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The local superior: “the shepherd of his brothers”

By Fr. Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

Continuing our reflection on Oblate community, I would like to share some reflections on its components. In particular, I would like to say a word, in this issue, about the local superior. As you know, the term “superior” today meets some opposition due to several factors, not least of which is the change in the cultural context of recent decades, on both the social and ecclesial levels. In some congregations, the superior of a local community is called the guardian; in others, the one responsible; in others, the facilitator or coordinator. Whatever you want to call it, in many cases we simply reject a term without being able to find a more adequate one. Often the terminology is inadequate when you find yourself having to translate a reality that goes beyond the meaning of the words, as in this case. In real life, you can find a superior who knows how to be a subject, a servant of his brothers and you can find a coordinator who acts like a despot or dictator. It is a matter of perspective, mainly linked to the way of living a role, a service, a presence.

Our rule of life speaks of the local superior on several occasions. Constitution 38 sees the local superior as the guardian of the joint project of the community, called to be vigilant so that this project be realized. But it is Constitution 93 that describes more fully the identity and role of the local superior. It would be appropriate for each local superior to read this Constitution at least at the beginning of each week. This Constitution is accompanied by two Rules which explain in detail the tasks that each local superior is called upon to perform. In the printed text, there is also, at this point, a reference to the 1825 edition of the Rule of the Founder. This text of St. Eugene could

frighten a local superior since it is demanding and because of what is required of those who are called upon to perform this ministry, but it can also be read as an ideal toward which every local superior is called to strive in his service to the community, as a “call” to give the best of himself in the service he offers to his brothers.

In a 1996 writing on the role of the superior in a formation community, Father Marcello ZAGO wrote: “In my ten years of experience as Superior General, one principle has become more and more obvious to me: there is no personal and missionary renewal without true community life and this is not possible without a true local superior. Moreover, this is also a belief that comes out of the General Chapters that have reflected upon our renewal.” Much of what Father Zago writes in this article can be applied to any local community.

One characteristic that I would like to emphasize here, taken from the document *Witnesses in Apostolic Community*, defines the superior as “the shepherd of his brothers,” a term with explicit biblical overtones. He is the promoter of fraternal charity and is called upon to perform this task in the most varied of ways, often sacrificing personal interests or desires. It is the prerogative of the shepherd “to lay down his life for his sheep.”

In the last part of this article, Father Zago lists some behaviors and attitudes typical of a superior. In a few strokes, he paints a picture of extraordinary beauty. For reasons of space, I must confine myself to listing these suggestions

without comments. The superior believes in the community and in its theological, formative, missionary and apostolic value. The superior loves the community, loving each of its members, caring for them with the greatest availability and being an example for them through an affective love towards them, as St. Eugene himself would do. The superior goes before the community, pointing the way forward through an exemplary and faithful life. The superior animates the community in many different ways: through community meetings convened by him to foster communion; through a gospel-based discernment about the life of the community and of each individual member; through the elaboration of a common missionary project and the promotion of a spirit of cooperation and initiative; through effective dialogue in which he is able to explain

to his brothers the challenges to be overcome and the shortcomings to be corrected. Finally, the superior prays for the community, knowing that it is a gift of God rather than the result of human activity.

The local superior, in the mind of our Founder, plays a vital role, not only in the life of his own community but also in that of the whole family. Numbers 492-508 of the "Selected Texts," so familiar to us, refer to such a person. They are texts heavy with inspiration, psychological intuition and spiritual insights. One example: on October 14, 1848, Eugene writes to Father Dassy: "In order to govern, I recommend sweetness. Do not weary your subjects; be compassionate and patient. Be firm when necessary, but never hard." Simple directives, different situations, but always contemporary.

Holy See

CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES Oblate named General Director of Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith

On April 2, 2014, the Apostolic Nunciature in Warsaw announced that the Provincial of the Polish Province, Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, has been appointed General Director of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an office of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome. He will be responsible for the operation of this Pontifical Society in 150 countries. The main objective of the Society, according to its website is "to enliven that Christian maturity which, by its nature, is missionary; it aims to form living members in the Church, able to animate the missionary dimension of its life." The Society oversees collections for the missions throughout the world and manages the allocation of this aid. It also disseminates information about the needs of the missions and it develops leaders and associates for the missions.

Until the appointment of a successor for Fr. Szmydki as Provincial, the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Andrzej KORDA, will be in charge in Poland.

Fr. Szmydki was born in 1951 and made his first vows as an Oblate in 1970. He attended scholasticates in Obra and in Rome; his two-year pastoral regency was in Cameroon. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1978, he earned a doctorate in dogmatic theology from the Catholic University in Lublin where he also taught for several years. He is the author of many scholarly works in the field of dogmatic theology and ecumenism.

During the 1992 and 1998 General Chapters, he was elected Assistant General; he held the portfolio for missions during those 12 years. In 2005, he returned to Poland where he was named Vicar Provincial for the Missions. He was appointed Provincial of Poland in 2010 and again, in 2013. He is fluent in Polish, Italian, French and English. He has a conversational knowledge of Spanish and Russian. (www.oblaci.pl)

VATICAN Canadian Saints with an Oblate connection

On 3 April 2014, in a private audience with Cardinal Angelo Amato, S.D.B., Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, Pope Francis inscribed into the Church's official list

the canonized three new saints, foregoing the usual requirement of a second approved miracle. One of them, the Jesuit José de Anchieta (†1597), was a missionary in the Canary Islands. The other two were born in France but ministered in Canada. Francois de Laval, former Bishop of Quebec (†1708) and Marie de l'Incarnation, Foundress of the Ursulines of Quebec (†1672).

Obviously, all of these new saints lived before the Oblates were founded. However, the

two French missionaries to Canada have an Oblate connection. The Postulator for their 1980 beatification was the Oblate General Postulator, Father Angelo MITRI (†1984). And the former Superior General of the Oblates, Fr. Fernand JETTÉ, wrote a book about St. Marie de l'Incarnation: *La voie de la sainteté d'après Marie de l'Incarnation, Fondatrice des Ursulines de Québec*, Institut de Missiologie de l'Université d'Ottawa. Ottawa, Editions de l'Université [1954].

General Administration

INTERNATIONALDE MAZENOD CENTRE Workshop for Triennium animators

Seventeen Oblates and four lay coworkers took part in a session in Aix to prepare animators for the Triennium of preparation for the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Oblate Congregation. The participants presently continue the work of St. Eugene in Nigeria, Angola, Australia, Venezuela, India, Uruguay, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Cameroun, Canada, Cuba, Brazil, Zimbabwe, the United States, Ireland, England and Poland. During the session, talks were given by Fathers Gilberto PIÑON, Fabio CIARDI and Joseph LABELLE.

The goal of this animator workshop in Aix was to form the participants from different parts of the world by revisiting the history of the Founder (including relevant locations of early Oblate life), re-read the Constitutions and Rules, familiarize them with the existing resources and create some new materials for the Oblate family in order to celebrate the Oblate Triennium in word and actions.

Ultimately, this whole Triennium process is to continue the Call to Conversion (the theme of the 2010 General Chapter) and the call of our baptism. Of course, one does this individually, but much of conversion can only be done in community and through the pain of difficult situations.

The entire Mazenodian family wants to acknowledge the 200 years of dedication, work,

joys and sorrows of so many who have gone before them and to honestly discern where God calls them into the future. Participants will be communicating with their respective Unit and Regional leaders about this experience and offer animation ideas. (<http://www.centremazenod.org> and <http://www.omiusa.org>)

GENERAL HOUSE

“The God of Surprises”

Fr. Oscar LUCAS is a Filipino Oblate who arrived at the General House last summer to oversee computer technology there and to coordinate the Oblate Database Modernization Project. Here, he tells of the recent naming of Orlando Cardinal QUEVEDO to the College of Cardinals, from the point of view of a fellow Filipino Oblate.

“It came as a complete surprise”, this was how Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI, DD, started narrating the story about his being named a cardinal by Pope Francis during his conference with the whole Oblate community of the OMI General House, in Rome, on February 16, 2014. He related that at first he did not believe the news because he never had a single clue it was coming at all. In fact, according to him, he was already preparing his letter of resignation to be submitted to the Holy Father as he was reaching the age of 75 on March 11, 2014, the age of retirement for a diocesan bishop as mandated by Canon Law. He said that he had already made known to the people about this retirement plan in various occasions, even prior to his being named as a

cardinal. Archbishop Quevedo has already devoted many years of his life both as an Oblate priest and Bishop in the mission of Mindanao. However, this time God still has other plans for him.

I must admit that personally, as a Filipino Oblate, it brings immense pride to know that the Holy Father has chosen Archbishop Quevedo, a fellow Oblate, to be the first cardinal of Mindanao. I felt that it was God's way of recognizing the good works the Oblates have been doing for seventy-five years in Mindanao. At the same time I could not help but be amazed on how God, in his own mysterious ways, could work and intervene in human history, considering that in the context of the whole tradition of the Philippine Catholic Church, Manila and Cebu are the only places that have had cardinals. Mindanao was never a place where we would expect the Holy Father would name a cardinal.

Reflecting on the whole turn of events, I could not help but consider it as an act of pure divine providence – a sheer inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I believe God only used the Holy Father now to make obvious and clear something which we have already known for so long: the Church of Mindanao, where a large number of Oblates have been doing missionary work, has so much to contribute and has a very vital role to play in the life of the Philippine Catholic Church as a whole.

Now, with Archbishop Quevedo being named as a cardinal, it is as if a "spotlight" is all of sudden focused on the whole of Church of Mindanao. I am convinced that this occasion reveals all the more the sincerity of Pope Francis in recognizing the importance of the People of God especially in the places where there are great problems of poverty and peace. By naming a cardinal in such remote area of Archdiocese of Cotabato, the Holy Father is giving a very clear and strong message to everyone that this is how serious he is in making the Catholic Church more sensitive to the plight of the poor, especially in Mindanao.

Cardinal Quevedo said that he was praying for special grace so that he can help the Holy Father's vision for a humble Church of the poor: *"I pray that I can contribute a little to that vision of the*

Holy Father about the Church of the poor in the Philippines." With this new gift from God, Cardinal Quevedo recognizes very well the fact that it can always bring a surprise. Indeed, God has given him now one of the biggest surprises of his life. He feels all the more humble now before Him – the God of surprises!

GENERAL JPIC SERVICE

New Director named

During the winter plenary session of the Central Government, Father General in Council named Fr. Kennedy KATONGO as the next Director of the General Service for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. He will succeed Fr. Camille PICHÉ who has held the office since 2008.

Fr. Kennedy was born in Zambia in 1980. Before entering the Oblate prenovitiate in Lusaka in 2000, he was a volunteer with the program "Youth Alive Zambia," which sponsors programs with youth regarding prevention of HIV/AIDS, child abuse, unemployment and poverty. After his first vows as an Oblate in South Africa in 2003, he completed his philosophy studies in Cedara and returned to Zambia in 2005 for regency.

During his year of regency, besides working at Michael's Mission in Kalabo, he worked with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Youth Ministry. The CCJP offers outreach programs on civic education, trade and debt in Zambia, human rights, human trafficking, rights of refugees, access to clean water, food security. It also leads in the fight against corruption and against the abuse of women and children.

In 2006, he went to the United States for his theological his studies at the scholasticate in San Antonio, Texas, and Oblate School of Theology.

While in the USA, he did a summer internship at the OMI-JPIC office in Washington, DC, where he was able to do research on such issues as trade and debt, climate change, human trafficking, access to clean water, immigration and the plight of refugees.

At Oblate School of Theology, in 2009 he earned a “Master of Arts” degree with the thesis: “Beyond Vulture Funds: A Catholic Social Teaching Response to Zambia’s Economic Debt Reality”. He also earned a “Master of Divinity” degree in 2010.

Having returned to Zambia, he was ordained to the priesthood in 2010. His first obedience was to work in Zambia as associate pastor in Kalabo Mission. He was treasurer of the mission and also

director of youth ministry in the Delegation of Zambia. Later, he was named Director of OMI-JPIC for Zambia. Since 2012, he has been at Sancta Maria Mission in Lukulu.

In 2012, he was invited to take part in the Justice and Peace Animators workshop in Rome and he participated in the OMI-JPIC General Executive meeting in that same year. He will take up residence at the General House later in 2014.

Asia-Oceania

INDONESIA

The multi-cultural focus of AORC

On 23-28 February, the Oblate Province of Indonesia welcomed the major superiors of the Asia-Oceania Region (AORC). They were from Australia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Turkmenistan. The Counselor of Asia-Oceania, Fr. Clement WAIDYASEKARA, was also present.

The 5-day AORC meeting was held in the Oblate Scholasticate “Wisma de Mazenod” in Yogyakarta. The principal theme of the meeting was “Understanding Culture as a Way to Dialogue”, which included reference to the theme-related situation of the individual countries.

Upon arrival at the venue, there was a welcoming ceremony according to the Dayak tribe’s culture. Fr. Larry DE GUIA, Provincial of the Philippines, cut a long blocking cane which was placed at the entrance gate. One by one, the participants drank a glass of Dayak wine called “Tuak” before entering the meeting room. This was followed by a beautiful opening liturgy. It started with a Javanese dance; then there was a procession with a candle, the Oblate Cross and the Constitutions and Rules, symbols of Christ, the Church, and the Congregation.

Fr. Bagus Laksana, SJ, spoke of cultural symbols in relation to religion. The second speaker, Mr. Rajaban, gave concrete examples of religious-cultural dialogue in an analysis of the Dayak Tribe of East Borneo.

There were also visits: to the Yogyakarta Royal Palace and the Sacred Heart Temple at Ganjuran. In the evening, they enjoyed a performance of Javanese dance at Prambanan Temple.

The participants had the opportunity to explain the status of dialogue in their own countries. They also heard an update from the General Councillor concerning the interest of the Central Government in their region. A new AORC secretary was appointed, Fr. Yohanes DAMIANUS, replacing Fr. Jun JACOBÉ.

The meeting concluded with a Cultural Night. There were 8 performances of traditional dances from Dayak, Java, and Bali. The participants were very happy when the dancers asked them to dance together. At first the participants seemed shy and did not know what to do, but in a short time, they could dance very well!

JAPAN

Inspired by Bishop Turquetil

On the occasion of his 60th anniversary of priesthood, Fr. Bertram Silver speaks about the origin of his missionary vocation.

After having spent over forty years with the Eskimos the Bishop Arsène TURQUETIL chose to retire at our scholasticate in Washington. He lived with our Oblate community for about ten years. During this time he would daily meet with us scholastics, sharing his experiences of living for and with the Eskimos. Annually, on the eve of the feast of “The Little Flower,” St. Therese of the Child Jesus, he would share with us how, before

her canonization, she was helpful in bringing the first converts to him. It was the year 1916 – Father Turquetil’s fourth fruitless year with the Eskimos. Two Oblates had been murdered the year before. His bishop granted one last year before closing the mission. Then two unsigned envelopes arrived from Normandy, France. One of the letters contained dust from under her casket. Father Turquetil and Brother Girard prayed and the next day sprinkled some of the dust over the unsuspecting Eskimo visitors. The next Sunday, these visitors asked for instruction - 17 Eskimos were baptized – the mission was saved. With tears in his eyes, he would end his talk with us. The year after my ordination, the Bishop went to our Lord and he is buried at our Oblate Cemetery in Tewksbury!

Why mention Bishop Turquetil in this article? Because he is my model as a “missionary”. During my several years in Washington, I met many Oblate missionaries who had been working in foreign countries. I was one of the group that took care of the Missionary Files. About three years before ordination, I had made up my mind to ask for “the foreign missions”, mostly because of the example of Bishop Turquetil. I gave a lot of thought to the missions our province was connected with: Brazil, Philippines, and Japan.

When I was in theology, Bishop Taguchi, he Bishop of Osaka and the Prefect of Shikoku, came to the scholasticate and gave us a talk about Japan – specifically about Shikoku. The Oblates had gone to Japan in 1948 and he was thankful to the Superior General for accepting the invitation to send missionaries to his diocese. Again, I think it was the Holy Spirit guiding me to be “sent” to Japan. I received permission, with three other scholastics, to take courses in Japanese at Georgetown University. I was most grateful. But receiving my obedience to Japan in 1954 was one of the happiest days of my life. Thanks to Bishop Taguchi and Bishop Turquetil.

Just about sixty years have gone by. I am grateful to the Oblates for letting me spend most of these years in the Prefecture of Tokushima. I made efforts to become adapted to Japan and the Japanese. My love for the sound of the Japanese

drum has opened doors for evangelization. I became involved in “Utai” -- Japanese cultural opera singing. Learning to play the Japanese flute or “shakuhachi” also introduced me to the silent sounds of the Japanese culture. Just “being available” seemed to be my missionary outlook. To bring Christ to those who do not know Him.

My thanks to the Oblate community in Japan for “putting up” with me for these sixty years. I plan on enjoying the “Golden Years” – with the help of our Lord and the love of our Blessed Mother. (*The Far East Star*, April 2014)

PHILIPPINES

A harbinger of peace

The agreement between the Philippine government and the “Moro Islamic Liberation Front” rebel group, signed on March 27, generates new hope but has to truly be “a harbinger of peace, justice and development”: This is what was said to *Fides Agency* by the Philippine Province of the missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which has been present in the south of the Philippines for 75 years.

In a message sent to *Fides*, Fr. Lauro DE GUIA, Provincial Superior of the Philippines, expressed the hope that the agreement “leads to an era of harmony and development”. “With patience, sacrifice, goodwill, trust and dialogue, agreements can be made that create strong ties between groups with different backgrounds and interests”, he said. The Oblate missionaries support the “spirit” of the agreement, in particular the recognition of the legitimacy of the “Bangsamoro” people’s cause, and their aspirations to autonomy through a democratic process; the aim of finding a solution to their demand for justice and dignity; the aim of putting an end to the fighting between the government and the MILF and promote peace and stability; the parties’ commitment to protect and promote the rights of all the inhabitants of the Philippines in the South.

The missionaries noted: “We are fully aware of the fact that an agreement will only work if it is implemented. We therefore call on all those interested to live up to their commitments,

respecting the principles declared”. In particular, it calls for “mutual respect for the right to one’s own identity, to continue dialogues and consultations, the establishment of a truly democratic and representative local government of the diversity of the population”. The Oblates also ask that the agreement be extended to other members of the Islamist rebel groups on the ground, such as the Moro National Liberation Front, in order to define the agreement “genuinely inclusive”. “We commit ourselves to continue to pray, to study and to work in support of the peace process”, concludes Fr. De Guia. (*Fides Agency*, 28 March 2014)

PHILIPPINES

Developing a culture of peace

Orlando Cardinal QUEVEDO said on 29 March that his archdiocese was pushing for the twin goals of more inter-religious dialogue between Christians, Muslims and Indigenous communities and the development of a “culture of peace” in Mindanao to complement the newly signed Comprehensive Agreement with the Bangsamoro.

“We will engage not only the leaders but the masses and other major stakeholders of peace in Mindanao, in helping realize the real meaning and intent of the Bangsamoro peace agreement,” Quevedo said.

Quevedo is often referred to as the “Man of Peace” in Mindanao. In the 1990’s, he helped found the Bishops-Ulama Conference, whose main goal

was to help foster peace and understanding among various faiths in the southern Philippines.

“There is a need in the Archdiocese of Cotabato for a social action programs, basic ecclesial communities and inter-religious dialogue to realize the two things,” he said.

The cardinal has asked Oblate missionary, Fr. Bert LAYSON, to push for the development of a “culture of peace.” Ordained in 1988, Layson spent over 20 years in the predominantly Muslim towns of Sulu and Tawi Tawi. He was chaplain of the Notre Dame College of Jolo and coordinator of the inter-religious desk of the Vicariate of Jolo when Bishop Benjamin DE JESUS OMI was gunned down on February 4, 1997. From Jolo he was assigned to Pikit in North Cotabato, a predominantly Muslim town experiencing war.

Over the years, Fr. Bert wrote over 100 stories of his personal experiences in inter-religious dialogue for in his *MindaNews* column: ‘Fields of Hope’. He then served as coordinator of the Oblates’ inter-religious ministry from 1998-2008. He received the Pax Christi International Peace Award in 2002, the Ninoy Aquino Fellowship award for public service in 2004 and again in 2006. Well prepared for his appointment, “Fr Layson will be at the service of the archdiocese as inter-religious dialogue (IDR) coordinator for the entire archdiocese. His acceptability and credibility among Muslims at the grass roots and central leadership of the MILF makes him the best choice for IRD ministry”, said Fr. Lauro DE GUIA, Oblate Provincial.

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

A bishop remembers an Oblate priest

Fr. James “Jim” ERVING, age 43, died peacefully on March 18, 2014 in San Antonio, Texas, where he had been battling brain cancer for several months. Bishop Daniel Flores, Bishop of Brownsville, in whose diocese Fr. Jim had ministered, wrote a touching tribute to the young priest in his blog. It was the Founder himself who first sent Oblates to minister in South Texas in 1849.

I met Father James Erving, OMI, when the Oblates sent him to serve at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, in Port Isabel. He jumped into that assignment with a vigor I imagine St. Eugene molded into his first Oblate companions. He was not there long; he worked like he knew he wouldn’t be. But in fact he could not have known. Pastoral discussions involving his Oblate Superiors and the local bishop would soon result in an abrupt transfer to the other side of the Diocese, to Our Lady of Refuge in Roma, Texas.

I remember he came to see me before the change took effect. Humble, yes, and brutally honest with me, the kind of character God carves out of granite. A bishop cannot ask for more from any priest. It would be a difficult move, he said. Lots of things yet to be done to build the faith in Port Isabel, he said. I know, I said. God will provide for Port Isabel, just as He now provides for Roma. Fiercely obedient, obediently fierce; a Religious Community could not ask for more from a priest. Fr. Jim said a lot more; but most of that I take to the grave.

We talked about the pro-life apostolate. I thanked him for being willing to take it up. He had plans, but wasn't sure where to start. But start he did; our pro-life march that year went from St Joseph the Worker, to Sacred Heart Church, passing right through downtown McAllen on a Saturday morning, right in front of the abortion place. The picture is from that day. I like it because it so captures his blunt devotion to Christ and his Church. He is not pointing at me; he points for me to see something beyond. Be assured, I got the point, though I had not yet turned my head. No "let's stay in the sacristy and witness from here" in this man. Fierce defender of the unborn, the poor, the immigrant. Once in a while, I thought that day, a bishop stumbles into a good decision.

He gave all he had to Roma. I worry about the kids, I told him; they need a strong and courageous pastor. He was that. The missions need building up; people are moving into Starr County. I didn't need to say a lot; he understood. I did not know him long; but I think I knew him well enough to know he would be a strong shoulder pushing in favor of God's people here in the Rio Grande Valley.

Once, at a Confirmation in Roma, we ate lasagna after the Mass and after all the pictures. He told me about how Spanish was a struggle, but he was getting better. The people love a priest who gives himself to them, even if he gets the accent wrong on some words, I said. He told me about the immigrant population. We talked a lot about that. He said more, but that too I will keep for a later appointment.

We do not know the mind of God apart from what is shown us in the wounded heart of Christ. But in the contemplation there, we find more than we could have ever thought possible. His illness came quickly, relentlessly, and took him from us fast. His suffering was a fierce battle he waged obediently. God was all along forming a saint; that is what He is always trying to do for us. Fr. Jim, I am sure, knew that. May we be so generous in letting God do what He tries so desperately to do.

I hope in heaven, so did Jim. Should God grant me the grace to let Him do in me what He must do to get me to heaven, Jim will be one I expect to see early on, pointing, to make sure I remember to look up at the Mystic Rose, and beyond her, to that center where is beheld the Word Eternal proceeding in the glorified flesh of God Incarnate. Amen.

UNITED STATES

Oblates working with immigrants

As politicians and commentators debate the merits of immigration reform, Missionary Oblates are on the front lines, helping immigrants from around the world feel welcome and improve their lives here.

Father Kevin COLLINS is mentoring dozens of immigrant high school students in Houston, Texas and showing them what they can achieve through education and hard work.

In New Orleans, 88-year-old Fr. John MORIN is working with hundreds of recently arrived Haitian immigrants. Father Morin spent 40 years as a missionary on the impoverished island.

Brother Lucino CRUZ is leading a team of volunteers who are teaching immigration reform advocacy and citizenship classes at three Oblate parishes in southern California.

Oblates at St. Patrick Church in Lowell, Massachusetts, are helping immigrants from Asia adjust to their new life in the United States by supporting classes in English, child care, American citizenship and nutrition. Mass

is celebrated in the native language of the Cambodian and Vietnamese communities of Lowell. An Ros, the first Cambodian deacon and only the second in the world, ministers at the parish.

“The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have a long history of serving immigrant communities throughout the United States,” said Fr. Seamus FINN, Director of the Oblates’ Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office (JPIC) in Washington, D.C. “We stand in solidarity with all immigrants and advocate for their rights and dignity.” In recent years the Oblates have become even more outspoken in their support of comprehensive immigration reform. Their efforts have focused primarily on education and advocacy.

The Oblates support just and compassionate immigration reform that includes a process offering a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants already in the country. They believe immigration reform principles must enhance family unity and address the root causes of immigration, such as economic hardship, political oppression and religious persecution.

“People of faith have always stood in solidarity with immigrants by supporting actions for comprehensive immigration reform,” said George Kombe Mgolwe, advocacy associate for the JPIC office. “Lawmakers need to be reminded that there is a diverse coalition of people of faith that supports comprehensive immigration reform.”

Father Finn explains that the debate over immigration reform should not be framed as a Democrat vs. Republican or a liberal vs. conservative debate. Instead, it should focus on allowing all human beings to share in God’s creation. “This is why the Catholic Church supports immigration reform,” said Fr. Finn. “It is a pro-family and pro-life issue.” (*Oblate World* – www.omiusa.org)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

The stones speak!

The stones speak in this basilica celebrating its golden jubilee!

On 25 March, 1957, Pius XII blessed the corner stone of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Cape. The great doors speak as they count the thousands of visitors and pilgrims each year.

The bells speak of a call to gather here and celebrate. The altars say that great is the mystery of faith. The entire architecture speaks of grandeur and beauty to be contemplated! The stained glass windows speak of a Light who comes to visit us. The confessionals speak of pardon generously granted. An immense cross speaks of a Friend who gives his life here for his friends. The great organs speak of a national Marian shrine, a place where so many artists enjoy singing and playing and dancing.

Happy golden jubilee, Basilica of the Cape, on the banks of a great river. (Yoland OUELLET, Director, in *INFO OMI* 1 April 2014)

Europe

UKRAINE

Fr. General’s visit

The Oblate Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, made his first visit to the Delegation of Ukraine in mid-March, 2014. His visitation was part of the celebration of the 25-year presence of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Ukraine. The first Oblate to arrive, Fr. Krzysztof BORODZIEJ, came to the town of Bar near Vinnitsa in September of 1989; he was soon followed by Fr.

Jacek PYL. At that time, the OMI mission was in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic; now, it is in the independent state of Ukraine.

Fr. Lougen arrived in Ukraine on March 11 and then made a brief detour to Belarus. From March 14-25, he met with the Oblates in Ukraine, visiting seven out of eleven houses in the Delegation (He did not go to the one that is in Russia). His visit had been planned long ago and no one could predict back then the tense and

dramatic time the country would experience in March. During his stay, Father General witnessed some consequences of the recent Ukrainian revolution; he visited Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the main square of Kiev and the site of protests and fights in January and February. Fr. General had planned to visit the Oblates in Crimea: Bishop Jacek PYL in Simferopol and the OMI community in Yevpatoria, but he could not do that since flights to Crimea had been cancelled.

He made visits to most of the other parishes run by the Oblates, such as Chernigiv, Slavutych, Gnivan, Tyvriv and St. Nicholas parish in Kiev. "I've been in liturgies, in meetings with people from parishes and different ministries and I see an interest in our Congregation, an interest in mission, what we are doing, how we are growing. It's been fascinating to see the interest that the lay people have in our work. It strikes me also the number of young people in the church", he stated.

During his visit, the Oblates gathered to hear him preach their retreat at Obukhiv, near Kiev. The fact that Father General was together with his fellow Oblates made this retreat a special time of grace and not just another spiritual exercise. The Oblate Brothers and priests who gathered in Obukhiv felt that the Superior General came as the Father of the Congregation, as their Father. "That fatherly love could be heard from what he was saying and seen, even from the way he smiled. I like his humanness, warmth, concern, and the atmosphere of trust that he creates," said Fr. Sergij PANCHENKO, who ministers in the Catholic Media Center in Kiev.

Two of our confreres, Frs. Krzysztof BUZIKOWSKI and Kamil ZYNDA, who live in Yevpatoria in Crimea, could not come to the retreat because of safety concerns and the very tense political situation after the referendum on the peninsula. They decided to stay in their house but participated in the retreat in Obukhiv by the means of the internet. They watched and heard talks by Fr. General online a few times every day. Both Oblates were closely united spiritually and emotionally with the rest of the Oblate group and vice versa.

At the beginning of the retreat Superior General blessed a new icon of St. Eugene in the chapel of the Obukhiv community. On the last day, March 21, there was a reconciliation service with the possibility to approach, forgive and embrace one another. Later that day, there were Vespers with a ceremony to receive the new Constitutions and Rules from the hands of Superior General, a very touching moment for everyone.

Also on that last day, there was a solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki, President of the Ukraine Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Petro Malchuk, the Ordinary of the Kiev-Zhytomyr Diocese. Almost 50 priests, guests and Oblates, concelebrated. Many lay faithful from different parishes, Oblate associates and prominent guests attended the Mass. After the Eucharist, all were invited to the basement of the Obukhiv church to watch a new film about Oblate missionary work in Ukraine. Then, the Superior General, along with Superior of the Delegation, Fr. Pavlo WYSZKOWSKI, expressed their gratitude to lay and religious associates for their outstanding support to the OMI mission over the years.

Brother Sebastian JANKOWSKI who works with homeless on the streets of Kiev, after having met Fr. Lougen, said: "The visit of Father General gave me a lot of joy and encouragement for my apostolic ministry and community life. I especially liked his conferences on poverty, respect for one another in community and on missionary commitment. It was very encouraging when Fr. General underlined the important role of Brothers in the Congregation and the witness of their faith".

At the end of his stay in Ukraine, Fr. Lougen shared his impressions about the Catholic Media Center run by the Oblates: "I have all kinds of good impressions. First of all, we're living in a moment right now that is difficult for Ukraine, so that's always in the background: what is happening in Crimea, what would the future be, etc., but the people have been very warm and welcoming wherever I've gone.

“I found some small communities where the Catholics have told me the history of their life and Church and I hear so much about a Church that has been suffering. I’ve also found out that my brother Oblates are extremely available to the people; I’m happy to see them close to the people they serve and also to see that they’re trying to live a good community life which is always a challenge for us”. Fr. General concluded with a smile, “The food has also been wonderful. I have to say I put on a few kilos!” (by *Cyprian CZOP*)

ITALY

The Gospel by e-mail

To give us an idea of how much the area around Bravetta Street has changed, compared to 30 years ago when the parish of the Most Holy Crucifix was begun, the parish priest, Father Giuseppe SORRENTINO shows us an old tree, adjacent to the church. This old tree trunk still has the “nibble marks” from goats. This shows what the open countryside was like before urbanization swallowed much of the green space. However, unlike other areas of Rome, the district has maintained a degree of tranquility and the 18 thousand inhabitants can benefit from urban services, at a reasonable proximity to the city center and the Vatican. The population is quite diverse: in some areas, mostly upper middle class, while in others, mostly ordinary people. One aspect, however, is common to all the people: high participation in parish life. Father Pino (as he is called by parishioners) remembers one clearly distinguished parishioner: the former president of the Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. “Scalfaro,” the priest remembers, “was one of the most faithful parishioners that we had. Every morning, even when he was president, he came to Mass and in the last years of his life, when he was unable to get out, he asked that communion be brought to his home, so I visited him personally.”

As already mentioned, strong participation is a hallmark of this parish, and not just by famous people. Father Pino continues: “This is a booming parish. This year alone we have had 53 confirmations and about 100 First Communions. For Sunday Mass, the church is packed and often we lack seats.” The parish is also the reference

point for families, defined by the parish priest as “the real engine of society.” Available to the families, in fact, within the compound there is a large playground for children, an oratory, and rooms for prayer meetings and other things. In this regard, in one of these gatherings, the families are directly involved in what can be considered a very special catechesis. “For six years,” said the priest, “we have had this project in which the parents are directly involved, following appropriate evangelization, in the Christian formation of their children.” It is an interactive process, within the bosom of the family, which helps both the little ones and their elders to grow. Another source of pride for Father Pino is the very active Filipino community. “These people are well integrated into our community. They are a beautiful presence and are well-liked by everyone.” Every Sunday, they participate in Mass which is sometimes celebrated in their own language.

But Father Pino is a pastor decidedly “tech savvy” and in step with the times. Every week, in fact, he sends to all parishioners a verse from the Gospel, with a message and a little story attached. “People greatly appreciate this service which has started a buzz among relatives and friends of parishioners who belong to other parishes. The word is out there so much so that those who come to the church for the first time ask to leave their email address.” Finally, there is no lack, even in this case, of charitable services. There are in fact 50 families who are assisted periodically with food packets and other aid. Many of these families, in the past almost all foreigners, are now mostly Italian. There is also a very active assistance for the elderly who are often left alone, and “who have no one, apart from the parish, to ask for help.” (Ugo Cataluddi in *iltempo.it*)

UKRAINE

Surviving, thanks to faith, hope and charity

“We are cut off from the rest of the country,” the Auxiliary Bishop of Odessa-Simferopol, Missionary Oblate Msgr. Jacek PYL, writes to *Aid for the Suffering Church*, concerning the actual situation in Crimea.

He continues: “We communicate only by telephone and e-mail. Even the aid packets are

blocked at the border.” In spite of the very few resources available, the Catholic Church, which has only about two thousand faithful, is taking care of so many families in difficulty. After the referendum that sanctioned the annexation of Crimea to Russia, the Ukrainian banks closed to make way for those of the Federation; Russian money has just begun to circulate and during the transition, the people could not touch their bank accounts nor receive wages and pensions. “We are trying to respond to the emergency, handing out food and medicines, with special attention to large families. We also help the Greek-Catholic families who are participating in our liturgical celebrations because all of their priests have left Crimea.”

The members of the Roman Catholic clergy have remained on the disputed peninsula, but it is not yet clear if they will be able to stay. It seems that the government in Moscow will require a visa of Ukrainians not born in Crimea; many of the religious who work in the Diocese of Odessa-Simferopol are of Polish nationality with a long-term residency permit issued by the Ukrainian government. The separation has also canceled years of negotiations with Kiev for the restitution of Church properties taken during the soviet era. “The church in Sebastopol, turned into a theater under communism, was on the verge of being returned to the Church, but past efforts are no longer valid.” Also construction and restoration permits already obtained are now useless, but Bishop Pyl does not let himself be discouraged: “We have restarted many times from zero and we are ready to do it again. The important thing is that no one put obstacles in our path.”

Some weeks ago, in a letter addressed to the people, the bishop invited the people of Crimea “to not permit that the brotherhood among the people of the peninsula be broken.” An identical appeal was later made by Metropolitan Lazarus of Simferopol and Crimea of the Russian Orthodox Church. “Christians of every denomination have prayed in spiritual union so that there be no fratricide. The fact that there was no blood shed during the passage of Crimea to Russia is a sign of the strength of our prayer.”

Many Orthodox priests, tied to the Kiev patriarchate, have left Crimea for fear that Moscow intends to

absorb their Church or even forbid its presence on the peninsula. Deprived of their own clergy, the Christians of the Ukrainian Church have preferred to turn to the Catholic Church rather than the Russian Church. “Their faithful have expressed the desire to pray with us and I immediately agreed. We are all children of the One God.”

Relationships with the Islamic community are stable for the moment, although the media speak of the arrival in Crimea of militant groups coming from Chechnya and the republics of the former Yugoslavia. “The situation is still calm but the news that we get from the media is alarming.”

Considering the uncertain future of the region, Bishop Pyl repeats the great need for prayer. He says that in Crimea, they survive only thanks to the Christian virtues: faith, hope and charity. “Faith allows us to look at what has happened through the prism of God’s providence; with hope, we look to the future, because we know that God is near us in this difficult moment; and charity, toward God and our neighbors, helps us to avoid fostering hatred in our hearts. (9 April 2014, www.acs-italia.org)

ITALY

Always a formator -- Fr. Angelo Dal Bello: 1926-2013

Fr. Angelo DAL BELLO lived many years of his life as a formator on various levels, both for his Italian Province and at the International Scholasticate in Rome. He was revered as a confessor and a spiritual director, especially of young religious, not only of Oblates but of various congregations.

So respected was he by the late Archbishop Marcello ZAGO, that in 1998, he was invited to live with the former Superior General when the latter was named Secretary for the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and moved to the Propaganda Fidei building at Piazza di Spagna in Rome. He was with the archbishop when he died in 2001.

At the end of 2012, however, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. This did not keep him from his

ministry of spiritual direction until he was finally confined to his bed. In his diary in late September, he wrote: "I'm experiencing physical pain. Love has taken away the pain; it is not mine, but that of the Bridegroom. These days I see Life, real, incarnate, because here is the Bridegroom and his Mother. Magnificat! I write this with effort... physically. So it is His will. For me, there remains God; there remains the Eucharist. There remains the expectation of Paradise revealed. It's my all and this is enough for me. Magnificat!"

He died at the Provincial House on the night of 20 November 2013. A few days later, his

Provincial, Fr. Alberto GNEMMI wrote to the Oblates of the Mediterranean Province: "I think it is important to consider in our prayers the person of Fr. Angelo Dal Bello. (...). His life of faith, centered in the supernatural, has allowed him to have a gospel-centered soul, open to trust and hope in terms of being and acting. A pure man, abandoned to the will of God, which made him a companion of many consecrated young men and women as a confidant, spiritual director, confessor. I believe that we can entrust to him, sure of his intercession, our prayers for the gift of Oblate and missionary vocations."



Anniversaries for June 2014

75 Years of priesthood

1939.06.18	05846	Fr. Engelbert Machinia	Central European
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70 Years of priesthood

1944.06.05	06793	Fr. George Croft	United States
1944.06.18	06933	Fr. Philippe Montgrain	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

65 Years of priesthood

1949.06.04	07831	Fr. Aloysius Svobodny	United States
1949.06.16	07753	Fr. André Matton	Belgium/Netherlands
1949.06.19	07594	Fr. Elzéar Béliveau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.06.19	07686	Fr. Lionel Dumont	Lacombe
1949.06.19	07688	Fr. Maurice McMahon	Lacombe

60 Years of religious life

1954.06.16	09675	Fr. Donald Hughes	Australia
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60 Years of priesthood

1954.06.05	08660	Fr. James Pillar	United States
1954.06.12	08518	Fr. Jacques Drolet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1954.06.17	08684	Fr. Myles Cyr	United States
1954.06.27	08605	Fr. Roland Tessier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1954.06.29	08790	Fr. Camillo Prosdocimo	Mediterranean

50 Years of religious life

1964.06.13	11767	Fr. William Morell	United States
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50 Years of priesthood

1964.06.05	10264	Card. Orlando Quevedo	Philippines
1964.06.12	10514	Fr. John Dourley	Lacombe
1964.06.14	10541	Fr. Leonard Inui	Colombo
1964.06.14	10944	Fr. John Iwo	Colombo

25 Years of priesthood

1989.06.10	12907	Fr. Emmanuel Maphoma Mosoeu	General Administration
1989.06.17	12804	Fr. Antoni Degutis	Assumption
1989.06.17	12774	Fr. Peter Eisenbart	Central European
1989.06.17	12726	Fr. Andrzej Gryglak	Poland
1989.06.17	12799	Fr. Włodzimierz Jamrocha	Poland
1989.06.17	12805	Fr. Andrzej Knop	United States
1989.06.17	12806	Fr. Wojciech Kowalewski	France
1989.06.17	12760	Fr. Marek Mularczyk	Poland
1989.06.17	12798	Fr. Lucjan Osiecki	Poland
1989.06.17	12802	Fr. Arkadiusz Sedzielowski	Poland
1989.06.17	12797	Fr. Władysław Walaszczyk	Poland
1989.06.17	12761	Fr. Krzysztof Zielenda	General Administration
1989.06.17	12782	Msgr. Radosław Zmitrowicz	Poland
1989.06.24	12872	Fr. Yoland Ouellet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

Prayers for our deceased

No. 35-40

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Jean Fortin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	27/09/1928	Québec	23/03/2014
Fr. Arthur King	United States	25/01/1933	Lowell	24/03/2014
Bro. Edmond Galarneau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	14/01/1929	Richelieu	30/03/2014
Bro. Jean-Charles Dutil	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	20/07/1921	Richelieu	09/04/2014
Fr. James Pfeifer	United States	16/02/1927	Mission	23/04/2014
Fr. Ronald Young	United States	18/11/1957	Mission Hills	27/04/2014

“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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