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Ongoing formation for renewing oneself in the Oblate charism

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In the Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons during the Year of Consecrated Life, which coincides with the second year of the Oblate triennium, Pope Francis explains the objectives of the year for each religious institute and for each consecrated person: look at the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope. For us Oblates, the three invitations are a *kairos* moment, inviting us to renew ourselves in our charism on the eve of the 200th anniversary of the Congregation. From the earliest moments of the Congregation, St. Eugene de Mazenod was convinced that the future of our mission as Oblate missionaries could be assured only by well-formed Oblates, imbued with the spirit of the charism¹. The emphasis was not only on first formation for young people who were preparing for Oblate missionary life, but also on formation that lasts a lifetime. In the request for authorization, addressed to the Vicars General of Aix, the Founder specifies what can be considered the dual purpose of the Congregation, namely, on the one hand, the preaching of missions and, on the other, the sanctification and personal renewal of the members.

Formation seeks the integral growth of the person. It continues throughout life ... It involves a constant conversion to the Gospel (C.47). Since the call to conversion, renewal and integral growth is not limited to first formation, ongoing formation needs to be well organized and prepared so as to accompany each Oblate and every community in their journey. In the Congregation, we have first formation structures that work well on the whole,

¹René Motte, Formation, in *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, p. 391.

and provide a good accompaniment to formandi during their formative journey, which lasts between 8 and 12 years. In contrast, little has been done for the ongoing formation of Oblates. Yet it is a formation period that lasts longer and accompanies the various phases and *seasons* of the life of an Oblate. As Constitution 69 reminds us, ongoing formation helps the Oblate to examine how he achieves unity between his life and his mission at all stages of his development.

One call to conversion from the 2010 General Chapter is that each Unit put together a good formation program to allow all Oblates to renew themselves for the good of the mission. This formation program must consider the five pillars of Oblate formation for the good of the whole person: the spiritual, human, community, intellectual and pastoral/missionary dimensions, and all of that in the light of our charism. To carry out this program, it is necessary that someone be appointed, together with a team, for coordination and monitoring.

Over the years, some Units have managed to build a good program for ongoing formation and some Oblates have been designated to organize it, according to the different stages of Oblate missionary life. In some places, updating programs are held periodically at the Unit level or between Units, while in others, it is the local communities that organize ongoing formation for their members. The experience of sabbatical programs or other specialized formation, well planned and according to specific needs, are another way for recharging and renewing oneself. The De Mazenod experiences and other updating sessions in Aix offer all Oblates the opportunity

to plunge back into the founding experience of our Congregation and go home renewed.

However, it seems that the need to stop from time to time is not easily a part of our missionary passion. To look at our religious and missionary experience, to take stock, to share our faith and to refresh ourselves, to make a better start, as individuals and as a community. But “the very life and future of our Congregation, indeed the success of our mission, depend in large part upon our willingness to look to our own renewal.”² Ongoing formation cannot be considered as an optional addition to a program of missionary life that is already loaded. It is an integral part of our missionary life. What does Jesus do in the face of the harshness of his apostles’ missionary activity? He invites them to come apart into a deserted

²General Norms of Oblate Formation, n°266

place “to get some rest.” (Mark 6:31) In the face of every kind of challenge in missionary and religious life, in a world in constant motion, and more and more demanding, given the routine of daily life, in the face of fatigue, discouragement, and propaganda, and all kinds of difficulties encountered and lived in the mission and, which gradually reduces their *taste* for Oblate religious life, it is essential that Oblates have time for reflection, for spiritual and human recharging, for exchanges of ideas and listening, so they can take stock of their lives and renew themselves. The context of a good ongoing formation is fertile ground where a healthy and successful first formation may continue.

The call of Pope Francis to consecrated religious to wake up the world implies that first of all, we be people who are happily awake, in step with the cries and true expectations of the world of our time.

General Administration

EUGENE DE MAZENOD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

A new program for the De Mazenod Experience

A long work-session, which aimed at assessing the two recently conducted De Mazenod Experiences and at drawing up a new program for this privileged Experience, came to conclusion on the 5th of March. Three members of the General Administration, the Oblate community of Aix, and two specially-invited Oblates participated in the session.

The De Mazenod Experience is meant to be a time of spiritual renewal, lived in Aix, the ‘Holy Land’ of the Oblates. This program has its origins in the decision of the General Chapter of 1953 which introduced to the Congregation the Second Novitiate, which, a year later, was to be renamed the De Mazenod Retreat. The first De Mazenod Retreat, given in French, was held in Rome. Subsequently, more retreats followed fairly regularly, in French or English, and were held in Rome, France, Canada, and the United States. The General Chapter of 1972 ended the organization of the Retreat at the Congregational level and recommended that Regions should establish their own sessions for spiritual and pastoral renewal.

Finally, the 1986 Chapter launched the program called the De Mazenod Experience and chose Aix as a favourable home for such an Experience. The eligible participants for the program are Oblates of the entire Congregation with at least 10 years in perpetual vows. Today, forty De Mazenod Experiences have been held at Aix, and about 550 Oblates have participated in the program. The last two Experiences were held in 2014, in Spanish and in English respectively.

Recently, the De Mazenod Experience has been rethought in the light of the call to conversion of the last General Chapter.

The following are some of the essential elements of this new program:

Progressive Integration, sharing, community prayer, pilgrimage in Aix – in the footsteps of Saint Eugene. Fundamental question: How does the Founder’s life inspire my own?

History of the Congregation and the first Oblate community. Fundamental question: How does the life and experience of the first Oblates inspire my own mission?

Oblate charism. Fundamental question: What is my personal experience of the charism?

A 15 days retreat based on Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Concerning the present missionary outlook of the Congregation, with the presence of a member of the General Administration. Fundamental question: What are the challenges of the Congregation's mission and how do they align with the challenges of my own mission?

Renewal of vows and commissioning.

The dates of the next De Mazenod Experiences will be communicated soon. (Krzysztof ZIELENDĄ)

PRECAPITULAR COMMISSION **Second meeting of commission**

The 2016 General Chapter's pre-chapter commission (Claudio BERTUCCIO, commissioner and members Martin WOLF and Emmanuel YOUNGTEN) had its second meeting in Rome from March 24-26.

With the initial documents already in the hands of provincials and superiors, and being distributed rapidly to the entire Oblate congregation, the focus of the meeting turned to the next steps to be taken in preparation for the gathering in the Congregation's 200th anniversary year.

The election of delegates is also underway, with the approval by the Superior General in Council of the plans of 3 regions; and two more regional plans will be reviewed at the April/May plenary session.

The commission met with Fr. Gilberto PIÑÓN to see how the plans for the 3rd year of the Oblate Triennium could be linked with the chapter preparation, and with Fr. Shanil JAYAWARDENA to discuss the possibilities for the Oblate Communications Service to assist in Chapter preparation as well as provide updates and highlights during the Chapter itself.

Reports from the Oblate provinces, delegations,

missions and regions are a key part, along with the reports of the Superior General and General Treasurer, of the first days of any Chapter. Plans for these reports will be distributed as soon as possible to the various Oblate leaders. A request for proposals from individual Oblates, communities and committees for topics for the chapter to discuss will also be forthcoming soon.

Finally, the commission reviewed a number of possible logos for the Chapter which could fit in with the theme of "Evangelizare pauperibus misit me—pauperes evangelizantur" and the 200th anniversary of our foundation. These were presented, together with a list of possible auxiliary personnel for the Chapter, and other recommendations to the Council liaison, Fr. Cornelius NGOKA, to bring to the upcoming plenary session.

GENERAL HOUSE

Brother Giuseppe D'Orazio & St. Joseph Benedict Labre

Have you ever met St. Joseph Benedict Labre as you were wandering the streets of Rome? If yes, then it was probably not he, for he died two centuries ago. The one you saw was probably not an apparition; you simply saw one of his namesakes, Brother Giuseppe D'ORAZIO.

Just like the famous beggar-saint, Brother Giuseppe goes every day as a pilgrim from church to church. He lights a candle, collects holy cards and recites rosaries. But he also goes up and down Italy to visit the families of missionaries. And when the missionaries leave, he has for each of them a little image of a saint, attached some green United States cash. He remembers by name everyone that he meets.

In the evening, when we go to bed, he begins to walk back and forth in the chapel into the wee hours of the night and who knows what they discuss, he and his Madonna of Good Counsel (in front of whose image he always lights a candle and places flowers) and the Blessed Sacrament.

He hears us perfectly without the need of a hearing aid; he also hears what he should not hear and he pretends to not hear what he does not

want to hear. He sees very well without glasses and he sees what he should not see and pretends to not see what he does not want to see.

This faithful guardian of the house where he began to live 65 years ago, even before it was officially open, on 24 February 2015, celebrated 95 years of life. Ad multos annos! (Fabio Ciardi at <http://fabiocardi.blogspot.it/>)

EUGENE DE MAZENOD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

The priests of Aix in the footsteps of Saint Eugene

During the last week of February, a pilgrimage of the priests of the Diocese of Aix and Arles took place in the footsteps of Saint Eugene de Mazenod. Bishop Christophe Dufour made this pilgrimage together with about thirty priests of his diocese. The role of guide and preacher was entrusted to Father Bernard DULLIER OMI, author of "15 days with Eugene de Mazenod".

During the pilgrimage, the participants attended conferences on the spiritual journey of Saint

Eugene de Mazenod. All the conferences were given at the Foyer of Charity in Sufferchoix. The pilgrims visited the Church of Grans where the first parish mission preached by Saint Eugene and his companions took place, three weeks after the foundation of the Missionaries of Provence. Then, they walked following the footsteps of Saint Eugene through Marseille and completed the pilgrimage by the celebration of Eucharist in the chapel of the vows at the Oblate House on Cours Mirabeau in Aix.

Here are some words of Fr. Dullier during his inspiring homily at the closing Mass: "In this Chapel we encounter Christ who calls each of us by name, to be with him and to send us to bear witness to the Good News. In this chapel, this morning, is present the Diocesan Church with its presbytery gathered around their Bishop. The local Church is a sign of the universal Church. At the end of this pilgrimage, a call is heard, a call to unity and brotherly love without which the Church is not the Church, a call also to love the Church; because no one can claim to love Christ, if he does not love the Church". (Krzysztof ZIELENDĄ)

Africa-Madagascar

CAMEROON

Youth ministry at Douala

The mission with youth is one of our traditional ministries. Youth have an important place in our Oblate mission. We remember that after his ordination, returning to his diocese of Aix, St. Eugene sought and received freedom from any parish assignment, in order to answer the call he discerned at his conversion and to give priority to unemployed young people. We are trying to carry out this mission by putting into practice the threefold educational plan proposed by our Founder: to lead them to be fully human, to be Christians and to be saints.

"Father, what is the Church doing for us young people? Can the Church help us find employment? Is it possible to succeed if you are not hired by the State?" These are the questions the youth are asking of us regarding their future and their involvement in the life of society. These questions that come up again and again in our

chats with young graduates led us to organize, on 17 January 2015, a formation workshop for youth entitled: "Life Orientation." This thought-provoking gathering among young entrepreneurs had as its objectives to find solutions to youth unemployment; then to allow young Christians to rub shoulders with young professionals to awaken in them the spirit of enterprise; finally, to enable young entrepreneurs who do not have the means to advertise their projects to become known to the public.

Today, we see a high rate of unemployment. The employment market is saturated and the generation between 25 and 35 years of age is experiencing many difficulties. Everyone struggles as best he can to create jobs and help other young people who cannot find jobs to be hired by the State. Most young people we work with are in this age group.

Our Founder was an entrepreneur. Indeed, the secret of entrepreneurship is to dare. He invites

us to dare as big as the world. Starting a business means a willingness to face the difficulties and the various trials of life. Nothing good comes to you easily. After our day of formation on entrepreneurship, we managed to get our message across to young people. We want to ask young people to live their lives according to their passion and the talents they have. One's passion points to one's profession and this profession must be driven by a mission that involves challenge, suffering and perseverance. At this point, it will no longer be enough for young people to go out to look for work or just go to the university to seek a degree there. Our dream is to help young people find their passion, develop their talents, standing tall, as energetic creators of jobs that will help others to get out of poverty. (Fr. Donatus Uchenna CHIAKA)

CONGO

Laity won over by the Oblate charism

For the Second Vatican Council, the mission to work in the vineyard of the Lord (Mt 9: 35-38) is not only given to those who receive the sacrament of Orders; it concerns all the baptized, all of God's people.

It is precisely with this idea of the Second Vatican Council that twenty-two lay persons, won over by the Oblate charism, committed themselves on the first Sunday of Lent in the parish church of Notre-Dame du Rosaire in Kikwit before Father Abel NSOLO, provincial of the Congo. They have committed themselves before God and the Christian community to live deeply the Oblate charism: that is to say, the calling to live as apostolic men and women, lovers of Christ, the Church and the poor.

Father Provincial exhorted and encouraged the associates to live, to work and to give witness in such a way as to extend the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in their own life situations. He urged them to see how to live in a new way their belonging to the Church, to the Congregation and to the Oblate province of the Congo.

Their commitment came after a year-long formation centered on three major themes,

namely: the Founder, the Congregation and its structures, and the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate. Their immediate preparation for this great moment was a retreat preached by Fr. Adolphe VUNGA, pastor of the parish of Notre-Dame du Rosaire. Their chaplain, Fr. Augustin MULELE, their Vice President, Mrs. Florence Baere, and Mr. Onesime, Kukatula, honorary member, gave witness at this event. The statutes were handed over to the coordinator of the district of Kikwit after the Vice President had read the names of the committee members.

After the Mass, everyone, together with their guests, came together to share drinks prepared for the occasion at the former Oblate procure in Kikwit. It was a joyful moment to see the increase, not only in number but also in quality of the members of this Oblate family. Undoubtedly, its holy Founder, Eugene de Mazenod, rejoices over it in heaven. May he intercede for us! (Reported by Fr. Augustin Mulele)

KENYA

Oblate kidnapped and released

Fr. James FIORI, Superior of the Oblate Mission in Kenya, tells of a frightening experience his community had in late 2014: the kidnapping of a young Oblate priest. Then the Oblate himself, Fr. Samuel HONG, tells his own story, all in the OMI Lacombe magazine, Oblate Spirit.

Fr. Fiori: Just before Christmas our community went through a stressful, frightening experience. Fr. Samuel Hong was kidnapped and robbed at gunpoint. I had taken him to Nairobi and we had lunch together before I left him to visit a Quebec missionary with whom he attended language school. He took a matatu (public transportation) to Karen, which is where we reside. He was walking home when he was abducted.

I received calls for money, which I did not give. First I don't have the kind of money they were looking for, and in any case we would need a second person to authorize such a transaction. It is not recommended that we pay ransoms. I asked Samuel "Are you in trouble?" and he said yes. He called a few minutes later with the same

request. I went to the police at this point. One becomes aware of how powerless we are. Where do you begin to look?

At around 2 a.m. he returned home shaken but unhurt. They took everything he had and emptied his bank account. This was an incredible experience of community. I sent out an urgent message to the congregation and since then we have received messages from all over the Oblate world. I do believe that it was the power of prayer that brought this to a good conclusion. Most of the time the victims are killed

Fr. Hong: I was on the way home and decided to walk to our place from the Karen bus station, as I usually do. When I passed Subiaco, I saw a car stopping in the distance.

I didn't pay much attention, when suddenly four men got out of the car and one of them was pointing a gun at me. He asked me to get into the car. I did whatever they asked. I gave them my debit card with PIN number. They threatened me with harsh words. I could feel that they just wanted money.

They withdrew money from my account by ATM, but one is only allowed to withdraw a fixed number of Kenyan shillings a day. I had more than that in my account at the time. So they took me to a house and tied my hands and feet. After midnight, they withdrew the rest, and then they released me. I was able to catch a motorbike taxi to our home.

I could really feel God's protection and Mary's helping hands. I think it can happen to anyone. This time it was me. I do not blame anybody. (Oblate Spirit, February 2015)

LESOTHO

Oblates in pilgrimage

On 17 February, the Lesotho Oblates and their associates (MAMI), along with members of other religious communities, assembled at Roma to celebrate the 189th anniversary of the approbation of our Congregation and Constitutions. This was also a special pilgrimage for the Oblates of the

Province in honour of the centenary of Father Gerard's death in 2014, which is to come to a close in May this year. The day began with a procession from Ha Mafefoane, a village near Roma Parish, under a rock where history tells us that *Ntate Gerata* and his companions first pitched tent when they arrived in the Roma valley, before being given a place to build the mission.

In his opening and welcome remarks, at the beginning of the procession, Fr. Antony Lisema MATSOSO, Provincial, highlighted the significance of the celebration and brought to the attention of the participants that the day was a double header in that it coincided with the launching of the second year of the Triennium of preparations for the bicentenary of the foundation of the Congregation, the hundred years of Blessed Joseph Gerard's death as well as the Year of Consecrated Life proclaimed by Pope Francis.

Father Provincial reminded all present that the celebration was also a call for us to remember Blessed Joseph Gerard's missionary zeal, his humility and his commitment; a call, above all, to walk in his footsteps. Referring to Father General's letter for 17 February, he underlined the need to read and reflect on our Constitutions and Rules. He emphasized the importance of prayer in our lives.

All the six bishops in the country were present. All except one are Oblates. Archbishop Gerard Tlali LEROTHOLI, Archbishop of Maseru, presided at the Eucharist. At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, there was a short procession to the tomb of Blessed Joseph Gerard where there was the renewal of vows and the singing of the *Salve Regina*.

To mark the launch of the second year of the Triennium to the bicentenary in 2016, a member of the Triennium committee introduced the theme of the second year, "a new spirit: formation as a lifelong process and the vow of poverty". He underlined the importance of community meetings and other gatherings where we can meet to share and discuss our faith and Oblate values as a family. He challenged us to do first things first by reminding us that we should not sacrifice "Oblate values and gatherings in the name of the

mission”, which has become common among us. (Fr. Benedict Tseko MAKARA in *MAOBLATA A LESOTHO*, March 2015)

CONGO

An Oblate leads media workshops

During this Year of Consecrated Life, the Major Superiors’ Union in Congo is sponsoring workshops for women religious on the theme of the media.

“Listen to the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the model of a good listener, which is why she received the good news of Salvation for humankind. First, start listening to the silence around you and within you.” These were some of the words addressed to religious sisters of less than three years of profession in Congo DR, at a media training workshop organised over two weekends by the Major Superiors Union in Congo’s Kinshasa-Limete. The workshop attended by several religious sisters from over 50 congregations had as its theme: “Community life and the media today.”

During the workshop, the importance of media

in the life of the religious and that of the Church was explored.

The trainer at the workshop was the Congolese Oblate priest, Father Jean-Baptiste MALENGE who is a member of the international team of trainers from the Centre for Research and Education in Communication. Speaking to the religious sisters, Fr. Malenge stressed the importance of listening as a pre-requisite for good communication.

The workshop reminded the young religious sisters to stay up to date with current affairs by listening to the news, acquiring information on television, radio, newspapers or through the internet. This, Fr. Malenge said, is in line with the Vatican II Council Decree on Social Communications, *Inter Mirifica*, No. 5. Fr. Malenge said it is unfortunate that many religious people do not follow the news and are unaware of what is happening in the country and in the world.

Several other training sessions are planned for the special year being celebrated by the universal Church namely, Year of Consecrated Life. (Vatican Radio, 25/02/2015)

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES

Cardinal Quevedo: “I am for peace...”

On Sunday, 25 January 2015, a police operation took place at Tukanalipao, Mamasapano, Maguindanao, between the Special Action Force (SAF) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Originally a mission to serve arrest warrants for high-ranking terrorists, the ensuing battle led to the deaths of 44 members of SAF, 18 from MILF and 5 from the BIFF, and several civilians. As a result of this tragic battle, the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) presently being deliberated in Congress is in jeopardy. The BBL is meant to finally bring peace after many years of violence, kidnapping and killing. In March 2015, the Oblate Archbishop of Cotabato, Cardinal Orlando QUEVEDO, wrote a letter calling for understanding, reconciliation

and peace. He entitled his letter: “Grieving, Doing Justice, Working for Peace (A Letter to all Christians)”. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

Fellow Disciples of Christ:

Greetings of peace in the Lord!

As a Filipino and Mindanawon, I grieve profoundly for our gallant SAF troops who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of justice in Mamasapano. I grieve deeply with their families.

As a disciple of Christ I likewise grieve for the other Filipinos, Bangsamoro civilians and combatants, who perished in the same horrible tragedy. I grieve deeply with their families.

With the families of all the victims I demand that justice be done, that answers to the many

questions raised by the whole nation be forthrightly answered. Those responsible for the tragedy must be brought to justice without fear or favor. The attribution of guilt must not be one-sided. It is now coming to light from the ground that inhuman brutalities were committed by both sides. Guilt is on both sides of that fateful, clearly avoidable, combat.

Yet in the face of outrage and calls for all-out war for the manner by which our law enforcers lost their lives, I call for peace. I call for rationality rather than emotionalism. I call for justice that is not selective. I call for openness and fairness rather than bias and prejudice. ...

I have been a missionary among Muslims for the most part of my priestly life. I have been a parish priest in Jolo. I taught Muslims and Christians in a Catholic University which now has a predominantly Muslim student population. I have witnessed a harmonious dialogue of life among the students. Many of our soldiers and high ranking officers studied in our Catholic schools. So, too, did members and leaders of the MILF. They are not terrorists. Terrorist have in fact broken away from them. The MILF only aspires and struggles politically for a place under the sun in freedom and dignity. The BBL was negotiated painstakingly with stops and detours for at least five years. It is not an agreement that was hurriedly done. It fulfills the Bangsamoro aspiration for self-determination. It preserves our fundamental principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. ...

I am for peace, the peace that God grants to people of good will. I am for the peace that God gives through the collaborative work of men and women who work conscientiously for the good of the whole country. By focusing on the good of a Bangsamoro minority in the "peripheries" who have suffered social injustices for centuries, they are working for the common good of all Filipinos. They are healing historic wounds that have caused great suffering to all Filipinos.

And so must I grieve for our courageous SAF troops who have lost their lives. I must also grieve for all the other Filipinos who perished in

Mamasapano. I grieve and pray for the families they left behind, their inconsolable widows and children, for their uncertain future. For their sake I seek justice and accountability.

I beg you as fellow disciples of Christ, the Prince of Peace, to pray and work together for peace so that Mamasapano will not repeat itself. Let not emotions, biases and prejudices prevail over objective reason and over our most cherished Christian values of justice and peace, truth, love and harmony.

It is the Spirit of God that gives hope and infuses love and harmony among peoples of different faiths and cultures. With God's Spirit we can soar over tragedies, we can restore trust for one another, we can strive together for harmony and peace. Ultimately it is in the enlightened heart where love and peace begin.

May the God of Justice, Peace and Love bless us all.

+Orlando B. Cardinal Quevedo, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Cotabato

PAKISTAN

Solidarity with our Oblates in danger

While the secular media has reported the terrorist attempt to kill Christian congregations at two churches in Youhanabad, a suburb of Lahore, on 15 March 2015, we Oblates need to know that our brothers in Pakistan are living close to these dangerous situations. In fact, there is an Oblate house of formation (philosophy students) in Youhanabad, not far from the churches where these sad events happened. The Delegation Superior, Fr. Derrick WARNAKULASURIYA tells of this tragedy and asks for our solidarity in prayer.

Two churches in Youhanabad, Lahore, came under a suicide attack on Sunday, killing at least 17 people and injuring over 80, some of whom very critically.

Youhanabad is the biggest Christian settlement in Pakistan where over 40 Christian denominations are living. The total Christian population there

is about one hundred and fifty thousand, of which about 35% are Catholics. There are several churches and worship centers for each denomination. The Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan are two major churches that house respectively 2000 and 1000 people at Sunday morning services. It was estimated that last Sunday, there were about 1700 people assembled for the Sunday Mass in the Catholic Church, while several hundred were also gathered to the Christ Church of the Church of Pakistan. Both churches were provided police security, but the few police personnel who were there at the Catholic Church were watching a cricket match that Pakistan was playing against Ireland in the world cup tournament when the attacker detonated his devices. If it had not been for the 18 year old Catholic boy (Akash) who wrestled with the human bomber and sacrificed his own life, several hundred men, women and children would have been massacred in a blood bath inside the church. Shortly thereafter, the second attacker managed to shoot three policemen who were providing security for Christ Church. He detonated the bomb he was wearing, killing himself and several worshippers.

Angry Christians turned violent and caught two

suspected terrorists whom they lynched and then set their bodies on fire. Others destroyed both private and public properties.

On 17 March, the bodies of the Christian victims were buried amidst much tension. All entries to Youhanabad were sealed and no movement was possible. I too had to stay in a nearby parish house from morning to evening. It was a sleepless night for all of us and no doubt for all the Christians living here for fear of Muslim mobs who had warned of setting fire to the whole area. We sent our philosophy students out of our house to a close by convent and now (18 March) we decided to send the boys home, for the situation is deteriorating. I also told the archbishop and the rector of the seminary that we are taking this action for the safety of the boys. The archbishop too agreed with our idea and perhaps the whole seminary will be closed till Easter.

Our situation is quite uncertain, and I have advised the other community members to be ready to leave the place at least for a few days, because there have reportedly been very unpleasant announcements over the public address systems of some of the mosques. Keep us in your prayers. God bless you all.

Europe

ENGLAND

150th anniversary of the “Kilburn Cathedral”

When they come to write the history of twentieth century English Catholicism, “Kilburn Cathedral” will merit a chapter all of its own. In its 1960s heyday, Sacred Heart, Quex Road (its proper name) in north-west London, run by Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), boasted the largest congregation of any church in the country. There were 13 Masses on a Sunday for the 13,000 who queued to worship here, a feat only achieved by taking over an old Nonconformist (ed. Non-Anglican) hall next door and running extra Masses on the half-hour throughout the day.

For hundreds of thousands of Irish émigrés, Sacred Heart, in what was then known as County Kilburn, provided a home away from home. So

there were ceilidhs (*ed. dances*), hooleys (*ed. parties*), the St Patrick’s Day concerts at the art deco State Cinema on the High Road and racks of Irish papers. But this extraordinary parish, with its vast Pugin (*ed. A famous architect*) church, had a mission to integrate its parishioners into their new surroundings. There was a meet-and-greet service for those stepping off the “Boat Train” from Holyhead, hostels for new arrivals, an employment agency and the Marian Housing initiative that enabled young couples to get their foot on the property ladder.

On 21 February, the Sacred Heart began a year-long celebration of its 150th anniversary with a visit from the American Superior General of the OMI, Fr. Louis LOUGEN. In July a special Mass will be said for all those who were married at Quex Road. When we arrived

here 15 years ago, County Kilburn was slowly slipping off the map. The dance halls that once hosted Irish show bands had been demolished or put to other uses. The religious statue shop is now a pawnbroker. Quex Road continues to flourish, with the Sunday congregation still a robust 2,000 spread over five Masses.

Fewer than 20 per cent of those who attend, however, are ethnically Irish, and they are an ageing group. The only times the diaspora gathers en masse these days is for funerals, or Masses of repatriation for those departing these shores to be buried under home turf. There is, inevitably, going to be a whiff of nostalgia about the 150th celebrations, albeit accompanied by a clear-eyed acceptance that things certainly were not all rosy back then.

There was poverty, prejudice against those first-generation Irish immigrants and damage inflicted on some by the Church itself. But the anniversary is also about celebrating the present. Those who fill the pews at Quex Road are from every corner of the globe – Eastern Europe, the Philippines, Somalia, Nigeria and many more. There are currently 58 nationalities in the parish and 38 languages spoken, including in the adjoining primary school where 81 per cent of the pupils are on free school meals.

The church runs the local food bank. We have all heard lately the charge that our Catholic schools, our Catholic parishes, indeed every faith community, are somehow separatist, divisive, intolerant obstacles to multiculturalism, and therefore at the root of today's problems with fundamentalism. Next time I am challenged with this nonsense, I am going to hold up the example of Quex Road.

With its encouragement, the Irish community gradually merged into broader British society, to the benefit of all. And that is what continues to happen, buttressed by the church's stated twin commitments to outreach and justice and peace. This is a church that nurtures what unites us because it lives out the values of a Church that teaches the tolerance and love of a neighbour. For 150 years, Sacred Heart has been giving the lie to talk of introspective religious ghettos by

being a contributor to the common good of its wider community, and of the nation. Those who decry religion as sectarian would do well to pay it a visit. (Originally published in *The Tablet* by Peter Stanford. Reprinted with permission.)

POLAND

Presenting the Church as a community open to all

NINIWA is a pastoral program for youth involved with the Missionary Oblates. It is active in twenty parishes in Poland. Twice a year, the youth of this movement participate in meetings, in different cities in Poland, in the Życia Festival (Festival of Life = an evangelization celebration for youth), and in missionary volunteering. At this time there are 1500 participants in the groups. The community center is in Kokotek, near Lublin in southern Poland.

The authors of great musicals such as "Francis - the called one of Assisi" and "Exodus", together with the Community of Niniwa, to celebrate its tenth anniversary, recently presented the musical "Jonah" - an adaptation of the biblical story of Jonah. In the second part of the celebration, there was a concert by Father Jakub Bartczak, a priest and rap musician. The gathering was held in the city of Katowice, with the participation of 6000 people.

A giant fish, a shrub which grows lettuce, a bicycle that symbolizes the will of God – these are just some examples of the show's props. The play had 150 participants, including professional theater actors, guest vocalists and youth who prepared for several months in workshops.

The interpretation of the Book of Jonah by the author Mariusz Kozubek demonstrated in an interesting and amusing way the conversion of the inhabitants of a sinful city (Nineveh), as well as the struggle of Jonah with himself and with God. The story of the prophet is presented in nine scenes.

The work was composed of various styles and combinations of musical rhythms and sounds of Jewish origin, rock and pop music, with a very

dynamic choreography and humorous scenes. The story was told through dances, songs and recitations presented in scenes such as: the storm at sea, the ship, the belly of the whale or the city full of luxury.

The event was a success. There were several curtain calls. The idea was to convey and stress the simple truth that God is merciful and wants us all to be saved, no matter what we think of the sinners of Nineveh, whether we want to condemn them or give them another chance.

The message of the musical led into the second part of the festival. The World Youth Day Cross was carried onto the stage where there was a prayer of adoration before moving on to the concert by the rapper priest. During the concert, various groups, associations and communities working with youth were introduced.

The organizers wanted to present the Church as a community open to all youth, whose diversity attracts and enriches. (P. Wojciech KLUJ)

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

A journey to the ancestral territory of the Innus

Nigerian Oblate Fr. Cornelius ALINNAEMKA is currently doing parish ministry in the Northern Coast of Canada.

The first year of my missionary experience among the Innu consists in learning their language and culture. With the help of a language teacher, last May, I started my apprenticeship in this rich and beautiful language which became for me a very significant and pedagogical experience. I was offered an experience in the ancestral hunting territory of the Innu; an experience that, at the beginning, left me wondering and with many questions.

During the spring break, I accompanied a family to their ancestral hunting territory. We left on March 2 by train for this territory rich in culture. As we travelled to our destination, I was filled with anticipation, wondering what I would discover. The picturesque landscape of the Northern Coast of Canada filled my eyes and my imagination as each instant of the journey became etched in my mind. It was like a journey to a supernatural museum.

On arrival, I began to understand little by little what the life of the Innus was like in the olden days. I first had to learn how to walk on snow. As I have a very significant weight, I had no choice but to harness snowshoes. Having never used them, I had to immediately begin my apprenticeship. With a few initial difficulties, I soon learnt the

trade and it became fun. Hunting was also new to me. So I had to practically learn everything from the scratch: how to start a fire and keep it going for heat; how to dig a hole in a frozen lake to get drinking water; how to drive a snowmobile; wake up in the middle of the night to ensure that the fire won't go out; learn to follow the trail so as not to fall into a snow-covered hole... In brief, I had to learn to live like the Innus lived in the olden days (except the snowmobile would have been replaced by dog-teams – which would be another experience). Each experience was like a journey into the cultural world of the Innus.

As much as all this activity was most interesting and exciting, an experience in the hunting territory of the Innus is not just learning about hunting but also of feasting, as each day was characterized by the variety and taste of different foods: one day we relished a meal prepared with bush fowl; the next day we enjoyed a stew made from wild hare, followed by caribou meat...all delicious to the taste.

And so with Mr. Zachariah and Mrs. Céline Bellefleur, two persons well-versed in the Innu language and culture, I started my cultural journey in the ancestral land of my Mission community.



Anniversaries - May 2015

75 years of religious life

1940.05.01	07615	Bro. Gaston Comtois	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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65 years of religious life

1950.05.11	09442	Bro. Hugo Van den Broeck	Belgium/Holland
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65 years of priesthood

1950.05.28	07962	Fr. Maurice Hemann	Philippines
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60 years of religious life

1955.05.01	09891	Fr. Wilhelm Deutmeyer	Central European
1955.05.01	09886	Fr. Volker Grunwald	Central European
1955.05.01	09959	Fr. Walter Jüptner	Namibia
1955.05.01	09895	Fr. Franz-Josef Stendebach	Central European
1955.05.01	09885	Fr. Josef Thesing	Central European
1955.05.01	09890	Fr. Nikolaus Wand	Central European
1955.05.01	09887	Fr. Bernhard Wolf	Central European
1955.05.21	10442	Bro. Waldemar Gutberlet	Central European
1955.05.31	09899	Fr. Elino Isip	Philippines
1955.05.31	09911	Fr. Santiago Lyons	Mexico
1955.05.31	09908	Fr. Richard Philion	United States
1955.05.31	09960	Fr. Richard Sheehan	United States
1955.05.31	09906	Fr. Ronald Walker	United States

60 years of priesthood

1955.05.31	08838	Fr. Thomas O'Brien	Brazil
1955.05.31	08643	Fr. Roberto Peña	United States
1955.05.31	08836	Fr. Paul Wightman	United States
1955.05.31	08654	Fr. James Wynne	United States

50 years of religious life

1965.05.01	11974	Bishop Lucio Alfert	Paraguay
1965.05.01	11631	Fr. Berthold Heller	Namibia
1965.05.01	11945	Bro. Bernard Mulligan	Lacombe
1965.05.31	11928	Bro. Donald Claerhout	Lacombe

50 years of priesthood

1965.05.31	10555	Fr. John Hogan	United States
1965.05.31	10543	Fr. William Sheehan	United States

25 years of religious life

1990.05.21	13235	Fr. Marcelo Jr. Andamon	Philippines
1990.05.21	13232	Fr. Rogelio Caalim	Philippines
1990.05.21	13336	Fr. Wongwibulsin Paul Prasong	Philippines
1990.05.21	13231	Fr. Eduardo Santoyo	Philippines

25 years of priesthood

1990.05.20	12893	Fr. Robert Leising	United States
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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 20-26

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Roger Brouillet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	22/03/1920	Richelieu	12/03/2015
Fr. Robert Lesmerises	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	27/09/1932	Richelieu	14/03/2015
Fr. Lucien Wisselmann	France	20/09/1924	Strasbourg	17/03/2015
Bro. John O'Reilly	OMI Lacombe	24/05/1929	Ottawa	17/03/2015
Fr. Jean-Paul Demers	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	01/06/1924	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu	19/03/2015
Fr. Antoni Pospiech	Poland	02/06/1932	Katowice	24/03/2015
Fr. James Hartford	Anglo-Irish	27/05/1934	Dublin	25/03/2015

“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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