



## Community and Communications

*Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, Vicar General*

After climbing the mountain that led us to consider the Holy Trinity as a model for our community life, in this reflection we go back down to our daily lives, to our local communities, to the brethren with whom we share our lives, our work and our experiences. While at the table one day with some of my confreres, I asked them what I should write about in this issue of *OMI Information*, and since we were talking about the media and their impact on our lives, it was suggested that I take this theme: the communications media and our community life.

On the one hand, I find this topic exciting because of the possibilities it offers for reflection; on the other, it is difficult and complex because of the questions it raises and the issues that arise. It would be interesting to know what we immediately think of when we use the term “communications media”. It would also be interesting to share what we mean by “communication” or “communicate”. I think that what comes most immediately to mind when we talk about the communications media today are certainly the traditional ones, such as radio, television, print media, but also and especially, the most recent ones: from the Internet to the various social networking sites that allow us to speak or to write from one end of the globe to the other; the tablets where we can read books, magazines and newspapers; and finally, what is probably the communications medium par excellence today: the cellphone. Not to mention that what we call “mobile phone” today has little to do with what the same name meant a decade ago. Apart from the numeric keypad that 10 years ago was only used to enter the number to call, the cellphone of today can have a thousand functions, all different and all for the sake of communication.

One difference that should be mentioned, when speaking of the media, especially in relation to mission and ministry, is their level of interactivity. Watching television has a near zero level of interactivity, unless one is permitted to express a “yes” or “no” through televoting; listening to the radio is similar. Even reading a newspaper offers a minimal level of interactivity: the ability to respond to an article of some kind, but where the answers are selected and eventually published in accordance with criteria established by the newspaper itself.

If we talk about the Internet with its thousands of chat rooms we can take part in or the cellphone, the level of interactivity is much higher; in fact, these tools are designed precisely for communicating, sharing, interconnecting. Everything: from ideas to consumer goods and to money.

The media today are the result of what is commonly called the digital revolution, a revolution that has changed and is changing cultures and civilizations, revolutionizing many aspects of our lives, with consequences that we can imagine but that we can hardly predict or even sometimes check. It is a revolution that radically changes the relationship with space and time and it extends to all levels of the world's population. It is a phenomenon that should be studied, together with that of globalization, a mix that is capable of devastation greater than that of the atomic bomb or the H bomb.

Of course, this revolution, which we only mention without any sort of scientific claim, also has a significant impact on our community life, both positive and negative. Torn between

the idea of highlighting the negative aspects that these media can have on our community life and emphasizing the usefulness they may have in strengthening the bonds of communion and enhancing our life, I thought I would limit myself, in this number, to the positive aspects.

These means of communication allow us to grow in our belonging to the same family, whether it be the community, the province or the congregation. Via the Internet, email, Skype or cellphone, just to mention some of the most common means of this kind, we can connect and stay connected even at a distance, and sometimes that is an important support for our lives. A community that is spread out for the sake of the mission can remain connected through these tools and the life and experiences that one of its members is living can be shared and communicated to others. This type of interaction is positive and increases communion, allowing us to share and spread the good.

Another positive aspect is the knowledge that these means of communication allow us to get, not only of the news that is also being distributed by the traditional media such as television or radio, but they also provide access to an ever wider breadth of knowledge, to entire libraries, the complete works of men and women who have made the history of

which today we are a part. Of course one needs a good deal of self-discipline for the discernment and use of this vast flow of knowledge put at our disposal today with just a few clicks of a mouse or a few taps of our index finger.

These media can also allow us to work together at a distance; to arrive at important decisions without being physically present to each other; to carry out a mission on behalf of the community with regular updates about its development. They also offer us a means of deepening relationships. It is true that social networks and other digital forms of human relationships may create new problems; we'll see about that next time, but the fact remains that these means at the same time permit the tightening of bonds, the making of new acquaintances and a more consistent sharing and living in communion with our fellow humans.

Since I have already begun making proposals of topics for community meetings, let me also propose this time a community meeting that aims to deepen and share the positive aspects of the various means of communication that we use every day in our lives and in our mission. We will later discover together the pitfalls, the "temptations" and the challenges that lie beneath these same means.

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## Holy See

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### VATICAN

#### **A papal appointment for Fr. General**

Pope Francis has appointed the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, to be a member of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, created in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, is currently composed of 49 members: 27 Cardinals, 16 Bishops and Archbishops, 2 National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies and 4 Superiors General, now including Father General.

At the head of the Congregation is its Prefect, His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, from Italy, and its Secretary is Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, from Hong Kong. (This position was once occupied by a former Oblate Superior General,

the late Archbishop Marcello ZAGO.) Its current under-Secretary is Father Tadeusz Wojda, S.A.C., from Poland and its Adjunct Secretary and President of the Pontifical Mission Societies is Archbishop Protase Rugambwa, from Tanzania.

As a member of the Congregation, Father General will participate in its next (19<sup>th</sup>) Plenary Assembly in the autumn of next year.

### VATICAN

#### **Cardinal Francis George retires**

Shortly after Cardinal Francis George became the eighth Archbishop of Chicago, he told some of his Oblate brothers that one of his hopes was to be the first Archbishop of that city to retire and meet his successor. All of his predecessors had died in office. On 20 September 2014, he achieved that hope. On that day, Pope Francis

accepted his resignation from the pastoral care of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Chicago (USA), in conformity with the Code of Canon Law. The Cardinal had submitted the obligatory letter of resignation upon his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012. The Pope appointed as Cardinal George's successor Bishop Blaze Cupich, currently the Bishop of Spokane, Washington.

Cardinal George, formerly the Vicar General of the Oblates (1974-86), professed his first vows in 1958 and was ordained a priest in 1963. He has

served in Chicago since 1997. He had previously been the bishop of Yakima, Washington, and archbishop of Portland, Oregon. Pope St. John Paul II created him a Cardinal in 1998. He served as President of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops from 2007-2010.

In 2006, the Cardinal was diagnosed with bladder cancer. After surgery and chemotherapy, he was able to resume his duties, but the cancer returned in 2012 and 2014. Currently, he is undergoing a clinical trial of a new form of chemotherapy.

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## General Administration

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### **OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE Thank you, Fr. Nino! – Welcome Fr. Shanil!**

*The vocation of the Oblate Communications Service is to help the Congregation, in faithfulness to the spirit of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, to share past and present experiences and to promote unity while respecting and valuing differences. In other words, the Service wants to make an important contribution to the communion between the General Administration and the whole Congregation and, at the same time, among the different Units, helping to create that family spirit so dear to the heart of the Founder. (OMI Information, No. 523, June 2012)*

At the end of September 2014, Fr. Antonino "Nino" BUCCA concludes 11 years at the helm of the Oblate Communications Service as he moves on to a new obedience in the Mediterranean Province and Crocifisso Parish in Rome. Replacing him is Fr. Shanil JAYAWARDENA, originally from the Colombo Province in Sri Lanka.

During Nino's tenure at the General House, we have seen many changes and innovations, especially in the offerings of the Congregation's official website ([www.omiworld.org](http://www.omiworld.org)) of which he has been the webmaster. One can find there a very useful electronic library of many Oblate resources: books written by or about Oblates; publications such as "Missions" (1862-1878); "Oblate Vie Oblate" (1974-2011); *Études Oblates* (1942-1973); Oblate Anecdotes; Interviews; Writings of Superiors General; *OMI Information*, *OMI Documentation*, the *Communique* of the Central Government's plenary sessions (all

dating from the early days of the use of the computer at the General House); and many other resources for the study of the history and the charism of the Congregation.

During the 2010 General Chapter, Nino did a masterful job producing videos of the day by day proceedings of that important gathering. His video of the election of the Superior General received praise in other international media outlets for the openness and candor of the Oblate election process. (<http://goo.gl/Noj4Fw>)

Nino is also known for his creative way of working with young adults. Besides his work at the General House, he has offered his services ministering with students at the Sapienza University in Rome. For the past five years, he has been chaplain at two schools of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, with a total of 1,500 students. He has also been the inspiration and also the producer of a musical version of the story of the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. The production of "Aquero" has taken place for 18 years in Lourdes and various Italian cities. He was also the Executive Producer of an oratorio written for the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Eugene de Mazenod. "Mistral" was first produced in Rome at Divino Amore Shrine on 21 May 2011 and then at the Oblate World Youth Days held in Madrid, Spain, in that same year. He has also produced three CD's of liturgical songs, always with the collaboration of professional artists and musicians.

Nino's replacement at the Oblate Communications Service, Fr. Shanil Jayawardena, arrived in Rome in June 2013. He has spent the past year



studying Italian and following courses in the area of communications at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome.

Born in Sri Lanka in 1981, he was ordained to the priesthood in 2008. Before coming to service in the General Administration, he ministered in his native country as a member of the Oblate preaching band "Nazareth" in Wennappuwa. He also led the Sri Lankan delegation for the Oblate Youth Encounter and the World Youth Day held in Spain in 2011.

### **INTERNATIONAL DE MAZENOD CENTER For an integral human formation in the prenovitiate**

From 14 July until 2 August 2014, 23 formators met in Aix en Provence, for a formation session, especially for the prenovitiate phase. The first week focused on sharing prenovitiate experiences and programs in the different Units of the Congregation. Participants were able to listen to and discuss the good news and the challenges related to this phase of formation in our Units and regions.

During the second week, Father Michael MORRISSEY helped us to better understand the importance and merits of human formation at the prenovitiate level and how best to support the prenovices, taking into account their human growth and helping them to know themselves better.

The third and final week was dedicated to the place of the Oblate charism in the prenovitiate formation program. With the help of Father Joe LABELLE, we understood better how to integrate elements of the Oblate charism and the life of the Founder into the formation and preparation of the prenovices. A retreat day hosted by the superior of the Aix community, Father Krzysztof ZIELENDKA, allowed us to enjoy a moment of silence, to assimilate all that we had lived and received throughout the session.

The session was primarily a fraternal experience which gave the formators physical contact with the places of our foundation in the first year of the Oblate Triennium. The various activities fostered living together, sharing and mutual

understanding, visiting the St. Eugene de Mazenod sites and making us more responsive to the importance of this phase of formation.

The various exchanges and sessions created among the formators a greater awareness of the importance of this first step of Oblate formation and their responsibility as formators. It is a time of preparation for the novitiate that consists in getting to know the candidates better and accompanying them, so they can know themselves more deeply so as to better respond to God's call. Human growth and Christian education are two areas to which the prenovitiate phase must pay special attention. It is necessary to take the time to accompany these young people; this implies full-time formators who are well prepared and supported by a stable team.

In his fraternal message to the participants, Father General reminded us that the prenovitiate is the "door" to all Oblate formation and, therefore, formators must ensure the good health of this human "raw material" and the strength of their spiritual formation.

To achieve this, it is essential to develop a good formation program for the prenovitiate, in light of the General Norms of Oblate formation, preferably in consultation with the Units of the same region. Coordinating the prenovitiate program with the other phases of formation can ensure continuity between one phase and the other and a better monitoring of the progress of each young person. The prenovitiate must have the place it deserves in the formational progress of the candidates. We must therefore avoid improvisation or the tendency to regard university studies, especially of philosophy, as the primary focus of a prenovitiate formation.

The formators came away more aware of their responsibility, and they rely on the fraternal support of their major superiors in the ministry of presence that the Congregation has given them. They are aware that, as formators, they are called to be both witnesses and guardians of the Oblate charism and must regularly form and convert themselves. Indeed, formation is a process that lasts a lifetime. (Cornelius NGOKA)

## INTERNATIONAL DE MAZENOD CENTER Preparation for perpetual vows: 2014

The International St. Eugene de Mazenod Center in Aix is committed to promoting the Oblate charism and Oblate spirituality. The Aix community makes every effort to live in the spirit and charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod, including his predilection for the most abandoned. In other words, they live their mission with love and passion offering their dynamism and selflessly sharing their expertise.

Beginning on 5 August, twenty-two young Oblates took part in a session in preparation for perpetual vows. They represented 14 countries. One could say, the whole world was represented in Aix! There were 9 Oblates from the International Scholasticate in Rome; two from the scholasticate in Vermicino, Italy; eight from Poland; and one each from China, Germany and Canada. Two of them are their second year of studies for the licentiate (moral theology and canon law). The rest are approaching the end of the first cycle of theological studies. Each large group of scholastics was accompanied by a formator, also reflecting the international dimension of our congregation: Frs. Edward

DAGAVOUNANSOU (Cameroon), Gennaro ROSATO (Italy), Sébastien BÜNING (Germany) and Piotr PIASECKI (Poland).

Despite the fatigue of the road, these young Oblate scholastics arrived filled with enthusiasm, energy and joy. They arrived to prepare for perpetual oblation by drinking from the fountain of the charism of the Founder. In the words of St. Eugene, they came “to set their lukewarm hearts on fire.” They came to the place it all began to be animated by the same spirit, which calls us to bring Jesus to the ends of the earth.

Filled with the joyful awareness of being at Aix, the source of our Oblate charism, their excitement was contagious. Another exciting dimension of this extraordinary meeting was the intercultural and international scope of the group, experienced by some for the very first time. This meeting was a remarkable opportunity for them to experience and be enriched by the intercultural richness of our Oblate family. This was perhaps the last meeting for some as scholastics; therefore each young Oblate, in his own way, contributed to creating fraternity and conviviality with one another. (Jean-Dieulhomme DUVERSEAU)

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### NIGERIA

#### The Oblate Mission in an adverse context: our “New Aix”!

*Fr. Emmanuel YOUNGTEN, a 34 year-old Oblate from Nigeria, who lives in the Republic of South Africa and serves as Executive Secretary of the Africa-Madagascar Region, recently visited his homeland for the holidays. While he was there, he reflected on the disarray and the violence perpetrated in Nigeria by a militant Islamist group called Boko Haram. He considered it in the context of violence occurring against Christians and other religious minorities at the same time in places such as Syria and Iraq. What follows are some of his reflections:*

What is happening to the world? What is Nigeria becoming? Sons and daughters of a generation we commonly call “civilised”, we still agonize in the darkest days that have ever greeted human existence.

Around the world, and precisely in Syria and in Iraq, the current onslaught against the Christians and the “Yazidi” sect continues unabated. Human beings are massacred with less dignity than is demanded for the slaughter of animals.

Just like ISIS in Syria and Iraq are on a slaughtering, genocidal and jihadist mission, so also the Islamic sect commonly called Boko Haram is on almost the same mission.

It’s not a year since this dreaded sect sacked many parishes and burnt schools amongst which a Minor Seminary in Maiduguri. Many Christian communities in Borno State have been sacked and completely destroyed. People have been made refugees in their own country. This act did not seem to serve as a wakeup call to the government about the seriousness of the sect. Shortly afterwards, 200 school girls were abducted. Again the government ranted and

panted with its usual official condemnation of the act. And after the condemnation? From the glass houses where these condemnations are pronounced, there isn't often a concrete act to accompany the words.

What becomes of a country where a whole generation has grown in the context of gunshots, unceasingly haunted by the images of their slaughtered parents, brothers and sisters? What is left of a country where both hatred and famine created by that unnecessary conflict have seen most of its production units destroyed? Is everything doomed? Are we finished? Is it the end of Nigeria? Is it the ultimate victory of evil over good?

I believe this is exactly where the Oblates come in. This is exactly where, as agents of hope and revival, our people need us to be. Remembering the situation in France in the days of our founding, we need to bring to life within us the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod in our time: this is a time for the renewal of Christianity in Nigeria. Given the current reality there, we need the audacity of the gospel in order to be one with those who need us most. We must talk to them in their language, be one with them in their persecution, address them as "most respectable", recognize their sublime sacrifice as guarantors of the faith in an adverse situation and give them renewed hope for the advent of a peaceful era.

Surely, there has never been a time like this when we are so challenged as individuals and as a community of faith. As Oblates, I would like to think that we have an enormous task of leading in this mission which has now become a hostile terrain. Wherever the Oblates are present in conflicted societies, they are often confronted with the challenge of adjusting in order to adequately guide and nourish their faithful in a spirit of solidarity with other brethren.

## **NORTHERN PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

### **Triennium training session**

A Triennium training workshop for animators was held in the Eugene De Mazenod Conference Centre in Germiston, South Africa, on the 8 - 11 August 2014. The workshop was organized

by Frs. Charles NABWENJE and Barnabas SIMATENDE who were appointed by the congregation to spearhead animation processes in the English-speaking Units of Africa. The main purpose of this workshop was to equip Oblates appointed by their different Units with documents that they can use when informing and reminding their fellow Oblates about the Oblate charism. Sixteen Oblates from 8 Units in the Africa-Madagascar Region were in attendance.

Oblates throughout the world are busy preparing for the bicentenary of the Congregation. In the course of the workshop, it became clear that some of the Units are already well along in preparations for the event. The Province of Namibia is preparing for the celebration by evaluating their work from every angle. In the Natal Province, special prayers for the Triennium have been composed.

It is expected that in 2016, when the whole Congregation will be celebrating 200 years of existence, every Oblate in every corner of the world will be fired up with enthusiasm! Oblates are being called to rekindle their prayer life and to live a lifestyle in harmony with their call. (*Fr. Charles Tumo MATSOSO in MAOBLATA A LESOTHO, September 2014*)

## **LESOTHO**

### **A call for dialogue**

*Of the four dioceses in Lesotho, three of them are led by Oblates of Mary Immaculate: Archbishop Gerard LEROTHOLI (Maseru); Bishop Augustinus BANE (Leribe); Bishop Joseph SEPHAMOLA (Qacha's Nek). Bishop John Tlohomola, S.C.P., is Bishop of Mphahlele's Hoek.*

*Fides News Agency published this news concerning a country so important to Oblate history and so dear to Blessed Joseph GERARD.*

The situation in Lesotho remains tense after the failure of an attempted coup on 30 August led by rebel general Tlali Kamoli, now in hiding in the hills with a few faithful heavily armed military. On Sunday 7 September, after the midday Angelus prayer, Pope Francis endorsed an appeal launched by the Bishops of that African country: "I join my voice to the voices of the Bishops of

Lesotho, who appeal for peace in that country. I condemn all acts of violence and pray that the Lord will restore to the Kingdom of Lesotho peace that is in justice and fraternity”.

In their appeal, the Bishops of Lesotho said they were “dismayed and shocked to hear in the early hours of the morning on 30 August of a ‘military operation’ which led to the occupation of several police stations in Maseru, during which one policeman was brutally murdered and several others wounded”.

“While we firmly condemn such inhuman actions - a statement sent to Fides reads – we wish to offer

our heartfelt condolences to the family of the officer who lost his life during this sad incident”.

In their appeal the Bishops recall that “lasting peace is only possible if the legitimate interests and concerns of all the parties involved are taken into consideration. This is why dialogue is so important in the process of peace building”.

Lesotho is a small country with about 2 million inhabitants. It forms an enclave within South Africa, although from the political point of view it is formally independent from its powerful neighbour. The country has a catholic population of about 1,280,000.

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## Europe

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### FRANCE

#### **Lest we forget: La Brosse-Montceaux, 70 years ago**

On 25 August 1944, the Nazi garrison that had occupied the French capital since 1940 surrendered to the French Army of the Interior which had been reinforced by the French Army of Liberation and the Third American Army. But a month before that historic day, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were in mourning because of the execution of five of their confreres at the hands of a brutal Nazi officer, Wilhelm Korf, a well-known torturer. Seventy years later, we remember the sacrifice of Brothers Jean CUNY, Lucien PERRIER, Joachim NIO and Fathers Albert PIAT and Christian GILBERT, all of whom were executed at La Brosse-Montceaux on 24 July 1944.

Since 1934, the chateau of La Brosse-Montceaux had served as a scholasticate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a house of formation for future missionaries to the North Pole, South Africa, Laos, the Philippines and Ceylon.

Beginning in 1941, some Oblates from the scholasticate became involved in the Resistance. Resistance newspapers were distributed; false documents were produced at the seminary. In July 1944, weapons and ammunitions were dropped nearby by parachute. The weapons were brought to the scholasticate, hidden and then relocated, with the collaboration of some of the Oblates. Only a few of the religious, including

Father Pierre LETOURNEUR, the bursar, and Father Henri DU HALGOUET had contacts with networks of the resistance.

On 17 July at 11 o'clock in the morning, some members of the Resistance, along with a very young boy, came to the scholasticate to pick up weapons and take them immediately to Paris. The religious were surprised that this was happening in broad daylight, but they complied and had the weapons removed from their hiding place.

On 22 July, a member of the Resistance, known at La Brosse-Montceaux as the “Fox,” presented himself at the scholasticate. The automobile that took him to Melun was watched by the *Feldgendarmarie* in the area of Fontainebleau. The “Fox” was arrested with his chauffeur. He had in his pocket a notebook where, in spite of the orders he had received, he had written the names and the pseudonyms of his comrades. The Nazis would know how to make good use of these names.

At dawn on Monday, 24 July, a 5 o'clock, the whole community was gathered in the chapel and had finished their prayers. A truck pulled into the courtyard; then three groups of German soldiers, armed with machine guns, ran onto the property. The religious had to leave the chapel and two by two, as they received the order, line up in front of the portico of the cloister.

Wilhelm Korf, head of the Gestapo at Melun, was looking for weapons parachuted a few days



earlier by the allies. After gathering the entire community in a clearing of the park, the Gestapo took five of the confreres to the basement of the chateau. Brothers Jean Cuny, Lucien Perrier, Joachim Nio and Fathers Albert Piat and Christian Gilbert were then tortured. The legs of one were broken, the feet of another were burned with a torch; in the shoeshine room, each was subjected to waterboarding in a hundred liter cooking pot.

In spite of the brutality and the torture, the Oblates did not talk. Finally, they were gunned down in front of the whole community gathered there and the bodies were thrown into a well.

Later, a large Wehrmacht truck came to get the containers and parachutes out of the well. At 4 in the afternoon, two more trucks arrived and the 86 priests and brothers were ordered to pile in. The religious were taken to Fontainebleau. Then they were transferred from Fontainebleau to Compiègne, except for Father Louis, who was considered too old and was left to his fate. The Oblates were shipped to Germany on 25 August, but the train carrying them could not get past Peronne. Settled down in a makeshift camp, on the 31st, they could watch the collapse of the Germans. At three in the afternoon, the Red Cross replaced the Nazi authorities and evacuated the camp. At six in the afternoon of 1 September, the bells rang out the liberation of the city. One after another, the Oblates returned to their scholasticate at La Brosse-Montceaux which they found thoroughly wrecked.

## FRANCE

### A scholastic in Lourdes

*Scholastic Brother Dawid KARCHUT, from Assumption Province in Canada, recently completed his third year of theology at the Oblate scholasticate in San Antonio, Texas. During the summer, he had the opportunity to minister for a month with the Oblates who are responsible for Services Jeunes (Youth Service) at Our Lady's shrine in Lourdes. He wrote about it for his province's newsletter.*

Fr. Wojciech KOWALEWSKI is responsible for youth ministry at the most popular Marian shrine in Europe. Together with Fr. Roberto VILLA, two

lay assistants and groups of volunteers that come to work at the shrine for two-week sessions, Fr. Wojciech serves the youth that come to Lourdes.

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine consists of the famous grotto where Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette, as well as several chapels and basilicas built to accommodate the millions of faithful who make a pilgrimage to this holy site.

The *Service Jeunes* headed by Fr. Wojciech is an integral arm of the life of the Lourdes shrine. In our work with the youth who come to Lourdes, among the first things offered is a two-hour pilgrimage along the path of the life of St. Bernadette. This is a powerful experience for many young people. As they realize that Our Lady chose to appear to this young, ignorant, and poor girl, the fact that God may desire to have a relationship with them begins to become real in their hearts.

The level of maturity, hope and faith displayed by the predominantly French youth to whom the *Service Jeunes* ministers is impressive by any standards. In addition to providing tours centered on the life of St. Bernadette and through the Shrine and Grotto, the *Service Jeunes* provides catechesis of the signs and messages at Lourdes. It also organizes two prayer events at the Grotto. The two international Masses at the Pope St. Pius X Basilica, named in honor of his effort to promote frequent participation at the table of our Lord by all of the Christian faithful, are in part animated by the *Service Jeunes*.

During my stay of six weeks, it was my privilege and pleasure to participate in each of these activities on many occasions. Apart from the daily encounters with youth from around the world, the most profound experience I had while working here at Lourdes was assisting at the miraculous pools at Lourdes. One particular moment stands out for me: when two older gentlemen found out that they were just assisted by three Oblates who were volunteering at the same pool, they offered us their episcopal blessings in thanksgiving for our quiet, behind the scenes, yet important work. (News & Views, Assumption Province August-September 2104)



**ITALY****I know you and I admire you**

*On 26 July, Pope Francis made a quick trip to Caserta, a city not far from Naples. While there, he had a private visit with the priests who serve in the diocese, among them Oblates from the town of Maddaloni, just a few kilometers from Caserta. Fr. Giovanni SODDU tells us of some of the brief exchanges that took place between the Oblates and Pope Francis:*

“I know you and I admire you,” said the pope to Fr. Antonio CICCONE when the Oblate told him the name of his religious family.

Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO, a missionary in Thailand, was there in his white cassock. When Pope Francis asked him about that, Fr. Claudio explained that he has been a missionary in Thailand for 21 years. The pope told him that he too had a cousin, a Salesian sister, working in that country. He was surprised to learn that Fr. Claudio knows her. Then he told Fr. Claudio that he knew the Oblates in Argentina. “In Argentina, in Buenos Aires where I was bishop, you had a parish, a beautiful parish, but because of the shortage of vocations, you had to leave it and we took it over. But it was all done well, in full agreement.” He added that the Oblates are doing beautiful work with the poor in Argentina.

Fr. Giovanni Soddu promised to pray for the Holy Father and his ministry. Fr. Renato CICCONE was standing there, leaning on his cane and holding his rosary. When the pope learned that he was 92 years old, he placed his hand on the Oblate’s head and gave a special blessing. Fr. Tonino CAMELO told the pope that he works with the sick in a hospital and he had some letters for the pope written by the sick. “The sick....

take them my greetings and by blessing,” said Pope Francis.

Fr. Aniello RIVETTI said, “The nicest thing was when the pope greeted each one of us; at that moment, it seemed as if the others were not there, he was there only for us; at least for that moment, for the pope, only I was there.”

The last one in line was Fr. Vincenzo SGAMBATO who said: “I am 75 years old. I had never seen a pope from so close. It was a most touching moment. When I kissed his hand, I told him thanks and that I too am an OMI.” “Good for you!” he said.

**SPAIN****New Youth and Vocation Center**

The Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, Fr. Alberto GNEMMI, has announced the September 21 inauguration of a new Youth and Vocation Center in Pozuelo-Madrid.

The Oblates of the former Italian Province opened a similar house in 1968 in Marino, near Rome. While the community’s purpose was not primarily a place of vocational recruitment, nevertheless many of the youth who shared the Marino community later became Oblates.

Likewise in Pozuelo, Spain, there will be a community where youth will be able to “go, to see and to listen.” Youth will be able to find in Pozuelo, a suburb of Madrid, a welcoming milieu amidst Missionary Oblates who live together a life marked by prayer, sharing of meals, fraternal conversations and a variety of pastoral ministries. They will be able to witness these religious missionaries living the Gospel together, attentive always to the call of the Lord Jesus.

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**Asia-Oceania**

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**COLOMBO****The passing of a priest-physician**

There is a small band of Oblate priests and Brothers in various parts of the world who do “double duty,” so to speak. Not only are they religious and missionaries with all that those words imply. They also exercise the profession of medical doctor. On 9

September 2014, Fr. Damian FERNANDO, Oblate, mission preacher and medical doctor/gynecologist, died at the Nazareth Preaching Community in Wennappuwa. He was only 58 years old. He had served people spiritually but also medically.

Fr. Damian was a well-known gynecologist in Sri Lanka as well as in the United Kingdom. He had

being working as a doctor for 14 years before he joined the Oblates. He discerned a vocation to Oblate and religious life and made his first profession of vows in 1997. He was ordained a priest in 2001.

In his early years as a priest-physician, he was in Buttala, working tirelessly for the people, irrespective of their religion. He thoroughly sacrificed his time and energy in promoting healthy conditions and sanitation issues in that rural area. He also managed to establish voluntary health service for the people.

Having being transferred to Wennappuwa due to his ill-health, he further continued to work as a family counsellor, using both his spiritual and medical knowledge. With great success, he was able to give sound advice to many childless couples. The Oblate Colombo province and Fr. Damian's patients will miss this man who used his talents so well in the service of others. (Fr. S. Randil FERNANDO)

## COLOMBO

### Mazenod Youth Team gathering

The Mazenod Youth Team met in August to grow in their faith and in their skills as leaders of youth. Their meeting was held at St. Vincent's Children's Home in Maggona.

The principal speaker was Mr. Mahinda Namal, a teacher, father, social-observer, social-analyst, artist, writer and motivator. He energized the team and encouraged them to look at the youth in society with their "third eye." He further challenged the team to serve society by working with youth, irrespective of the race, sex, religion and provinces.

Fr. Dilan PERERA, Provincial Councillor in charge of youth ministry in the Oblate Colombo Province, addressed the Mazenod youth team, thanking them for the time and energy they give for the betterment

of society. He challenged them to reach out to the "unreached" in society while making use of their team spirit, talents and resources.

The Mazenod Youth carry out their ministry in four teams:

The Mission team seeks out opportunities for the mission, encouraging the sub-units' representatives to reach the unreached, organizing various new programs, uploading to the website and inserting the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod into society.

The Media team writes articles for the local and religious newspapers, magazines and the internet about the missionary experiences of youth, St. Eugene, social justice, issues important to young people and various burning topics in the country. They also publish a Mazenod Youth magazine and produce short films, dramas, musical programmes, various works of art and documentaries for youth and others.

The Meditation team evaluates the mission efforts and organizes retreats for the team and other youth; they celebrate the death and wedding anniversaries of the team members' parents, birthdays, Christmas and the feast day of St. Eugene. They organize prayer sessions, Holy Masses and Bible sharing. They visit the sick team members and their families. They also send out reminders about important feasts among the Oblates, especially the Founder and other Blessed Oblates.

The Market team instructs society on various environmental, political, health, educational, youth, childhood, family and religious topics through the use of banners, posters, stickers, CD, DVD, VCD, songs, leaflets, advertisements and other modern means. They use many public places for their displays in order to get the attention of youth and others. (Fr. S. Randil FERNANDO, coordinator of Mazenod Youth.)

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## Latin America

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### PARAGUAY

#### VIVAT holds a workshop

*VIVAT International is a coalition of religious congregations whose vision statement say, in part: "Sharing a vision of the world and of every*

*human being as created in goodness and dignity, and believing in the equality in rights and in dignity of all individuals, peoples and cultures, we commit ourselves to promote justice, harmony and reconciliation in the world." The Oblate Congregation, and consequently, every individual*

*Oblate, is an associate member of VIVAT. Fr. Daniel LE BLANC, our Oblate representative in the VIVAT office at the UNO in New York, reports on a workshop he attended recently.*

From August 4-8, 2014, ninety-one representatives of the Oblates and other Congregations of VIVAT International met in Pikyry, Paraguay, very near the borders with Argentina and Brazil, for a workshop and planning for the future. Most of the participants were from Paraguay, but there were also four from Chile, three from Argentina, seven from Brazil, one from Mexico, three from the VIVAT office in New York, one from the VIVAT office in Geneva and one from West Papua.

Amongst the Oblates, we had an impressive variety of perspectives, from lay collaborators to Oblate brothers and priests, as well as a permanent deacon and his wife and a deacon soon to be ordained; and not to be forgotten, Father Francisco CARRILLO, provincial of the Paraguayan Province and Fr. Daniel DIAZ from Mexico.

The days were filled with activity, including presentations to reflect the work of VIVAT International at the world level, but also several examples of collaborative efforts between the international and ever growing number of nationally organized VIVAT groups. Important was the very informative early part of the workshop where groups took the time to present themselves and explain the reality in which they live and work. Also explored were procedures, aspects of the work at the United Nations, the focus of VIVAT and some of the areas where VIVAT members at

the national level and those at the international level can support each other in their efforts in favor of those living in poverty. And, finally, working at the country level, participants considered the possibilities of networking and supporting each other in their efforts.

The Paraguayan group decided to focus their attention on the right to land of the people they work with, especially the right to land of Indigenous Peoples and small farmers. This is especially important as a great many in the countryside are being expelled from their land by major multinational agricultural concerns with little or no protection on the part of the government.

If I may add a personal note, this workshop also allowed me a few days to visit my Oblate brothers in Paraguay, at the Provincial House, the pre-novitiate, the scholasticate, and in the “Chaco”, the very first mission the Oblates began in South America. They had originally been asked to work in the Chaco, then part of Bolivia, but by the time they arrived from Germany, a war had ensued and part of Bolivia’s territory had been ceded to Paraguay.

All in all, this workshop afforded all of us an excellent opportunity and amazingly, even after only 5 days, it was abundantly clear that everyone found it difficult to leave a good time and return to doing what we all do best – accompanying the people of God, preferentially those living in poverty, in every aspect of their lives there where we are called to be. (JPIC Report, Fall-Winter 2014)

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## Canada-United States

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### UNITED STATES

#### **Alaskan youth on a mission trip**

On July 13, 14 teens and 7 chaperones from two Oblate parishes on the Kenai Peninsula joined those from a parish in Anchorage and boarded the ferry in route to Kodiak, Alaska. In Kodiak, they joined forces with 14 teens and Fr. Frank Reitter at St. Mary’s Church.

Bro. Victor Manuel PATRICIO, an Oblate scholastic studying in San Antonio, Texas, and

who had just arrived in Alaska for a month, participated in the week-long mission trip. He was a great asset and role model for the teens. The Mission Trip consisted of leadership workshops in the morning and service projects in the afternoon, and an evening Mass to wrap up the day.

During the workshops the youth participated in team activities that required leadership and team work. They learned about a well-known personality test and how to work with people

of different personalities. They also had guest speakers from the Rotary Club and the US Navy SEALs. During Mass, the youth served as altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and musicians.

In the afternoon, Fr. Frank Reitter kept them busy with projects around St. Mary's school and church. The youth designed and painted a mural on one of the church buildings, designed and built a Rosary Walk, and did other cleaning and maintenance tasks.

After a week of hard work, on July 18, the young missionaries from the Kenai Peninsula boarded the ferry for the return journey and to begin making a difference at home! (By Eli Woodvine in OMIUSA, September 2014)

## **OMI LACOMBE**

### **Remembering an Oblate educator**

*Founded in 1818, the University of Saint Boniface is the francophone university for Western Canada. It offers excellence in a college and university education and is adapted to respond to the needs of its students while developing leaders for society.*

On September 16, 2014, a Students' Residence at St. Boniface University (USB) in Winnipeg received a place name designation in the course of a short ceremony which took place on the grounds before the building. In honor of the contribution made by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of Manitoba towards USB, from now on, the building will be designated as *Father Théophile LAVOIE, O.M.I. Residence*.

The rector of USB, Gabor Csepregi explains: "The residence was bought from the Oblates in 2005 at a very reasonable price. The generosity on the part of this religious order enabled USB to promote its profile and its ability to offer lodging to students, young Canadian men and women, and international students, and that is a gesture we want to acknowledge. This initiative has enabled us to extend our campus and to develop the services we offer the community. The designation permits us to bring to a happy

conclusion this fine project and to go forward seeking new solutions for student lodgings at Saint Boniface for our student men and women. As well, the role, that as rector, Father Lavoie played on behalf of our institution at the time of its incorporation was of great importance and, that too, must be underlined."

"In the name of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for choosing Father Théophile Lavoie to lend his name to adorn the students residence of the University of Saint Boniface," said Father Edmond PARADIS, superior of the Taché District of the OMI Lacombe Province. "By making this choice, the university is giving recognition to the role that the Oblates played in university education. Thank you."

Father Théophile Lavoie, educator and priest, a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was born November 6, 1836, at Kamouraska in Lower Canada. He was the 8th rector of the establishment.

A monument placed on the residence grounds was also unveiled. Upon it, one can read the following inscription: *From 1860 to 1866 and again from 1870 to 1878, the Oblates administered Saint Boniface College. During this second period, Théophile Lavoie, O.M.I. (1836-1908), administrator of the College at the time, took in hand its incorporation (1871) and, as a representative of the College's founders, negotiated the creation of the University of Manitoba in 1877.* (Info Taché, 19 September 2014)

## **UNITED STATES**

### **Burial in the Cowboy Cemetery**

Upon her death in 1961, Sarita Kenedy East left a part of her vast, 400,000 acre La Parra Ranch in South Texas to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to be used for "religious purposes." The Oblates had had an important role in preaching the Gospel to the workers on the ranch. The "Cavalry of Christ," missionaries on horseback, were well-known in the entire Rio Grande Valley. Near the little chapel on the ranch, there lies the Cowboy Cemetery where the Kenedy and East families are buried near the cowboys or rancheros



who took care of the vast estate. It was in that cemetery that Fr. Francis Kelly NEMECK chose to be buried 17 September 2014.

Father Kelly (as he was known) was a great influence in the spiritual lives of countless men and women - married, single, vowed religious, priests, and bishops. He professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1955. In preparation for the priesthood, he studied philosophy at De Mazenod Scholasticate (today's Oblate School of Theology) in San Antonio and theology at St. Joseph Scholasticate in Ottawa, Canada. During the course of these studies he was drawn to the thought of the Jesuit cosmologist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who envisioned all of creation evolving to ultimate reunion with Jesus Christ. Teilhard's thought was a lifelong influence in his spirituality. His other model was St. John of the Cross, whom he studied very deeply and followed in his spirituality very closely. Those who knew Fr. Kelly saw in him a modern mystic.

He achieved a doctorate in spiritual theology at the Catholic Institute in Lyons, France, during which time he also taught and directed retreats in Ontario, Canada. His dissertation in 1973, under the direction of Henri de Lubac, S.J., developed the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and St. John of the Cross on the constructive value of human suffering

In late 1973, he joined the house of prayer founded earlier that year by Fr. Hervé MARCOUX, in the former main house of the vast La Parra Ranch. The fact that Fr. Marcoux had named the house of prayer Lebh Shomea, Hebrew for "listening heart," certainly corresponded with Fr. Kelly's own contemplative spirit. Together with Sisters Marie Theresa Coombs and Maria Meister, hermits, Father Kelly developed Lebh Shomea during the next forty years into an internationally recognized place of silent contemplation and discernment for thousands of people from all walks of life. Drawing people to Lebh Shomea were the silence and the small hermitages where they could truly experience aloneness with God.

Together with Marie Theresa Coombs, he coauthored many books on spiritual discernment and direction, which have also been translated into Spanish. These books are considered by many as classics to be read by anyone who is serious about becoming a spiritual director.

He also traveled to San Antonio to teach courses in spirituality and discernment at Oblate School of Theology for several years. Deteriorating health forced him to leave Lebh Shomeah in 2013. He died on 11 September in San Antonio at the Oblate Madonna Residence.

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### Anniversaries for November 2014

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#### 65 years of religious life

1949.11.06	08797	Fr. Pierre Tissot	France
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#### 60 years of religious life

1954.11.01	10400	Bro. Gérard Landreville	Notre-Dame-du-Cap France
1954.11.01	09847	Fr. Casimir Milan	

#### 50 years of religious life

1964.11.01	11597	Fr. Karol Lipinski	Poland
1964.11.01	11668	Fr. Wojciech Wojtkowiak	Assumption

#### 25 years of priesthood

1989.11.18	12819	Fr. Raymond Warren	Anglo-Irish
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## Prayers for our deceased

No. 73-79

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Marius Bessemans	Central Prov. South Africa	22/11/1924	Kimberly	02/09/2014
Bro. Edward Lynch	OMI Lacombe	21/11/1934	Vancouver	07/09/2014
Fr. Damian Fernando	Colombo	27/09/1956	Wennappuwa	09/09/2014
Fr. Francis Kelly Nemeck	United States	19/04/1936	San Antonio	11/09/2014
Fr. Ettore Andrich	Mediterranean	02/10/1942	Oné di Fonte	12/09/2014
Fr. Jean-Noël Fouquet	France	17/05/1929	Pontmain	16/09/2014
Bro. Jean Destrée	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	16/03/1929	Richelieu	17/09/2014

*“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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