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## With the Church, a home and a school of communion

**Fr. Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General**

In our journey of reflection on community, the theme we have chosen for the first year of our Oblate Triennium, today I would like to invite you to reflect on two Church documents of the past 20 years. This will allow us to broaden our view beyond the confines of the Oblate world and to tune into the Church's wavelength, in which and for which we exercise our ministry.

The first document is "Fraternal Life in Community", by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. It is a document from 1994 that is worth reading again during this, our first year of reflection on Oblate community. In particular I would like to invite you to read numbers 39-42 of this document, possibly as preparation for a community meeting in which it would be timely not only to share but also to focus on some essential elements of the life of the community and its apostolic activity.

I would like to focus in particular on an expression that we find in number 39, where it speaks of a "just balance" between two positive aspects of community life: respect for the person and for the common good, the demands and needs of the individual and those of the community, personal charisms and the community's apostolate. This balance, often risky and difficult to achieve as well as to maintain, "should be far from both the disintegrating forces of individualism and the levelling aspects of communitarianism." These are expressions from the document, which goes on to define the religious community as "the place where the daily and patient

passage from 'me' to 'us' takes place, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted to the community, from seeking 'my things' to seeking 'the things of Christ'."

There is certainly material here for serious reflection and discussion in community. What is highlighted in this paragraph affects not only the lives of individuals, but also their mutual relationships and the apostolic project, the ministry and the service assigned to the community.

The second document that I would like to propose for reflection and community discussion is the Apostolic Letter of John Paul II "At the beginning of the new millennium", 2001. It would be interesting to make the document the object of reflection and discussion, especially with regard to the theme of community, numbers 43-45. This Apostolic Letter is obviously addressed to all Christendom, but there are passages that resonate and represent a major challenge for consecrated life. Here is what John Paul II proposed at the moment when the Church was preparing to cross the threshold of a new millennium: "To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings." (43). Faithfulness to God's plan and responding to the world's deepest yearnings: are these not also, perhaps, aspects that characterize us as Oblates of Mary Immaculate?

In the words that follow, the pope develops this point, trying to explain what that which he just

stated means in practice and stressing the need to promote a spirituality of communion as the foundation, not only of community life but also of all the relationships that we called to establish among ourselves and with others.

This text made me think of an idea that surfaced in the Chapter of 1992 and ended up in its document "Witnessing as apostolic community." I remember that during that Chapter, they sensed the importance of making, within the Oblate family, a shift similar to that made on the international level in the fairly recent past: from dependence to independence, from independence to interdependence. The idea of interdependence had been accepted very positively and with a certain euphoria. But in fact, this word is almost always accompanied, in the Chapter document, by the word "communion." Personally, I was convinced, and still am, that the

end point of this journey is precisely communion. Interdependence, while helpful, always implies dependence: mutual indeed, but still dependence. The reality of communion, however, surpasses any form of dependence because it is based on the concept of a gift.

I find it significant that John Paul II would say, in the text quoted above: "A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us." In communion, which is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity, we find not only the spiritual but also the theological and existential foundation of community life and the mutual relationships that we are called to establish and make grow among us as a true and proper "missionary activity."

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## General Administration

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### UKRAINE

#### **Fr. General is there!**

*On Monday, 17 March 2014, the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, wrote about the atmosphere in Ukraine on the day after the referendum in Crimea. He is in Ukraine to preach a retreat to the Oblates there.*

The situation is apparently calm although one sees masses of troops here and there; on the road we passed quite a line-up of Ukrainian tanks the other day near Kiev. The anxiety of the people is great given the history here in Ukraine of such great suffering and the present mood coming from Russia. I was to visit the square where the people were shot but due to heavy sleet and wind we did not go. People are going there to protest, lay flowers, pray, talk, console and strengthen each other.

The referendum regarding Crimea was a complete farce. Independent observers said perhaps 20% of the population in Crimea voted although Russian authorities claim that 85% and more voted. They are saying that 91% of the vote was favorable that Crimea be under Russia. This is a typically Russian manipulative approach to such situations

and no one takes the referendum seriously. People here in Ukraine said that in light of world pressure at this moment, Russia might wait for things to calm down and then move in to take over Crimea entirely in several weeks. The fear is whether Russia will move into other parts of Ukraine to dominate it even outside of Crimea.

I am told that the Greek Catholic Church will be the first to suffer under Russia's rule. The Greek Catholic Church has 3000 priests in Ukraine and they are mostly young priests with wives and little children. Already the families are preparing to move their wives and children to safer places should the Russians show greater force. A Greek Catholic priest in Crimea was abducted on Saturday and later released. I was told that it was miraculous he wasn't killed or at least beat up. This is an intimidation tactic of Russia to send a strong message to the Greek Catholic Church. There is no doubt that it will be extinguished by Russia. In some conversations, there has been talk about safer places for the Greek Catholic priests and their families in other countries of Europe where they might be able to do ministry among the many Ukrainians spread throughout Europe or even serve the Latin Church.

Our two Oblates in Crimea will not come to the retreat since their visibility could be dangerous for them and they might not be permitted to return. They are a bit afraid and are sealed up in their apartment, having bought provisions when the trouble started. They are in contact with the Superior of the Delegation twice a day. They did celebrate the Eucharist for the Greek Catholic priest who was abducted since he prefers not to be seen any more. No wonder why not! Our two brothers in Crimea hope to follow the retreat by Skype so they will be connected to us. I am due to visit them after the retreat and I hope that it will be possible. Each day brings new events and we will see if I can go.

The tension is also seen at the Ukraine/Polish border where I have been told that containers of tents, cots, food and medical supplies have been stationed should there be a tragedy within Ukraine or should the supplies be needed for refugees seeking safety. People are preparing for the worst.

In a parish I was at on Saturday, I was asked what the people could do. I referred to the Gospel that day "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." I also said we draw close to Mary, Our Lady of Peace, at this time and pray together for the protection of Ukraine and that peace and security might be established. The people are comforted to know that the world is concerned and that Oblates are praying everywhere for Ukraine.

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## Europe

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### UKRAINE

#### A call to peace

*Simferopol is the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Ukraine. As such, it has been the scene of great tension in the conflicts of late February and early March. The Auxiliary Bishop of Odessa-Simferopol is an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Bishop Jacek Pyl, ordained to the episcopacy in January 2013. On 26 February 2014, Bishop Pyl released the following statement.*

For many weeks now, the Roman Catholic Church has been accompanying with her prayers the whole of Ukraine, praying for the peaceful solution to the problems with which the country is struggling. In our prayers we ask God for his mercy for all Ukrainian people and we also offer voluntary fasting on bread and water for the same intention. Today, as the unrest has encompassed the Crimean territory, we want to pray especially for our peninsula. With our prayers, we reach out to all the people, regardless of their religion, political views or ethnic background. We pray that the people, who for decades have lived in peace, will not start fighting today and that the bloodshed of the kind we have seen in Kiev's Maidan (Independence Square) may be avoided here.

I am calling on all people, both the faithful and others, that in the name of solidarity with the heritage of our Fathers, who cared for the development of our Autonomous Republic of Crimea, to avoid extremism and, in this difficult time, to not let the brotherhood among Crimean people be broken. In AROC we have Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tartars, Armenians, Poles, Germans, Czechs and many others living peacefully together. For many centuries we have had the Orthodox, Muslims, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Caraims and people of other denominations, together with atheists, living in Crimea. We cannot let our ethnic background nor our religion divide us now. We are children of the same God, the only God, who is our common Father. The motto of the Republic of Crimea which is inscribed into our coat of arms is "*Blooming in unity.*" May these words be our motto for the difficult time now.

I would like to reach out with my words to the faithful of all denominations that they keep praying for peace, and that those who have decided to do so, continue voluntarily fasting. May the Good God free our hearts from all evil temptations and may he bless our good intentions.

+ Jacek Pyl, OMI

*Auxiliary Bishop of the Odessa-Simferopol Diocese*

## UKRAINE

### On the edge of disaster

Since the invasion of Crimea by Russia, the news from that part of Ukraine is cause for great concern worldwide, but in particular for our Oblate family. The Auxiliary Bishop of Odessa-Simferopol is an Oblate: Bishop Jacek PYL. But the Oblates are also in charge of a parish in the Crimean city of Eupatoria (or Yevpatoriya). According to *Wikipedia*, “*Today Yevpatoriya is a major Ukrainian Black Sea port, a rail hub, and resort town. The population swells greatly during the summer months, with many residents of northern cities visiting for beach recreation. As such, local residents are heavily employed during summer months but are often under-employed during the winter. The main industries include fishing, food processing, wine making, limestone quarrying, weaving, and the manufacture of building materials, machinery, furniture manufacturing and tourism. The National Space Agency of Ukraine has ground control and tracking facilities here.*”

Mindful of the dangerous situation for the Oblates in Crimea but in all of Ukraine as well, on 14 March, Fr. Pavlo VYSHKOVSKY, the Delegation Superior in Ukraine, once again asks for our prayers:

*In these days, people from many different countries in the world are joining together to support us in prayer and solidarity. Thank you very much for your prayers and support.*

*And now in Crimea, where there are Oblates in the city of Eupatoria, there is danger of war. We hope that God will help us live in peace.*

*Today, Father General begins his visit in Ukraine. Next week, he will guide all the Oblates of Ukraine in a retreat. We will be united with our brothers from Crimea who probably will not be able to come to the delegation house in Obukhiv for the retreat. They will remain with their people in Crimea to be with them in this difficult time, to protect them and support them.*

Furthermore, the Vatican approved organization “*Aiuto alla Chiesa che soffre*” (*Help for the*

*suffering Church*) published on 14 March an interview with Fr. Oleksandr Khalayim, who had just returned to Rome from Ukraine. In his interview, Fr. Oleksandr specifically mentions the plight of the priests in Crimea: “*With regard to the referendum next Sunday for the separation of Crimea, the thought of Fr. Oleksandr goes to the eight priests working in the disputed peninsula. ‘It was not possible to send them anything, not even medicine. There are many checkpoints on the streets and flights from Kiev to Simferopol and Sevastopol have been canceled. Both cities can be reached only from Moscow.’ In addition, the local Muslim community, the Tatars, is threatening to unleash a holy war, if Crimea becomes Russian.*”

## FRANCE

### Remembering Fr. Pierre Babin

The Centre for Research and Education in Communication (CREC), founded in 1971 by the late Fr. Pierre BABIN (†2012), held a special reception in his honor on 25 February, in the context of the congress of SIGNIS, a worldwide Catholic association for communicators.

Many former students of Fr. Babin were present and recalled how he had touched their lives, not only in the technical aspects of the world of media, but also with a spirituality for the era of mass communications.

A video made on this occasion can be found on YouTube at: <http://goo.gl/OaoZMO>.

## ITALY

### Founder of the “Family Centre” dies

Father Luciano CUPA, founder of the “Family Centre” died in Rome on 26 February. The psychologist and family counselor founded the Centre, with Rosalba Fanelli, in 1968. In 1976, they founded the School for Counselors.

Transparency, tolerance and tenderness. To those who knew him, those are the three big legacies that Father Luciano leaves behind: for those whose lives were interwoven with his, in the parish first, then in the Family Centre, the

premarital and marriage and family counseling centre, as well as in the School for Family Counselors; and for those who carry on his insights and commitment to the service of the person and the family.

Born in Suno in the Piedmont region on 30 July, 1927, Father Luciano was ordained a priest in 1950. After teaching at the juniorate in Florence, he served in parishes, from Sicily to the Veneto. For nine years, he was pastor in Bologna, then a Scout leader and finally professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 1966, he founded the Catholic Centre for Marriage Preparation, along with his confreres, Frs. Gianni COLOMBO and

Victor DALLA LIBERA, inspired by the Novalis Centre at the University of Ottawa, then directed by the Oblates. In 1968, the “Family Centre” was born.

The ministry’s focus was “being of help to family relationships, individuals and couples.” Fr. Cupia himself spoke of this in 2008 on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Centre: forty years, he explained, in the name of transparency, tolerance and tenderness: “Transparency, illuminating life, thought and action; tolerance, in respecting the beliefs of others, accepting others without wanting to change them; tenderness, in confident and gracious surrender to love.” (www.romasette.it)

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## Latin America

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### VENEZUELA

#### Living with uncertainty

While the secular media keeps us informed, more or less, about the various “hot spots” of the world, as Oblates, we need to pay attention especially whenever some of our brothers are living near violent and dangerous situations. In the last half of February, the news from Venezuela has been worrisome.

The Oblate Mission of Venezuela (attached to the Mediterranean Province) is led by Fr. Javier ÁLVAREZ. This mission superior recently wrote to Fr. Miguel FRITZ, the General Councillor for Latin America, to inform him of the situation. Fr. Javier also included remarks from the Facebook page of Fr. José Manuel CINCUENDEZ who lives in Palo Gordo, not far from one of the centers of unrest.

They both speak of the strife and demonstrations that began on a university campus, but which have triggered elsewhere more protests and subsequent repression by the government who call the demonstrators “golpistas y fascistas” (coup leaders and fascists). Several persons have lost their lives in the melees.

José Manuel sums up the background to the trouble that goes well beyond the original complaints of the university students: *What’s happening in Venezuela? It’s difficult to explain. For a long time, there has been lack of basic products in the country. To get such elementary*

*items such as oil, margarine, milk, pork, sugar, toilet paper, one has to stand in line and pay more than a fair price for these things: it looks like a conspiracy.... Such collective discontent, along with the desire to impose a “socialist” system, is the breeding ground for a backlash against the government.*

Our brother Oblates are unaware of much of what is happening because of the tight control the government has on the media. In some areas, internet connections are also blocked.

As Javier concludes his e-mail to Miguel Fritz: *When we have more information, we will keep you informed; but as you see, the thing is still very uncertain and it does not augur much good. I repeat that all the members of the mission are well and those who are in most danger are in the State of Táchira. Here in Santa Barbara, everything is totally tranquil, for the moment.*

### BRAZIL

#### 50 years in Recife

*Oblates from the former Central Province in the United States went to northeastern Brazil 50 years ago to work with the very poor in the city of Recife. To help celebrate the anniversary of the Oblate arrival there, two members of the former province, Fr. David KALERT and Fr. Louis STUDER, joined the celebration. Fr. Studer recounts his experience.*

More than 1000 people gathered in Recife on February 2, 2014, to celebrate 50 years of Oblate presence and ministry in the Archdiocese of Recife-Olinda, Brazil. Archbishop Fernando Soburido, OSB, presided and preached at the Mass and thanked the Oblates for their work, especially with the poor. Over 40 Oblates and diocesan priests were present for the celebration. Fr. David Kalert and I represented the U.S. Province.

Several parishioners gave testimony at Mass of how the Oblates encouraged and helped them on their journey to Christ. The Oblate Provincial of Brazil, Fr. Francisco RUBEAU, expressed gratitude for the dedication and hard work of the Oblates over these 50 years. He assured the people of the continued presence of the Oblates and made a strong request for vocations.

Responding to the call of Blessed Pope John XXIII for each religious community to send missionaries to Latin America, Fr. William COOVERT, provincial the former Central Province sent Frs. James KOHMETSCHER, Boniface WITTENBRINK and Darrell RUIPER to found the first Oblate community in an extremely poor favela known as Brasilia Teimosa. The three were soon joined by Fr. Ed FIGUEROA who had earlier worked with the Oblates from the former Eastern U.S. Province, in São Paulo, Brazil.

When the Oblates arrived in Recife, they faced a military dictatorship in Brazil that did little to serve the needs of the poor. Many Oblates spoke publicly about this cruel injustice. A couple of them were sent to prison, one was tortured and two were forced to leave the country. Those who remained worked on the streets with the very poor.

Together with two Brazilian religious sisters who had worked with him on the streets, Fr. Figueroa founded the Community of God and Our Lady for homeless children, many of whom were disregarded by society because of mental and physical challenges. Archbishop Dom Helder Camara donated a large house for the community.

In September 2001, the City Council of Recife proclaimed Fr. Kohmetscher a *Citizen of Recife*

for his many years of solidarity with the poor in their struggle for fit living conditions.

The Oblates throughout Brazil have also met with success in fostering vocations. Presently 60 Oblates are in vows ministering in Brazil, with another 34 in various stages of seminary formation in the province which was established in 2003, uniting the Oblate Units of São Paulo, Belém and Recife.

I thanked the Oblates, the Oblate Associates, and all those with whom the Oblates have ministered over these 50 years. Their prayers, encouragement, and faith, help make Recife celebration our ministry with them one of joy and blessing!

## **BOLIVIA**

### **Carnival in the mountains**

*Brother Agustin COTÉ published in his monthly "News Notes" this letter he had received from Father Roberto DURETTE in late February.*

Here we are at the beginning of Carnival. Life takes on a different aspect until the Sunday of Temptation, that is, the first Sunday of Lent. There are many aspects of the Bolivian carnival depending on the different regions of the country. On the altiplano---the highlands where we are located---carnival is linked to the cult to Mother Earth. The ch'alla, as it is called in the Quechua language, is the main ritual during which one thanks the Pachamama (Mother Earth in Quechua) for all that she has given us during the year and at the same time asks her for protection and her continuous blessing for the coming year. The ritual consists of showering the earth with alcohol, confetti etc. This has a profound meaning now that we are just beginning to learn how to respect nature and protect the environment.

According to Quechua and Aymara thinking (the two main Indigenous people of the altiplano) we are intimately linked to the Pachamama, we are part of her. If we destroy or damage nature, we are destroying ourselves in the long run. This is a far cry from what we learned before, that man

is king of creation and thus has the power and right to use, abuse and dispose at will of God's creation: a wrong interpretation of the Bible. The end results are contaminated rivers, destroyed forests, polluted air and people having serious health problems. One has to listen and learn from millenarian cultures.

Then there is the traditional carnival celebrated in the city of Oruro situated 50 miles from the mining town of Siglo XX where I am. The famous entrada (entry or beginning) is held on Saturday before Ash Wednesday. The main theme is the struggle between good and evil personified by the Archangel Michael on the one hand and Lucifer on the other. All of this is choreographed by dancers accompanied with appropriate band music. That is followed by a parade of more than 50 dancing groups

wearing colorful costumes. Everything finishes in the wee hours of the night. The feast attracts tourists from many countries.

This year the rains have been very heavy and many parts of Bolivia are flooded at this moment. Over 60 people have died. Most of the flooding is in the lowlands of the country. Happily for us is that we are high in the mountains (13,000 ft. / 3,962 m.) With the help of our radio stations we are awakening the solidarity of our people so they can help those who are suffering the consequences of the flooding. Positive results! Last November the Bolivian Senate in one of its sessions in La Paz voted to give an award to our radio station for the work done in promoting democracy, human rights and development. It was a great day for all our communicators and also motivation to continue on.

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## Asia-Oceania

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### JAFFNA

#### **Oblate JPIC promoter arrested and then released**

Two human rights defenders, Ruki Fernando and Fr. Praveen MAHESAN were detained by police of the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Ruki Fernando is currently serving as Human Rights adviser to the INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre based in Colombo. Fr. Praveen is Director of the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR) based in Jaffna. Fr. Praveen is also the parish priest of the Amaithipuram Church at Akkarayan in the Kilinochchi district. Both have been actively involved in human rights issues in general and those affecting the victims of war in particular

The arrest took place in on Sunday evening, 16 March, in Kilinochchi district. Before the two were transferred to Colombo for further "interrogation," the provincial of the Jaffna Province, Fr. Paul NADCHETHIRAM was able to see Fr. Praveen for a brief time. Fr. Paul has also met with the Oblate lawyer from the Colombo Province and with Malcom Cardinal Ranjith. The Cardinal has promised to do whatever he can. Also offering much support is the provincial of the Colombo Province, Fr. Rohan SILVA.

*AsiaNews.it* published the following report on 18 March:

The Christians Solidarity Movement (CSM) and the National Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development strongly condemn the arrest of the two men. "We condemn this unlawful arrest. We call upon the government, which boasts about securing the rights of oppressed people, to release them immediately and show that the freedom it speaks about actually exists," said the CSM in a statement released at a press conference held at the Centre for Society and Religion in Maradana.

In its communiqué, the CSM calls for the release of the Catholic priest and a human rights activist who were arrested two days ago on terrorism charges.

The Christian group was joined by the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development, which, in a separate statement, called their arrest "inhuman and arbitrary."

"Fr. Praveen Maneshan and Ruki Fernando did not do anything illegal or criminal," the CSM said. "They only gave a voice to those who have none.

Theirs is a humanitarian commitment. For many years, they have worked for the rights of the people, without distinction of race, creed or origin.”

“We call on the authorities to provide them with free access to lawyers and to carry out transparent investigations,” said Fr George Sigamoney, executive secretary of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development.

Other people involved in human rights and members of the local Catholic clergy also spoke out at the press conference organised by the CSM.

“By acting this way, the government is trying to tell the world that Tamil terrorists still exist and that they still have supporters” said Fr Marimuttu Sathivel, one of the participants.

“In doing so, they are saying that the military must still be present in the northern and eastern provinces.”

Then, on 19 March, *AsiaNews.it* announced

This morning at dawn Fr. Praveen Maheshan, Tamil priest, and Ruki Fernando, a Catholic activist Sri Lankan, were released. The two had been arrested for “terrorism” on March 16 in Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka. The magistrate Aluthkade Columbus ordered their release without charges against them. Ajith Rohana, a police spokesman, announced, however, that the investigation that led to their arrests continue. Contacted shortly after the liberation, Ruki Fernando told *AsiaNews*: “I truly believe that only the prayers of so many friends and colleagues here and around the world have guaranteed my safety and that of Fr. Praveen. Thank God, who has heard and has granted our prayers.”(*dbsjeyaraj.com* and *AsiaNews.it*)

## **JAFFNA**

### **Tamil clergy write to the UNO**

In a letter to the United Nations Council on Human Rights, Tamil priests in the North and East of Sri Lanka state that there is an urgent need

for an international investigation into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that occurred during the Civil War and which continue even today on the island. The letter, sent to *Fides Agency*, is signed by 205 priests and religious, including Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Jesuits, other religious and more than 100 nuns. The first signatory, Bishop Rayappu Joseph of Mannar has endangered himself by calling for a UN intervention. As learned from *Fides*, the bishop, described as “the Romero in Sri Lanka,” is receiving pressure and death threats.

“Almost five years after the war ended, we have not seen any truth and justice emerge from the national mechanisms,” the text insists, noting that “part of the Tamil population is discriminated against and assaulted. Disappearances, sexual abuse, arrests, detentions and torture on the basis of the anti-terror law, restrictions on freedom of assembly, of expression, of association and of movement continue today,” charge the religious. “You cannot collectively commemorate the dead and the disappeared. Those who criticize the policies and practices of the government and defenders of human rights are branded as traitors or supporters of terrorism.”

Among these, there are also several Catholic priests who were “interrogated, threatened and intimidated. ... The army continues its interference in civil and economic activities, especially in the North and East, undermining the civil and economic empowerment of local people,” they continue. At the same time, they say, “we are concerned about the intensification of systematic efforts and measures to destroy the identity of the Tamil community. Military centers and institutions are grabbing the land of the Tamils, while development projects and an organized settlement of Sinhalese settlers continue at a rapid pace in the North and East of the island, where the Tamils have historically been the majority.”

The clergy also denounces “the imposition of the Sinhalese language and Buddhist religion in the North and East. ... There has been no genuine political process to address the root causes of the conflict, which are being



aggravated.” For this reason, it is urgent that the international community, through the United Nations, find concrete forms of assistance for the Tamil population. They ask, therefore, that the UN investigate allegations of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the war; that it clearly identify the units and individuals responsible; that it monitor human rights violations in Sri Lanka, through teams of UN experts; that it provide protection programs for victims and witnesses; that unrestricted access to all the important places, people and documents be ensured for the experts. ([www.radiovaticana.va](http://www.radiovaticana.va))

## PAKISTAN

### On a mission with Pope Francis

The mission in Quetta in the Baluchistan region, inaccessible land where Taliban militants groups are hiding, continues “in the company of Pope Francis”. This is what Fr. Renald LAWRENCE, of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Procurator of the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta, told *Fides Agency*.

A year after his election, the missionary explains: “The encouragement pronounced by the Pope: go, do not be afraid and serve your neighbor, has touched us deeply. Today they work with zeal and courage in this land, to share the same mission of the Pope and witness to Christ.” “Pope Francis,” he explains, “is a man of God and his vision is to give Christ to the world. As missionaries in this borderland, and as workers in God’s vineyard, we share with him, in often difficult circumstances, the mission of bringing Christ in this part of the world.”

The Oblate missionaries think that “Pope Francis appears to be a true bridge between God and the people, between the Church and today’s humanity.” What strikes Fr. Lawrence is, in particular, the first encyclical, “*Lumen fidei*”, written with Benedict XVI. It is a text that “invites us to shine the light of faith in our lives and in our land. It teaches us that faith is not arrogant, it strengthens the ties between the people and is at the service of justice and peace.” In Pakistan, the Pope’s speeches and actions are

much appreciated, said the missionary, such as his “basing a reform of the Curia on the criteria of simplification and transparency.”

Pope Francis also impresses with his simplicity and sense of what is essential. Fr. Inayat Bernard, a priest of the Diocese of Lahore, told *Fides* that “his choice to stay in a simple place, not in the papal apartment is an example.” Struck by this witness, Fr. Bernard says that he “refused a smartphone as a birthday gift from his friends”, and donated that amount of money for the poor.

The Executive Secretary of the Biblical Commission of Pakistan, Fr. Emmanuel Asi, in an interview with *Fides*, believes that “Pope Francis’ election was good news for the universal Church.” He added that the Commission has decided to translate the papal encyclical “*Evangelii Gaudium*” into Urdu, “so as to spread the text among the common people”. He shares the Pope’s lifestyle and his ecumenical and interfaith approach.

According to Fr. Bonnie Mendes, a priest in Faisalabad, “The Holy Father’s gesture of the washing of the feet of children and disabled prisoners earned him respect in the hearts and minds of people of all religions in the world.”

Fr. Francis Nadeem, OFM Cap, the national coordinator of the “Interreligious Council” in Lahore, told *Fides* that Muslim leaders also expressed their appreciation for Pope Francis and identify him with Pope John Paul II, who visited Pakistan in 1981, hoping that “he will visit Pakistan to encourage and strengthen interreligious dialogue.” (13/03/14: *Fides Agency*)

## BANGLADESH

### Sacrifice also through saving

To emphasize the importance of sacrifice during Lent, this year too, after the Ash Wednesday Masses, the churches of Bangladesh gave to their own faithful little terracotta “piggy banks”, inviting the Catholics “to save during the 40 days that separate us from Easter” and “to use the money raised for charitable and social activities.”

This practice, very common among Bangladeshi Catholics, has been going on for five years now.

Fr. Ajit COSTA, Oblate of Mary Immaculate and pastor of De Mazenod Parish in Dhaka, told *AsiaNews*: “This gift is intended to teach the meaning of sacrifice. We give a “piggy bank” to each family, so that the Catholics can save money together. This year we have distributed 1,500 of them, compared to 1,200 last year. With the collection of 2013, we raised approximately \$2,150: the money is used for the social and spiritual development of the community.”

Last year, continues Fr. Costa, the proceeds “were assigned to St. Thomas Church in the diocese of Sylhet, which needed urgent repair. But part of it was given to a Christian cooperative which used it to build houses. This year we hope to collect enough to draw up plans for the construction of a new church.”

During Lent, Catholics do not eat meat and many of them are content with only one full meal per day. Nirmal Gomes explains: “From the beginning of this period, we eat less and thus save a lot, compared to the normal daily expenses. It is also a good way to teach my daughter the value and the meaning of sacrifice.” (by Sumon Corraya in [www.AsiaNews.it](http://www.AsiaNews.it))

## **JAFFNA**

### **Houses for those displaced by war**

Twenty three newly built houses were handed over on 29 November 2013 to families who were displaced by the war of 2009. Up to now these families were living in makeshift shelters. Fr. Jeevendra PAUL, Grant Director of the OMI General Administration, kindly graced the occasion. This is an OMI-LEBARA partnership project where the financing is done by the LEBARA Foundation while the Oblates take care of the logistics. Already fifty houses in Paranthan and fifty houses in Maniamthotam, Jaffna, were handed over to displaced families by this project in 2012.

From the LEBARA website: *Aged 15, Lebara co-founder and CEO Ratheesan Yoganathan sought*

*refuge in the UK from the Sri Lankan Civil War. In 2001, he and friends Leon Ranjith and Baskaran Kandiah co-founded the Lebara Group.*

*Their vision was to help migrant communities keep in touch with loved ones back home by providing high-quality, low-cost products and services.*

*But when Ratheesan witnessed the impact of the 2004 Tsunami in Asia that vision widened, because he saw first-hand what happens to young children when denied basic needs such as water, food, shelter and education. It was then that the idea for the Foundation was first conceived. In 2008, the Lebara Foundation was registered with the aim of providing housing, health measures and schooling for displaced communities around the world.*

*“At the very heart of Lebara’s culture is the desire to give back and make a difference to the communities of our customers and their families and friends,” says Ratheesan. (<http://www.lebarafoundation.org>)*

## **KOREA**

### **Waiting for Pope Francis**

*11/03/14: Vatican Radio interview with Fr. Vincenzo BORDO.*

There’s great excitement in the Republic of Korea following the announcement of the pastoral visit of Pope Francis to this Asian country in mid-August. The Korean bishops wrote in their message: “This visit by Francis is a visit to all of Asia.” Especially among the poor and disadvantaged people of the big cities, the joy is spreading and they are abuzz with preparations for August. At Songnam, on the outskirts of Seoul, there is one of the more important Caritas centres in the country. Founded by Father Vincenzo Bordo, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, it is home to around 500 homeless people a day. David Dionisi asked the priest how the news was received by his guests.

V.B. - With great enthusiasm and great joy, especially where we are, a centre for homeless

people, beggars and street people. On hearing the news, everyone was elated. In fact, when the Pope celebrated his birthday and invited three homeless men, along with a dog, I related the news to all my guests who, thinking then that the Pope might come to Korea, said: "Then he will come to see us too! If he invites the homeless to his home, then he will come to be with us, all five to six hundred of us." So, there is great anticipation and expectation by our friends on the street to see him, because of his gestures of appreciation and recognition of street people.

D.D. - How will you get yourselves ready?

V.B. - First of all by teaching them who the Pope is. Here, we are in a non-Catholic and non-Christian setting; they know very little about the Pope and the Catholic Church. The first thing to do is to tell them who this person is, what he does and what the Catholic Church is. Therefore, we will prepare some catechesis for these people, a first proclamation, because they know neither Jesus nor the Church, and much less, the Pope. Consequently, it will be an opportunity to evangelize.

D.D. - So as not to get used to the situations of deprivation and misery we encounter walking the streets of our cities, you have a daily relationship with these things and have made your own this message of Pope Francis since the start of the Caritas Centre. What are the feelings of a missionary who has given voice to such a challenge on the periphery of Seoul?

V.B. Great joy when I heard these words of the Pope, because for the 20 years -- 22 years that I am in this ministry -- a few times I have felt myself ridiculed, abandoned, even outraged. The Pope, who recognizes this work, which says that these are brothers who are suffering, gives me much courage and gives so much courage to the street people. They say: "But the Pope who is such an important person, does he remember us?" These are situations of suffering that people do not often see, do not know about or do not want to see. The fact that the Pope has taken notice and has brought it to the attention of everyone gives consolation, hope and joy to all our friends who live on the street.

D.D. - How has Korea changed since 1989, the year of John Paul's second visit, until today? What are the new pastoral challenges of the local Church?

V.B. The Church has changed a lot in recent years; society has changed a lot and therefore, the Church too has changed. I arrived in Korea in 1990 and the attendance of Korean Catholics at Sunday Mass was 80%; you saw not only a lot of people going to Church, but you also so many young people. It's been 20 years and the percentage of those who attend Sunday Mass is around 25-30%, and they are mainly the elderly. Therefore, the problem of secularization is very great and there is need for a new evangelization and a new image of the Church. There is great need of new ways for a reality that has changed.

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## Canada-United States

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### **NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP Father Pigeon turns 100**

On 7 March, the Notre Dame community got together to celebrate its most "venerable" elder, Father Leo-Paul PIGEON. For the occasion, the provincial Fr. Luc TARDIF presided at the Eucharist and, at the beginning of the celebration, gave him an apostolic blessing from Pope Francis.

During the banquet, Fr. Pigeon shared some reflections. First of all, he thanked the people at

the house in Richelieu and the Oblates for the quality of the environment and the surrounding living conditions. He emphasized that we believe in a God who created the heaven and the earth, and this double creation delights him each day. He then spoke of the work he did on the property in making a very precise inventory of the kind of trees that grow there.

Fr. Gaston MORIN, in the name of the Oblates of the house, pointed out his love for life as an exceptional witness to one and all: he is an eloquent sign of the possibility offered to

everyone to grow old joyfully and serenely. (INFO OMI, 15 March 2014)

## UNITED STATES

### Brother Andy -- Bishop Patrick

In homage to the countless Irish immigrants who helped build the United States, each year around the 17 March, the feast day of St. Patrick, "Apostle of Ireland," there are parades in many cities and celebrations of Irish heritage. In some cities such as Chicago, they even dye the waters of the river green for the occasion. Seemingly everyone wants to be Irish at that time of the year.

In Belleville, Illinois, the Ancient Order of Hibernians have, for 12 years, been enlisting Oblate Brother Andrew "Andy" LAWLOR to march in the city parade in full episcopal regalia, impersonating Bishop St. Patrick. For his annual role as a bishop, he grows a short beard.

Born in Ireland in 1947, Brother Andy came to the United States in the 1970's. For several years, he worked as a cook for the Oblate community in Washington, D.C. He eventually decided to join the Oblates and he professed his first vows in 1995. Since that time, he has worked primarily at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, in the hospitality ministries and with the liturgies.

## ASSUMPTION

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Catholic Youth Studio

On 4 January, the Catholic Youth Studio celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This was an occasion to give thanks to God for these past 20 years of evangelization through the media.

What added to the joy of the celebration were the many people linked in various ways to the Catholic Youth Studio, both friends, benefactors, clergy and most of all, volunteers and listeners. This made the evening a special time in which we were able to recall many of the great initiatives the Catholic Youth Studio had throughout the years. A commemorative video presentation that went through the 20 years of Catholic Youth Studio recalled the founding of the Radio with Fr. Marian GIL and later, the

following directors Frs. Mieczyslaw BURDZY, Pawel RATAJCZAK and Marcin SERWIN.

The night began with thanks to God and to the many people who made KSM what it is today. Many representatives of the Polish-Canadian community and local authorities spoke about the meaning of KSM in the community and many words of thanks were given to the Radio as a way to recognize these past 20 years.

During the evening two very important awards were presented by the Provincial of the Assumption Province, the Crystal Madonna, which is one of the most prestigious honours given out by the Assumption Province to their collaborators. The recipients of the award were Ms. Kinga Fasciszewska, who has worked for the Catholic Youth Studio for all 20 years of its existence, and devoted countless efforts to what it is today. The second award was given to an institution which is greatly linked to the Oblates, as it was founded by the Province, namely, the St. Stanislaus – St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union. They were and continue to be great benefactors of the media corporation as well as many other initiatives of the Oblates.

## UNITED STATES

### Cardinal George has recurrence of cancer

Our Oblate Cardinal Francis GEORGE will undergo additional chemotherapy, according to an article he wrote for the archdiocesan newspaper, "The Catholic World." More cancerous activity has been found once again near his right kidney.

The Cardinal underwent chemotherapy following a diagnosis of urothelial cancer in August 2012. The cancer was dormant for more than a year.

The new chemotherapy treatment will be of shorter duration but the drugs will be more aggressive than those used in 2012. The Cardinal hopes to maintain his normal schedule during the treatment.

Please pray for his recovery. His article can be found at: <http://goo.gl/Ix3PYY>.

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**Anniversaries -- May 2014**


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**65 Years of Religious Life**

1949.05.01	09232	Bro. Jean Destrée	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.05.01	08621	Fr. Max Risse	Central European Prov.
1949.05.01	08622	Msgr. Bernardo Witte	Argentina-Chile
1949.05.01	09233	Bro. Joseph Wucher	France
1949.05.31	08638	Fr. William Du Buisson	United States
1949.05.31	08639	Fr. James Foelker	United States
1949.05.31	08633	Fr. John Sokolski	United States

**60 Years of Religious Life**

1954.05.31	09670	Fr. Patrick Thompson	United States
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**60 Years of priesthood**

.1954.05.29	08709	Fr. Vincent LaPlante	Lacombe
1954.05.29	08729	Fr. Clarence Lavigne	Lacombe
1954.05.29	08502	Fr. Charles Sellars	United States
1954.05.30	08717	Fr. Raymond Crowe	United States
1954.05.30	08733	Fr. Rajmund Grzesik	Poland
1954.05.30	08722	Fr. Antoni Lesz	Poland
1954.05.30	08569	Fr. Bertram Silver	Colombo
1954.05.30	08565	Fr. Martin Walsh	United States
1954.05.30	08752	Fr. Brunon Wielki	Poland

**50 Years of Religious Life**

1964.05.31	11648	Fr. Edmund M. Gnanapragasam	Jaffna
1964.05.31	11647	Fr. Christy M. Kanaganayagam	Colombo
1964.05.31	11522	Fr. Edmund A. Murugupillai	Colombo

**50 Years of priesthood**

1964.05.02	10568	Fr. Mario Lombardi	Mediterranean
1964.05.17	10482	Msgr. Eugeniusz Juretzko	Cameroun
1964.05.17	10490	Fr. Ludwik Plewinski	Poland
1964.05.29	10737	Fr. Joseph Hattie	Lacombe

**25 Years of Religious Life**

1989.05.21	13168	Fr. Rito Daquipil	Philippines
1989.05.21	13169	Fr. Dennis Gui	Philippines
1989.05.21	13170	Fr. Oscar Lucas	General Administration

## Prayers for our deceased

No. 22-34

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Luciano Cupia	Mediterranean	30/07/1927	Rome	26/02/2014
Fr. William O'Donovan	Anglo-Irish	13/11/1917	Inchicore	27/02/2014
Fr. Pierre Veyrat	OMI Lacombe	04/07/1923	St. Albert	27/02/2014
Fr. Stanisław Toman	Poland	08/05/1937	Katowice	01/03/2014
Fr. François Dyjak	Assumption	11/10/1941	Vancouver	03/03/2014
Fr. Jan Jop	Poland	02/10/1928	Lubliniec	05/03/2014
Fr. Alexandre Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	19/10/1919	Richelieu	08/03/2014
Fr. Pierre Rigaud	OMI Lacombe	29/05/1920	St. Albert	09/03/2014
Bro. Paul Ricard	United States	11/08/1944	Tewksbury	15/03/2014
Fr. John Ngubane	Natal	23/08/1923	Durban	17/03/2014
Fr. James Erving	United States	22/01/1971	San Antonio	18/03/2014
Fr. Gerald Barrett	United States	14/01/1937	San Antonio	20/03/2014
Fr. Ernst Drescher	Poland	16/08/1926	Hünfeld	22/03/2014

*“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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