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Let us pray to the Lord of the harvest

Fr. Cornelius Ngoka, OMI, Assistant General

The month of May is traditionally considered a month of Mary, during which devotion and prayer to the Virgin Mary become more intense. For us, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in addition to the Marian month, it is also a month where we celebrate two Oblate saints: St. Eugene de Mazenod, canonized 20 years ago, and Blessed Joseph Gerard, apostle of the Basuto. During this month of May, we increase our prayer for vocations to Oblate missionary life. A novena of prayer for vocations is usually proposed for all Oblate communities, between May 21, feast of St. Eugene de Mazenod, and May 29, feast of Blessed Joseph Gerard. We pray and encourage others to pray to the Lord to send laborers into his harvest (C. 52). I would like to take this opportunity to share with you two brief reflections about this vocation ministry.

The first relates to the letter of Father General for 8 December 2013, at the beginning of the Oblate Triennium, where he drew our attention to vocation ministry, a vital ministry for our Congregation. I encourage you to reread this letter. It stresses the need to invite young people, to challenge them by the testimony of our life and mission. We must continue to invite youth because our charism is unique and special in the Church:

“We are fired by a charism that is unique and special in the Church, one that makes us very close to the poor, the rejected, the forgotten, the people that society ignores, and the people who don’t feel accepted in church. We show a very human face of Jesus to the world, one full of compassion and solidarity. I would go so far as to say that our charism lies at the heart of the Church and indeed at the heart of the Gospel itself. We

would be remiss if we did not enthusiastically and boldly continue to invite young people to live as consecrated religious missionaries, priests and Brothers, within our charism.”¹

To the promotion of vocations there is added the testimony of a joyous Oblate missionary life and prayer to the Lord of the harvest. Vocation ministry is primarily an act of faith in Christ, Lord of the harvest.

I would like to emphasize the fact that the invitation of Father General coincides perfectly with the Founder's belief that, in addition to missionary commitment and vocation ministry itself, the witness of the life and prayer of the Oblates were very important means for promoting vocations. For, above all, vocations are a gift from God. It is he who calls.

The second point I would like to share is the need to live the 200th anniversary of the Congregation as a time of grace for thanking the Lord for our vocation as Oblates and for renewing our attitude and commitment to promoting vocations to Oblate life. During this pilgrimage of grace, we are called to fan the flame of Oblate life and mission. Committing ourselves more to the awakening of vocations, welcoming and accompanying potential candidates, seems to be one of the concrete ways for fanning the flame of our Oblate life and mission. This can be achieved through a detailed assessment of the existing vocational ministry in each Unit in view of better organization. Where this is not yet the case, a responsible Oblate should be appointed to vocation ministry, who will work with a team for the awakening and accompaniment of vocations.

Some Units and regions are in the process of organizing congresses on vocation ministry. I think it is a good way to stir up and maintain the flame of the vocation to Oblate missionary life and to remind the Oblates that each of us is responsible for vocation ministry by the example of our joy and our generosity.

At the level of the Congregation, the General Administration will organize a congress on vocational ministry as one of the events marking the 200th anniversary of our founding. It will take place in Aix en Provence, 8-16 July 2016. This is an important occasion for inviting the entire Congregation to give thanks to the Lord for our vocation and renew us in this important ministry for our life and our mission.

During this time of preparation for the 200th anniversary of our Congregation, all Oblates are invited to renew themselves in their vocation to Oblate life and mission. The month of prayer for vocations takes on special meaning in this second year of the Oblate Triennium, devoted to formation and the vow of poverty. The difficulties and challenges we face in several

Units of the Congregation in vocation ministry and the accompaniment of candidates make us aware of our poverty and invite us to trust in the Lord. Prayer is part of every ministry in favor of vocations; it enlightens it and supports it. Jesus himself asks us to pray "to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). The mission belongs to God; it is he who calls and sends those he wants. It is our responsibility to participate actively in the work of God through our prayer and our commitments. The novena of prayer for vocations proposed to us in this second year of the Oblate Triennium will help us to listen to and learn from Christ, the Lord of the harvest.

Pope Francis reminds us that vocation ministry is primarily a ministry on our knees, praying. We pray that through the intercession of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and Blessed Joseph Gerard, the Lord will renew us in our vocation and send other youth to join us as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

¹ Letter of the Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 2013, in OMI Information, Number 539, December 2013.

Holy See

VATICAN

Condolences of Pope Francis at the death of Cardinal George

To the Most Reverend Blase Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

Saddened to learn of the death of Cardinal Francis E. George, Archbishop Emeritus of Chicago, I offer heartfelt condolences to you and to the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Archdiocese. With gratitude for Cardinal George's witness of consecrated life as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, his service to the Church's educational apostolate and his years of episcopal ministry in the Churches of Yakima, Portland and Chicago, he joins you in commending the soul of this wise and gentle pastor to the merciful love of God our heavenly Father. To all who mourn the late Cardinal in the sure hope of the Resurrection, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a

pledge of consolation and peace in the Lord.

FRANCIS PP.

(18 April 2015 : <http://www.news.va/>)

VATICAN

Oblates took part in International Congress of Formators

"To live in Christ according to the form of life of the gospel" was the theme of the International Congress of Formators for Consecrated Life, organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (formerly the Vatican office for Religious Life), held in Rome as an activity of the Year of Consecrated Life, on 7-11 April 2015.

The numbers give us a hint at the size and importance of the event: 1,300 formators participated, from

108 different countries, representing some 450 charisms or religious families.

The demand was so overwhelming that the organizers were forced to limit the number of participants, using as criteria the number of members of each institute. We Oblates were given 11 places, allotted to the following formators: Mario BRANDI, Joaquín MARTÍNEZ and Jude SAPARAMADU from the International Roman Scholasticate; Giuseppe RUBINO and André M. NDÉNÉ (Mediterranean Province); József WCISŁO and Wojciech POPIELEWSKI (Poland); Ronald LAFAMBROISE (United States); Gaby KINZE (Congo); Norbert WILCZEK (Province of Central Europe); and Joseph PHIRI (Zambia) from the scholasticate in Cedara, SA.

During his audience with the participants on 11 April, Pope Francis told them: “Consecrated life is beautiful; it is one of the most precious treasures of the Church, rooted in the baptismal vocation. So it’s good to be formators, because it is a privilege to participate in the work of the Father, which is to form the heart of the Son in those whom the Spirit calls. Sometimes one can feel that this service is a burden, as if it were taking us away from something more important. But that’s a deception, it’s a temptation. The mission is important, but it is equally important to form for the mission, to form for the passion of the proclamation, to form for the passion of going everywhere, into every corner, to proclaim to everyone the love of Jesus Christ, especially to those who are alienated, to proclaim it to the little ones and to the poor, and also to let oneself be evangelized by them. All of this requires a solid base, a Christian structure

of the personality which families themselves rarely can give these days. And that increases your responsibility.”

VATICAN

Six Oblate bishops “ad Limina Apostolorum”

The Vatican news service announced that on 24 April 2015, the Holy Father had received the bishops of two African nations in their “ad Limina Apostolorum” visit. A list of the bishops present makes it clear that the vast majority of the Episcopal Conferences of both Namibia and Lesotho are Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Of the seven bishops at the meeting, only one of the bishops from Lesotho is not an Oblate. Present for the visit which they must make every five years were: (from Namibia) Archbishop Liborius Ndumbukuti NASHENDA, O.M.I., of Windhoek; Bishop Philipp PÖLLITZER, O.M.I., of Keetmanshoop; Bishop Joseph Shipandeni SHIKONGO, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Rundu; (from Lesotho) Archbishop Gerard Tlali LEROTHOLI, O.M.I., of Maseru; Bishop Augustinus Tumaole BANE, O.M.I., of Leribe; Bishop John Joale Tlhomola, of Mophale’s Hoek; and Bishop Joseph Mopeli SEPHAMOLA, O.M.I., of Qacha’s Nek.

Pope Francis concluded his talk to the bishops: “I urge you, finally, to persevere as men of deep and constant prayer, in the way of Blessed Joseph Gerard, who listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in all matters. Prayer precedes and leads to authentic evangelization... When the Church summons all Christians to constantly take up anew the task of evangelizing the world... she is showing us the path to our deepest happiness.”

General Administration

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Fr. General comments on death of Cardinal George

Cardinal Francis George always maintained a close connection with the Oblates. His visits to the provincial house in D.C. were frequent, and, when his health was good, he always stayed with us. He always came to the General House in Rome when he was there. He was a brother

among us, and we were accustomed to calling him Francis and to banter and argue with him, especially some of his former students! I don’t think he would want us now to be sitting around singing his praises!

He assisted the Superior General, Father Fernand JETTÉ, for twelve years as Vicar General. It was a most remarkable and delicate time in the history of our Congregation and Francis

supported and collaborated closely with Fr. Jetté. His support for improving first formation and vocations at that critical moment was against the current of the times. Another prophetic act was initiating the Congregation's efforts for a Justice and Peace Committee at the level of the General Administration. He oversaw a new edition of "Oblate Prayer", a post-Vatican II reformulation of the "Vade Mecum" of prayer that was used by Oblates. This was done at a time in which traditional practices of prayer were on the wane, and it was a call to all the missionaries to renew their lives of prayer in the spirit of the Oblate charism.

When Francis came to the 2010 General Chapter of the Congregation, he made an important, off the record, intervention. He mentioned how some of those prayers from the Congregation's past continued to be a part of his spirituality, prayers like that in the morning to the Blessed Trinity, an inheritance we have received from the Sulpician and French school of spirituality. Recently, we read about the testimony of a lay person who said Francis prayed the Sulpician prayer "O Jesus living in Mary" every day. Another important insight he shared with us concerned the Chapter theme, "a profound personal and communal conversion to Jesus Christ". He said it was truly a courageous theme for a General Chapter. Then he reminded us, "The conversion to Christ that you are being called to live is conversion to Jesus Christ crucified; always keep that in mind." That points us to Saint Eugene de Mazenod's experience before the crucifix on Good Friday.

I think the three passions of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, our Founder and Father, were also the passions of Francis. These are: passion for Christ; passion for the Church; and passion for the poor. His missionary vocation as an Oblate shaped Francis' life, and, as bishop, his "Oblate DNA" guided his heart. Francis was passionate about Christ, and his life as an Oblate, a priest and a bishop was a life in Christ. He saw the world through the eyes of Christ the Savior, a world loved by God who gave his only Son to save it. We know Francis' passionate love for the Church was unconditional, and he poured himself out for the Church in zealous activity. His passionate love for the poor was always present

in his outreach to the homeless, to children, to minorities, to immigrants and refugees. His love was not simply sentimental but concretized in action for justice and peace. His ministry to the poor, and his simple way of being with the poor, were never about attention for himself, but, in the spirit of Saint Eugene, he did it for God's glory.

With hard work, solid dedication and no fanfare, Francis sought, by God's grace, to live entirely for the Kingdom, and, as Saint Eugene exhorted his Oblates, he sought to be holy, to become a saint. Again, this was not for show or for applause, but was a personal commitment and a truly interior road in the spirit of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, only for God's glory.

In the name of the entire Congregation I would like to express our condolences to Archbishop Blaise Cupich and the Archdiocese of Chicago. I also extend our deepest sympathies to Francis' sister, Margaret, and all the members of Francis' family. Finally, in a special way, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate express our condolences to Father Daniel Flens and our gratitude to him for his service and watchful care for Francis for so many years. May God bless you, Father Dan!

Francis, our brother, rest in peace! Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate!

GENERAL HOUSE

A monument restored

It is a known fact that the International Roman Scholasticate was situated for nearly seventy-four years (1887-1961) at Via Vittorino da Feltre, near the Colosseum in Rome. The heart of Saint Eugene was kept there and the scholastics used to pray there every night before going to bed. In 1908 a tabernacle-like monument in marble was erected to guard the heart in a worthy manner. It was a reproduction of the mission church in Aix.

Today the heart of St. Eugene is revered in a side chapel of the General House at via Aurelia 290. Following the departure from via Vittorino da Feltre in 1961, the monument was transferred to the new General House, and forgotten in the basement. Fr. Roberto SARTOR recently

rediscovered it and Mr. Ioan Bejan, an expert Romanian mason has rebuilt it. It can now be seen in all its glory in the garden of the General House. Nice idea! Ad perpetuam rei memoriam!

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Francis Cardinal George, OMI: 1937-2015

Francis Cardinal GEORGE, Archbishop-emeritus of Chicago and former Vicar General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, died on 17 April 2015, at his home. He had suffered from cancer since 2006 and officially retired as Ordinary of Chicago in November 2014.

Here is the statement of Cardinal George's successor, Archbishop Blase Cupich, a few hours after the Cardinal had died:

"A man of peace, tenacity and courage has been called home to the Lord. Our beloved Cardinal George passed away today at 10:45 a.m. at the Residence.

"Cardinal George's life's journey began and ended in Chicago. He was a man of great courage who overcame many obstacles to become a priest. When he joined the priesthood he did not seek a comfortable position, instead he joined a missionary order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and served the people of God in challenging circumstances – in Africa, Asia and all around the world.

"A proud Chicagoan, he became a leader of his order and again traveled far from home, not letting his physical limitations moderate his zeal for bringing the promise of Christ's love where it was needed most. When he was ordained a bishop, he served faithfully, first in Yakima, where he learned Spanish to be closer to his people. He then served in Portland, where he asked the people to continue to teach him how to be a good bishop. In return, he promised to help them become good missionaries.

"Cardinal George was a respected leader among the bishops of the United States. When, for example, the church struggled with the grave sin of clerical sexual abuse, he stood strong among his fellow bishops and insisted that zero tolerance

was the only course consistent with our beliefs.

"He served the Church universal as a Cardinal and offered his counsel and support to three Popes and their collaborators in the Roman congregations. In this way, he contributed to the governance of the Church worldwide.

"Here in Chicago, the Cardinal visited every corner of the Archdiocese, talking with the faithful and bringing kindness to every interaction. He pursued an overfull schedule-- always choosing the church over his own comfort and the people over his own needs. Most recently, we saw his bravery first hand as he faced the increasing challenges brought about by cancer.

"Let us heed his example and be a little more brave, a little more steadfast and a lot more loving. This is the surest way to honor his life and celebrate his return to the presence of God.

"As we celebrate in these Easter days our new life in the Risen Lord, join me in offering comfort to Cardinal George's family, especially his sister, Margaret, by assuring them of our prayers, thanking God for his life and years of dedication to the Archdiocese of Chicago. Let us pray that God will bring this good and faithful servant into the fullness of the kingdom. May Cardinal George rest in peace."

Francis Eugene George was born in Chicago in 1937. He suffered polio at the age of 13 and consequently, was not able to attend the archdiocesan major seminary. Instead, he entered the Oblates' St. Henry's Seminary in Belleville, Illinois. It was there that he felt the call to religious missionary life; he professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1957. Ordained a priest in 1963, he spent the first years of ministry as a philosophy professor and formator of young Oblates. In 1973, he was named provincial of the former Central Province and a little over a year later, he was elected Vicar General at the Chapter of 1974. He was 38 years old at the time and according to some Oblates who were

present at that Chapter, he was hand-picked by the new Superior General, Fr. Fernand JETTÉ whose student he had been at the scholasticate in Ottawa.

While he was Vicar General, he traveled to many provinces and delegations of the Congregation. This worldwide view of the Church served him well when he was named a Bishop and a Cardinal in later years.

In 1990, Pope St. John Paul II named him Bishop of Yakima, Washington, a region that had been served by some of the first Oblates sent to the United States by St. Eugene de Mazenod in 1847. In 1996, he became the Archbishop of Portland, Oregon, and in 1997, he was asked to move once again, to become the archbishop of the city of his birth. In January 1998, Pope St. John Paul II elevated him to the College of Cardinals; his titular church was San Bartolomeo all'Isola in Rome.

His brother bishops in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops elected him their Vice-President in 2004. From 2007 until 2010, he was the President of the Conference.

Many of those who were witnesses to his work and his talents considered him the most intellectually gifted U.S. bishop of his generation. Some even called him the “American Ratzinger” because of his sharp intelligence and ability to articulate the position of the Church and complex theological issues.

May he rest in peace.

UNITED STATES Teaching contemplation

For many years, Fr. William SHEEHAN, at one time the provincial of the former Eastern Province of the U.S. and also a formator for many years, has been teaching a method of contemplation, Centering Prayer, whose meaning was summarized by St. Gregory the Great at the end of the 6th century as “the knowledge of God that is impregnated with love.” The Oblate was the subject of an article on the internet blog “Crux” (<http://www.cruxnow.com>).

If Father Bill SHEEHAN were your parish priest, the pews would be packed for every Mass. As it is, he’s in huge demand all over the country to lead retreats where everyone sits for hours a day, eyes closed, in a silent prayer known as Centering Prayer. And his retreats are packed.

“He’s the best of the best. There’s a light in him and a sweetness and gentleness that you’re very drawn to,” says Nancy Nichols Kearns, a long-time Centering Prayer practitioner and volunteer with Boston’s chapter of Contemplative Outreach, Centering Prayer’s umbrella organization.

Bill Sheehan himself is more modest. “I just think people are searching for something deeper, and sometimes they don’t even know how to articulate that,” he said at home in Lowell, Massachusetts, where he is a priest with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. “I’ll be flying to a retreat wearing my Oblate cross, reading or preparing. Inevitably the person next to me will ask, ‘Where are you going? What are you doing?’ ‘I’m going to a retreat center in Amarillo (Texas),’ I’ll say. ‘Oh?’ I’ll tell them I’m a Catholic priest and I’m giving a retreat there and then, boom, Catholic, not Catholic, Christian or not, they want to know all about it.”

There’s a fascination there, a curiosity, maybe even a holy yearning like the one he finds among those making his retreats for a day, a weekend, a week or more. At the start of each retreat, he asks participants why they’re there and what they’re looking for. “They’re looking for silence,” Sheehan says. “And they’re looking for a deeper relationship with God. There’s just that attraction.”

As someone who’s felt that attraction, too, I’m amazed there aren’t Centering Prayer groups in every Catholic parish around, particularly now, when we hear so much about the need to slow down, unplug, live “mindfully” in the moment, and meditate. Centering Prayer offers a path to all that. More important to Catholics, as its co-founder the Trappist monk Thomas Keating has said, it offers the chance to experience the presence of God — even if you’re no paragon of perfection yourself.

Perhaps Centering Prayer has struggled in parish acceptance because it's relatively new and unknown to many priests. Or perhaps it's because the tradition-bound Catholic Church is not the first place would-be meditators would look for guidance.

Thus, in 1975, Centering Prayer was born. Sheehan met Keating and the prayer just a few years later. Keating was wondering then if laypeople, not just nuns and priests, could move into this tradition and invited Sheehan to join a small group at a 14-day retreat at the Lama Center in the mountains of New Mexico.

"Back then, there was no electricity, no indoor water, just outhouses and an outdoor shower. Inside at night it was all candles," Sheehan remembers. "For the first time, my life was reduced to utter simplicity, just the basics, and it was fine. Then to be plunged into the silence and several hours of prayer throughout the day, with Thomas (Keating), well, it was a very powerful experience."

That was more than 30 years ago. In 1986, Contemplative Outreach Ltd was formed to

share the teaching of Centering Prayer. It is now practiced by tens of thousands in nearly 50 countries and, as I said, in a smattering of American Catholic parishes.

Sitting across from Sheehan in his Lowell office, I can see in his face and hear in his voice what decades of "showing up" has done for him and his own love story. I want what he's got.

Bill Sheehan is not far from 80 years old. He doesn't look it. His blood pressure is terrific, he tells me, another "fruit" of all that prayer. "How long can I do this?" he says, referring to flying all around the country giving retreats. "I don't have a clue. But I say that as long as I've got something on the calendar, I'm going to be okay. I've put dates down for 2016, and I've got some in 2017.

"Let me tell you: At my age, someone's always asking, 'Are you retired?' And I say, 'Not quite.' I tell them I'm spending most of my time hanging out with people who are searching for God." (By Margery Eagan. Full article at <http://goo.gl/KX1kJm>)

Africa-Madagascar

CAMEROON

The crimes of Boko Haram

Fr. Raymond Pierre NANI is originally from North Cameroon. He grew up in the little town of Salak, at the foot of Mount Mandara, some 15 km from Maroua. Currently he is in France to study missiology and Islam; he recently completed a term as provincial of the OMI in Cameroon. Prior to that, he was at the prenovitiate in Mokolo, on the border with Nigeria. Here he speaks about the situation that has arisen because of violence by the Islamic sect Boko Haram in this part of Cameroon. (In Audacieux pour l'Évangile, April 2015)

How are the people living day to day in this situation caused by the violence of Boko Haram?

In the mountains, the villages that are close to the border are under the protection of the army; that gives them a bit of courage. Elsewhere,

others had to leave to come to Mokolo where they have relatives. But they live in fear because they cannot move about freely, especially to go into their fields. And for the peasants, without their field, they are nothing! They are farmers with small fields. They live day and night in fear. What reassures them is the presence of the army. If there were no army, we cannot imagine how they would live!

In some villages, the army asked people to go, leaving only the military in order to identify better the enemy. Near Kolofata, people have hardly planted since it is not safe to have grass that could impede visibility growing in fields. Activity is slowing down. People hope that this will end one day but for now, it is really difficult. How can they survive if people do not cultivate the fields? This creates untold suffering. Tomorrow, what is going to happen with the shortage of millet, peanuts and beans? When

the border was open, people improved their lives through Nigeria because everything was sold there!

What is the Church's position in this crisis?

The arrival of exiles in Maroua created a shortage of staff. The diocesan clergy is forced to reorganize, but it's complicated. Some areas are inaccessible. Even motorcycles are prohibited. I think too about the two priests of Tokombéré. To go to celebrate, they must be accompanied by the military! For our simple mountain people who are afraid of a policeman on the road, you can imagine when they see the priest arriving with the military...!

For the feast of Christmas at Maroua, we were asked to anticipate the Midnight Mass. And can you imagine? At St. John, to get into the church, it was necessary to have police checking each person like they do at airports; this was astonishing for the people. They had never seen anything like it.

The Church is there; it's not crossing its arms. In some places like Kolofata or Nguétchéwé, people are there, but they are afraid that some suicide bombers from Boko Haram will arrive. That's how the Church is facing the departure of many missionaries. The missions are disrupted. What is there to do so as to continue supporting Christian communities? I see that the diocese suffering in this regard.

To this must be added the influx of Nigerian refugees. First they were settled in Catholic schools. Who could help these people, be sensitive to their situation? It took the local Church, the Diocesan Development Committee, to launch an international aid program. Initially, 300 or 400 people arrived. It was necessary to feed them before the CHR arrived. And now there are thousands and the CHR is there; the Church continues to help.

And what about the Oblates?

Thank God, the Oblates no longer have a major presence in the Far North. We do have

two parishes and a prenovitiate in Mokolo and a hospitality house and parish in Maroua. At Mokolo, movement is restricted. If they go to Maroua and if they want to take the bus back to Mokolo, after a certain hour, the buses no longer go into the city! It is difficult but they are managing! They have not said: we're leaving! They do their duties, they celebrate Mass, they go to the different sectors, they get together to share. I admire their courage; they are apostolic men. The Christians are there as well as the priests, although they are foreigners (Nigerians), like the diocesan priests! They carry on their ministry as if nothing had happened and that gives comfort to the Christian communities of the parish.

Has this situation had an impact on relations between Christians and Muslims?

I believe that it has not damaged the relationship that existed between Christians and Muslims, on the contrary! Boko Haram attacks both Muslims and Christians! Everyone is in the same situation. Both suffer the same way! This then gives us great understanding in our dialogue. Everyone ensures the security of the other. Whether Christians or Muslims, they saw the need to unite against this enemy they did not know. So between Christians and Muslims, one senses this sharing, this dialogue.

CAMEROON

A Lenten pilgrimage

Lent, a time of prayer, penance and sharing. Each individual lives it according to his spirituality, each group according to its charism and each parish according to its organization. Served by the Oblates since its creation in 1994, Christ Good Shepherd Parish in Gari-Gombo used to live Lent like any other time in the liturgical calendar of the Church. But Lent this year, 2015, had a quite different appeal; it was a very positive appeal as it aimed at bringing the faithful to live Lent differently. It was a Lent that was organized and planned by the solidly united pastoral team of Father Alojzy CHRÓSZCZ (pastor), Bro. Basil OBIEJE (scholastic in regency) and the Franciscan Sisters of the community of the Sacred Heart Missionaries (composed of three sisters).

For living a better Lent this year, the youth had, from their first meeting of the year, scheduled a pilgrimage for Lent. While the idea of pilgrimage was encouraged by the Brother, it was adopted by all the youth, approved by the pastor and lived by the whole parish.

On Friday, 13 March, the day of gathering the pilgrims in the parish, there were only 30 pilgrims registered! This figure already exceeded the number 20 originally forecast; so it was already worrisome.

Saturday, 14 March, a departure Mass began at 6:00, presided by the parish priest. Before the end of the Mass, we had 60 pilgrims (one could not send anyone away). There were youth, nursing mothers, fathers and even the elderly, over 60 years old. At 7:30, Father gave the departure blessing and the pilgrims, supervised by Brother Basil and Sister Renée Manka Mbida, took to the road. Throughout the walk, a series of talks and the Way of the Cross were provided by Brother Basil; different types of rosaries (rosary of the Virgin Mary, rosary of the Holy Spirit, Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, etc.) were led by the Sister, and songs were led by the youth.

At the beginning, the weather was favorable and sunlight pierced the fog to be reflected in the glistening leaves. But after 8 km of walking in the forest where there was no sign of human habitation, we were soaked by heavy rain for more than two hours. At first, this bad weather was considered a misfortune, but as it watered the ground, we realized that the rain was needed so that we could go across the 22 km of hills ahead of us. After walking 7 km, we observed a 15-minute break and the rest of the walk was done without pause because of rain. But we still got to our destination (the chapels of Ndeng) at 15:37, after a walk of 8 hours.

We were welcomed and even sheltered by Protestants. Muslims who were able to approach us greatly encouraged us also. In the evening, at 18:00, there was a talk by Sister Gisele Bella (superior of the community of Franciscan Sisters) who had joined us at Ndeng-SFIL by car with the pastor. After a talk about the benefits of the pilgrimage, a dinner was offered.

It was a joyful pilgrimage but also a very difficult one because it was the first experience of such a distance anywhere in the diocese of Yokadouma. (Sch. Bro. Basil Ebubechukwu OBIEJE, in <http://www.omicameroun.com/>)

Europe

ITALY

A “counter-protest”

On 1 April, an Oblate parish in the city of Cosenza welcomed students from the “Enrico Fermi” Science High School (Liceo Scientifico) when a large group of students staged a massive “walk-out” from classes in order to make the traditional “Easter duty” at the parish. The walk-out was in response to a protest by the local section of the Union of atheists and rationalist agnostics (Uaar) who claimed that the religious rite should be denounced as an “interruption of public service” since it had been scheduled to take place in the school itself during school hours.

The “counter-protest” took place in the church of San Domenico, staffed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who also teach catechism in

the school. Fr. Carmine MARRONE, the local Oblate superior, said: “We should thank our brethren from the Uaar because they have made us more aware of the treasure which our faith is.”

SPAIN

Remember the martyrs of the 20th century

In a 26 March 2015 letter to the parish pastors of the Archdiocese of Madrid, the Auxiliary Bishop Juan Antonio Martinez Camino, announced an initiative to honor the 402 canonized and beatified martyrs of the 20th century who died in and around Madrid. The bishop stated: “It is good and necessary to know about this treasure and gift of God to our diocesan Church, which can be of great help in the renewal of Christian life and the new evangelization.”

Therefore, the archdiocese has created a special place in Madrid for remembering these martyrs: in the Church of the Calatravas. On 12 April, Divine Mercy Sunday, there was the dedication of two newly painted icons at altars in the church. One icon depicts St. John Paul II as “the pope of the martyrs of the 20th century,” and the other depicts a number of the martyrs: priests, sisters, other religious and laity. There is also a publication where one finds a map to the burial sites of all the martyrs (Guía “Memoriae

martyrum”. Los santos mártires del siglo XX en Madrid, BAC, Madrid 2015)

Among the martyrs pictured, there is Blessed Francisco Esteban LACAL, representing the 22 Oblates of Mary Immaculate martyred in 1936: priests, Brothers and scholastics from Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid). They were beatified on 17 December 2011 in Madrid; their feast day is on 28 November.

Latin America

URUGUAY

A new community in Rodó

About 3 years ago, during the annual retreat of the Delegation of Uruguay, while on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgin of the Thirty-three at Florida, we Missionary Oblates asked ourselves: why not ask the Virgin to help to found a new community? In reality, there were not many of us, but we trusted in the fact that the good God would provide. Maybe it's only an anecdote, but I am convinced that it was at that moment that a new foundation began.

Opening a new community is not at all easy. First of all, one must understand the purpose. We must not forget that we Oblates have been called to evangelize the poor in community. Then we must see what the diocese is planning and consider whether we have the personnel available for the activity. A lot of things have to come together for a common goal and we had to discover where God wanted to lead us.

What seemed important right from the start was the openness of the bishop of Mercedes. He proposed that we establish a community for the missionary animation of the diocese: certainly a challenge but an interesting one, to return to our origins. The clergy also seemed interested in our missionary work and in our presence as religious in the diocese. After having consulted the entire delegation, the response was positive and it was necessary to pick a place.

We were looking for a place to establish the community that would be at the center of the diocese so we could get around quickly, a place

that did not require the work of a big parish that would have taken us from our principal activity. The place suggested by the bishop was a town some 200 km from Montevideo called José Enrique Rodó, better known as Rodó. This place had been taken care of for 40 years by an Italian priest “fidei donum” who had recently died. This missionary devoted his life for the people, especially setting up important services. Besides having well-furnished chapels, he provided wedding dresses for women who wanted to get married but who were too poor to buy; he had a radio station; he broadcast the mass on the local television station, etc.

After his death, the town had a supply priest for a few months. We arrived in January of this year and we immediately began to establish first contact with the people of the place and with the pastoral workers of the neighboring areas. For us Oblates, it is a big challenge that requires the collaboration of everybody. Right now, we are 13 missionaries in Uruguay, but it is a challenge that feels like a new beginning, a new life.

We now have two Oblates on site, Fr. Agostino IADEROSA and Fr. Stefano CARTABIA, and we hope to have a third one soon. We have already scheduled two missions for this year and a youth mission in 2016 for the youth of the diocese. It's a big step for our little delegation. It is helping us to prepare for the bicentennial of the foundation of the Oblates; it gives us a desire to renew ourselves and to keep alive the legacy of Saint Eugene and of the Oblates who have preceded us. It helps us to be a Church “on the go”, such as Pope Francis is requesting, so as to pass on the joy of the Gospel. (Fr. Jorge ALBERGATI)

Asia-Oceania

PHILIPPINES**Cardinal Orlando Quevedo comments on Cardinal George's death**

To me Francis was first a friend and a brother-Oblate. Becoming a Bishop, and Archbishop, and Cardinal, he continued to be simply a friend whom I could chat and banter with.

This was so when we first met as scholastics in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1963. We had just finished our third year of Theology. He in Ottawa and I, in Washington, D.C. What struck me about him were his sharp piercing eyes that looked at me as though I was the only person in the room with him. Those eyes were the windows of his mind and heart. He had a keen penetrating mind, whose grasp of culture, philosophy and theology, even as a scholastic, would later unfold onto the public stage.

About Francis I once told this story to Chicago Catholic faithful gathered at the First Archdiocesan Festival of the Catholic Faith.

I told them about the deep humanity of their shepherd. It was summer in Washington, D.C., the eve of the final examinations at the Catholic University of America. Francis was doing a Master's in Philosophy. I was into European Diplomatic History. The other Oblate scholastics had gone up to their rooms to study. Francis and I stayed behind to watch the Miss Universe Contest on TV. It was a long, drawn-out event. I wanted to watch till the end because the Philippine beauty candidate was a semifinalist. He also wanted to stay for the final result. At the end we both went to sleep around midnight without studying for the finals. Miss Universe first, summer studies second. But not really, for I am certain that he got grades of A for his Philosophy subjects that summer.

He was genuinely a brilliant philosopher and an outstanding theologian, an intellectual of the first degree.

At the canonization of our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, Fr. Marcello ZAGO, the Superior

General, organized a brief symposium for Oblate Bishops from around the world. He asked me to present a brief view of the Church in Asia.

To present the vision of Church in Asia I pointed out the rich mosaic of Asian cultures, Asia as the cradle of ancient religions, and the massive poverty of the Asian continent. Given this pastoral context, the vision of the Church in Asia, I said, was evangelization by way of a triple dialogue - inculturation or dialogue with cultures, inter-religious dialogue or dialogue between Asia's major religious and philosophical traditions, and integral human liberation or dialogue with the poor peoples of Asia. Francis approached me during coffee break and told me, to my total surprise, that it was the first time he understood why dialogue was so imperative in Asia. In jest I told him, "Ah so after all these years you finally learned something from me!"

But, indeed, his was a scintillating intellect, ever in search of truth. And that truth was first of all the truth of God, of God's mission, our mission.

He was the Vicar General of the Congregation when he visited the Philippines. I listened to a conference that he gave the scholastics in Manila. For me, the conference was a doorway to a better understanding of St. Eugene's "missionary daring" and "evangelizing the poor." It was also a key to his missionary heart that, in the midst of formidable challenges to mission in Southern Philippines, was full of optimism, of faith and trust in Jesus. The depth of his conviction was most certainly the fruit of personal prayer before the Lord.

The last time I met Francis was when I visited him last year. He was in relatively better health as he conducted the Chicago priests' assembly. He asked me to speak to the priests. I spoke briefly about the work for peace in the Archdiocese of Cotabato. But I noticed how difficult it was for him to walk even for a short distance. He spoke then quite casually about the doctor's prognosis that his days were numbered. I realized that we might not see each other again.

Today I heard that the Lord had finally called Francis to his bosom. I started my homily at the priestly ordination of six Jesuits at the Ateneo de Manila with Francis in mind. I said that while I would speak about Jesus the eternal High Priest, I also had in mind an icon of Jesus the Good Shepherd, a great priest, a missionary Oblate, a Cardinal, a friend, who was at home in the great urban centres of the world as well as in the poor rural missionary peripheries of South America, Africa, and Asia. As I mentioned the name of Francis, I had to pause to control my voice.

Francis, my dear friend, my brother Oblate, even as we pray for you, commend us to the Lord, to our Blessed Mother, and to your namesake, St. Eugene.

COLOMBO

Mazenod Youth teaches with stickers

As a means of informing society, the Marketing Team of the Mazenod Youth has initiated an awareness programme against drugs, alcohol, pornography and smoking. The youth have decided to distribute stickers on the danger of these things.

As the first step, they started the campaign at an Oblate parish, Mattakkuliya, Colombo. It was a successful effort. The Mazenod Youth pasted stickers of awareness on three-wheelers, public buses and shops in the parish. A good number of people, regardless of their religion and ethnicity, collaborated in carrying out the campaign without any hindrance.

The team members have decided to go to another place in the diocese of Chilaw, the village of Sirigampola. The parish priest is very much enthusiastic and cooperative with the mission. His personal involvement in the Diocesan Alcoholic Anonymous programme is an added reason for his openness to this awareness campaign.

It is essential to address these issues and instruct the youth of the villages regarding the dangers of drugs, alcohol and other threats. It is interesting and encouraging to note that

other youth in society constantly encourage the Mazenod Youth to intensify and continue their efforts with these issues.

PAKISTAN

Providing for our security

After the gruesome events in Youhanabad, Lahore, on 15 March 2015, where a couple dozen faithful were massacred in the church compound by twin suicide attacks, injuring a number of people, and following the extreme reaction of some of the Christians, the fear factor has gripped every Christian settlement, Christian installations, churches, religious houses, seminaries and Christian schools.

The government had already imposed measures to protect vulnerable places from the clutches of terrorists and extremist groups; these became more common at Christian installations after the events at Yohanabad.

The Oblates in Pakistan have three formation houses: in Karachi (scholasticate), Lahore (philosophate) and Multan (juniorate) and a small school in the desert in Derekabad. The law enforcement agencies have firmly advised us too that our installations be safeguarded by raising parapet walls as high as eight feet (2.4 m), with spiral barbed wire three feet high (1 m) atop the walls. Part of this security measure includes the installation of closed-circuit TV cameras with recording devices.

We are grateful to the Oblate Superior General, the Treasurer General, the regional Councilor for Asia Oceania and the members of the General Administration for helping us attend to these precautionary measures. The Delegation of Pakistan also sincerely thanks the regional units who helped us at the hour of our need. (Pak Bulletin, January-April 2015)



Anniversaries for June 2015

70 Years of religious life

1945.06.29	07962	Fr. Maurice Hemann	Philippines
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70 Years of priesthood

1945.06.01	07437	Fr. Robert Lechat	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1945.06.10	07143	Fr. Edmond Turenne	Lacombe

65 Years of priesthood

1950.06.16	08172	Fr. François Buteau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.06.16	07618	Fr. Rosaire Langelier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.06.29	08040	Fr. Richard Haslam	Anglo-Irish
1950.06.29	07740	Fr. John Patterson	Natal

60 Years of religious life

1955.06.24	10645	Bro. Marcel Michaud	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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60 Years of priesthood

1955.06.04	08888	Fr. Thomas Brown	Brazil
1955.06.04	08895	Fr. Arthur Craig	United States
1955.06.05	08854	Fr. Robert Kelly	Lacombe
1955.06.05	08739	Fr. John McCann	Lacombe
1955.06.17	08868	Fr. Lucien Bouchard	United States
1955.06.17	08690	Fr. Francis Demers	United States
1955.06.18	08896	Fr. Daniel Lafrance	Lacombe
1955.06.26	08919	Fr. Marek Czyzycki	Assumption

50 Years of religious life

1965.06.13	11671	Fr. Charles Borski	United States
1965.06.13	11674	Fr. Ramiro Cortez	United States
1965.06.13	11670	Fr. Gilberto Piñón Gaytán	General Administration
1965.06.13	11768	Fr. William Zapalac	United States

50 Years of priesthood

1965.06.05	10660	Fr. Andrzej Grzesiak	Poland
1965.06.05	10809	Fr. Antoni Mendrela	Assumption
1965.06.05	10808	Fr. Ludwik Spalek	Poland
1965.06.13	10924	Fr. Edward MacNeil	Lacombe

25 Years of religious life

1990.06.05	13281	Fr. Benjamin John Bosco Gali	India
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25 Years of priesthood

1990.06.09	13016	Fr. Carlos Alarcon	United States
1990.06.17	12989	Fr. Alexandre Sistenich	Belgium & Holland
1990.06.17	12728	Fr. Andrzej Stenzina	Lacombe
1990.06.19	12879	Fr. Kazimierz Bielak	Poland
1990.06.19	12887	Fr. Krzysztof Czepirski	Poland

1990.06.19	12880	Fr. Adam Filas	Assumption
1990.06.19	12886	Fr. Tadeusz Kal	Poland
1990.06.19	12885	Bishop Wieslaw Tony Krotki	Lacombe
1990.06.19	12883	Fr. Stanislaw Kubis	Poland
1990.06.19	12873	Fr. Piotr Lepich	Poland
1990.06.19	12881	Fr. Roman Majewski	Poland
1990.06.19	12878	Fr. Zbigniew Matejek	Poland
1990.06.19	12889	Fr. Marek Modrzewski	Poland
1990.06.19	12888	Fr. Krzysztof Pabian	Poland
1990.06.19	12892	Fr. Pawel Ratajczyk	Poland
1990.06.19	12730	Fr. Andrzej Sowa	Assumption
1990.06.19	12882	Fr. Krzysztof Trocinski	Cameroon
1990.06.19	12912	Fr. Kazimierz Zdziebko	Poland



Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 27-33

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Michel Legros	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	05/05/1952	Richelieu	06/04/2015
Fr. Joseph Osinski	France-Benelux	11/03/1937	Divion	08/04/2015
Fr. Donald McLeod	OMI Lacombe	27/03/1927	Saskatoon	13/04/2015
Bro. Jean René Roublot	France	08/05/1927	Lyon	15/04/2015
Fr. Thomas Swords	Central Province of South Africa	07/07/1937	Bloemfontein	15/04/2015
Francis Cardinal George	United States	16/01/1937	Chicago	17/04/2015
Fr. René Laberge	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	20/09/1935	Richelieu	21/04/2015

“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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