more for his identity.

“The substance of the Good News proclaimed by Jesus,” the document says, “is that among men, community is possible and necessary.” Fraternal life is for us an experience of salvation through which we share our lives with others as Christ shares his with us. “Where there is love, there is community. Where there is community, there, the Kingdom of God is growing. And where there is the Kingdom, there is salvation.” The community, therefore, built on mutual love, is crucial to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. “The community can be broken by times of division and dissent, but it can also rise to the heights of forgiveness and reconciliation.” Through the community, we offer to the world the witness of unity which is presupposed by the very faith of the world.

The third part of the document shows some ways to live community. As a starting point, one should be clear about the basic elements that let the community be born, live and grow. “The community,” we read in number 11, “is not a clerical clique or a shelter from prying eyes. Even less is it a boardinghouse or a fixed abode. It is a living communion of persons, a human environment in which everyone can open up and develop.” A healthy relationship between the individual on the one hand and the community on the other hand is a prerequisite for the success of the community experience. The community is defined as “a network of relationships in which everyone feels ‘at home.’” In this scenario,

fraternal charity with all its nuances plays a major role; on this point, the Founder never missed an opportunity to call his Oblates to the practice of this virtue, especially in their mutual relationships within the community. His spiritual testament is the most obvious proof of this.

Diversity, simplicity of life, sharing and communal property are other elements that characterize the Oblate community and ensure its life. A particular element emphasized in the document is communal prayer: “everyone should understand that one of the most intense moments in the life of the apostolic community is when it gathers to go to the Lord in order to seek his will, sing his praises, beg his forgiveness and ask for the strength to continue to serve.” Prayer is expressed in many ways, but “what is absolutely necessary is that the community remains a praying community.” I wonder if there is something here to be improved in our journey today.

The fourth part of the document is a look at the future in relation to the Oblate community and the challenges that historical circumstances pose for it; it opens prospects for new ways to live community, new ways of belonging to the Oblate family and new answers to the situations and the signs of the times.

Finally, mention is made about Oblates who live alone. On this point, we will say more later. Here it is stated that “what gives impetus to community spirit is more the “*cor unum*” rather than a simple physical proximity.” The statement is correct and satisfactory in principle, but it would be interesting to conduct a study that is historical and attentive to concrete experiences to see how much reality backs up this principle. Perhaps it is time to draw conclusions from the experience of the past 50 years from that point of view. It is a complex reality that cannot be analyzed simplistically nor naively, but it is appropriate to deal with it. Sometimes I wonder if one of the fruits or signs of conversion, during the Triennium that we have just begun, could not be just that: that no Oblate lives alone anymore!

“Mission and community: that is our vocation.” The conclusion of the document returns to the theme of the relationship between mission and community. I invite you to read numbers 22-24 of the document, available on our Oblate website. Other than the language used, the content in this final part of the document does not seem to be 42 years old like the document itself. It demonstrates, as if it were necessary, that renewal is a daily “call,” just like conversion.

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## Holy See

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### VATICAN

#### **Holy Father greets Sri Lankan pilgrims**

On February 8, in St. Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis held a special audience for groups of faithful from Sri Lanka, on pilgrimage to Rome to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the Church to Our Lady. In his remarks, the Holy Father spoke of the shrine built by an Oblate:

Among other things, he said: “I greet you, dear brothers and sisters of the Sri Lankan community in Italy! I extend fraternal greetings to Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and the other Bishops of your homeland. I thank Cardinal Ranjith for the invitation to visit Sri Lanka. I accept it and believe the Lord will give us this grace. You have come on pilgrimage to Rome to render homage to

Our Lady, at the end of the celebrations to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration to her of the Church in Sri Lanka.

“Seventy-five years ago, the dark clouds of what would be the second world conflict were thickening in the skies and the faithful, guided by a sure intuition of faith, entrusted themselves to Our Lady, who always defends her children from dangers. In 1940, in the dramatic circumstances of the war, the Archbishop of Colombo, Msgr. Jean-Marie MASSON, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, made a vow to build a shrine in honour of Our Lady if the island were preserved from foreign invasion. So it came about, and after the end of the war the beautiful Shrine of Our Lady of Lanka at Tewatte was built, and was consecrated forty years ago.

“Dear brothers and sisters, Our Lady is always close to us, she looks upon each one of us with maternal love and accompanies us always on our journey. Do not hesitate to turn to her for every need, especially when the burden of life with all its problems makes itself felt.”

## VATICAN

### Oblate bishop resigns

On 11 February 2014, the Holy Father Francis accepted the resignation from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Mohale’s Hoek, in Lesotho, presented by His Excellency, Bishop Koto

KHOARAI, O.M.I., in conformity with Canon 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law.

The 84 year old Bishop Koharai was ordained for the Diocese of Mohale’s Hoek in 1978. At the time of his resignation, he was one of the ten longest serving bishops in the world. Also on that list of ten is another Oblate, the 73 year-old Bishop Jean-Claude BOUCHARD of Pala, Chad, ordained a bishop in 1977.

Bishop Koharai’s successor, also appointed on 11 February, is Fr. John Joale Tlhomola, of the Servants of Christ the Priest.

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## General Administration

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### GENERAL SECRETARIAT

#### Understanding statistics

“There are lies, damned lies, and statistics.” So said U.S. humorist Mark Twain, and those words hold true for the annual statistics presented by the General Secretariat of the Oblates to the Vatican and posted each February on our web site, and especially so this year.

A number of people have noted significant differences in the numbers, particularly of scholastics, in the report for 2013 from that of 2012. “It must have been a terrible year,” some said, “to go from 627 to 558 seminarians in one year.” Although not a lie, and certainly not a damned lie, these are statistics, and they depend entirely on the source.

The source for Oblate statistics is the database of Oblates in the secretariat, upgraded and adjusted with reports which come in from the various Oblate provinces, delegations and missions. The records of first vows, final vows, ordinations, departures and deaths which are received daily in Rome go to make up the annual report.

The process runs smoothly where communication by e-mail, fax, and regular mail works well. But, in many of the places where Oblates minister, electricity is haphazard at best, the mail about the same, and telephone lines for faxes function occasionally. Where these services don’t work is where the “lies” part of it enters, since the

General Administration’s Roman statistics depend on the local information getting to Rome.

This year, a concerted attempt was made to “catch up” and led to what appeared to be inconsistencies. A number of cases where Oblates were ordained a few years ago, and the records never made it to the secretariat, were discovered and corrected. Oblates listed as scholastics for two, three or four years who were actually priests for that period were now listed as priests instead of scholastics. And, some whose departure information had never reached Rome finally were removed from the list. On the positive side, a number who had taken first vows over that period were able to be added to the list of Oblates.

All in all, it was a major adjustment, and, we hope, a one-time move. Next year’s figures should be more consistent with reality and the word “statistics”, at least in Oblate reports, can be removed from the Mark Twain quote. (William O’DONNELL)

### GENERAL POSTULATION

#### Fr. Thomas Klosterkamp, new General Postulator

In conformity with the norms of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, which recently established an age limit for Postulators, Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ VEGA has ended his tenure as General Postulator of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Father General in Council has named Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP as the new Postulator. The General Postulator, as delegate of Father General, is the principal agent for all the Oblate Causes.

Fr. Martínez, the outgoing Postulator, was officially appointed on 14 September 2006, with the approval of the Prefect of the Congregation of the Holy See on 10 November of that same year.

Fr. Klosterkamp was born in Monheim, Germany, in 1965. He made his first oblation in 1988 and was ordained a priest in 1994. Among other assignments or responsibilities, he was the provincial superior of Germany for four years and then he served six more years as the first superior the new Province of Central Europe made up of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. He currently lives in Rome and is superior of the General House. (*Joaquín Martínez*)

## GENERAL POSTULATION

### Reopening of the Cause of the Servant of God Pierre Fallaize

In March 2010, as General Postulator of the Causes of Oblates, I wrote to the bishop of Bayeux-Lisieux to know what was happening with the Cause of the Servant of God, Bishop Pierre Fallaize, a Cause promoted by that diocese. The Chancellor of the Diocese, Daniel Austin, answered me, reassuring me that it had not been buried, but the nun who was directing the work had fallen seriously ill and that the Bishop, Pierre Auguste Pican, SDB, was looking for a new postulator. The new Bishop, Jean-Claude Boulanger, has appointed one in the person of Fr. Raymond Zambelli, who says: "Currently we are totally restructuring the diocesan Commission for this Cause. Bishop Boulanger must appoint new members." And so it is starting again. That is good news.

Bishop Pierre Fallaize (1887-1964) was a pure-blooded Norman. He was born in Gonneville-sur-Honfleur (Calvados, France). Orphaned of father and mother, he entered the minor seminary of Lisieux in 1899.

He did his military service and upon being discharged, he followed the steps of his compatriot, Bishop Arsène TURQUETIL, the legendary missionary bishop of the Polar Regions. He applied to enter the Missionary Oblates and, without awaiting a reply, presented himself at Bestin (Belgium) to begin his novitiate on 8 December 1906. He made his first vows on 25 December 1907 and was ordained a priest in 1912. The following year, he was sent to the polar missions of Mackenzie, considered then as the most difficult.

He was ordained a bishop on 13 September 1931 at the age of 44.

Eight years later, he had to submit his resignation because of almost total blindness which he accepted with heroic patience. The Inuit or Eskimos called him "*Inúk Ilaranaikor*" (the man who never gets angry).

He went back to his homeland and exchanged his episcopal crosier for the white cane of the blind and the "sled" of a guide-dog. For many years, he was a faithful confessor for the Carmelites and the many pilgrims that go to Lisieux: the Carmel and the basilica of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, his compatriot, friend and patron... these would be his new mission fields.

In his old age, he let himself be seduced by missionary nostalgia and he decided to go back to the North Pole where he would give his soul back to God three years later, in Fort Smith, on 10 August 1964. (*Joaquín MARTÍNEZ VEGA*)

## Canada-United States

### OMI LACOMBE

#### Death of the Oblate Dean

Father Leopold ENGEL passed away on 22 January 2014 in Saskatoon, SK. Early in his ordained life,

Father Engel was chosen to be Superior of the Oblate Community in Toronto. Thereafter, he was named Superior for a total of forty years in various places: St. Charles Scholasticate in Battleford, St. Thomas College in North Battleford, Provincial

Superior of St. Mary's Province, Superior of the Oblate General House in Rome, and finally, Mazenod Residence in Saskatoon.

Father Engel was blessed with a rich variety of qualities and skills. Fluent in a half-dozen languages, he exercised a voluminous correspondence and readership. His leadership was enhanced by love of community, attention to detail and organization, faithfulness in relationship and communication, willingness to serve, exceptional hospitality and a hope-filled, upbeat attitude.

Father Engel was born on 5 September, 1913, in Regina, SK. He professed his First Vows in 1933. His scholasticate years were spent at St. Charles Scholasticate, Battleford, SK, and at Odra, Poland. In 1938, Father Engel was ordained to the priesthood in Odra, Poland.

The funeral liturgy was held on 27 January at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Saskatoon, SK, presided by another former provincial of St. Mary's Province, Bishop Gerald WIESNER.

The new Oblate Dean is Fr. Englebert MACHINIA, of the Central European Province. He celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 21 October 2013 at Gelsenkirchen in Germany.

## ASSUMPTION

### Poland honours an emigrant son

On 10 November 2013, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Grzegorz Morawski, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Poland, honoured Fr. Janusz BŁAŻEJAK, pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Toronto, with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic. The Order of Merit of the Polish Republic is an honour bestowed by the President of Poland on "Polish citizens living abroad, who have made an outstanding contribution to international cooperation and collaboration in joining the Republic of Poland with other states and nations."

In his speech, the Consul General stressed Fr. Janusz's involvement in Polonia. Fr. Janusz is the chaplain and a member of the main board

of the Canadian Polish Congress, vice-president of the Polish Christian Millennium Foundation, a board member of Copernicus Lodge and Cultural Center of John Paul II, chaplain of ZHP Canada, chairman of the Conference of Polish Priests for Eastern Canada and chairman of the Polish Pastoral Council of the Archdiocese of Toronto. (Assumption Province News and Views, November-December 2013)

## UNITED STATES

### Oblate expresses his faith through art

January 25 marked the anniversary of the first gathering to share the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod. Although February 17, 1826, is the anniversary of papal approval of the Oblates' Constitutions and Rules, it was on January 25, 1816, that St. Eugene gathered a group of five other priests and asked the diocese of Aix for approval to live in community as the Missionaries of Provence. The novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois, USA, celebrated the anniversary with a special meal and prayer. Prior to the meal and following a reading about an experience St. Eugene had in Rome when having his own feet washed, the novitiate community knelt down and washed each other's feet.

A member of last year's novitiate class used his artistic talent to express the significance of the day. "The 'First Supper' painting touched my faith in a very particular way. It sprung from an experience of a beautiful meal to commemorate the foundation day of our congregation, OMI. That evening [Jan. 25] was shared in great fraternity, and the faith and vision of the first Oblates was brought to life by revisiting stories and sharing around the tables in a spirit of brotherhood. Fr. Jack LAU of the novitiate team proposed the idea of painting my experience of that evening while it was still burning within me," said Bro. Sidney SAKALA.

Sakala made his first vows as an Oblate on August 1, 2013, and is now a scholastic studying in Cameroon. He has been painting since he was young, but began attending art classes in the ninth grade. What started out as pencil sketches turned into a life-long passion of his, "I intend to continue painting for it is a huge part of my life."

He has found a way to combine his passion for painting and devotion to faith, "Faith touches a huge part of my life and I am blessed in so many ways to express this relationship I have with God." His artwork can be found hanging around the halls of the novitiate in Godfrey.

Sakala says he has high hopes for the Oblate Congregation. "I hope that we will continue to make an effort and bring to life what we hold as core to our life in community and ministry. The creation of art works, stories and all talents that touch our Charism is of great importance." (By Becky May in [www.omiusa.org](http://www.omiusa.org))

## Latin America

### HAITI

#### A "Holy Day" gift!

*Fr. Fred CHARPENTIER tells of a very special gift in his annual Christmas letter.*

When you think you've seen it all, that's when God springs something new on you to get your attention. Before Christmas, I went to the Foyer St. Etienne, home for the elderly, for a routine visit and as I was talking to Marie Marthe, our manager, a hand drawn flatbed cart, the kind used to carry supplies, pulled into the yard and stopped at our feet with some poor old fellow sprawled on it. The "chauffeur" told us he had someone to deliver here. From what we were able to find out, it seems that this poor man on the cart was a street person living on a porch and sidewalk off the cathedral rectory. He had just suffered a stroke and someone was trying to get him to the hospital for urgent care, but he was refused access (no next of kin to vouch for him), and so they decided to send him to the Foyer.

I could not stay because of another urgent case I had at the Fraternity Home for Youth, so I told Marie Marthe to see what could be done to get him to the hospital with references from our clinic staff. She would inform me about this the next day.

I went to the Foyer again the next day to check on the new arrival. What happened is that the man pulling the cart got impatient after I had left, thinking nothing would be done, and so, he just pulled out of the yard with the cart and the poor fellow still on it! When I heard that, I was more than upset and decided to go look for him myself. But before leaving, I told the staff that if we did not find him, there would be no Christmas party this year! "Don't you see that this man is our Christmas gift this year?"

After all, this is what we're here for! You should not have left him go away..." I then went immediately to the Cathedral Square, and there was our man, stretched out on the rectory steps; next to him was a friend on crutches. The lady street vendors who occupy the same space were watching over him and were sort of expecting me somehow to show up. They had wide smiles on their faces. They told me about his stroke yesterday, that they had tried to get him to the hospital, but were refused access, etc...

By now, our man was talking; he felt a little better, thanks to these ladies, pure strangers to him. I could see that his right side was paralyzed. He told me his name: Luckner **St. Jour** (family name translates HOLY DAY!!!). He had lost his job as a property caretaker years ago and he had to shine shoes for a living now. He spent all day living in the Cathedral Square, and slept on the rectory porch at night with other people like him so as to be safe.

After listening to him, I told him not to move; I would see the Sisters of Charity, and then I would send Yvenel to bring him to their urgent care ward; and when he gets better, he could come home with us to the Foyer where he will have his own place and lots of friends. He was happy to hear that. Finally, after all these years, someone saw him... Just then, the Assumption Cathedral bell tolled the mid-day Angelus prayer. I told him that was Our Lady's call for him today and my call to go see the sisters. So, I went to see my good friend, Sister Genova, the Mother Superior, and told her my story. She agreed right away to take him in for urgent care at 3 p.m. that same day! When he gets better, they will bring him to the Foyer for us. Luckner is now in good hands and I'm feeling much better. We had a wonderful Christmas party, and, God willing, Luckner will be with us as God's special gift to us this year.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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**CONGO****The Oblates send out other missionaries**

The African Institute of Mission Sciences (IASMI), directed by the Oblates in the Kintambo quarter of Kinshasa, has been organizing since 1994 a program of formation for missionaries coming from different places to work in Congo. Since then, about a hundred have participated and always, the formation program concludes with a solemn missionary send-off. This year, the celebration took place on 18 January.

While primarily inspired by the Gospel, the send-off draws on symbols of African culture. The highlight of the whole celebration is the anointing with white kaolin, a lime-based clay, with which the celebrant traces the sign of the cross on the forehead, hands and feet of those “sent” on mission. Kaolin, used in initiation rites and other important moments of life in Congo and other African countries, here becomes a symbol of blessing and communion, purity and faithfulness in the fulfillment of the mission received.

Normally, those who are “sent,” whose number varies from semester to semester, are priests, religious men and women. This year there were three sisters: a Franciscan Missionary of Mary from Colombia, and two Indians of the Missionary Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The ceremony was held, as usual, in the adjoining chapel of the scholasticate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in the presence of more than two hundred people, including students, professors and employees of the ISEM complex (*Institut St Eugene de Mazonod*), which includes the theology faculty, the missiology faculty, and an institute of missionary animation. Present was also a large group of lay people, mostly boys and girls who attend courses of specialization in computer science at the center created by Father Giovanni SANTOLINI, who now rests in a tomb on the grounds of scholasticate.

During the Mass, the number of the “sent” rose to four. Spontaneously joining the three sisters

was the celebrant, Abbé Félicien Mwanama, a diocesan priest and professor of missiology at our institute, named a few weeks ago as bishop of Luisa, a large diocese in the interior of the country. During the homily, he pointed out that he, as a newly appointed bishop, felt like he was “going out” (according to the pope's invitation in *Evangelii gaudium*), and therefore fully a participant in the rite of sending.

Helping to create an atmosphere of intense participation were the beautiful and lilting harmonies of polyphonic chants from the rather vast Congolese repertoire. Whenever we celebrate this missionary send-off, it has the flavor of an event that rekindles in all the joy of the Gospel, the joy of the mission. (Fr. Domenico ARENA)

**NATAL****The Church's response to AIDS**

The South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) AIDS Office and St Joseph's Theological institute launched a book called “Catholic Responses to AIDS in Southern Africa” during the plenary session of the bishops of the SACBC on 25 January 2014 in Manzini. The book was edited by Stuart BATE, OMI, and Alison Munro, OP.

The book looks at the response of the Church over the past thirty years as discussed at a theological conference held at St Joseph's Theological institute in Cedara, KwaZulu Natal in January 2013. Different papers examine the response in urban and rural dioceses, theology of sin in the context of AIDS, the tricky question for the Catholic Church regarding the use of condoms, HIV testing for candidates to seminaries and religious life, AIDS as a theme in spiritual direction, as well as AIDS and inter-religious dialogue.

Worldwide, Southern Africa has been the region most affected by HIV and AIDS. In 2011 it was estimated that about 10% of the population was HIV positive. But a much higher percentage of the population has been affected by the consequences of infection. Many have had to

deal with the care and support of family and friends infected by HIV. Many others have been affected by the loss of parents or other significant others as a result of AIDS related deaths. This includes up to 2 million “AIDS orphans.”

The Catholic Church in Southern Africa has been one of the principal players in the response to this crisis. From a relatively slow beginning in the 1980s it had become a major provider of health care and information on HIV prevention by the early 21st century. This book examines both the pastoral outreach and the theological motivation for this involvement. Despite a pastoral response in health care and social outreach quite out of proportion to the size of the Church in this region, the Catholic Church is largely viewed by society as having a negative impact on the scourge. A simple Google search of “AIDS and Catholic Church” reveals (apart from Catholic Church sites) an almost entirely negative set of comments focusing on only one thing: Condoms. That such a single minded universal scapegoating dominates is a sad reflection on the manipulation of truth in the modern world. It shows how control of the means of production in information technology creates hegemony based on secularist philosophical approaches to libertarianism in sexual freedom. The reality is much wider and much more nuanced than this prejudice. This book hopes to play a small role in redressing the balance.

## **GUINEA-BISSAU**

### **The challenges are enormous**

In 2013, our delegation celebrated ten years of presence in Guinea-Bissau. That is certainly not much in terms of length, but our consideration should not be limited only to numbers. What we want to do today is to realize the quality of our presence and even more, we want to look again at the needs so as to better face the challenges confronting our missionary presence in Guinea.

In ten years we have had time to settle down, to adapt, to discover the realities of the country, to know the socio-political situation. We have shared the daily lives of the people and lived with them through some of the crises that have

left consequences that are still remarkable today. Ten years is the time it took for us to build a solid foundation, a deep foundation for our mission project in Guinea as shown by our progress since we arrived in October 2003.

From Farim to Antula, we wanted to follow Christ, to let him live in us as we made him known and passed him on to others. This in response to the great expectations that this Church of Guinea had expressed to us upon our very arrival: “We do not expect that the new missionaries will work miracles, but that they be men of God.” Men of God we have been every time we brought his word to all those hearts who are seeking God. We've been that every time we bore witness to his love for humanity. We never cease to be that so long as there burns in us an unconditional love for Christ and his Church, in the image of our holy founder.

Today our missionary zeal in Guinea should no longer know moments of doubt and hesitation. The challenges are enormous: on the apostolic level, there is a lack of pastoral ministers; there are still parishes and missions unattended by a priest. There are still areas where parishes could be established; the size of some missions is so huge that they should be split, to name but a few! On the societal level, there is much to do when you consider that because of the political instability of the country, no government has really managed to address the social issue and make it a priority. How can we forget the Guinean youth? They have a great desire for education and schooling, but alas, they are plagued by school crises for which there are still no real solutions. The school system is paralyzed; only private schools experience normal operations, while these schools are not within the reach of the average Guinean.

In short, the needs and demands are many. We must all take them to heart and offer them to the Lord in our daily prayer, and in our work of evangelization, let us remember that “the glory of God is man fully alive.” Then we can accompany the people of Guinea that seeks to get up and walk towards God! (Fr. Simon Peter BADJI in *Échos de la délégation du Sénégal - Guinée Bissau*, January 2014)



**SENEGAL****"Foyer Joseph Gerard" in Dakar: a new home**

In a person's, 25 is a significant age. You begin to firm up a path for your own life. Often for professional or romantic reasons, you leave your parents' home to live in your own. The "Foyer Joseph Gerard" has walked the same path: at the age of 25, it has found its own home. It was born in the house next to the rectory of Mary Immaculate Parish in Assainies Parcelles, Dakar. Grown to childhood, it moved to Castor together with the pre-novitiate. On October 7, it opened its own house at the CSPA, behind the Police Station, Unit 22 of Assainies Parcelles, while maintaining close ties with its older brothers at the pre-novitiate, all of this thanks to the help of its "parents," the Senegal-Guinea Bissau delegation of the Oblates and Mr. Honoré Gbaguidi.

On 15 February 2014, we took advantage of the visit of Father General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, for the blessing of the new house.

The drums expressed beautifully our joy at having Fr. Lougen with us. There followed a meeting of the youth with Fr. General who invited us to an ever deeper self-knowledge and to be transparent and dependable persons. After welcoming the prenovices from Castor, the other Oblates of Dakar, the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor and some friends of the community, we proceeded to

the blessing of the house. As he went around the house, Fr. Louis added his own blessings: at the pantry, "may it never lack something to eat;" on the stairs, "may no one fall down;" in the rooms of the formators, "wisdom, patience, good humor!" Finally, we shared a meal together.

The first class at the new "foyer" is made up of 14 youth and two Oblates. Our main occupation is the classes of the second and third year which we frequent at the Secondary School of Assainies Parcelles. But we live together with the desire to clarify our call to consecrated life in the OMI family and in the spirit of the Foyer.

In the French language, the "foyer" is a fireplace. The fire which warms and gathers the family: that is what we live in eating together, in sharing, in sports, and in the upkeep of the house.

The fire which gives light and glows: that is what we are trying to live in the pastoral activities at the parish or simply with the witness of our lives at school.

The fire which burns and purifies: that is what we live with our daily prayer in the liturgy of the hours and the Eucharist, in times of formation and spiritual direction. Lord, enkindle in us your Spirit, place in us the fire of your love...but let's be careful not to burn down the house! (Claudio CARLEO)

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## Asia-Oceania

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**JAPAN****Triennium begins in the Far East...**

Since it was not possible for everyone to come together on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, the Oblates in Japan decided to meet in Itami on 26 December 2013.

The liturgy to open the Triennium began with a hymn to the Holy Spirit followed by meditation, prayer and reflection. Sitting together as a community facing the baby Jesus in the crib was an important moment for us. It was as if we too like the Magi from distant lands were present together that evening.

After the one-hour liturgy it was time for a social hour and fellowship. As the spirits refreshed the soul, some delicious dishes nourished the body. When everyone had his full then came the 'bingo time' that was enjoyed by all. Some were in a mood to sing and dance too!

The following day we gathered in the chapel of Itami church for the Eucharist, which was presided over by the most senior man in the delegation Fr. Bert SILVER.

The Magi left the land they knew following a star to a place of uncertainty and discovered the Savior of the world. Their encounter with the

Lord changed literally the direction of their lives and they returned home as renewed persons.

The Triennium is a time for both personal and community renewal. It also invites us to change direction through concrete gestures of conversion. Our wish and prayer is that during these weeks and months of preparation, God may inspire us, help us be bold and courageous so that we will commit ourselves to some real signs of new life among us. (Bradly ROZAIRO)

## PHILIPPINES

### Planning a jubilee celebration

The year 2014 will mark the 75th anniversary of Oblate missionaries in the Philippines. The first pioneer missionaries came from United States provinces: Frs. Gerard MONGEAU (Texas Province), Emile BOLDUC, Egide BEAUDOIN and George DION (Franco-American Province). They landed in Manila on 25 September, 1939. Fr. Mongeau was appointed as the Superior of the Philippine Mission directly under the General Administration and supported by the 4 American Provinces.

In January 2014, a preparatory committee for the jubilee laid out plans that will culminate in

a three-day celebration in September 2014: the Festival of Remembering on 23 September; the Festival of Reliving on 24 September; and the Festival of Hoping on 25 September.

On the whole, the jubilee will be a celebration of thanksgiving for the Divine Creator's loving grace and guidance. It will commemorate the legacy of the early Oblates, vigorously renew the spirit of evangelization among present co-workers and missionaries, and face the challenges of the future of new evangelization with zeal, especially among the poor and the abandoned, with concrete actions as articulated in the province's 2013 Congress.

Among the many activities, there will be:

- A comprehensive video production depicting the life of the Pioneers, pioneering ministries, present ministries and life of the martyrs of the Philippine Province;
- Videos about Oblate missions on social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter;
- Thematic monthly District days of recollection for Oblates, based on the Apostolic Exhortation, "Evangelii gaudium" and talks by former provincials.

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## Europe

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## UKRAINE

### Praying for peace

*On February 21, from Ukraine, in the midst of a terrible conflict, the Oblate Delegation Superior, Fr. Pawel WYSZKOWSKI, wrote to Fr. Chicho ROIS, the General Councillor for Europe, to update him on the situation.*

Already almost 100 persons have died because of the conflict in Ukraine. The fighting itself has, at this moment, ceased, because the president has finally signed an accord with the leaders of the opposition concerning a return to the constitution of 2004, when the president did not have as much power as he has today. The accord has been endorsed by representatives of Poland, Germany and France. Unfortunately, Russia has not endorsed it.

There will be presidential elections at the end of this year and in ten days, a government should be formed.

The people, who for more than three months have been on the squares of Kiev and other places, see this accord as a great hope and a way out of the crisis. Three days ago, the statue of Our Lady of Fatima was in the square. The Roman Catholic cathedral, which is a few meters from Independence Square, was taking in various refugees and wounded persons. A hospital in Kiev, led by a Catholic doctor, was taking in gratis many of the sick and was performing surgery gratis. There were 600 more injured persons just in Kiev.

From the moment the conflict became so serious, various religious orders opened their doors for the refugees. Even now, in the monasteries

there is continual adoration for peace and in the parishes too, there are liturgies for peace. I have invited all the members of the delegation to do a daily hour of adoration in our houses and, together with the people, to have a complete day of fasting.

The Oblates who offer their lives for the people have not been killed or wounded, but they are helping the people, especially those with no way out; they offer them hope and consolation at the death of their loved ones. The financial crisis and the heavy inflation that now afflicts the country touches us too, but we have confidence in Divine Providence.

There is a beautiful picture in which one can see a priest who yesterday guided by the hand a group of 60 policemen who had been battered for 24 hours of clashes with the people. The priest is “untouchable;” like a child, you don’t kill him who acts as a guide for the people even now. Just a few years ago, 45 thousand religious were killed in our country; today, you don’t touch them. Thanks be to God.

We really hope that Father General will come to visit us. It’s important that we not be alone at this time; before his visit in March, things will calm down. Thanks for your prayers and your support.

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### Anniversaries for April 2014

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#### 65 Years of priesthood

1949.04.24 08119	Fr. Jacques Dherbomez	France
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#### 60 Years of religious life

1954.04.05 10256	Bro. James Beggan	Anglo-Irish
1954.04.25 09658	Fr. José Frisch	Paraguay
1954.04.25 09659	Msgr. Erwin Hecht	Cent. S. Africa

#### 60 Years of priesthood

1954.04.11 08567	Fr. Adolf Volk	Namibia
1954.04.11 08622	Msgr. Bernardo Witte	Argentina-Chile
1954.04.25 08677	Fr. Jules Dion	N.D.-du-Cap

#### 50 Years of priesthood

1964.04.05 10774	Fr. François Carpentier	Cameroun
1964.04.05 10771	Fr. Jean Lamy	Cameroun
1964.04.05 10781	Fr. Xavier Mandron	France
1964.04.05 10772	Fr. Jean-Claude Romain	France
1964.04.05 10778	Fr. Joseph Sergent	France
1964.04.05 10769	Fr. Lucien Vivant	France

#### 25 Years of priesthood

1989.04.08 12898	Fr. Bruno Favero	Mediterranean
1989.04.29 12903	Fr. Marius Nimal Fernando	Colombo

## Prayers for our deceased

No. 10-21

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Joseph Francis Santhiapillai	Jaffna	24/09/1933	Jaffna	23/01/2014
Fr. Clement Kokoana	Lesotho	14/04/1939	Maseru	26/01/2014
Bro. Edward Mikolajczyk	Poland	25/07/1954	Poznan	28/01/2014
Bro. André Plantamp	France	23/01/1935	Apt	29/01/2014
Fr. Richard Houlahan	United States	07/12/1932	San Antonio	30/01/2014
Bro. André Locas	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	25/02/1927	Richelieu	03/02/2104
Fr. Thuso Gregory Mothibedi	Central Province, South Africa	20/06/1969	Bloemfontein	03/02/2014
Fr. Chester Cappucci	United States	25/06/1926	Tewksbury	04/02/2014
Fr. Jacques Pomès	Cameroun	26/01/1936	Pala	13/02/2014
Fr. Maurice Robitaille	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	24/11/1921	Richelieu	16/02/2014
Fr. Roma Payant	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	30/06/1915	Richelieu	18/02/2014
Fr. Jean Colson	France	31/03/1920	Pontmain	22/02/2014

*“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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