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Community: advice from Pope Francis

Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

Continuing our reflection on the Oblate community, I would like to reflect today on a text of Pope Francis that a faithful reader of this bulletin pointed out to me. On 22 May, the Pope met with rectors and students of the Pontifical Roman Colleges in the Paul VI Audience Hall. Chatting with them in a familiar and rather informal manner, the Pope answered some questions of the seminarians. One of them was about community.

A Chinese seminarian asked the Pope for some advice on how to live in community with other seminarians, in order to make the community a place of human and spiritual growth and the practice of priestly charity. In response to this question, Pope Francis stressed the importance of the community in formation, ever aware of the problems and difficulties that seminarians might encounter in this journey, as well as of the advantages community life offers to those who are committed to living it. He then focused on two specific and very concrete aspects that I thought opportune to repeat in this short article because they are also important for a religious and Oblate community. The value of these two directions goes well beyond the years of initial formation. There are two “words of advice” that Pope Francis could offer to us Oblates too.

The first is very simple and may seem trivial, but I think it is the starting point for building community. It is an explicit invitation to never speak ill of others, especially in their absence. Pope Francis shares here an experience from when he was a young bishop in Buenos Aires: his secretary, who was also young, had spoken

to him very strongly about a decision that had had negative consequences. The frankness and courage with which his secretary had spoken to him had led Francis to think to himself: “This is a real brother; I’ll never take away his job as secretary.” “Gossip,” continued Pope Francis, “is the plague of a community.... If you do not have the courage to say something to his face, then speak with the superior or the director and he will help you. But do not go to the rooms of your companions to badmouth.”

I can share a personal experience: at the beginning of Lent in recent years, I have tried making the resolution to not speak ill of my confreres, to not “badmouth,” to not encourage whoever might start speaking ill of confreres, etc. Well, I never knew it would be so difficult and how often it happens...that I would need a special help from the Holy Spirit to “not fall into temptation.”

The second aspect emphasized by Pope Francis, in a more positive tone, regards the fraternal support that we are called to offer each other within the community, through the common search for truth and through communion. Here Pope Francis stresses the importance of prayer that we can address to our common father for our confreres, especially for those with whom we have difficulties. Referring again to his personal experience, he said that one day he went to meet with his spiritual director to share a problem he was having with one of his brothers. After having allowed him to vent, after having allowed him to express his anger against this brother, the spiritual director asked him: “Tell

me, have you prayed for him?” That was enough to help him understand how important it is to build community, to bear one another in prayer and especially to lift up those with whom we have difficulties or problems, those whom we do not love.

We too can ask ourselves if we have ever prayed, simply and sincerely, for our “enemy” confreres. The “enemy” that Jesus, in the Gospel, asks us to love is not the one who comes to us saying: “Good morning, I am your enemy!” At times they are the confreres with whom dialogue is difficult, those who think differently than we do, who have other opinions ... The first step in building community with them too can actually be praying for them!

And now a point taken from our own tradition. Preparing a talk for an ongoing formation session, I picked up a “Guide for Oblate Animation”, prepared 20 years ago by Fathers Sullivan and

Elizondo. The theme of the first chapter of this guide is the Oblate charism. I found a particularly strong passage on community that I thought I’d share. “There is not, nor can there exist, community,” writes Father Sullivan, “if there is no communion. This communion consists, in a way, in living a certain vision of the Gospel and in performing a given task, the mission: this is the charism of the group. The Congregation, and therefore the community, is the incarnation – in time and space – of the gift of the Holy Spirit – the charism! That’s why the members of the Society have come together and continue to live together despite everything. The charism is the set of core values that the group has in common; it is the goal that unites them.”

I would like to invite each and every one to reflect on and share, in a community meeting, these two points emphasized by Pope Francis and on the statement that there cannot be community if there is no communion.

Holy See

VATICAN

Oblate named Apostolic Administrator

On 31 May 2014, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Wilhelmus de Bekker from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Paramaribo (Suriname) in conformity with Canon 401 of the Code of Canon Law. The Holy Father named Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Fr. Antonius (Toon) TE DORSHORST as Apostolic Administrator of that same diocese

“at the disposition of the Holy See.”

Fr te Dorsthorst was born in Holland in 1943 and was ordained a priest in 1970. He arrived in Suriname in his early youth (before his priestly ordination) and has lived there ever since. His main apostolate has been among the indigenous and Maroon people of Suriname’s interior. He speaks Dutch, English and French and is fluent in the local languages of the Sranantongo, Saramaccan and Aucaan peoples.

Africa-Madagascar

KENYA

AMR Conference: signs of hope

After the recent Conference of the Africa-Madagascar Region, 23-24 April 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, the newly elected president of the region, Fr. George IHEANACHO, wrote this hopeful message in the regional newsletter:

The just concluded Africa-Madagascar Regional Conference, Nairobi, 2014, was unique. It was lived in the background of the Triennium of

the 200 years of our Congregation. Each Unit of the region had the opportunity to highlight efforts made towards an apostolic community experience of the Triennium for this first year. The variety of commitments towards the Triennium activities bears witness to the ingenuity of the Oblate charism in diverse contexts of our Region.

This underscores why 13 out of the 16 members of the AMR Conference, assisted by a team of Oblates and lay persons for logistics, gathered

to reflect on the theme: *Oblate model of formation in Africa: A look at the challenges and opportunities*. This is indeed a crucial area in the life of a Region considered as one of the lifelines of the Congregation.

As the Conference reviewed efforts made by Units to implement the Yaoundé 2012 resolutions, it came to limelight that there has been a remarkable exchange of scholastics in the formation houses within the Region, an inaugural meeting of formators in the Region and an effective running of the AMR office in Johannesburg with a regular flow of information, among others.

The Region is gradually taking its rightful place in the Congregation as some hitherto young Units celebrate their jubilees, expand to other territories, assume leadership roles in ecclesiastical circumscriptions and fully partake in the services rendered to the Congregation at the highest levels. Though this is a cause for joy, we must be conscious of the challenges that face us as a Region and as a Congregation.

Are we ready and willing to have a radical change in our life and structure as a Region? Can we be courageous and faithful enough to overcome the challenges of living beyond 200 years as a Congregation?

May our Patroness and Mother, Mary Immaculate, and our dear Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, intercede for us as we journey towards a renewed and a re-inflamed oblate charism and life.

ZIMBABWE

A first Oblate parish church

In the Archdiocese of Bulawayo, the 27 April was a special day in the life of the Oblates working in Zimbabwe. Divine Mercy Parish in Mahatshula was opened and blessed by Archbishop Alex Thomas, SVD. The opening and blessing ceremony was such a blessed moment to witness. Divine Mercy Parish becomes the first Oblate-built parish in Zimbabwe. Congratulations to the Oblates for their hard work and commitment in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo and to the people

of Zimbabwe. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord".

KENYA

A return to the mission

Recently, Fr. Ken FORSTER, provincial of OMI Lacombe Province in Canada, returned to Kenya where he had served as a missionary several years ago. Here is an excerpt from his report to his province.

Fr. Gideon RIMBERIA, a Kenyan Oblate ordained less than two years, will be the pastor of the new parish in Kisaju. They have many needs. Kisaju, which is a fast growing community relatively close to Nairobi, has been chosen as the place to establish the parish centre. Without a church, the community celebrates Sunday Mass in a nursery classroom that is overflowing. They are negotiating to get a few acres of land from the Catholic-sponsored school. The Oblates are presently renting a house as their residence in the mother parish but will move shortly to Kisaju itself, and look to rent there. They will be working with many tribal groups but predominantly with the Masai.

The area is very dry, so water will be a major concern. Their collection from this emerging parish has been 300,000 ksh in the last six months or about \$3600, but they often receive considerable food and vegetables in the *sadaka* (offering). They often have enough to share with a shelter for women that is run by nuns and served by the Oblates weekly.

A newly ordained Oblate from the Mission of South Korea, Fr. Sam HONG, has received his first obedience from the Superior General to serve in Kenya. He arrived in April.

All members of the mission community met in our formation house in Karen, Nairobi, for three full days. It was a time of prayer, sharing of ideas, wrestling with choosing a common path, planning the future and discerning leadership for the mission. Fr. Jim FIORI has been re-appointed for a second term at the last Provincial Council

meeting in Vancouver. His two councillors are Fr. Faustin LITANDA and Fr. Gideon RIMBERIA.

We discussed concerns regarding formation. We have three scholastics in theology, one in novitiate and six in pre-novitiate studying philosophy. We project that we may have ten young men joining as postulants in Meru. How can we give them the best formation as wholesome young men, as Oblates, to become saints as St. Eugene desires?

There are many development projects taking place in Kenya. Highways and major circular roads in Nairobi are being built with Chinese government grants. There also seems to be the development of a middle class able to purchase vehicles, especially motorcycles, even in the rural areas like Kionyo. There is a new asphalt road from Chogoria through our Kionyo Parish to Meru town. What a big change from the roads we drove on sixteen years ago! Traffic is very heavy on the highway from Nairobi north. Pray that we don't lose any of our Oblate brothers as people are impatient and pass in dangerous situations.

SENEGAL

With children and teenagers

For several years now, the boarding residence of the Koungheul Mission has been welcoming a large group of children and teenagers during the school year. It is an important service, so that these children and young people, who come from their villages in the countryside, might have a safe place to stay and eat, and a place to study.

Christians and Muslims together form a community, with the help of the house master, Jean, who watches over them closely, together with Raphael, a young man. There are two women, Marianna, Jean's wife, and Sidonie who look after the kitchen with painstaking and often tiring labor. I help too, along with my two confreres, Fr. Jacques DIOP and Brother Etienne BASSENE.

Every morning, the children and teenagers go to school, but here they have a home to return to, to eat, to rest and to be supervised. The Christians can therefore be part of the life of our parish of

Our Lady of Fatima, but Muslims also receive human and moral training by participating in formational activities.

Last 18 May, we had our patronal feast day. It was a beautiful day, with the presence of the whole community of Koungheul, the neighboring villages and several guests. It was an opportunity to come together to share in the joy of a solemn celebration, a good lunch and moments of relaxation and rest. Above all, it was an opportunity to honor Mary (who is very popular in Senegal, not only among Christians but also among Muslims) and entrust our lives to her.

In coming months, we want to refurbish the entire residence, by painting and making necessary repairs, from the kitchen to the dormitories.

Soon the rainy season will begin (July to September) and it is time to cultivate the fields (millet, corn, peanuts) so that they can feed their families. Our children and teenagers, once school is out, will go back to their villages to help their parents on the farms (until the beginning of October and the reopening of the school). We ask of the Lord and His providence good results at school (especially for those who have exams) and also abundant rain that that will bear good fruit for the work in the countryside! (Fr. Pier Francesco PURPURA)

ZAMBIA

Over 50 Oblates in 30 years

The story of the Missionary Oblates' presence and ministry in Zambia is truly an amazing one! This year the country, located in south central Africa, celebrates 50 years of independence from British rule (1964) and the Missionary Oblates are celebrating 30 years since the arrival of the first missionaries from the United States (former Southern Province).

Current statistics tell of a huge success story: today, there are 31 native Oblate priests and 4 perpetually professed native Oblate Brothers ministering there. Fifty one seminarians are studying for the Oblates from Zambia. Twenty seven are in temporary vows; five are in the

novitiate; nineteen are in the pre-novitiate.

Besides the ministries of the Oblates in Zambia itself, Zambian Oblates also serve in South Africa, the United States, Mexico and Italy. Recent requests have been made to the Delegation Superior, Fr. Freeborn KIBOMBWE, for Zambian Oblates to minister in Australia and China. That request is currently under consideration. Fr. Freeborn is also planning eventually to send Oblates to the neighboring country of Malawi.

The zeal of these Oblates to minister elsewhere is not surprising since seminarians for the Oblates study in South Africa, the United States, Cameroun, Italy and Germany. They learn early in their education and formation about the internationality of the Oblate Congregation and the great need for Oblates in many parts of the world.

The vocation shortage of Oblates in the U.S. Province has been relieved somewhat by the generosity of two Zambian Oblates who have come to the U.S. to minister recently. Fr. Humphrey MILIMO has joined the mission center in Buffalo, New York, and Fr. Emmanuel MULENGA is with the Oblates at the mission center in New Orleans, Louisiana. Fr. Nebby Chanda MUTALE will soon be arriving in the U.S. to be on the formation team at the post-novitiate in San Antonio, Texas, while pursuing graduate studies.

The U.S. Province, while serving as a mentor to the delegation in Zambia, has learned much from the dedicated service, the strong faith, and the ardent zeal of these young Zambian Oblates who are truly on fire to bring the gospel to the nations (Fr. Louis STUDER in OMI USA, July 2014)

NATAL

The Church responds to globalisation in Africa

Saint Joseph's Theological Institute, Cedara, held its second annual conference from the 24th to the 26th April 2014. The theme was: *The Response of the Church to Globalisation in Africa*. After a word of welcome from Fr. Sylvester DAVID, President of the Institute, the concept

of globalization was introduced by means of a number of trends it promotes in human society.

The first, the secularism trend, is the continuing move of religion to the realm of the private. This leads to the marginalisation of religion as participant in the social debate about right and wrong. A related trend is the relativizing of truth as a result the dismissal of transcendence as a source of general moral norms and absolute truths in favour of socially and culturally determined truths for particular groups of people.

A further trend is a shift in the notion of justice, increasingly prioritised in terms of materialist issues to the detriment of ethical behaviour, including concern for the exploited and the environment. This leads to the poor being marginalised in society and more open to resistance identities and behaviours. These manifest as strategies either advocating engagement with violence or withdrawal into dependency driven states such as substance abuse or "religious" experiences of euphoria outside daily life.

Spirituality trends occur within such resistance groups. Some promote fundamentalist religious positions both outside and within traditional religions. Such spiritualities can lead people to resort to violence. Another spirituality trend is the growth of consumer religion offering religious products based on personal needs, prioritising immediate gratification over permanent commitment and ethical behaviour change.

On the socioeconomic level there is a growing gap, globally, between rich and middle class on the one hand and the poor on the other. The poor are increasingly *intra-national* in nature rather than international as in the modern period of first world and third world countries. Unemployment is increasingly the primary sign of the poor. Lack of access to human development is one of its principal causes.

Globalisation thus raises issues of human drama and suffering. Some manifest in conflict including on the interreligious level others in growing human incapacity and lack of development. Yet

others come from the environment. Others affect the lack of growth in local knowledge to counter the power of the global metropolises.

During the course of the conference, various

scholars presented papers that addressed these trends. They endeavoured to show how the Church can respond as an advocate for peace and justice, the poor, the disabled, and the whole planet. (Stuart C. BATE, Director, Research and Development SJTI)

Asia-Oceania

PAKISTAN

Planning the future

On 30 April 2014, the Oblate Delegation of Pakistan gathered at Mazenod House, Lahore, for its Annual Assembly. During the session, the members took part in groups for further discussion of a 5-10 year plan for the Delegation. It was a follow-up of a previous planning session held in November 2013.

Later Fr. Aloysius ROY, the Delegation Superior, invited Fr. Vernon DERRICK to share his thoughts on the Oblate Triennium of preparation for 2016. First of all he spoke about the need and purpose of the Triennium which began in the congregation on 8 December 2013. He explained the schema for weekly reflection, citing the documents appearing on omiworld.org. It was recommended that every Oblate community celebrate the Triennium liturgy once a week to be in communion with the Oblate Congregation and for personal and community renewal.

On the evening of that same day, the Oblates gathered in the chapel for Holy Mass and to participate in a paraliturgy during which Fr. Roy handed over to each member the new edition of Constitutions and Rules 2012.

On the first of May, two Oblates Waqas RAZA and Kashif GAURI made perpetual vows at the Oblate Philosophate, Lahore, and at the same venue, on 9 May, they were ordained deacons by His Grace Sebastian Shaw, OFM, the Archbishop of Lahore. (Fr. Gulshan BARKAT)

PHILIPPINES

“Peace is living together”

To emphasize the crucial role that religions and cultures can have in building peace and reconciliation in Mindanao: that is the aim of the

international conference held on 6 and 7 June in Cotabato, at Notre Dame University, a university founded by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate present in the Southern Philippines.

The conference, entitled “Peace is living together”, was organized in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Cotabato, the Community of Sant’Egidio and the Indonesian Muslim “Muhammadiyah” association. Leading Christian and Muslim figures spoke, including Cardinal Orlando QUEVEDO, Archbishop of Cotabato, civic leaders and politicians, as well as personalities from the world of education and culture. Religious, political, social and cultural organizations interested or involved in the peace process in the South Philippines were present.

The conference was a moment of reflection after the historic agreement signed for peace in the southern Philippines, emphasizing the principle of inclusion, described as “fundamental at a social and political level, for majorities and minorities, all with the right to be represented”, as reported in an explanatory note sent to Fides. In this context, it is said, “it will be extremely significant that Bangsamoro Parliament is composed of Muslims, Christians, indigenous and independent members”.

The event intended to support the peace process and to broaden the participation in all religious, civil and political realities in Mindanao. After signing the agreement, in fact, “the challenge now is to implement the peace process in the region”. (*Fides News Agency*, 5 June 2014)

SOUTH KOREA

A Korean version of the “Nobel Prize”

In South Korea, the Ho-Am Prize is considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize. On the *Wikipedia* site, it is described in these words:

The Ho-Am Prize is a Korean annual award awarded to “ethnic Koreans, at home or abroad, who have made outstanding contributions to the development of science and culture and enhancement of the welfare of mankind.” It is named after a pseudonym of the late Byung-chull Lee (1910-1987), founder of Samsung.

This year’s recipient in the field of Community Service is Father Ha Jong Kim (the Korean name of Oblate Fr. Vincenzo BORDO). The Ho-Am Prize’s own website tells briefly why Fr. Vincenzo was chosen for this honor: *“Father Ha Jong Kim (Bordo Vincenzo), recipient of the Prize in Community Service, having overcome his own dyslexia, entered the priesthood to serve the poor and struggling. He came to Korea in 1990 and has served the homeless, the lonely aged, and troubled youth through a variety of programs including a soup kitchen for over 400 homeless per day and a center for youth in the city of Seongnam. He is also recognized for his efforts in publicizing and treating dyslexia.”*

Four other recipients, all Korean citizens, received recognition in the fields of Science, Engineering, Medicine and The Arts. Only the award for Community Service may go to a non-Korean. This is the first time it has gone to an Italian. Besides a gold medal, the prize consists also of 300 million Korean won, the equivalent of 215 thousand Euros.

INDONESIA

Workshop for animators of Triennium

It is the Oblate Triennium, a time to give thanks to God for the grace of our Congregation, to review and reflect on our lives, to sharpen our missionary zeal, and to recommit ourselves to the call and the vision of our Founding Father, St. Eugene de Mazenod. In this context, the OMI Province of Indonesia held a workshop for Triennium animators at the Oblate scholasticate in Yogyakarta on 13-15 June 2014. Each of the six districts sent delegates (an Oblate together with some laity and youth) who were trained for future animation within the districts. They were from Jakarta, Purwokerto, East Borneo, West Borneo, North Borneo, and the formation

communities. Present as well were scholastics, novices, and members of Mazenodian family.

The aim of the workshop was to familiarize the participants with the meaning, themes, and goals of the Oblate Triennium, as well as to plan Triennium activities to be carried out in their respective districts. During the workshop, the theme song of the Oblate Triennium for the province, entitled “Misionaris Sejati” (“A True Missionary”), was played, learned and sung with great enthusiasm by all who were present. The district representatives were able to sit together to plan their Triennium programmes and present them to the assembly.

The workshop concluded with a Mass concelebrated by 12 Oblates participants. At the end of the Mass, the Provincial of Indonesia, Fr. Antonius RAJABANA, gave all participants an Oblate Triennium cross and sent them off as OMI Triennium animators. (*Triennium Team of the Indonesian Province*)

PHILIPPINES

Advocacy for indigenous peoples

Today, the Oblates of the Philippine Province minister to the Manobo- Dulangan tribe who dwell far beyond the Senator Ninoy Aquino municipality, throughout Sultan Kudarat Province.

Fr. Renan ABAN has been the Indigenous Peoples Ministry Coordinator since 2009. The mission continues to provide scholarships to students from elementary to college age through the Oblate Missionary Fund. This school year, 60 children will be provided with dormitory privileges of free food and lodging, besides their educational scholarship.

Aside from the educational program, the Oblate missionary effort centers on Monobo-Dulangan tribal justice and their self-governance. It ensures the retention of the tribe’s cultural heritage, while being open to the enrichment of other cultures. Tribal leaders are more aware that they are not journeying alone; they are accompanied by the Church.

Immersion in the lives and struggles of the poor, particularly the Manobo-Dulangan tribe, is a vivid reality and a mission call for the Oblates. In general, the Manobos are not highly regarded since a small number of them have reached higher socio-political levels; they are mostly content with meeting their day-to-day subsistence and they greatly depend on communal work ethics. The latter have both positive and negative qualities. For a wedding, for example, the community joins forces to provide the dowry required of a prospective groom. On the other hand, the communal spirit may discourage others from working hard since they can depend on other families to share their crops or food with them.

Lately, the sad plight of the Manobo-Dulangan in the Ninoy Aquino municipality has intensified. Logging operations have prospered because of an Integrated Forestry Management Agreement issued by the National Department of Environment and Natural Resources, without due regard to the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 or any prior informed consent by the Manobo-Dulangan. The ancestral lands of the Manobo-Dulangan tribe have been materially exploited; crops ready for harvest

have been ruined by heavy logging equipment; and forest resources which serve as a major source of sustenance have abruptly diminished.

In view of peaceful dialogue, networking attempts have been made so that the Manobo-Dulangans' voice may be heard and proper consultation can take place. The Oblates' support and presence among the Manobo-Dulangan offers a leverage by which the Indigenous Peoples of Ninoy Aquino municipality can assert their rights with less fear.

Empowerment and the development of a strong will among the Manobo-Dulangan is a slow evolution, considering the ethno-cultural way of life that they strongly adhere to. However, Fr. Aban, firmly adheres to his missionary vow of obedience and Christ's parable of the mustard seed. For however small and painfully slow it might be, missionary work will fully blossom in the end: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" Matt. 17:20 (*OMI Philippines Newsletter*, June 2014)

Europe

SPAIN

OMI Martyrs inspire devotion and art

In various parts of the Oblate world, the lives and sacrifices of the Blessed Oblate Spanish Martyrs continue to inspire devotion among the faithful; some artists have been inspired to depict them in new ways.

Fr. François CARPENTIER, a native of France and for 50 years a missionary in Cameroon, has told former General Postulator, Fr. Joaquín MARTÍNEZ, of a large picture of the martyrs that now hangs in that African Mission.

In the United States, the Pastoral Center at the Lourdes/Guadalupe Shrine in San Antonio, Texas, has been dedicated to the Oblate Spanish Martyrs. A large copy of the image painted for the beatification hangs in a prominent place in the Center.

An Italian artist from Sicily, Liliana Niceta Siracusano, a member of MAMI, has painted an image of the martyrs standing in a field of wheat and dressed in white robes. "The harvest is still plentiful but workers that were preparing for the harvest were cut down in their youth."

ITALY

A special visit to Sicily

While the landing of migrants continues unabated in various ports of Sicily – since 1 January, there have been more than 52,000 – a commission of the German Federal Parliament, consisting of eight members and led by the Honorable Gero Storjohann, arrived in Palermo and remained in Sicily until 17 June for an immersion into the reality of immigration as it is lived on the island, in order to understand the issues and to consider some possible solutions, as well as the impact of the phenomenon in Germany.

The commission is the guest of the Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Palermo, Professor Vincenzo Militello, a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Palermo. Besides meeting with the Mayor of Palermo, Professor Leoluca Orlando, the commission also met with the Vice-prefect of the city and officials in the immigration office.

They met at the University with Dr. Giuliani of the United Nations' High Commission on Refugees. She spoke about forced migrations and the phenomenon of migration of unaccompanied minors. She pointed out the great efforts Italy is making with the operation of "Mare Nostrum" (Our Sea), and the important role that Caritas is playing in the initial welcoming of migrants.

Oblate Father Sergio NATOLI made a brief report on the economic aspects of migration, touching especially upon intercultural issues and explaining the project "Rainbow of peoples" as a way to help everyone, immigrants and natives, to live in harmony in the same territory, avoiding types of uniformity and ghetto-like isolation.

The meeting left a very positive impression by way of contributing to an exchange of ideas and the search for realistic programs for the benefit of those who choose to migrate in order to have hope for a life with a better future. (Sergio Natoli, omi)

ITALY

A prison visit

A youth organization founded by and accompanied by Italian Oblates has recently experienced the corporal work of mercy of visiting a prison, much like the Oblate Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, did as a young priest. The *Movimento Giovanile*

Costruire (Youth Movement "To Build" or MGC) sent 15 of its members to visit a prison in the Tuscan city of Prato, thanks to Annamaria GENTILI of the Oblate Cooperators of Mary Immaculate (COMI), who teaches prisoners there.

The youth sang at two Sunday morning Masses last May, one in the medium security section and the other in the maximum security section. One of the MGC members, Andrea Cuminatto, tells of the experience:

"In this experience, we didn't do anything other than sing at two Masses, but this small gesture was most valuable for the prisoners who were excited about our visit and who tried to linger as long as possible (within the limits of the strict prison rules) to speak with us and to share their own experiences. Many of them have discovered (or rediscovered) the faith while in prison. But it is not an atmosphere where it is easy to live the faith and our simple offering at the Sunday Mass was seen as a big event.

"For us, it was a powerful experience. Most of us had never entered a prison and just the control procedures for checking in and out were not very easy to do. The direct contact with the prisoners and the few words we exchanged with them made us understand a little better what it means not to have had the good fortune of a peaceful life, what it means to have grown up in conditions that led to life experiences that were ugly and often brutal enough to make you end up serving a sentence of several years. A penalty that often loses its rehabilitative function and leaves the men on their own, simply to survive in a cage.

"We saw this experience as something important enough to do again and we are already planning to repeat it on a regular basis throughout the next year."

Latin America

MEXICO

The youth festival

Under the motto "Fire, Life and Heart ... Oblate Youth in Mission", on 13-15 June, many youth came together from the Mexican States of

Tabasco, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Puebla, Mexico City, Guadalajara and Morelos to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Youth Association. Their faces reflected the joy of sharing the same faith, the same charism, of belonging to a missionary family, of being young

with the same spirit. This great festival began with a welcoming ceremony in which there were presented to the youth some Oblate symbols that would help them understand the JOMI journey: an image of young St. Eugene, the Oblate Cross, the Immaculate Virgin, the Oblate hymn. Fr. Nicholas DOMINGUEZ, youth animator, helped them to reflect on the letter sent from Rome by Fr Chicho ROIS to greet the Mexican Oblate Youth, beautiful words that resonated in the hearts of all participants. “Young people, thanks for being part of our Oblate family. The world needs young people with a heart on fire ... young people willing to give their lives, who are not afraid, young people who want to embrace the mission of Jesus, giving their lives in order to give life to the most abandoned.”

The youth were delighted when they saw entering St. Eugene de Mazenod (Brother Dario PEREZ) to share the dream of founding a missionary family and to explain how he began his work with young people in Aix-en-Provence, 200 years ago. Accompanying him were Frs. Francis KABIKA (Zambia) and Patrick OLIVEIRA (Brazil); together they answered the questions of the youth about the Congregation and its mission with youth today. Both repeated how a joyful spirit is fundamental to a young missionary, a spirit and action that bear the “good odor” of Christ, wherever the young person is sent as missionary.

To get all the youth involved, they worked in various teams. They reflected on how to creatively promote the charism among youth, on expanding the mission and on vocation promotion. To share with the community that welcomed them, they took to the streets to pray the Missionary Rosary; the people of the Ixcatepec community joined them in prayer. There was an opportunity to learn the traditions and folklore of the places where the different youth groups came from. A culture night was held with dances, skits, videos, and even “golosinas” (local sweets) from different parts of our beautiful country. It was a time to meet and become acquainted.

After nightfall, they celebrated a festival of light, with a bonfire; they wanted to set on fire their hearts for the mission “You are the light of

the world”. Similar to the Easter Vigil, besides reading the story of salvation and lighting the Easter candle, each person, candle in hand, passed on the flame and came into the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, awaiting them in the church. Fr. Daniel GAGNON helped them to pray for a healing of their hurts and so that they might not be afraid of a missionary commitment.

The Vocation Fair (Expo) was an important moment to ask of God: Lord, what do you want from us? To what are you calling us? Some religious congregations, all of them missionary, told about their charism and the apostolic work they do. The youth were encouraged to promote a culture of vocations in their community and to commit to fostering vocations in the places where they live, work or study...

The climax of the meeting was the celebration of the Eucharist presided by Fr. Vicente LÓPEZ, provincial. On the feast of the Holy Trinity, he encouraged the youth to continue to respond generously and collaborate in the mission, in extending the Kingdom. During this celebration, two brothers in formation, Dario PEREZ (Guatemala) and Julio Edgar HERNANDEZ (Oaxaca, Mexico), were sent symbolically to mission lands, the first to Cuba and Brother Julio, to study theology in Africa. This was to encourage the young people to take risks for the mission and to desire to cross borders in order to proclaim Jesus Christ. This great moment ended with the announcement of the next gathering of JOMI in 2015. Tabasco, a place of Oblate vocations, will receive the youth in a year, when they will continue to strengthen the mission with young people and prepare for the bicentennial of the Oblate foundation. The Tabasco group was given the Oblate cross so as to evangelize young people of that region.

The Oblates in Mexico want to walk with and for young people. They want to continue the momentum that many provinces are living. Their priority is to continue promoting the mission with youth and thereby promote vocations. May the intercession of the Founder St. Eugene and the Virgin of Guadalupe, Star of evangelization in Latin America, strengthen our walk. (Celina Bernal, coordinator JOMI-2014 and Fr. Nicolás Domínguez)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE**A new member of the “Centenarian Club”**

The third oldest Oblate joined the elite “club” of those who have celebrated their 100th birthday. On 18 May 2014, Fr. Valentine FIX received his official membership. He joined the Dean of the Congregation, Fr. Engelbert MACHINIA (Central European Province, born in October 1913) and Fr. Léo-Paul PIGEON (Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province, born in March 1914).

He served as a professor at the scholasticate in Battleford from 1940-47. He then served as pastor of several rural parishes that were served by the Oblates of St. Mary’s Province. He always had a very strong sense of duty and strove to be faithful to the Church and to his ministry as pastor. He could always be counted on to be clear and directive with the people with whom he worked. In 1983, he began his semi-retirement in Penticton, BC, providing some replacement ministry in the Nelson diocese. In September 2011, he moved back to Saskatoon. He now resides at Central Haven Care Home in Saskatoon, SK.

UNITED STATES**Another Oblate centenarian**

Fr. Boniface WITTENBRINK turned 100 on 30 June 2014 in Belleville, Illinois. Among his many achievements, in 1973, he founded WMRY *Radio Information Service*, a broadcast service for the blind and print-impaired. The service is located at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

When he was asked to start the service, he said, “I don’t know anything about radios except how to turn one on, and I sure don’t know anything about blind people except they can’t see.” Then, in typical Fr. Boni fashion, he said, “But if you think I can help, I’ll do it.” So, without prior experience in management or broadcasting, he learned -- both about radio technology and the visually impaired who would benefit from his ministry. The radio station he created, now

named *Minds Eye Information Service*, has benefited thousands of blind and print disabled people throughout the greater St. Louis-Belleville metropolitan area.

Over the years, he has received many awards for his work in raising public awareness about various diseases of the eyes and the needs of blind and sight-impaired persons. Before he began his radio ministry, he taught in Oblate juniorates and in retreat houses. He himself is now nearly blind, having only a little vision in one eye.

UNITED STATES**Fr. David Power, OMI: 1932-2014**

On 19 June 2014, the Oblates and the Church said farewell to a man who was considered by many as one of the foremost sacramental theologians in North America. Fr. David POWER died in Washington, D.C., USA, where he lived for many years.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1932, he was Professor Emeritus of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America, where he taught from 1977 to 2000. Prior to that, he taught at the Oblate scholasticate in Piltown, Ireland, from 1957 to 1971, as well as at the Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Dublin, and at Maynooth Major Seminary. During those years, he served as superior of the Oblate scholasticate; after that, he was also superior of the International Scholasticate in Rome. While in the Eternal City, he taught at the Gregorian University and St Thomas Aquinas University.

The author of many theological books and articles, he was also a visiting professor in several theology faculties, many of them Oblate: St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio (USA); St John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota (USA); St. Joseph’s Theological Institute in Cedara, South Africa, and at the seminary of the Archdiocese of Papeete, Tahiti (French Polynesia). Twice he

was visiting lecturer at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila, Philippines. He has also lectured in Australia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. His final assignment as “missionary professor” was in Lusaka, Zambia, where he was also

on the formation staff at the prenovitiate. He preached many Oblate retreats in such places as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United States, Japan, Southern Africa, and the Anglo-Irish province.

Anniversaries for August 2014

75 years of religious life

1939.08.15	06933	Fr. Philippe Montgrain	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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70 years of religious life

1944.08.02	07852	Fr. Louis-Philippe Roy	Lacombe
1944.08.02	07854	Fr. Alexandre Taché	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1944.08.15	07858	Fr. Maurice Blackburn	Lacombe
1944.08.15	07825	Fr. Joseph Boisseau	France
1944.08.15	07827	Fr. Angelo Bonadio	Mediterranean
1944.08.15	07887	Fr. Giangiacomo Coati	Mediterranean
1944.08.15	08095	Fr. Fiore Paglione	Mediterranean
1944.08.15	07829	Fr. Domenico Vitantonio	Mediterranean
1944.08.26	07831	Fr. Aloysius Svobodny	United States

65 years of religious life

1949.08.02	08684	Fr. Myles Cyr	United States
1949.08.02	08690	Fr. Francis Demers	United States
1949.08.15	09255	Bro. Clément Charest	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.08.15	08662	Fr. William Clark	United States
1949.08.15	08702	Fr. Gilles Comeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.08.15	08668	Fr. Nicola Ferrara	Mediterranean
1949.08.15	08667	Fr. André Jodoin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.08.15	08665	Fr. Natale Lessio	Mediterranean
1949.08.15	08779	Fr. Lino Maddalena	Mediterranean
1949.08.15	08669	Fr. Léo-Paul Nobert	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1949.08.15	08660	Fr. James Pillar	United States
1949.08.15	08654	Fr. James Wynne	United States

60 years of religious life

1954.08.02	09694	Fr. Charles Breault	United States
1954.08.02	09695	Fr. Ronald Carignan	United States
1954.08.02	09701	Fr. Roger Cyr	United States
1954.08.02	09696	Fr. Roberto Lacasse	Bolivia
1954.08.02	09698	Fr. Roger J. Lamoureux	United States
1954.08.15	09748	Msgr. Gilles Cazabon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1954.08.15	09746	Fr. Leo Dummer	United States
1954.08.15	09757	Fr. Carl Kabat	United States
1954.08.15	09755	Fr. Joseph Pitts	United States
1954.08.15	09749	Fr. Maurice Provencher	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1954.08.15	09743	Fr. Juan-María Tremblay	Argentina-Chile

50 years of religious life

1964.08.02	11556	Fr. Robert Morin	United States
1964.08.15	11664	Fr. Noël Boulanger	Lacombe
1964.08.15	11558	Fr. Richard Kelly	Lacombe

25 years of religious life

1989.08.27	13201	Fr. Phu Cuong Joseph Nguyễn	France
1989.08.27	13199	Fr. Bounlom Antoine Phengsilayvanh	France

25 years of priesthood

1989.08.06	12758	Fr. Okim Valère Eko	Mediterranean
1989.08.06	12719	Fr. Kabambi Joachim Manianga	Cameroun
1989.08.06	12718	Fr. Lebon Odon Mudiasubu	Congo
1989.08.06	12788	Fr. Labo-Nkomol Patrice Mukwanga	Cameroun
1989.08.06	12666	Fr. Miziba Apollinaire Munsintoto	Congo
1989.08.06	12720	Fr. Iyul Habell Nsolo	Congo
1989.08.12	12877	Fr. Sarath K. Anton Perera	Colombo
1989.08.19	11513	Fr. Heinz Ernst	Namibia

Prayers for our deceased

No. 44-52

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Louis Gouraud	France	22/03/1927	Pontmain	02/06/2014
Fr. Joseph Firtion	France	12/03/1920	Strasbourg	02/06/2014
Fr. Jan Van Hoydonck	Belgium/Holland	10/10/1923	Furnes	13/06/2014
Fr. John Doetzel	OMI Lacombe	03/04/1926	St. Albert	13/06/2014
Fr. Nicholas Forde	Anglo-Irish	08/09/1932	Prince George	13/06/2014
Fr. David Power	United States	14/12/1932	Washington	19/06/2014
Fr. Martin Quere	Colombo	25/02/1924	Kohuwela	23/06/2014
Fr. Albert Lafrenière	OMI Lacombe	22/10/1926	St. Boniface	27/06/2014
Fr. Emilianus <u>Tsasane</u>	Lesotho	03/08/1940	Maseru	28/06/2014

“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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 via Aurelia 290, I 00165 Roma, Italy
 Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
<http://www.omiworld.org>
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