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## Formation as a life-long process: Oblate Triennium: Year II

**Fr. Cornelius Ngoka OMI, Assistant General**

The Oblate Triennium is meant to be an instrument opening our lives to God's grace to fan the flame of Oblate life and mission as we prepare for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregation and the General Chapter of 2016. The Oblate Triennium is a pilgrimage of grace into the 'Call to Conversion' of the 2010 General Chapter in five dimensions of Oblate life and mission.

Year I of the Oblate Triennium was dedicated to "A New Heart: Life in Apostolic Community" and to the vow of Chastity. Year II, beginning on 8 December 2014 and going until 7 December 2015, is focusing on "A New Spirit: Formation as a Lifelong Process" and the vow of Poverty. We remember that there are two pillars to the Oblate Triennium: sharing faith among us in apostolic communities and concrete signs of conversion, both personal and communal commitments, in light of each year's focus.

First formation and ongoing formation are parts of one continuous journey, a life-filled commitment. Our CC&RR state in C # 47: "*Formation is a process which aims at the integral growth of a person and lasts a lifetime. It enables us to accept ourselves as we are and develop into the persons we are called to be. Formation involves us in an ever-renewed conversion to the Gospel and a readiness to learn and to change in response to new demands.*" Formation over a lifetime is a wonderful interplay of our humanity and God's grace so that we develop as Saint Eugene proposed: as humans, Christians and saints. Lifelong formation helps us become joyful witnesses of the Gospel and generous, audacious missionaries. C # 69 challenges us:

*"Ongoing formation encompasses all aspects of our development. It renews and develops our spiritual life and its inner resources and favours our growth in emotional and affective maturity. It increases our pastoral skills. It enables us to be critically aware of the integration of our life and mission at all stages of our development."*

The second year of the Oblate Triennium is calling us to commit ourselves to the process of life-long formation and to a new living of the vow of poverty. We recognize that we are in the process of growing, changing and aging in the midst of serving the mission of God in a constantly changing world. Formation over a lifetime is a dimension of our vow of perseverance and is the capacity, like Mary had, to "...live in creative and ongoing fidelity..."(C#46) throughout our lives so that we develop as effective religious and missionaries. "*Formation is vital to the life and mission of the Congregation...*"(C#49) so that we have the wisdom and the holiness to be able to connect the Gospel to peoples' lives in the reality of today in diverse cultures and situations. We might say we need formation for transformation.

This second year of the Oblate Triennium is also the call to conversion in the area of the vow of poverty. Gospel poverty is the key to evangelization. Beginning with Jesus, this has always been true in the history of the Church. We see it embraced by the First Christians (see Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:1-11) and a constant value throughout the history of religious life. Evangelical poverty "...compels us to enter

into a closer communion with Jesus and the poor, to contest the excesses of power and wealth and to proclaim the coming of a new world freed from selfishness and open to sharing” (C#20). The renewal of our living of the vow of poverty will cause an explosion of new life and missionary ardor for the Congregation that we cannot imagine. Do we not hear the call? Do we not believe?

The General Chapter of 2010 called us to a profound personal and community conversion to Jesus Christ. He is the center and reason for our missionary lives. The second year of the Oblate

Triennium focuses us on this relationship to Jesus, both as individuals and as communities for the sake of the mission. Formation over an entire life and the commitment to a poor life are meant to help us know Jesus “...*more deeply, to identify with him and to let him live in us so that we reproduce in our lives the pattern of his life*” (C#2). As exhorted by Eugene de Mazenod in his 1825 *Preface*, we are invited in this second year of the Oblate Triennium to allow Jesus to train us in piety, to fill us with his Spirit and to send us as audacious and joyful missionaries to preach the Gospel to the poor and most abandoned.

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## Holy See

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### VATICAN

#### An Oblate bishop in Australia

On 7 November 2014, the Holy Father Pope Francis appointed as Auxiliary Bishops of Melbourne, the Reverend Monsignor Terence Curtin and the Reverend Father Mark Stuart EDWARDS, OMI, currently the rector of Iona College in Lindum, Brisbane. Fr. Edwards has been assigned the Titular See of Garba.

Father Edwards was born in Balikpapan (Indonesia) in 1959. He moved to Australia in 1962 where he frequented St. Leonard’s Primary School in Glen Waverley and Mazenod College in Mulgrave. In 1980, he entered the Oblate novitiate. After first vows, he continued his studies for the priesthood at the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne and at the Melbourne College of Divinity. He was ordained a priest in 1986.

After his ordination, continued his education at Monash University in Melbourne where he earned a Ph.D. and a Bachelor’s Degree in Literature and Education. Subsequently, he has ministered in various Oblate schools and as an Oblate formator (novitiate and scholasticate). Since 2010, he has been the rector of Iona College. He also served four terms as a provincial councillor.

Upon receiving the news, Fr. Edwards said he was “surprised and humbled” by the appointment. “I will be sorry to leave teaching, which I have

enjoyed,” he added. His episcopal ordination will take place on 17 December.

Taking up his new role, the 55-year-old priest aims to give back to the diocese. “I hope to contribute to the pastoral life of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. In particular, I am looking forward to giving back to the Church that has made me, as I received my faith formation from the Church in Melbourne.”

### VATICAN

#### Fr. Steckling named bishop in Paraguay

On 15 November 2014, Pope Francis has named Fr. Wilhelm (Guillermo) STECKLING, Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, as Bishop of the Diocese of Ciudad del Este. The former Superior General of the Missionary Oblates is currently serving as the superior of the Beato José Gerard Scholasticate in Asunción, Paraguay.

The newly named bishop will have the difficult mission of bringing peace and harmony to a diocese that has recently suffered a good deal of turmoil. In September 2014, the Holy See issued the following statement: “*Following a careful examination of the conclusions drawn following the apostolic visits carried out by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Clergy to the bishop, the diocese and the seminarians of Ciudad del Este, the Holy Father has decided to substitute Bishop Rogelio Livieres Plano and has appointed Bishop Ricardo*

*Jorge Valenzuela Rios of Villarrica del Espiritu Santo as apostolic administrator of the diocese of Ciudad del Este. This was a difficult decision on the part of the Holy See, taken for serious pastoral reasons and for the greater good of the unity of the Church in Ciudad del Este and the episcopal communion in Paraguay. The Holy Father, in the exercise of his ministry as the 'perpetual and visible foundation of the unity of both the bishops and the multitude of the faithful', asked the clergy and all the People of God of Ciudad del Este to accept the Holy See's decision with a spirit of obedience and docility and without prejudice, guided by faith. On the other hand, the Church in Paraguay, guided by her pastors, is invited to embark on a serious process of reconciliation in order to overcome any form of sectarianism or discord, so as not to harm the countenance of the one Church, 'born of the blood of His Son' and so that Christ's flock may not be deprived of the joy of the Gospel".*

Now that "serious process of reconciliation" will be in the hands of a man who had the universal respect and love of his brother Oblates during the 12 years he served as Superior General (1998-2010).

Fr Steckling was born on 23 April 1947 at Verl in North Rhine-Westphalia, in the diocese of

Paderborn, Germany. He made first vows as an Oblate in 1967 and his perpetual vows in 1973. He was ordained a priest in his home parish of Spexard, near Gütersloh, in 1974. The same year, he received his first obedience for the then Vice Province of Pilcomayo and left for Paraguay.

His early ministry was among the rural Guaranis in the parish of Independencia, diocese of Villarica. He later worked in Asunción as a formator, primarily at the pre-novitiate. In 1986, and again in 1989, he was elected Provincial of the Vice Province of Pilcomayo. He had just finished his term of office and returned to his work at the pre-novitiate when the 1992 General Chapter elected him second Assistant General. During those six years as Assistant he was responsible for the formation portfolio.

He was elected the twelfth Superior General of the Congregation in 1998, succeeding Archbishop Marcello ZAGO, who had become the Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The 34<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (2004) reelected Fr. Guillermo for a second term as Superior General. Following his 18 year sojourn in Rome, he was happy to return to his missionary life in Paraguay.

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## General Administration

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### INTERNATIONAL DE MAZENOD CENTER Opening of "Maison des Lycéens"

The "Maison des Lycéens" (*House of High School Students*) opened its doors on Tuesday, 4 November 2015. It is located at the Oblate House at 56 Cours Mirabeau, Aix-en-Provence. It's a place of welcome for high school students -- to support them, to care for them, to respond to their human and spiritual needs.

The "Maison des Lycéens" opens its doors to an unconditional acceptance of high school students in this haven of peace in the heart of the city, the Oblates' cloister. Rain and stormy weather did not dampen the joyous excitement of opening day -- on the contrary! Our many students were glowing as they walked with broad smiles along

the red carpet which led to the warm and dry heart of this haven. From now on, this will be a sure and friendly meeting place of the students each Tuesday and Friday from noon until 2 p.m.

It's something not to be missed if one is looking for a bit of sociability and consideration in this fast-paced world, a place to catch one's breath and continue the day really energized! In fact, this diocesan initiative aims at meeting the need of youth to be taken seriously, supported in their human and spiritual growth. That is why the team of volunteers nurtures a disposition of mind and heart that will always welcome and care for each young person. They wish to support those who are entrusted to them on their journey of development and unity of all the dimensions of their persons, at their own rhythm and according to who they are.

Three other clusters of activities are meant to serve this purpose and are offered to the youth. There is an art center for discovering their talents and for coming out of themselves by putting on a musical comedy; an educational focus to help them know the desires of their hearts and for choosing the right paths; a spiritual component to help open them to the encounter by preparing

prayer vigils and the teen Mass each Saturday evening. It is quite a program that can only be enriched by the suggestions of the students since it's their house and it cannot prosper without them. "Come and see" that "it is good for us to be here." (Véronique HUET at <http://www.centremazenod.org/> )

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### MADAGASCAR

#### The Catholic mission at Masomeloka

We measure all dimensions of our missionary commitment according to how we share the daily life of the people of the Masomeloka region. We encounter various faces of poverty: it can be material, intellectual, spiritual and moral, aggravated by various cultural, racial and even religious clashes.

This is a fertile region that exports many products by canoe on the Pangalanes canal. Indeed, any other way of communication and travel is almost impossible due to bad road conditions.

Why are these people poor? What solutions can the Church can bring to these problems? How can she realize development projects?

The economic realities of Masomeloka present a people living from agriculture and livestock, using simple and traditional methods. It is the same for fishing at sea and in the Pangalanes canal. Their resources are not sufficient to support their families. They have no way to store up for the future. Every day, they look for something to eat; living from day to day, they remain constantly in a situation of material poverty.

From the social point of view, the people of this region are poor because 97% are farmers and fishermen. Population growth is increasing but the living space and the land to cultivate do not increase, so serious conflicts arise between families and neighbors. Some 55% of the cases handled in court at Mahanoro concern inheritance problems of the inhabitants of Masomeloka. This damages society and leads to harmful consequences such as jealousy, bitterness and revenge by spreading

insecurity and fear. To this is also added a big drug problem for young people, without overlooking the exploitation of the weak by the rich. They seek to take advantage by making illiterate people work hard for a pittance.

From the intellectual point of view: young people who have had the chance to study choose to leave to find work outside their region; they do not want to go back because of this mentality which they describe as "barbaric or backwards." Over 85% of the population cannot read or write. It even happens that in some villages in the countryside, we could not find a single person to lead prayers or hold the office of catechist.

Given all these problems, the Christians of Masomeloka do not want to become discouraged. They asked the Catholic mission to seek solutions with them because they want to save their generation and their future. Together we have worked on a project for the creation and opening of a Catholic school in the OMI parish. To move toward the realization of this project, we formed a group representing all the Christians of our Catholic mission. We held meetings every first Friday of the month, to arrive at a decision together; we decided to build a simple building 18m long and 8m wide, using local materials.

We shared the responsibilities for making a budget and finding the people who could help us carry out this project. Parishioners are finally seeing the realization of a project they awaited for 10 years. The birth of this work is rooted in the thrust of the OMI triennium, inviting Oblate missionaries to conversion, to be attentive to a new spirit and a new mission. The opening of the Catholic school is very important for the Church and the good of the people of

Masomeloka. It is a gateway to the knowledge of the faith, of wisdom and knowing how to live. (Fr. François de Sales RATOSONIRINA in Echo OMI Madagascar, November 2014)

## ZIMBABWE

### Justice and Development

When we speak of 'Justice' in Africa, we speak of 'Development'. 'Justice for the poor' is an expression that means very little, if it is not accompanied by tangible means by which disadvantaged people are able to help themselves out of their poverty. In the Oblates' Zimbabwe Mission, we are addressing a very important 'justice' issue.

In early June, Dr. Brendan Ratcliffe, a medical doctor from the Anglo-Irish Province, volunteered for three months to assist in a proactive malnutrition prevention programme at St Luke's Mission. During this period, he ran 22 workshops in 22 different communities surrounding St Luke's Mission. The workshops sought to provide communities with educational tools on how to prepare food supplies during the harvest period so as to ensure that communities have sufficient food for their children during the dry and nutrition-poor periods. He also embarked upon an analysis programme to assess the number of children either suffering from malnutrition or at risk of becoming malnourished. By such means, he was able to help the community determine for themselves their own level of risk, and this encouraged them to proactively prepare themselves for the long dry months.

Moreover, the community itself devised the concept of 'self-help community gardens' as a measure of support during the dry months. In the meantime, and in response to their problem, the Oblate Development Programmes and the Anglo-Irish Province are searching for funding for five boreholes for five communities which are most at risk of serious malnutrition amongst infants and children. Dr. Brendan was also able to be of tremendous support for the Provincial Medical Hospitals in the Matabeleland Province. He was asked by the Provincial Medical Director to assist in the repair of a number of anesthesia machines

which were lying idle for years because of a lack of technical skill to repair and maintain them. In fact, at the Tsholotsho Provincial Hospital, there had been a number of deaths during surgery due to the lack of anesthesia machines; the doctors at this hospital were desperate for help in this regard. Dr. Brendan was able to repair two machines at Tsholotsho Provincial Hospital and two at St. Luke's Provincial Hospital. It may seem a simple task, but the repair of these machines means the difference between life and death.

Justice for the poor is and must be a search that leads people to develop themselves in a way that promotes creative and insightful thinking. A problem is first and foremost solved by changing the way in which we see the problem per se, so that it no longer has the power to overwhelm so much that we cannot see the solution.

The work of Dr. Brendan has gone a long way in changing the mindset of poverty which perpetuates the crisis of poor people. He has sought to help people 'help themselves', through participative education.

The next step, after helping people out of poverty, must be to lead them to faith, to Christ and to the Church. Our help of the poor is not the work of a NGO. Our relationship must lead people to Christ. This is evangelization of the poor! We keep this ever in mind! (Charles RENSBURG)

## SENEGAL – GUINEA-BISSAU

### A Delegation "going out" to evangelize

*From a letter to the Oblates of the Mediterranean Province and the laity of the Oblate Family.*

On 22 November, we arrived at Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau. We stayed at the Oblate community located in the Antula neighborhood. They have been engaged since 2010 in ministering at the St. Francis of Assisi Parish (founded by Portuguese Franciscans in 1988 and having about 30,000 residents). As you know, the parish pastor is Fr. Celso CORBIOLI, who is also superior of the community; the parochial vicars are Frs. George Pascal

NDOUR, Giancarlo TODESCO (also treasurer of the diocese) and Carlo ANDOLFI, who just arrived in the community after having spent ten years in charge of the mission of Farim, the first Oblate mission in Guinea-Bissau.

It was hot, but not excessively; the humidity was worse. We came here from the mission of Elenkine, in the south of the country, in the Senegalese area located at the mouth of the Casamance River. From 18 – 20 November, there was the meeting of the Delegation on the Island of Karabane, belonging to the parish of Elenkine, cared for by our Oblates. The majority of its members were present (except the scholastics and whoever is abroad for study and ministry): at least 34 Oblates.

The Delegation is young, lively and animated by a strong team spirit and the desire to do mission. And that it is an apostolic corps “going out”, as Pope Francis would say, is shown by the fact

that on November 24, we were at Cacine, in the south of the country, the place of the Delegation’s new mission. The presence of the bishop of the Diocese of Bafata, Msgr. Pedro Carlos Zilli, where Cacine is located, marked the official start of this venture. The pioneers are Frs. Daniel MANE and Roberto GALLINA, who from the beginning of the month moved in and will take care of the first evangelization.

On Friday, November 28, the Feast of the Oblate Martyrs, we were back in Dakar, Senegal, and we had the opportunity to visit the Youth Center located at the new house built to accommodate the more and more young people (currently 12) who are asking to live a time of vocational discernment. We will also visit the prenovitiate community (19 pre-novices), at the Foyer in the Front de Terre neighborhood of the capital. (p. Alberto GNEMMI, Provincial; p. Bruno FAVERO, Superior of the Delegation; p. Alberto Ruiz, Provincial Councillor)

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## Latin America

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### **BRAZIL**

#### **Episcopal ordination of Bishop João Kot**

Many people study their genealogy to learn more about their ancestors. Catholic bishops also like to trace their episcopal ancestry or lineage, relative to the bishop who ordained them to be successors of the apostles.

The first Oblate bishop in Brazil, Bishop Joao KOT, was ordained to his new office on 18 October 2014 by Dom Pedro Brito, Archbishop of Palmas. But if one takes eight steps back in the lineage of Dom Pedro, one comes to the name of Bishop St. Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Co-consecrators were Dom Fernando Saburido, Archbishop of Olinda-Recife, where Dom João ministered for many years, and Dom Carlo Ellena, the bishop-emeritus of Zé Doca.

Dom João (as he is now called in Portuguese) was chosen by Pope Francis on 23 July to be the new bishop of the Diocese of Zé Doca in the state of Maranhão. Born and educated in his

native Poland, the new Oblate bishop came to Brazil in 1994.

The diocese of the new bishop is extensive. There are 20 municipalities in a geographic area of 35,100 km<sup>2</sup>, some along the coast and some in the forest regions.

He was born on 10 May 1962, in the city of Makow in the Diocese of Kraków (Poland). He made his vows as an Oblate on 8 September 1986 and was ordained a priest on 20 June 1992.

There is a Youtube video available in Portuguese: <http://youtu.be/1N2gtkXePMM>

### **CUBA**

#### **A new arrival**

*Fr. Roger HALLÉE, who served for many years in Haiti and in Columbia, recently arrived in the Oblate mission in Cuba. He tells of the work there in the “News Notes” of Brother Augustin COTÉ.*

I arrived in Havana, Cuba, on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and

was met at the airport by Alberto MONTIEL, the Superior of the Oblate mission in Cuba. He is Argentinian and has been in Cuba for the past thirteen years. My arrival in Cuba was expected and I was put to work immediately in the Catalina de Guines area, located some 60 kilometers southeast of Havana, an hour's drive on paved roads. There are two Oblate units in Cuba, one in Catalina and the other in Los Palacios, located some 80 kilometers southwest of Havana. It's a two-hour trip between the two pastoral areas.

In Catalina, Alberto and I have the care of 4 parishes: Catalina, Aguacate, Madruga, and Piché. I have been assigned to care for the last two areas which include outlying areas to be cared for on a monthly basis. I was pleasantly surprised to see the present church activities in the area. During my limited past experiences in Cuba, in the mid-nineties, there were very limited pastoral possibilities and few active parishioners in our Oblate parishes. There has been a very positive change towards more active pastoral activities and participation on the part of the local population. For example, in Madruga, there is a youth choir and a youth group. There are 20 catechists working with over 180 children in the program. Services are well attended. Feast days have been celebrated publicly with the necessary government permission which is readily available upon demand. So, surprise, there is a lot of work to be done and much to look forward to in the Oblate presence in Cuba.

## **BRAZIL**

### **With the Indians in Brazil**

*Henri Leconte left for Brazil 15 years ago. Now 81 years old, strong of foot and eye, his enthusiasm remains intact. Passing through Paris, he spoke about the Brazilian Oblate reality and about his current situation...*

*What is your own situation these days?*

I am in a formation community in Belém, with some young men who are thinking of becoming Oblates. I am there to accompany them, as a witness of the mission.

*And what do the Oblates do in Brazil?*

There are 52 of us, of whom half are Brazilians. Many are in parishes, but at the same time, a good number of us are engaged in social action ministry.

*And you? I have heard it said that you are involved with the Indians...*

It's something I discovered in the parish: the Indian origin of some families, even if they do not want to admit it! In a very mixed Brazilian society, there is a rejection, let's even say a shame, of Indian origins. So when I left the parish 6 years ago, I contacted the Indigenous Missionary Center, CIMI, an organization that depends on the Conference of Religious, and which works with the Indians. Since then, I make regular visits to Indian villages located more than 500 km from Belém. The hardest part, of course, is traveling by coach on very bad roads! But the longer it continues, the more comfortable I am. It's a question of getting to know their lives: their way of thinking, listening to them ... Very often I say almost nothing. I am becoming accustomed to their way of doing things, their sleeping, their eating. I spend my time visiting, knowing that we discover things that surprise us.

*Do they speak Brazilian?*

Yes! But at the same time they are reconnecting with their own culture. I remember taking part in a religious festival over several days. I was not sure if they were okay with that. On the third day, the son of the shaman said, "Thank you, Father, for coming. This is the first time a Catholic priest has participated in this celebration from beginning to end."

*How would you characterize the missionary challenge with the Indians?*

Clearly, the problem is their shame at having Indian ancestors! It is a denial, a stigma in every family, and that's because there is a European-African-American cultural mix. Finally, the slaves were better integrated than the Indians.

*How does the CIMI function?*

At CIMI, our policy is to help the Indians to remain on their land because even if they become inculturated into Brazilian society, they want to keep their uniqueness. We, the Catholic Church, must go all the way. In terms of religion, the Bible, everything begins in the Promised Land: the people would live, only if they found their land, the land that flowed with milk and honey. Why do we not focus more on this to pass on the message of our faith? When I read a gospel, I like to make up parables about the land, about fishing, in order to enter into a greater harmony with Indian reality. (*OMI France October 2014*)

**URUGUAY****Seven years old and growing**

Seven years ago, the Oblates at San Rafael Parish in the Cerro region of Montevideo welcomed the first students at the Talitakum Center. The center gets its name from the story of the daughter of Jairus in Capernaum: a 12 year-old girl whom Jesus restores to life and to her family. It is a learning community that carries on the project of Jesus in its many aspects: schooling, recreation, sports, psycho-sociological and affective aspects, etc. It is an attempt to recreate a family atmosphere where the young people can grow “in wisdom and grace.”

In the first group, there were 20 young people. This year, the school year began with 60 youth who had abandoned their studies and were in risk of wandering the streets all day long, without any hope for the future. At Talitakum, they have the opportunity to take classes in electricity, cooking, metal work, computers and sewing.

Their reality is very difficult, both because of the socioeconomic situation of their families and because of their environment. The whole educational community (teachers, kitchen staff and cleaners, social worker, psychologist and Oblates) are working hard with the youngsters and their families to change their situation for the better so that they might help themselves. Sometimes, they seem to be paddling against the current and that is really the most difficult

thing. For us it is important not to “lose” any of those who come to us, even if they are sometimes deprived of their liberty because of theft or behavior not entirely correct.

The students, through their workshops, also lend a hand outside of the center: those in the kitchen by preparing desserts and sandwiches for meetings or gatherings; those who are learning the trade of metal workers by making railings, gates and waste bins for other institutions as well as grills, planters and windows for their homes. The boys in electricity installed the electrical system of our new hall and they sometimes help the teachers with small jobs. Our “tailors or seamstresses” made aprons and hats for the kitchen workers and have learned how to make pants, shirts, jackets and beautiful party dresses. Those in computers have made videos about their activities and are beginning to update computers that are several years old.

Talitakum is really loved by our parish community and beyond. In October, there was a charity bazaar to raise money. Everyone collaborated, some preparing gifts; some cooking sausages and fried pastries; some operating the various game booths; others taking a “stroll” around the center to prevent any mischief – and there is always some; some putting on a little entertainment; and many others offering their time and talents for the delight of all.

This is very different from the Talitakum of 2007, but there is the same joy and the same desire to help these youth as much as possible. (*Fr. Antonio MESSERI for Procura delle Missioni OMI*)





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## Asia-Oceania

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**JAPAN****After 53 years, still on the job**

*When Roman scholastic Raymond BOURGOIN (a member of the former St. Jean Baptiste Province in the United States) was finishing his Licentiate in Philosophy at the Gregorian in 1961, something new was happening in Oblate formation. "First world" scholastics were being invited to go to finish their studies in a new culture where they might serve as missionaries after ordination. After his final vows with his classmates in Roviano, Italy, Ray left for Tokyo where he would immerse himself in the Japanese language and study theology in preparation for his 1966 ordination. In the November issue of the "News Notes" of Bro. Augustin COTÉ, Father Ray gives an update on his ministry 53 years after leaving Rome.*

Thanks for the latest update. Looking at the list of some of the men now stationed in Tewksbury, I see mostly guys I knew in Bucksport or Bar Harbor and even Rome, either as teachers or classmates or schoolmates! Wow!

You ask for an update of my experiences here. Every evening I feel like that day was like the day before! Nothing new under the sun! I'm still the delegation treasurer for another 2 years after which a younger man will take over. I'm slowly acquainting him with what has to be done as treasurer and he already feels the enormity of the job, though he had graduated in economics before entering the OMI. He's still 40 and already has 2 full-time jobs, which he likes very much: head of our largest kindergarten and curate in a parish. So I told him that if he needs me as an assistant to do the odd jobs which are once or twice a year, I'd be willing to take some weight off his shoulders. He seemed pleased to hear that.

I am also a member of the Team Ministry, that is, 5 of us all live in the same house, and rotate for the care of 5 parishes in the same Prefecture (State). We work as a team to cover each other, etc. In the city of Kochi there are 2 parishes. Three hours to the west of here, there is another

parish and to the east, there are 2 parishes, one is a little over an hour and the other a little over 2 hours away. Of course that's for me, since I stopped driving over 3 years ago and travel by train. Those who drive cut about 15 minutes to a half hour from the time.

I serve as head of our Volunteer Bureau, which finds people to help in social welfare works. Three times a year, it goes to various high schools to teach students how to handle a wheelchair when helping disabled people. One of the things, for example, is how to bring people upstairs with a wheelchair ... when there is no elevator, of course. We also print material that disabled people need for their endeavors.

In one of our parishes, we have a home for DV (Domestic Violence) patients. It ran for over 20 years after the priest who started it began this work. At the time, such DV homes didn't exist in all of Japan, so his was the first one. Patients came from all over Japan at that time. When he died, it took almost 5 years to get it in condition to receive other DV housewives. But now, many such homes thrive throughout Japan and there seems to be no need of the one we have, as others have better quarters. However, we still have the building, and I as leader, with 8 others on the board, will be meeting to see what other social works we could use it for. Some suggest that we make it a DV place for husbands who are battered. Others suggest a place for foreigners who work in Japan and who need housing and maybe an hour a day of language studies. These are mostly from the Philippines, but other countries are involved. They don't know whom to turn to when they have problems, legal or otherwise.

**PHILIPPINES****Ministering to Indigenous youth**

A significant event occurred on 3 August 2014 at the parish of Our Lady of Salvation, Timanan, South Upi, Maguindanao. Fr. Jurambelle John SACIL blessed the De Mazenod Dormitory for I.P. (Indigenous People) students. Students, benefactors, parents and other guests were

present for the event which also served as a commemorative tribute for the 232nd anniversary of the birth of St. Eugene De Mazenod. The former bunker house was renovated into a dormitory through the help benefactors in both the Philippines and the United States.

The dormitory houses 31 needy students of the Teduray, one of the major Indigenous Peoples of the Southern Philippines. They are Grade 7 students at Lumao National High School, located about 15 kilometers from the parish.

Eighty percent of Barangay Kuya's population belongs to the Teduray, Lambanglan/Baleg and Manobo indigenous tribes. They are timid and peace-loving people who live in the area. Many of them are illiterate and, because of poverty, children have no access to education. Added to this, the distance of their homes from the school site becomes another deterrent because the children need to cross a river to reach the school.

The idea of establishing a dormitory for the Indigenous youth came from a conversation between the Timanan parish priest, Fr. Dennis GUI, and some of the school administrators from the area. With the urging of Fr. Gui, the Oblate parish began the "Indigenous People Support Project." Students are provided free meals, free lodging, and a free school uniform. Vegetables planted in a nearby property add to the food supplies for the students.

The project is a genuine community endeavor. The teachers of Lumao National High School take charge of the management and supervision of the dormitory. Parents provided the labor for the repair of the bunker house. The local government through the Vice-Mayor and Barangay Captain have pledged monthly support for the dormitory students' food, and the Church community raises needed funds.

St. Eugene had a soft spot in his heart for disadvantaged youth. This remains a living Oblate legacy, as the people of Our Lady of Salvation Parish in Timanan respond to the educational needs of youth. (Philippine Province Newsletter, November 2014)

## COLOMBO

### Introducing St. Eugene to the people

In August 2014, the city of Wennappuwa formally named a road after the Oblate Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod. On 1 November 2014, another step was taken to introduce the Oblate Founder to the local people. A statue of the saint was inaugurated at the entrance to the Nazareth Preaching Community on St. Eugene de Mazenod Road.

A good number of persons were on hand for the statue's dedication: Holy Family Sisters, parishioners of all ages from the Wennappuwa parish and several Oblates. The preaching community's superior, Fr. Sarath PERERA, and Fr. Gamini SILVA, a scripture professor, spoke about the Founder and his significance in the history of the Church.

After a short prayer service, the provincial of the Oblates' Colombo Province, Fr. Rohan SILVA, unveiled and blessed the statue. He invited those present to especially pray for unity of families.

Within the Nazareth property, there is also a new Marian Grotto, a replica of the grotto at Lourdes. Oblate Bishop Norbert ANDRADI of Anurudhapura blessed the new site of Marian devotion. (*Fr. S. Randil FERNANDO*)

## PHILIPPINES

### JOMI: 60 years!

The history of the Junior Oblates of Mary Immaculate (JOMI) may be traced to long before the establishment of the actual seminary. In a letter of Fr. Gerard MONGEAU, Superior, to Most Rev. Michael J. O'Doherty, Archbishop of Manila, dated February 5, 1946, he asked for authorization to begin a project of "fostering vocations and to train Filipino boys as future Oblates of Mary Immaculate." The proposed house would be established in the district of Grace Park: "the few young seminarians would live there and receive Oblate training while at the same time attending classes at San Jose Seminary." In addition, Fr. Mongeau offered to "get salvaged materials from the Army to

build also a small chapel where we could start the work.”

In 1946, this plan was realized. Our Lady of Grace Parish in Manila was founded with Fr. Joseph BOYD as first parish priest. Priestly vocations soon developed as Fr. Francis MCSORLEY stated in his letter to the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Leo DESCHATELETS in March 1949. He mentioned the rapid growth in the number of applicants. The Oblates could foresee that the Quonset hut at Grace Park would not hold all of the students. Eventually, a new juniorate building was constructed on the property of Our Lady of the Assumption Scholasticate in Manila. The juniorate would move several times more until its present location at Notre Dame University in Cotabato City.

It is gratifying to note that of the 77 Filipino Oblates in 2013, 51 or 66.23% had their first formation in the Juniorate House and/or Seminary. Thus, with grace-filled hearts, the 60<sup>th</sup> JOMI foundation anniversary was celebrated last August 24, 2014 at the De Mazenod Seminary, Notre Dame University, Cotabato City.

Fr. Lauro DE GUIA, Provincial of the Philippine Province, presided at the anniversary Mass. Fr. Jose ANTE was the homilist. This was followed by the viewing of a photo exhibit which presented the history of the JOMI based on archive documents and an interview with Fr. Ante. In the afternoon, a program was held with former JOMI seminarians, benefactors, teachers, Oblate priests and Brothers, seminarians and parents.

The occasion brought into context the theme for the 75<sup>th</sup> Oblate Jubilee of the Philippine Province, namely, “Remembering how it began, Reliving the memories, and Hoping for a brighter and fruitful formation.” (OMI Philippines Newsletter, November 2014)

## CHINA

### Konkang School, “Flying high”

On Friday quite early in the morning our teachers have to run to the nearby elementary school for English class. “Good morning, teacher” “Good morning, students” is the way they

all start the class, and with the assistance of the Chinese teacher, we do spend all morning visiting different classrooms and experiencing the willingness to study and the good sense of discipline of this young generation.

All the students have made little cards with their English name. They are always welcoming and jumping around in the playground every time a group of foreign students goes there for a short visit and to play.

It all began 2 years ago when we approached the principal of the Konkang (“airport”) School. There are about 800 students, most of them sons and daughters of immigrants from the provinces who live in six villages around the area. We offered them the possibility of expanding their knowledge of English and of having activities with foreigners for mutual enrichment, with an exchange of cultural values for a better world ahead of us. One of the results of such exchange has been the very successful ranking of the school in the district; they are indeed “flying higher” and we too along with them.

## PHILIPPINES

### Living with the OMI Charism through the years...

*The Oblates of Notre Dame are a congregation of women religious founded in Cotabato City, Philippines, in 1956 by Bishop George DION and Archbishop Gerard MONGEAU, pioneers of the OMI mission in the Philippines. Sr. Stella Marie Llerin, OND, a former OND Superior General, tells of her experience of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who are celebrating 75 years in that island nation.*

The local Church of Kidapawan was ministered by OMI foreign missionaries. As a child, I was made to understand by my mother that these priests are BALAAN (HOLY) because they sacrifice themselves by leaving their native lands to celebrate Mass for us and forgive our sins. Later I found out that they didn’t only say Mass and forgive sins; they also played with us, visited families and had fun. Catechism classes were fun because there were corresponding prizes for every

correct answer. Flores de Mayo was even more fun because of more games, plus cheese, bread and powdered milk to share. The OMI's in Kidapawan were also known for their "COWBOY" lifestyle. This meant they seemed to be always on the go... reaching far-off barrios by foot and by horseback. I think it was this 'missionary horse-power' that led me to the Oblates of Notre Dame where I started my heart's adventure.

The Society of the Oblates of Notre Dame is a dynamic missionary legacy of the OMI's presence in the Philippines. It is a significant ecclesial event recognizing women's role in the Church, not only to compensate for the lack of priests but to share God's mission as women disciples sharing the OMI charism of seeking the poor at all times.

Bishop Dion and Bishop Mongeau were known for their exemplar missionary zeal and their missionary know-how. Bishop Dion's passion for mission and Bishop Mongeau's compassion for the poor have woven a rich heritage of missionary life to emulate...

Journeying with me as a young religious was my Spiritual Director, Fr. Tom LENERT; later, it was Fr. Chris O'LEARY. It was a period of idealism and altruism amidst the winds of change in the Church, (the challenge of aggiornamento) and the First Quarter Storm (a period of unrest and demonstrations) against the dictatorial regime of President Marcos. These two OMI Spiritual

Directors taught me how to nurture a dream, harness my own gifts and navigate the path to freedom. They accompanied me as I walked into dangerous boundaries, learning hard lessons, relying and trusting the ways of the Spirit of mission.

The OMI's spirit of community and spontaneity easily connects with people's sensibility, drawing out of them the best that is in them, empowering the laity to claim their rightful place in the Church and sharing the Oblate passion for mission. I have a great admiration of the OMI's "dangerous presence" in mission. They are known for their being "specialists in difficult missions". They are at the edges of society and in the corridors of power striving to communicate the message of peace, justice, integrity of creation and harmony. The OMI's also have powerful institutions and global network of cooperation.

After 75 years, it is important to highlight the silent, gentle and luminous presence of the elderly OMI's who have walked the danger zones of their times and who are now the living witnesses and wisdom resources of the Oblate Mission in the Philippines.

As one of the Oblates of Notre Dame, I can say that because of our experience of being nurtured, cared for, and challenged by many OMI's in varied situations, we are deeply grateful for being part of these 75 years of exciting missionary engagement in the Philippines. (<http://www.omiphil.org/>)

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## Canada-United States

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### UNITED STATES

#### Teaching the faith to prisoners

Oblate School of Theology of San Antonio, Texas, has carried its 33-year-old Instituto de Formación Pastoral/Pastoral Formation Institute to a new dimension, offering basic foundational knowledge of the Catholic faith to inmates at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Dolph Briscoe Unit in Dilley, Texas.

The first class has begun with 24 participants taught either by guest instructors who teach in

person or by DVD with guest facilitators who have graduated from the IFP/PFI curriculum and have been trained to use the program's multimedia packet designed for rural parishes. Currently six instructors teach in the program.

The IFP/PFI Program is the first Catholic education and formation program approved by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for a pilot implementation at the Dilley prison. Inmate participants must be approved by the unit's warden. The only academic requirement to participate is the ability to read at a sixth- or

seventh-grade level. The IFP/PFI program offers a systematic approach to formation and OST will confer a Certificate of Pastoral Formation on those who complete all the requirements for graduation.

This initiative was prompted by an inquiry to Oblate School of Theology by the Archdiocese of San Antonio seeking a program specifically designed for inmates. “We wrote a proposal and presented it to the Head Chaplain’s Office and met with two

representatives of the prison. We found them very helpful and eager to welcome us in,” said Dr. Scott Woodward, OST’s Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean. “They asked us to use this program with offenders who have 5 years or less until they are eligible for parole.”

There have been no programs offered by a Catholic institution of higher learning in the Texas prison system before this. (By J. Michael Parker, Director of Communications, OST)

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## Europe

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### ITALY

#### Remembering Bishop Blanchet

On 9 November 2014, the parish of the Shrine of Mary Immaculate in Aosta, a city in the beautiful Italian Alps, remembered the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Bishop Maturino BLANCHET, an Oblate who led the diocese of Aosta from 1946 until 1968.

Born in 1892, the future Oblate studied in the minor seminary of Aosta and at the age of 17 entered the Oblate Congregation. From 1915-18, during World War I, he served in the military; he was ordained a priest in 1921. He served in various roles of responsibility at San Giorgio Canavese (former scholasticate), in Naples and in Pescara until his nomination to the See of Aosta in 1946.

During his years as bishop, he founded eight new

parishes and ordained 78 new priests. As bishop and shepherd of his flock in the diocese, he would often recall his own days as a little alpine shepherd; he was interested in the countryside and the livestock. He had a special love for the workers of the fields and vineyards. One of the first things he recommended to his successor was to assure that the bishopric’s lawns and orchards receive the proper watering.

One of his last messages: “People come and go, but the Good God is the One who is, who does not change, and who never hands in his resignation. Always remain with Him who is our Father. There is nothing sweeter in the world than a house with poor furniture, but where the mother and father are present. The day that they are not there, no luxury can make up for the feeling of emptiness and poverty. God is our Father; to have him is to have a happy life.” (AostaCronaca.it)

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## Anniversaries for January 2015

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### 65 years of priesthood

1950.01.29	07852	Fr. Louis-Philippe Roy	Lacombe
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### 50 years of priesthood

1965.01.02	10313	Fr. René Gauthier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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### 25 years of religious life

1990.01.20	13219	Fr. Sanchez Florencio Robles	Mexico
1990.01.20	13285	Fr. Flores César Taípe	Peru
1990.01.21	13286	Fr. Carlos Salcedo Ojeda	Peru
1990.01.25	13341	Fr. Michael Mhlanganisi Dlamini	Natal
1990.01.25	13342	Fr. Tebogo Joseph Jantjies	Central South Africa
1990.01.25	13358	Fr. Francis Vusumuzi Mazibuko	Natal
1990.01.25	13266	Fr. Cedric Mduduzi Mchunu	Natal

### Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 88-93

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Bro. Albert Domergue	France	14/02/1921	Lyon	12/11/2014
Fr. Vincent de Paul Siebert	Australia	22/12/1931	Brisbane	14/11/2014
Fr. Vincent Ott	United States	10/06/1930	Belleville	14/11/2014
Fr. Yvon Filippini	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	26/03/1927	Strasbourg	15/11/2014
Fr. Richard O'Donovan	Anglo-Irish	05/05/1932	Bangor	24/11/2014
Fr. James Riley	United States	10/01/1919	San Antonio	25/11/2014

*“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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