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## Human Growth and formation in the prenovitiate

Fr. Cornelius Ngoka, OMI, Assistant General

The novena of prayer for vocations to Oblate religious life which we have just experienced has allowed us both to renew ourselves in our own vocation and to understand that in addition to vocation ministry, each activity and missionary presence should be an opportunity to pray for vocations to Oblate missionary life and promote them. The support of and familiarity with the candidates, beginners at this stage, will continue and intensify during the later stages, starting with the prenovitiate.

I would like to emphasize the important role of the prenovitiate in the Oblate formation journey today and the need to better *attend to* the formation process during this stage.

Of all the stages of Oblate formation, the prenovitiate, in its current forms, is certainly the newest and most diverse stage. In recent years, the need for better accompaniment of young men before the novitiate experience has become obvious. As Fr. Jetté noted in his report to the General Chapter of 1980: “Young people who wish to enter religious life today are often unprepared to begin a novitiate. Their previous religious formation is weak; their decision needs to be clarified, purified, matured ... Just about everywhere, the prenovitiate is considered necessary.” (*OMI Documentation*, 29 November 1980). As a Congregation we have gradually realized the importance and benefit of this stage of formation, thanks to experience and in the face of the different challenges that first and continuing formation pose for us today. The prenovitiate has become the first phase of first formation (GNOF, 156), mainly centered on human growth and Christian formation.

In the preface to the Constitutions and Rules of 1825, Eugene de Mazenod defines what might be called the *missionary pedagogy* of the Oblates: to help people become sensible (human), then Christians, and finally help them to become saints. The attention on the human person characterizes the Oblate way of living and doing mission. To remain faithful to the charism, Oblate formation must take into account the human dimension in the accompaniment of each Oblate. As Christian life is realized and develops in a concrete human context, we cannot ignore it in proclaiming the Gospel and in discernment and the formation journey.

Constitution 54 clearly states one of the goals of this experience: to help candidates “to achieve the personal and Christian maturity necessary for a fruitful novitiate and to assess their suitability for our way of life.” While the purpose and importance of the prenovitiate are no longer in any doubt in the Congregation, its program and its duration are not the same everywhere. Where the program lasts between six months and two years, the formation process tries to address mainly the human and Christian accompaniment of pre-novices. In this case, it is necessary to program this time so that the young men can make of it an experience of discovery and growth in their human, Christian and spiritual lives.

Where the prenovitiate program also includes the study of philosophy, the duration is usually between three and four years. In this case, if the prenovitiate program is not well defined, one often runs the risk of building everything around the study of philosophy and neglecting other dimensions of formation, especially human

accompaniment, Christian and spiritual formation. Whatever the duration or the system followed, the question is to ascertain whether the current prenovitiate programs help to accompany the candidates and prepare them for the crucial stage of the novitiate. We are often tempted to forget or even ignore the main objectives of this formation stage in the development of its program.

In July 2014, while meeting in Aix-en-Provence for a formation session, prenovitiate formators had the opportunity to share and listen to their experiences about the objectives and the current prenovitiate programs. At the end of the session, and despite the diversity of experiences, the formators, among other things, became deeply aware that the prenovitiate is a time of preparation for the novitiate which consists in getting to know the candidates better and accompanying them so that they can better understand and better respond to God's call. Human growth and Christian formation are two areas to which the prenovitiate stage must pay particular attention, in the context of community life. We must take time to accompany each pre-novice; this implies full-time formators, well-prepared and

supported by a stable team. The lack of a clear formation plan can easily lead to improvisation of this formation phase. In many cases, one is often tempted to *fill in the gaps* with a variety of activities that do not really help young people deepen their vocation and know themselves better so as to grow.

In his message to prenovitiate formators, Father Louis Lougen recalled that the prenovitiate is the “door” to all Oblate formation and, consequently, formators should ensure the good health of this human “raw material” and the solidness of their spiritual formation.

It is indisputable that the accompaniment of young men at this stage of formation must consider the socio-cultural and ecclesial contexts where they come from and the concrete situations of their respective Units. However, to live Oblate formation as an experience of growth, freedom and internal coherence, a good human and Christian accompaniment that begins already at the prenovitiate seems essential. It is also necessary that our formators be ready and well-prepared for the challenge.

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## Holy See

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### VATICAN

#### Oblate given new task

*On May 6, 2015, the Vatican's Fides News Agency carried this item:*

On December 5, 2014 Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, appointed Rev. Father Giuseppe GIORDANO, of the Missionary Oblates of

Mary Immaculate, as National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Guinea Bissau for a five-year period.

The new National Director was born 61 years ago in Italy. He was a missionary in Senegal since 1981, where he also served as National Director of the PMS from 1999 to 2011. He has been in Guinea Bissau since 2013, where he is parish priest in Farim, in the diocese of Bissau.

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## General Administration

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### GENERAL SECRETARIAT

#### A new collaborator in the office

*The Secretary General, Fr. Marek JAZGIER, informs us about changes in the Office of the General Secretariat.*

As you may know, the Dominican Sisters, who were our collaborators in the Offices at the

General House, are leaving Rome upon the expiration of their contract at the end of June, 2015. We are very grateful for their dedication and service in the past years.

At this time, we welcome Ms. Flavia Sollazzo, who started her work at the General Secretariat on May 25, 2015. With the arrival of Ms. Sollazzo, we hope to re-establish a closer collaboration with you

as Superiors and with your Offices and Secretaries.

Please, take note that Flavia Sollazzo has all the credentials as the new office assistant at the General Secretariat, and can contact you on behalf of the Secretary General.

The contact information is unchanged:

- gensec@omigen.org - for the administrative issues
- genstat@omigen.org - for the consultations and statistics
- Tel. +39. 06 39 877 283 - for the very urgent matters

## GENERAL POSTULATION

### Good news from the Vatican

On May 5, 2015, Pope Francis authorized the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree for the beatification of Italian Oblate, Fr. Mario BORZAGA (1932-1960), and his Laotian catechist, Paul Thoj Xyooj, both martyred in Laos 1960. Hopefully on June 2 of this year, the process of the 15 other Martyrs of Laos will come to the same conclusion. Five of the 15 are Laotians, five are priests from France and members of the Paris Foreign Mission Society, and another five are Oblates from France: Fr. Joseph BOISSEL (1909-1969), Fr. Vincent L'HÉNORET (1921-1961), Fr. Louis LEROY (1923-1961), Fr. Jean WAUTHIER (1926-1967) and Fr. Michel COQUELET (1931-1961). Together with Fr. Borzaga, we hope to have six new Oblate martyrs beatified very soon.

On May 9, 2015, an initial meeting took place at the General House in Rome. The Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, met with the petitioner of the cause of Mario Borzaga and Paul Thoj Xyooj, the Provincial Superior of the Mediterranean Province, Fr. Alberto GNEMMI, and with its Vice Postulator, Fr. Angelo PELIS. Fr. Roland JACQUES, Vice Postulator for the cause of the 15 other Martyrs, representing its petitioners, the Bishops of Laos, as well as the Oblate Postulator General, Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, also took part in the meeting. The petitioners for both

causes suggested having a single celebration for beatification in the spring of 2016 in Laos or at a place in Europe. Thanksgiving masses in Italy and France might be organized as well. A decision about the time and the place of the beatification will be made by the Holy See, hopefully during the coming summer.

Here, in summary, once again, is the story of each of the Oblate candidates for beatification:

- In 1960, Fr. Mario Borzaga went on an apostolic trip to some villages but he never came back.
- In April and May 1961, Frs. Louis Leroy, Michael Coquelet and Vincent L'Hénoret were snatched from their missions in the Province of Xieng Khouang and savagely put to death.
- Fr. John Wauthier was a tireless apostle of the refugees and stood up for justice on their behalf. In 1967, another faction in Laos ambushed and killed him.
- In 1969, it was the turn of Fr. Joseph Boissel, 60, a veteran of the Laos mission. He was ambushed on his way to an isolated Christian community and executed. (*Thomas Klosterkamp, Oblate Postulator General*)

## JPIC GENERAL SERVICE

### Director meets with ambassadors about Africa

On May 21, 2015, Fr. Kennedy KATONGO, Director of the Oblates' JPIC office, was invited to join other religious leaders at a special briefing session with Ambassador Phillip Carter, of the United States Africa Command, and Ambassador Kenneth Hackett, United States Ambassador to the Holy See. The meeting was held at the residence Ambassador Hackett.

During the briefing, Ambassador Carter outlined activities of the U.S. government in Africa. In the conversations with the religious leaders present at the meeting, there were discussions about current issues affecting Africa. These included the Ebola crisis and Boko Haram in West Africa;

the plight of the Migrants in Libya; the problem of Al Shabab in Eastern Africa; the crisis in Burundi; the xenophobic attacks in South Africa;

democracy and good governance and a host of other developmental issues.

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## Europe

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### SPAIN

#### European Joint Session in Pozuelo

The Joint Session of the European Oblate Interprovincial Conference (CIE) with the Central Government recently took place in Pozuelo, Madrid, on 13-17 April, as about 50 Oblates gathered from across the region to meet around the general theme of Discerning a New Spirit – Beginning a New Journey.

In the five days together, there was open sharing of experiences of mission, plenty of discussion around the issues facing Oblates in Europe today and a respectful listening to and learning from each other. Fr. Ray WARREN, as Acting President of the CIE, set the tone in his welcome address in which he recognised that for this encounter, we are a community together. A sense of fraternity, openness to each other and free discussion characterised the days spent together. Each day comprised prayer and the Eucharist in the chapel dominated by an image of the 22 Oblate Martyrs (and one layman), presentations on particular themes followed by small group discussions and plenary sessions, plenty of conversation over the table and social time together. Judith King, a laywoman from Ireland, acted as facilitator and kept us focused on the task with her competent and gentle presence.

Fabio CIARDI led us in a day of retreat, speaking on the theme of Prophets of a New World. Drawing from the Constitutions and Rules, the experience of St. Eugene, and scripture, he helped us reflect on our mission to proclaim the Word in the light of the changing face of Europe. Fr. Pierre de Charentenay, SJ, helped us reflect on The Church and Europe Today, beginning with the provocative statement that “Europe was a Christian continent”. To respond to the situation today, the Church needs to deepen its spirituality, remain faithful to the Gospel, live more authentically and bring light upon what others would prefer to hide.

Three main themes were addressed during the Joint Session. The first, on Crossing Borders, looked at the experiences of a growing number of Oblates from elsewhere who come to work in the European mission, with testimonies from Fr. Joseph RAJ and Fr. Alex JOSEPH. Ways of better integrating such Oblates into the mission were explored as were the induction process for both the Oblate and the receiving community.

The second theme derived from the call of Pope Francis; a morning was given over to discussion of Going out to those on the peripheries’, a rich concept for Oblates called to evangelise the poor and most abandoned. Fr. Leo PHILOMIN spoke of his mission in Darndale, a parish on the periphery of Dublin where he saw his task as “keeping alive the flame of faith”.

The third theme concerned Oblate structures in Europe. The Provincials of France (Fr. Vincent GRUBER), Mediterranean (Fr. Alberto GNEMMI) and Central Europe (Fr. Stefan OBERGFELL) spoke of the good and bad experiences of unification. Fr. Chicho ROIS spoke of the process involved, stressing that restructuring must be to improve Oblate life and mission and that it can’t succeed without conversion and the engagement of every Oblate. Various scenarios and implications were discussed and it became clear that for restructuring to proceed, there was a need for Oblates in Europe to have a change of mind-set, to look beyond national identities as primary, and to see themselves as Oblates first, at the service of mission.

Father General addressed the assembly on the last day, blessing and encouraging the Oblates of the Region. He made three calls: to find more ways to interrelate and integrate across the European Region, East and West; to create a vocations strategy for the Region; and to create 8-10 communities, international in character, places of intense living of the Oblate charism, engaged

with lay people and committed to mission to those on the peripheries of Church and society. (Kevin MCLAUGHLIN)

## **POLAND**

### **Preparing for Oblate World Youth Days**

For the fifth time, the Oblates will be hosting special “Oblate World Youth Days” in conjunction with the international WYD that will take place in Krakow, Poland, on 26-31 July, 2016. The Oblates of Poland are inviting young people associated with the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod, to come together in Wroclaw on 20-25 July. Wroclaw is the largest city in western Poland. It is situated on the River Odra in the Silesian Lowlands of Central Europe, about 145 miles / 233km from Krakow.

During the Oblate event, there will be catechetical sessions; meetings with the Oblate superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, and the Provincial of the Polish Province, Fr. Antoni BOCHM; a Festival of Nations; concerts; skits; and the Way of the Cross.

Preparations for the Oblate youth festival are under way. Fr. Tomasz, MANIURA, Oblate youth coordinator, has been asked to be in charge of the preparations. A website and registration materials are being prepared.

This will be the fifth meeting of Oblate youth in connection with a World Youth Day. Previous gatherings took place in Germany (2005), Australia (2008), Spain (2011) and Brazil (2013).

The 2016 Oblate WYD will have special significance since that will be the year of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

the founding of the Congregation. From the very beginning of this band of missionaries, the members shared their faith, their mission and at times, even part of their home with young members of the Christian Association of Aix.

The origin of World Youth Day goes back to an encounter of Pope St. John Paul II with youth at St. Peter’s Square in Rome.

In 1984 at the close of the Holy Year of Redemption, over 300,000 young people from around the world responded to the invitation of Pope St. John Paul II for an International Jubilee of youth on Palm Sunday in St. Peter’s square. Looking out to the crowds who answered his invitation he said, “What a fantastic spectacle is presented on this stage by your gathering here today! Who claimed that today’s youth has lost their sense of values? Is it really true that they cannot be counted on?” It was at this gathering that the Holy Father entrusted to the youth what is now known as the World Youth Day Cross, to be carried throughout the world as a symbol of the love of Christ for humanity.

The following Palm Sunday, coinciding with the United Nation’s International Year of the Youth, Our Holy Father took the opportunity to welcome the youth of the world to Rome again. Later, he announced the institution of World Youth Day on December 20, 1985, and the first official WYD was held in 1986. (<http://worldyouthday.com/>)

Further information will be provided, as it becomes available from the organizers of Oblate World Youth Day. ([www.oblaci.pl](http://www.oblaci.pl))

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## **Canada-United States**

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### **UNITED STATES**

#### **Death of former Assistant General**

Father John KING, former Assistant General, died at the Oblate community in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, on 2 May 2015, at the age of 86. Until about a year ago, he had lived as a hermit and served as chaplain to a community of contemplative nuns. Each day, the religious

women gathered with Fr. King to pray and celebrate the Eucharist. The rest of their day was spent in solitude with the Lord.

The first thirty years of Fr. King’s life as an Oblate priest were filled with activity and accomplishments. He was professor of theology at the Oblate scholasticate in Washington, D.C. He was a consultant to some bishops during the

Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. From 1963 until 1966, he was superior of the Studium in Rome. When the Assistant General Fr. Thomas REDDY was named provincial of the former Eastern Province of the United States, the Superior General, Fr. Léo Deschâtelets, and his Council named Fr. King to replace Fr. Reddy. From 1968 until 1972, he served as Assistant General in Rome and then, from 1972 until 1974, as General Councilor for the United States Region. Upon completion of his service in Rome, he went to the Oblate mission in Puerto Rico and, a few years later, he worked among Hispanic Catholics in Lowell, Massachusetts.

While he lived this very active life, he felt a call deep within himself to seek the Lord in a more profound way. He asked his Oblate superiors for permission to explore a more contemplative life-style. What began as an experiment became a way of life.

In an edition of the Oblate review, *Oblatio*, Fr. Harry WINTER, wrote an article about Oblates at Vatican II: an Initial Survey (*Oblatio* I [Nov. 2012, 3]: 335-53). In a section about Fr. King, he wrote: "... when the then five provinces of the USA held the 'First American Regional Conference on Mission and Unity,' in Natick, MA, from Oct. 14-18, 1974, King had a major role in organizing and leading the conference. The report contains King's role in the evaluation session on the final day. 'For Fr. John King, Regional Councilor, it was a joyful experience, but not without pain and ambiguity; as one participant had remarked earlier, ambiguity is increasingly recognized as part of the life of the poor and, therefore, of Oblate life also. Looking over his seven years as Councilor, Jack observed that the Spirit is certainly at work in the Congregation, adding that he now found more support and less façade in the Oblates of today.' The fourth and last resolution voted by the Conference was 'That Fr. John King be thanked and commended for the leadership he has given to the American Region over the past seven years.'"

## UNITED STATES

### Oblate School honors Bishop Guillermo Steckling, OMI

*On May 7, 2015, Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, presented Honorary Doctorates*

*to Liberation Theology Founder, Gustavo Gutierrez, O.P., and to former Oblate Superior General, Bishop Guillermo STECKLING. Below are excerpts from the speech which the school's president, Fr. Ron ROLHEISER, delivered to the audience prior to the presentation of the honorary doctorate to Bishop Steckling.*

I had the privilege of serving on our General Council in Rome for six years with Guillermo as our Superior-General. I also had the privilege of living in the same house and community with him during those six years. I want to highlight some things about his leadership, both in its substance and its style. First, substance:

When Guillermo was elected as our Superior-General he replaced Marcello ZAGO, who wasn't easy to replace. Marcello was bigger than life and in a good way. He was charismatic leader who worked 24 hours a day and had a major new idea every hour. He did a lot of visioning and did some writing for John Paul II, and, as our Superior General, took the Congregation to many strategic parts of the world. But those successes had a downside. By the time Fr. Zago completed his time as Superior-General, all that expansion had stretched our resources dangerously thin. So when Guillermo became our Superior-General he inherited a congregation that was very much alive and very strategically-placed, but one that had also over-reached and needed to consolidate some things. As well, he also replaced a legend, a charismatic figure as big as life. No easy tasks!

And he did both tasks exceptionally well. He provided a quiet, strong leadership that helped to consolidate us and also take us to some new places. Interestingly: During his leadership the Oblates opened several new missions, and they were opened because they were in the poorest parts of the world. The needs of the poor trumped our need to consolidate.

Guillermo's years of leadership were characterized by 3 things: By solidifying our provinces, delegations, and communities, he helped make us a stronger congregation; by solidifying our communities internally in terms of prayer and hospitality to each other, he helped make us a more

prayerful and hospitable congregation; and in new outreach to the poorest of the poor, he helped make us a congregation more in touch with the poor.

That was the substance of leadership. What was its style? Leadership style is also substance, as Pope Francis is showing us. Sometimes how we do things has as much impact as what we do!

How did Guillermo do things as our Superior General? His leadership was very much characterized by three things: he listened – always listened and spoke last; He was gentle and patient – handled everyone with understanding and gentleness, he never broke the bruised reed; and he was always calm and steady – “this is to be expected, this comes with the territory, this too will pass;” a model of servant-leadership – he did away with the “head table.”

And why, more particularly, are we are honoring him with an honorary doctorate?

To put it in one line: Oblate School of Theology is honoring him for his role in leadership in the Oblate Congregation, but especially for his dedication and service to the poor, to whom he has given his life, both in rural barrios and in Roman offices.

As a young man, Guillermo had a vision of himself as a missionary – but his vision of this was of himself working with the poor, on the ground, in the barrios, wearing khakis and a sweatshirt, taking on the “smell of the sheep”. And for the first years of his missionary life, that’s what he did, he lived and worked with the poor; but, as the old saying goes, life is what happens to us while we are planning our lives. He got called to Rome by the Oblate community and he spent the next 18 years of his life there,

servicing the poor, but in a place far away from the smell of the sheep, in Roman offices.

But, as I shared, he did serve the poor there: always ensuring that we were seeing things through the prism of the poor.

Finally, after 18 years, he was released and happily returned to work with the poor in Paraguay but that was soon interrupted by a call from Pope Francis to become a Bishop in a diocese that was experiencing a lot of struggle. And again he left the barrios of the poor, this time for an episcopal office. But, again, ultimately, he did this for the poor.

St. Paul said: “I can live with lots and I can live with little, but always it is for the same reason, to serve Christ.” Guillermo has also, in his life, his words, and his commitments, has recast those words to say: “I can live in the barrios and I can live in an ecclesial office, but always it is for the same reason, to serve the poor.”

- And so, Bishop Guillermo ... for your selfless leadership in the church and in the Oblate Congregation,
- For providing a model of servant-leadership,
- For providing a model of how someone can serve the poor, no matter where circumstance takes them,
- For providing a model of what the word OBLATE means which we, here at Oblate School of Theology, can show to our students and can use to challenge ourselves,
- And, most of all, for your selfless serving of the poor for nearly 50 years,

Oblate School of Theology is proud to bestow on you the highest honor we can give, an Honorary Doctorate of Pastoral Leadership.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### **SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **A journey toward reunification**

For several years, there has been discussion on various levels concerning a possible reunification of the three Oblate provinces of South Africa. Over the past year, this discussion has taken

on a fresh impetus with various Task Forces appointed by the provincial leadership to further the process.

One step in the process took place at a workshop on 27-29 April 2015, when a total of 28 Oblates representing the Central, Northern and Natal

provinces met in Durban to fraternise and to share their hopes, fears and expectations for carrying on the Oblate charism in South Africa, planted there at the express wish of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

The group heard about the foundation of the Oblate mission in South Africa and the eventual “division” or “separation” that pastoral necessities called for in order to carry on the mission. In the 1850’s there was a need for the fast-growing Church in South Africa to be divided into Apostolic Vicariates and Prefectures for pastoral reasons. Thus, Oblate missionaries were appointed as bishops: Bishop Charles-Constant JOLIVET as Apostolic Vicar of Natal; Bishop Anthony GAUGHREN as Apostolic Vicar of Orange Free State; and Fr. O. MONGINOX as Apostolic Prefect of the Transvaal. This division was an incentive for the Oblates to support their brothers in their apostolic task by founding Oblate Units in these vicariates. For a long period of time, the bishops were also provincials of the Oblates in their territories until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Workshop was greatly honoured by the presence of the Superior General via Skype. He congratulated the Oblates of the three Provinces for having taken it upon themselves to give life to the ongoing process. He called on the Oblates to revisit the 2010 Chapter’s call and make it a basis for the foundation of the proposed Province. He invited the Provinces to see the ongoing process as a call of the Holy Spirit to look deep into the Oblate life and mission in terms of reinvention and redefining our Mission.

He said the fundamental questions that should not depart from the heart of every Oblate at this moment are: “What is the reality of South Africa today?” “What is the Lord calling us to do as OMI in South Africa?” “What is the Church calling us to do today”, “Where is He calling us to be?” He enjoined Oblates to keep the hope alive because he notices a very strong movement of the Holy Spirit. He further called on Oblates of the Provinces to espouse the life of simplicity; to make themselves accessible at all times; to be present in the lives of their people; to be truly Oblates! He finally enjoined us to involve, in this

process, all the Oblates; this can only be possible if there is accountability and transparency in the process through communication.

He invited the Provinces (animators and leadership) to involve the Region in the discernment process, to involve the General Councillor for Africa-Madagascar (who, before the General began his chat, greeted the gathering via Skype and expressed happiness for the progress recorded thus far), and finally to involve the General Administration. He ended his chat with a strong and passionate call to the animators, leadership and every single Oblate: “COMMUNICATE! COMMUNICATE!! COMMUNICATE!!!” (Fr. Emmanuel YOUNGTEN TEMSWANG)

## **NAMIBIA**

### **The poor become poorer**

“Twenty-five years after its independence, Namibia is a politically stable country and is growing economically. One of the biggest problems we have to face, however, is the distribution of the wealth produced. We see the gap between haves and have-nots increase every year. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. But we have an efficient judicial system, which emphasizes the responsibility of government and also, corrupt ministers are likely to be brought to trial and end up in prison”, this is how His Exc. Msgr. Liborius Ndumbukuti NASHENDA, Archbishop of Windhoek and President of the Episcopal Conference of Namibia, in Rome for their “Ad limina” visit, describes the situation in the African country to Agenzia Fides.

“Since independence there has not been a civil war. In this period of time there have been three Presidents. None of them wanted to stay longer than two terms of five years each, as required by the Constitution”, said the Archbishop. He explains that “the pastoral priorities have changed compared to the past. We are no longer in the emergency of the times of the war of independence, and now we can carry out an ordinary pastoral program focused on the teaching of the Gospel. Next to this, we place the emphasis on social programs to alleviate poverty. We have invested in particular in schools, and this



is our biggest contribution to the development of the Country. In economic terms, we can do little but we are contributing to the formation of a new class of managers and entrepreneurs for the future development of Namibia”.

“We have also invested heavily in health centers, especially in rural areas, where medical care is not easily accessible. Since 1998 we have also been carrying out a prevention program against the spread of HIV and AIDS and distributing anti-retroviral drugs for those who have contracted the virus and the disease. Particular attention is given to orphans whose parents have died of AIDS”, added Mgr. Nashenda.

As for relations with the State, he says: “We have good relations with state authorities, pursuant to an agreement of understanding, to the point that we have designated a person to liaise between the Episcopal Conference and the government. We cooperate but we remain a voice independent from the authorities. The government still appreciates our efforts and provides subsidies to our schools and hospitals”, concluded the President of the Episcopal Conference.

The Republic of Namibia owes its name to the Namib Desert together with that of the Kalahari. The capital city is Windhoek. It is bordered to the north with Angola and Zambia, to the east with Botswana and to the south with South Africa; the west overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. It has an area of 824 292 square kilometers and has a population of 2,220,000 inhabitants, of whom 444,000 are Catholics. There are 3 ecclesiastical districts. (Agenzia Fides)

## **MADAGASCAR**

### **Meeting of *formandi***

A meeting of young OMI in first formation in the OMI-Madagascar Delegation was held at St. Eugene de Mazonod Scholasticate, Fianarantsoa, from 8 to 13 April 2015. It went well. The participants, that is to say the *formandi* and all formators of three stages of formation (pre-novitiate, novitiate, scholasticate), came in full force and were all satisfied with this large gathering. Our young men participated

well in group work and in each plenary session. We mention, among others, the contribution of Archbishop Fulgence Rabemahafaly who gave a presentation on the consecrated life. A meeting with Christians and with those in formation for religious Congregations in Fianarantsoa also distinguished this gathering.

The meeting was organized during this second year of the *Triennium* devoted to formation where the keywords were “The new spirit” and “Poverty”. One of the main objectives of the meeting is contained in the general theme: “Young people in First Formation, responsible for the future of the Congregation.” Indeed, the Congregation needs motivated young men of great maturity, manifest in all its dimensions (human, spiritual, intellectual) during and after their First Formation.

The young men are quite convinced that this meeting has united, encouraged and motivated them to more actively respond to the call of Christ in the Congregation. It is up to them and the formators to do the follow-up so that it all becomes a reality, lived daily! That’s the great challenge after the meeting!

We humbly state that the meeting could take place because there was the collaboration of others: fellow Oblates and Oblate communities, missions and parishes with Christians in their care in Madagascar. Yes, thanks to this collaboration, especially from the financial perspective, the Delegation and the Formation Commission were able to organize it properly. Thanks a lot! (*Commission Formation OMI - MADAGASCAR*)

## **CENTRAL PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

### **A funeral in a boxing arena!**

When Fr. Leo D’AES died on May 8, 2015, one of the issues to be decided was where to hold his funeral rites. For 44 years, he had been pastor of St. Rose Church in Bloemfontein. It was obvious to those who knew him that the church would never hold the many people who would want to celebrate his life and pray him into eternal life. Therefore, the funeral, presided by Archbishop Jabulani NXUMALO, was held in the Bochabela

Arena; usually the Arena hosts boxing matches!

Fr. D'Aes was born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1929. He professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1948 and was ordained a priest in 1954. The following year, he received his obedience to South Africa where he quickly learned English and Sesotho. After serving in various parishes, he was transferred to St. Rose Mission, Bloemfontein, in 1971 and remained there for 44 very active years.

Dividing the parish into a number of Small Christian Communities, encouraging neighbourhood Gospel sharing and mutual care for each other as well as training of lay ministers became the pastoral strategy for which he worked untiringly. This vision of empowerment of laity within the church became central to his whole life's work and he maintained this till the end. In this regard he was seen as prophet of his time.

Fr D'Aes' other passion was for education. Throughout his long tenure at St Rose parish, he

managed St. Mary's Primary and St. Bernards High Schools. It was a time of change and political uncertainty; strong dedicated leadership was required and he had this in abundance. He turned both schools into top academic institutions in a society that was clamouring for good education.

Since his time in a parish in Edenburg, he was called "Pheello", meaning perseverance or insistence. This was characteristic of his entire ministry. He was an energetic, untiring, uncompromising and courageously outspoken advocate and priest for those in his care. He served a term as Vicar General in the Archdiocese of Bloemfontein and as District Superior for his Oblate Community but most of all he was present to his parish throughout a stormy political period, a true compass giving support and encouragement though his development initiatives as well as his solid preaching and training. (<http://omi-bfn.blogspot.it/>; see also some music from the funeral <http://y2u.be/ejwIk-pAgq8>)

## Latin America

### FRENCH GUYANA

#### A multicultural mission

*Fr. Vincent GRUBER, provincial of France, recently visited the Mission of Guyana. Here are some of his observations.*

I had the joy of discovering some important aspects of the realities of Guyanese society and of the Diocese of Cayenne, last March 27 till April 9. The 14 Oblates, coming from France, Haiti, Brazil, Laos, Vietnam and Cameroon, shared with us their joys and their sorrows, their convictions and their questions concerning the Oblate mission within the mission of the local Church.

It is an changing missionary story, marked by the arrival from France of some Oblates to serve the Hmong in 1977; then other arrivals of Oblates coming from Haiti in 2001; and finally the arrival of a Brazilian Oblate in 2006.

Guyanese society is facing today, as in the past, the challenges of welcoming and "living together"

with people of different cultures. In the past, the melding of populations from Africa and Europe gave the Guyanese a Creole culture. In recent decades, and even more now, the establishment of two Hmong villages; the widespread presence of Brazilians, the arrival of Haitian families; the Surinamese refugees following the civil war; the arrival of migrants from Santa Lucia; the settling of Amerindian groups; the development of businesses by Chinese families: all this creates a new people in French Guyana who need help in living together and in witnessing to their faith in the midst of the challenges of integration. One sees a total transformation of Guyana which has seen the Guyanese Creole go from 70% of the population in 1990 to 30% in 2014

I note some points shared at the meeting of all the Oblates of the mission, on Easter Tuesday: they appear to be happy in their work and happy to be among Oblates. Their main concern is the clarification of the Oblate nature of this mission. How to live our Oblate identity? Should they have more than monthly meetings? The mission

to the Hmong for 30 years has to be developed in view of greater integration with the other cultures present.

Cultural groups could be organized according to their languages and traditions, provided that with them, there is a gradual ecclesial integration. Some ask how to have a parish with faithful of different languages and cultures and at the same time, to focus their attention on newcomers who settle on unoccupied land, as well as on the Haitian neighborhood church communities and the Brazilian Ecclesial Communities in the neighborhoods.

Here as elsewhere, the Oblates are known for being close the people and specialists in difficult missions. There are many peripheries where the Oblates could go (hospitals, prisons....).

In the light of these realities and in the context of the situation of the Catholic Diocese of Cayenne, our Oblate missionary group needs to clarify its missionary charism and its place in the Church. Considering what the Oblates have built in terms of pastoral and missionary presence among different populations, some missionary goals in service of the local Church may be emerging:

- Develop the mission to the ethnic minorities in an integrated and comprehensive pastoral care of migrants as small ecclesial communities, according to the languages of the neighborhood and brought together in a common parish setup.
- Found missionary parishes with their various pastoral services, made up of faithful of an intercultural mosaic, as new neighborhoods develop.
- Reach out to the farthest away and poorest, not touched by the Church, especially newcomers and young people (more than half of the Guyanese population), the Amerindians, not to mention specialized chaplaincies: prison, health, community building, etc. ... (France Omi Infos n° 10 – April 2015)

## **BRAZIL**

### **Final chapter for the Brazil Central delegation**

The *Communiqué* of the most recent plenary session of the Central Government announced the following: “Following a long process of dialogue about the future of this Delegation together with the Province of Brazil, the Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province in Council suppressed the Delegation of Brazil Central. Fr. Ray WARREN and his Council expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the ministry rendered by the Oblates of this Delegation during the years of its existence.

“The Superior General confirmed this decision with the unanimous consent of his Council in plenary session on May 18, 2015, which will become effective on July 23, 2015. By then, the members of the former Delegation will have received their new obediences.”

In December 2012, the Anglo-Irish Province’s delegation in Brazil had celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At that time, one of the long-time Oblate missionaries in the delegation, Fr. Tom MURPHY, explained the underlying missionary spirit of the delegation. Among other comments, he said: “The classical theology of Mission implied ecclesiastical colonialism. The mission “ad gentes” consisted in converting the pagans, introducing them to the truths of the faith, and baptizing them. It was a theology and a pastoral practice that did not respect the cultural and religious values of those recipients of evangelisation. There was little or no consideration for the fact that, even in so-called ‘pagan’ civilizations, there exist religious rites of passage, of initiation, an indigenous religious expression.

“The Second Vatican Council changed the Church profoundly. The theology of mission was treated in a different manner. Mission was no longer “mission ad gentes” in the colonialist, triumphalist sense, but rather it was “receptio apud populum” - that is, a reception, an insertion, a welcome into the life of the people.

We Oblates arrived in Brazil with the old mission theology. However things did not work out as we expected:

- We came to teach and we were taught.
  - We came to evangelise (in the classical sense), and we were evangelised.
  - We came to teach Gospel values and we learned the values which are so much part of your makeup: your welcome, your hospitality, your generosity, your warmth,
- your solidarity, your compassion. You taught us the profound meaning of sharing, of neighbourliness.
- We came to preach the Good News, and you were the Good News for us.
  - We came to show the way and we became companions on the journey.”

## Asia-Oceania

### KOREA MISSION

#### 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oblate presence

On the feast of St. Eugene de Mazenod, May 21, 2015, Bishop Matthias Lee of Suwon joined the Oblates and their friends to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Oblate missionaries in 1990. During the celebration, they heard a congratulatory message from the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN.

In 1986, Fr. Marcello ZAGO, Superior General, approached some Italian Oblates about the possibility of their opening a mission in Korea. After four years of preparation, Fr. Vincenzo BORDO and Fr. Mauro CONCARDI arrived in Seoul on May 12, 1990. In a 2006 interview with *omiworld.com*, Fr. Vincenzo spoke about the Korea they met upon their arrival:

“As soon as we arrived, we started to inquire about the Korean Church and society in order to understand the situation. We soon realized that the circumstances were very different from the expectations we had had while in Italy. We found out that the *implantatio ecclesiae* had already been accomplished. The Korean Church was very well organized and self-sufficient in personnel and in structures. All the bishops were Koreans, and for every parish, there was an average of two Korean priests. We also found that Korean society was, economically speaking, very rich, secularized, nationalistic and very proud of itself. We realized in a short time that neither the Church nor the country needed our presence there.

“So we started, with the other two Oblates

who arrived in the following years, Giovanni ZEVOLA and Maurizio GIORGIANNI, a series of meetings, reflections, and seminars to help us understand our presence in Korea. We came to this conclusion: if the Church is a hierarchical institution (bishops, parish priests and teachers), they don't need us. But if the Church of Jesus is a communion of charisms as Saint Paul said (Rom.12,4-11) and Vatican II teaches, then there is a place for us as religious in the prophetic ministry, and as Oblates, in the missionary dimension of the Church. So we wrote a short document in which we, as Oblates, identified four areas of involvement.

“Working for the formation of local vocations; helping the local church on weekends; working for the poor people, according to our charism; and the formation of lay people.

“(Korea) is also a secularized society. (When we arrived there, the Sunday Mass attendance was 80%; now we are below 30%!). In addition, this society is very proud of itself and has a strong sense of nationalism. For this reason, it doesn't very well accept a foreign presence. As for the Catholic Church, they don't need us and our money because it is a well-established Church, economically speaking, and with human resources. In spite of all these problems and difficulties, the name of the Oblates is well known and respected within society, considering our courage to face the most difficult and challenging problems within this society (foreign workers, hospitals, street people...) and within the local Church, because of our humble and constant collaboration with the local clergy and our work in the formation of lay people. For 16 years now, we are involved in the mission to secularity and we are doing quite well in this field.”

Now, 25 years later, according to our OMI of Japan under the aegis of the Province of Personnel, there are 6 priests and 2 scholastics. Colombo, Sri Lanka.  
Korea is juridically a Mission of the Delegation

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### Anniversaries for July 2015

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#### 70 Years of religious life

1945.07.16	08485	Bro. Fernand Savard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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#### 65 Years of religious life

1950.07.16	08858	Fr. Joseph Bouvet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.25	08961	Fr. Rafael Alvarez	Mediterranean
1950.07.25	08948	Fr. Aladino Garmón	Mediterranean

#### 65 Years of priesthood

1950.07.01	07691	Fr. Hugues Barbeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1950.07.02	08102	Fr. Jozef Pielorz	Poland
1950.07.09	07858	Fr. Maurice Blackburn	Lacombe

#### 60 Years of religious life

1955.07.25	10454	Bro. Nicolás Fernández	Mediterranean
1955.07.25	10455	Bro. Misael Prado	Mediterranean
1955.07.25	10108	Fr. Alejandro Villafañe	Argentina-Chile
1955.07.26	09962	Fr. Jacques Léger	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1955.07.26	09973	Fr. Maurice Lesage	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1955.07.26	09971	Fr. Jean-Marie Pépin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
1955.07.26	09968	Fr. Noël Poisson	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

#### 60 Years of priesthood

1955.07.03	09218	Fr. André Marion	France
1955.07.10	08662	Fr. William Clark	United States
1955.07.10	08999	Fr. Rik Demol	Belgium & Holland
1955.07.10	08833	Fr. Waclaw Gorniak	Poland
1955.07.10	08749	Fr. George Mclean	United States
1955.07.10	08898	Fr. Willy Staes	Belgium & Holland

#### 50 Years of priesthood

1965.07.04	11003	Fr. Gabriel Jadaud	France
1965.07.04	11029	Fr. Guy Midy	France
1965.07.04	11004	Fr. Bernard Noyer	France
1965.07.05	10606	Fr. John Sherman	Australia
1965.07.25	10627	Fr. Klemens Klein-Hessling	Central European
1965.07.25	10848	Fr. Anton Lösing	Central European
1965.07.25	10820	Fr. Heinrich Rink	Central European
1965.07.25	10630	Fr. Elmar Theisen	Central European

#### 25 Years of religious life

1990.07.16	13239	Fr. Brian E. Harris	Australia
1990.07.24	13414	Fr. Tarcisius Eko Saktio	Indonesia
1990.07.24	13392	Fr. Supriyanto Simon Heru	Indonesia
1990.07.24	13391	Fr. Rudi F.X. Rahkito Jati	Indonesia

**25 Years of priesthood**

1990.07.13 12843

1990.07.21 12987

1990.07.28 12772

Fr. Harry Dyer

Fr. José Valter Ferreira da Luz

Fr. Alfred M. Tönnis

Australia

Brazil

Central European



## Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 34-45

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Joseph Tarcisius Bob Rodrigo	Colombo	16/03/1947	Hyderabad	28/04/2015
Bro. Lorenzo Williams	United States	21/05/1929	Tewksbury	01/05/2015
Fr. John King	United States	02/07/1928	Tewksbury	02/05/2015
Fr. Patrick Towe	Central Province, South Africa	31/07/1948	Kimberly	06/05/2015
Fr. Miguel Pellón	Argentina-Chile	30/04/1942	Buenos Aires	07/05/2015
Fr. Francisco Martín	Mediterranean	29/01/1928	Madrid	08/05/2015
Bro. Aloysius Phate	Lesotho	05/01/1929	Maseru	08/05/2015
Fr. Leo D'Aes	Central Province, South Africa	19/12/1929	Bloemfontein	08/05/2015
Fr. Heinrich Sicking	Central European	06/01/1934	Fulda	09/05/2015
Fr. John Cranley	Australia	20/09/1933	Perth	11/05/2015
Fr. George Croft	United States	02/12/1918	Tewksbury	12/05/2015
Fr. Felipe Matias	United States	08/08/1923	San Antonio	29/05/2015

*“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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