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Information No. 503 (English)

35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter edition, September 2010

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**The 13<sup>th</sup> Superior General: Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I.**



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## 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter – Daily Chronicle

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### **Day 21 (28/09/2010): Our new Superior General: Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI**

The 89 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from around the world at their 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in Rome have elected **Father Louis LOUGEN, OMI**, age 58, as the 13<sup>th</sup> Superior General of the Congregation.

When asked by the outgoing Superior General if he is ready to accept this office, he responded: "Yes I am ready, with fear and trembling and the support of my brothers and the help of God." Elected on the first ballot, Fr. Lougen will lead more than 4,000 Oblates working in 66 countries worldwide.

Father Lougen is the current Provincial Superior of the United States Province. He succeeds Father Wilhelm STECKLING, OMI, who served as Superior General for the past 12 years and had finished his second 6 year term.

Born in Buffalo, New York, USA in 1952, he met the Oblates as a student at Bishop Neumann High School in Buffalo, and entered the juniorate in Newburgh, New York, in 1970. He made his first profession at the novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois, in 1973 and continued his first formation at Oblate College in Washington, D.C., obtaining a Baccalaureate in Philosophy and a Master's in Theology. He made perpetual vows in Newburgh in 1976.

Following his ordination to the diaconate in 1978, he ministered for 6 months in Brazil. After his ordination to the priesthood in Washington in 1979, he returned to Brazil where, in the former São Paulo Province, he worked in parish and formation ministry, serving successively as pastor of several parishes, pre-novitiate director and novice master. As part of his ongoing formation as formator, Fr. Lougen participated in a 5-year school for formators program. He was elected to the Provincial Council of the São Paulo Province for three terms, serving in that capacity from 1985 to 1994. Upon returning to the United States in

1996, he served as assistant director of the pre-novitiate and pastor of Holy Angels Parish in Buffalo.

He became novice master in Godfrey, Illinois, in 2002 and was named provincial in 2005.

Father Lougen is very much aware of the international and intercultural aspects of the worldwide Oblate congregation. His nearly 17 years in Brazil give him a sense of the struggle of the poor in Latin America. As provincial of the United States, he has frequently visited his province's delegation in the African country of Zambia. He has also preached retreats in Asia. One of his priorities in his years as provincial in the United States was to encourage his brother Oblates to foster the call of new vocations to Oblate religious life.

On the day of his election as Superior General, he celebrated his 58<sup>th</sup> birthday. He speaks English, Portuguese and Spanish. □

At a prayer service after the canonical election, Fr. Lougen made his Profession of Faith in the presence of those who had elected him. Father Steckling then gave him a precious relic passed on from one Superior General to another, the Oblate cross of St. Eugene de Mazenod. Then the capitulars came forward one by one to promise obedience to their newly elected Superior General.

In compliance with a new rule approved by the 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the newly-elected Superior General and Council, in consultation with the current Superior General and Council, will decide the appropriate date for the installation, which will take place no later than three months after the end of the chapter.

**Day 1 (08/09/2010): Mary's birthday:  
General Chapter 35 has begun!**

In the prayerful atmosphere of Christ's Eucharistic sacrifice, the 89 members of the Chapter, together with the Chapter personnel and many guests, raised their voices in song during the opening liturgy celebrating the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter has begun!

In the chapel of the General House of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome, the Oblate Superior General, Father Wilhelm STECKLING, focused his homily on Mary and her role in leading Oblates to conversion to her Son, Jesus Christ. In his concluding words, Father General said:

*"On August 15, 1822, Saint Eugene received a special grace while praying before the Oblate Madonna, the one which is now in the general house. Did she smile at him on that day; did she give him a nod? We do not know exactly. Often we sing the Salve Regina before this statue. It contains the words: "advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte". This seems to speak to us of Mary's conversion - she will "convert" her eyes to us, meaning, she will change the direction of her gaze and look at us. But is it too strange that we speak of Mary's conversion? The prophets even allude to God's conversion: "Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you" (Zechariah 1:3). Yes, Mary, please convert to us, "convert" your eyes to us, look again upon us in these changing times as you looked upon Saint Eugene many years ago. And happy birthday, mother Mary! Amen."*

Following the Mass, there was a brief pause for coffee and other refreshments with the guests. Then the Chapter members gathered again in the chapel to begin their procession to the Chapter Hall. The words of the *Veni Creator Spiritus* resonated throughout the building as two scholastics, Giuseppe Calderone and Sebastian Büning, carrying the hand-written 1826 text of our Constitutions and Rules, led the capitulars into the Hall.

Once they had arrived in the hall and found their assigned places, the capitulars began their work.

The first day's schedule was mostly one of introductions and approvals of texts and personnel. In his role as President of the Chapter, Father General introduced the Chapter Moderators, Fathers Adriano TITONE, Filadelfo ESTRELLA and Hipólito OLEA; the facilitator, Brother Paul Michalenko, ST; the Canon Law adviser, Father Sean Cannon, CSsR; and the rest of the Chapter's officers and auxiliary personnel. By a show of hands, all were approved by the capitulars.

There was a brief overview of the Chapter's proceedings and the approval of the Chapter Directory. In the afternoon, the capitulars broke up into small groups in order to introduce themselves to one another.

After Oraison and supper, the evening was free for socializing and further getting to know one another.

**Day 2 (09/09/2010): Regional meetings,  
committee elections and a visit from  
Cardinal George**

Several months before the General Chapter, a liturgy committee began to plan music and prayer services for the Oblate gathering. Father Alfredo FERETTI (Italy) coordinated the work, along with scholastic Brothers Shivantha WAAS (Colombo), Thabang Nkadimeng (Northern Prov. South Africa) and Javier MONTERO (Spain). They put together a book of songs in several languages and a morning prayer to be used by the capitulars at the beginning of the first plenary session of each day.

The agenda for the capitulars on the second day included meetings in regional groups, in order to finalize the reports to be presented to the Chapter over the next few days and to study the other regional reports.

In the afternoon plenary session, the capitulars first practiced voting with the electronic voting system. Then they elected the Steering Committee and the Finance Committee. The Steering Committee, whose president is the Superior General, meets daily to plan the program and the sequence of Chapter business. The Finance Committee



makes recommendations to the Chapter regarding financial issues and studies in depth all of the reports from the General Treasurer.

Elected to the Steering Committee were Fathers Miguel FRITZ (Paraguay), Bernard KERADEC (France), Luc TARDIF (Canada), Stuart BATE (Natal) and Clement WAIDYASEKARA (Colombo).

The newly elected Finance Committee is composed of Fathers Vicente LOPEZ (Mexico), Alberto GNEMMI (Italy), Christopher PULCHNY (Canada), David ULLRICH (China) and Prosper NDJOLI (Congo). The General Treasurer, Fr. Rufus WHITLEY, serves as a resource person to the Finance Committee.

Each week, a capitular representing the different regions will deliver a brief reflection on the Chapter's theme of conversion. The first reflection was presented by Fr. Emile MOTHEAPHALA (Lesotho). Fr. Emile pointed out that the gift of conversion is a gift of God, given when and in the manner that God chooses. The initiative is God's: it is not a result of our efforts and it is not merited by us. It comes as a surprise and as a treasure that we find. During the Chapter, we must determine the best way that we might receive this gift. The gift is there; we only need to tap into it. We connect with the divine life within us through our life of prayer and contemplation.

For Mass on the second day, the Chapter welcomed our Oblate Cardinal, Francis GEORGE, Archbishop of Chicago, USA, as the principal concelebrant. He was in Rome on other business and was happy to spend a couple nights at Casa LaSalle with his brother Oblates. He met with the whole group in the Chapter Hall before the Eucharist, to share some personal thoughts. He mentioned three things in particular from his Oblate formation and experience that continue to influence his ministry as bishop: conversion to Christ crucified, as lived within the Oblate charism. He stated that his early formation in the French school of prayer sustains him even today with its focus on the Word Incarnate. Secondly, he carries in his heart an Oblate's love for the poor. And thirdly, his years as Vicar General

taught him to love the Church in the universality of its mission.

### **Day 3 (10/09/2010): The reports begin**

An important part of every General Chapter is the presentation of reports that bring the capitulars up-to-date on the state of the Congregation. Of course, the central report is that of the Superior General which has already been posted on the Oblate web site. But the five Oblate regions also have the opportunity to inform the Chapter about the challenges and successes in their particular parts of the world. There will also be reports from the Standing Committee of Brothers and from the Oblates and Lay Associates Committee.

Friday, September 10, was the day for four regions to present their reports. In the morning, there were presentations from the regions of Africa-Madagascar and Latin America. In the afternoon, there were reports from Asia-Oceania and Canada-United States.

After each 20 minute report, the capitulars huddled in small groups to express their impressions. Then there was time for a few comments and questions, with responses by various members of the presenting region.

In the evening after supper, there was a rare obligatory plenary session. The Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING; the Vicar General, Fr. Eugene KING; and the Provincial of France, Fr. Yves CHALVET DE RÉCY spoke to the assembly about the proposed international community at our original foundation in Aix-en-Provence, France. This proposed community has already been explained at length in the OMI Communiqué No. 111. Brother Benoît DOSQUET presented a PowerPoint about the future plans for the cradle of the Congregation.

### **Day 4 (11/09/2010): Moving toward conversion**

“This is a favorable time to celebrate and experience the mercy of God, as we are invited to conversion, and to look upon the One who

examines and reads our hearts.”

With these words, the Oblate Vicar General, Fr. Eugene KING, began an evening penitential service on the fourth day of the General Chapter. The liturgy team had prepared a paraliturgy centered on the Word of God, with periods of quiet meditation and prayers of petition, based on the theme of penance as part of conversion.

The various moments of the prayer focused on Conversion to Jesus Christ; Conversion to love of the Church; Conversion to holiness in the splendor of religious life; and Conversion to the mission.

Earlier in the day, during the morning session, the capitulars heard and responded to the final regional report, that of Europe. There was also a report from the Standing Committee of Oblate Brothers, presented by capitular and chairman of the committee, Brother Benoît DOSQUET.

In the afternoon session, the lay associates gave their report to the chapter. There are five of them taking part in the first week of the Chapter: Laura Nuin and Omar Tejería (Uruguay – Latin America); Vincenzo Teodori (Italy – Europe); Geralyn Furmanek (USA – Canada-United States); and Veronica Malebohang Ntja (Lesotho – Africa-Madagascar). The representative from Asia was unable to attend.

#### **Day 5 (12/09/2010): A day to relax**

On this fifth day of the General Chapter, the capitulars were free to sleep late, to relax and to visit the Eternal City.

Some took tours organized by other Oblates who are “old Romans” and are familiar with the city. Fr. Ned CAROLAN gave one of his famous tours of St. Peter’s Basilica. Fr. Richard WOLAK accompanied a group to visit the Basilicas of St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran. Fr. Don MC MAHON led a group to the catacombs. And the more adventuresome joined Fr. Andrzej JASTRZEBSKI for a hike into the Apennine mountains near Rome.

#### **Day 6 (13/09/2010): The reports continue: the General Treasurer**

After enjoying a day of relaxation and tourism on Sunday, the capitulars returned to the Chapter Hall to begin a new week of listening, reflecting and discussing. To start the week, Fr. Pawel ZAJAC, a Polish capitular from the Region of Europe, presented this week’s reflection on the Chapter’s theme of conversion.

He defined conversion as a rediscovery of true meaning, real meaning in those things that can tend to discourage us. We need no other reward, other than knowing that we are doing God’s will. Conversion calls for sacrifice and generosity in order to serve God as God deserves. He asked how much sacrifice we are willing to accept in living our value of faith; our chastity, our poverty, our obedience, our perseverance, the Eucharist, the Church, community life, the Holy Father, Oblate tradition. Many experience problems and frustration that make optimism difficult, but conversion means that day after day, we must come back to the values of religious life. Daily, we need to turn from a life centered on self to a life centered in Christ, finding Christ in the persons near us. Without sacrifice, there is no chance for an effective conversion.

Rule 126a states that the Superior General will make a report to the Chapter about the “financial situation” of the Congregation. Traditionally, he delegates this task to the General Treasurer whose task is described in Rule 148c: *“Under the direction of the Superior General and Council, he administers the common property and possessions of the Congregation. He also exercises a role of animation in regard to the responsible stewardship of temporal goods and the ongoing formation of Provincial Treasurers.”*

Father Rufus WHITLEY, who has held the post of General Treasurer since 2001, gave an extensive report with the help of PowerPoint slides containing many charts and figures. Oblates can receive a copy of this report by sending Fr. Rufus an e-mail at [whitley@omigen.org](mailto:whitley@omigen.org).

In the afternoon, after responding to questions and comments from the capitulars about his report, Fr. Rufus presented information concerning the Oblate International Investment Pool (OIP).

After supper, the capitulars were invited to hear a presentation from the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Studies, a group called for by the 2004 General Chapter. The presentation was made by Frs. Warren BROWN and Andrzej JASTRZEBSKI. The members, who meet annually, represent the following institutions: St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, United States; St. Joseph's Theological Institute, Cedara, Republic of South Africa; St. Bernard Oblate Scholasticate, Obra, Poland; Notre Dame University, Cotabato, Philippines; and St. Eugene de Mazenod Theology School, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

#### **Day 7 (14/09/2010): Father General's report**

Today, the capitulars sang of the victory of the Cross of Jesus Christ during their morning prayer on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. With this liturgical celebration, they brought to a close the first week of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. The principal agenda item of the day, and indeed of the week, was the report of the Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, on the state of the Congregation.

Elected Superior General for the first time in 1998, Fr. Steckling, or "Guillermo," as he is usually known by the Oblates, was given a second six-year mandate in 2004. Previously to his election as the 11<sup>th</sup> successor of St. Eugene de Mazenod, he was an Assistant General from 1992-1998. The German-born Oblate had previously served for many years as a missionary in Paraguay.

While his report has been available to the Oblate family on the internet for several weeks ([www.omiworld.org](http://www.omiworld.org)), in the Chapter Hall, Father General was able to highlight certain parts of it and give nuances that go beyond a written text. He used a PowerPoint presentation and spoke alternately in French, English and Spanish.

Following the report, the capitulars went into regional workshops to discuss what they had heard and to formulate comments and questions to which Father General responded in the afternoon session.

After supper, the capitulars were invited to hear an update on two important ministries in the Congregation. Assistant General, Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI spoke about the ministry of first formation. The General Councillor for Europe, Fr. Luis Ignacio "Chicho" ROIS ALONSO spoke of the developments in youth ministry since the last Chapter.

#### **Day 8 (15/09/2010): A "Listening Group"**

On September 11, the chairman of the Steering Committee, Fr. Luc TARDIF, announced the establishment of a small group of capitulars who would serve as a "Listening Group." Their task is to stay attuned to the rhythm of the Chapter in order, not only to sense how things are progressing, but also to give a theological and spiritual insight into the experience of Chapter.

With a weekly reflection, they will help the capitulars to be collectively attentive to the movement of the Spirit and to help them listen with the heart of Christ and the spirit of St. Eugene.

The group is made up of the following capitulars: Frs. Emmanuel MOSOEU (Central Province of South Africa), Pawel ZAJAC (Poland), Gasner JOINT (Haiti) and Oswald FIRTH (General Administration).

At this day when the Chapter enters its second week, Oswald Firth delivered the brief reflection. His message used three images to compare the spiritual and biblical idea of conversion to what the Chapter is experiencing: the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan; the crucifixion of Jesus; the encounter of Jesus with the disciples at Emmaus. Four capitulars were elected to a Drafting Committee: Frs. Guillermo SILES (Bolivia), Cornelius NGOKA (Cameroun), Victor SANTOYO (Peru) and Ray WARREN (Anglo-Irish Province).

The capitulars spent the rest of the morning session in focus groups on one of four topics: mission, community, leadership and formation. In the groups, they attentively listened to one another speak about what they are seeing and feeling vis-à-vis the reports and proposals. Then, in the afternoon's plenary session, they reported what they believe are possible avenues of conversion for the whole Congregation.

After supper, the capitulars were invited to an informative program by Fr. Camille PICHÉ, the Director of the General Service of Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation, and Frs. Gilberto PIÑÓN and Daniel LEBLANC, members of the JPIC Committee.

### **Day 9 (16/09/2010): On Government structures**

Five years ago, on September 12, 2005, a postcapitular Governance Committee, mandated by the Chapter of 2004 and appointed by the Superior General in council, had its first meeting in Rome. After many consultations, many meetings and many drafts of the final document, today was finally the time for representatives from that committee to explain to the General Chapter of 2010 what it is proposing as changes in the government functions of the Congregation.

Frs. Filadelfo ESTRELLA and Seamus FINN, members of that committee, with the help of a PowerPoint presentation, talked about the reasons for the proposed changes and how governance might look if the proposals are accepted. Two other members of the committee are capitulars: Frs. Ryszard SZMYDKI and Victor SANTOYO. All four of the committee members responded to questions asking for clarification of the proposed changes.

In the afternoon, the capitulars broke into smaller interregional groups to discuss what they had heard. Then they returned to the hall for an open discussion.

The optional evening session today was presented by Fr. Janusz Blazejak on the subject of ministry with migrant people.

### **Day 10 (17/09/2010): Government proposals and then a free afternoon!**

The capitulars greatly appreciated a decision of the Steering Committee to give them a free afternoon. Of course, they were invited to spend some of that free time reflecting on their decisions concerning the proposals on government structures. But many will also take advantage of the respite to go into the city for some sight-seeing.

The morning, however, was dedicated to rather intense work. After meeting in regional groups to discuss what they are hearing from others regarding the proposed changes, they returned to the Chapter Hall for more interventions from the individual capitulars.

The Chapter's theme of conversion is always in the back of the capitulars' minds, even as they discuss such things as the composition of the Central Government and terms of office. The governmental structures must enhance the life and mission of the Congregation and thus, the conversion of our life and mission.

Several times during their discussion, the capitulars are able to get a quick idea of where others stand on a proposal. They raise red, green or yellow pieces of paper to indicate that they are opposed to, in favor of or undecided on the question at hand. When most of the papers are red, they know that the proposal does not have much future. When most of them are green, they know that they are nearing consensus.

### **Day 11 (18/09/2010): Discussing, voting and amending**

The work on this eleventh day of the Chapter was intense and challenging for everyone in the Chapter Hall. It was the first time the capitulars were asked to actually vote on their level of support for the propositions concerning changes in government structures. After an open session where they could speak about their support or their hesitations, they had a straw vote or opinion survey to find out where the assembly is leaning as they approach the final voting next week.



In the afternoon, the results of the straw ballot were announced and the capitulars had the opportunity to suggest amendments to the text. Closely listening to these amendments was a newly elected Chapter Government Commission who, over the weekend, will put together a text to be voted next week. There will still be time for further amendments at that moment.

The original Government Committee appointed after the 2004 Chapter had finished its work with their presentation on September 16. The capitulars chose the following commission to help bring closure to this work: Frs. Claudio BERTUCCIO, Warren BROWN, Roberto SARTOR, Macaire MANIMBA and Rubens Pedro Cabral. They will have the assistance of the canonical consultant, Fr. Sean Cannon, CSSR.

The Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Franc Cardinal Rodé, wrote a letter to Father General on September 15. Among other things, the Cardinal said: *“It is my sincere hope that your deliberations thus far have been fruitful and that your gathering may provide valuable insights into the most effective ways of living and sharing the Oblate Charism. May all the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, their Associates and all those with whom they collaborate, be open to courageously accepting the challenges which deliberations on your Chapter theme might suggest.”*

### **Day 13 (20/09/2010): A sorrowful beginning to a new week**

After a pleasant Sunday of rest and tourism, the capitulars returned to the Chapter Hall to hear the sad news of an automobile accident in Austria that claimed the life of the great Oblate fundraiser, Father Josef MATHUNI. Two other Oblates were seriously injured in the same accident: Fr. Mario LEÓN, a Spanish Oblate working in the Sahara, and Polish scholastic, Bro. Lukas KLOS.

Father Mathuni became director of the MAMI in Austria in 1956 (*Marianisches Missionswerk*). He only recently handed the reins to a younger Oblate, Fr. Tomas VYHNALEK.

Recently he wrote on the internet: “This is my last newsletter. I have tried honestly to see the Great Commission of Jesus, His will, His love for us humans, especially for the poor, as a call to me and you to encounter His Spirit. You have responded with so much love and concern for their needs and the needs of our missionaries in all parts of the world and you have made many great sacrifices. I am very happy. Jesus must be very pleased. Mary, our mother, knows that it is all worthwhile. So for me, it was a great pleasure to work with you. I really thank you from my heart.”

He would have been 90 in February of 2011. We pray for his eternal rest and for the complete recovery of Mario and Lukas.

There was also some intense work in the Chapter Hall. In the morning, they voted on some of the proposals about government structures. The Chapter’s Government Committee had spent many hours over the weekend analyzing the straw vote taken on Saturday. They offered the Chapter their synthesis of amendments.

To change a Constitution, a two-thirds majority of valid votes is required; then the approval of the Holy See must be obtained before the change can go into effect. To change a Rule, an absolute majority of valid votes is sufficient and the change goes into effect immediately. Since some of the proposed changes were related to the terms of office of the Central Government and the frequency of General Chapters, there was some urgency for a vote on these issues in order to receive Vatican approval before proceeding to elections.

Here is a summary of the proposals and the results of the voting:

- C 120: Move the decision about the number of regions from the General Chapter to the Superior General in Council. Not accepted.
- C 127: Change the time between General Chapters from six to eight years. Not accepted..
- Const. 136: Change the term of the Superior General from six to eight years. Not accepted.



- Rule 136b: A new rule indicating that the newly elected Superior General and General Council will office within three months of the end of the Chapter. Accepted.
- Const. 140: A change in the composition of the Central Government, suppressing the office of General Councillors for regions and having a Superior General, a Vicar General and Assistants General. Not accepted.
- Const. 142: Change the term of the Vicar General from six to eight years. Not accepted.
- Const. 144: Suppress the last lines of Const. 144: *The Assistants General are also available to assume special responsibilities as assigned by the Superior General.* Not accepted.
- C 148: Mandate the creation of Offices for Formation and Mission within the Central Government. Not accepted.

In the afternoon, the capitulars met in regional groups to ask themselves the questions: “What are we hearing as a Chapter concerning conversion? What do we want to say to the rest of the Congregation? What are our dreams about the results of this Chapter?”

Later in the afternoon, they listened to the results of these discussions. They also submitted to the chairman of the Steering Committee some names for the Nominating Committee.

#### **Day 14 (21/09/2010): Focusing on conversion**

The plenary sessions were brief today because the capitulars spent much of their time in small, interregional groups, listening to each other speak about the Chapter’s theme of conversion.

In their interregional sessions, they first of all broke into pairs to interview one another about personal experiences of conversion. Then they shared with the larger group what they had heard.

In a similar session, later in the morning, they focused on another aspect of conversion: the community, especially the local community and the Unit.

In the afternoon, they identified emerging points of conversion for the whole Congregation.

After a plenary session during which there were reports of the days’ discussions, most of the capitulars enjoyed supper at the International Roman Scholasticate.

#### **Day 15 (22/09/2010): A nominating committee**

The Chapter Directory requires the capitulars to elect a special committee for nominating the Vicar General and the Assistants General. This morning, the following Oblates were elected to that committee: Fathers Pedro Rubens CABRAL (Brazil), Yves CHALVET DE RÉCY (France), Andrew BOYER (Canada), Anthony MAKATJANE (Lesotho) and Paul MARIAMPILLAI (Sri Lanka).

After hearing a reflection by Fr. Emmanuel MOSOEU from the Listening Group, the capitulars went into “focus groups” to discuss the theme of conversion as related to: Leadership, Formation, Mission, and Community.

Their task was to write brief statements that capture the essence of the call to conversion in those areas. They presented these statements to the Chapter in the afternoon. The objective was for the Chapter to have a concise focus on the calls to conversion by the end of the day.

The recently named Secretary of the Vatican Congregation of Religious, Father Joseph Tobin, CSSR, visited the Chapter to share a few thoughts with the Oblates. He spoke of the great work of the Oblates he has seen in his own work and travels and he thanked the Oblates for the witness they have given to the Church. Referring to our theme of conversion, he said that his community’s Founder, St. Alphonsus Ligouri said that a conversion based on fear never lasts. It’s only love that makes conversion endure. If what we are doing is based on fear, the conversion will not last. It will last if we have discovered the gift of God in Jesus Christ and the gift that the poor are to the Church and to us.

During the Eucharist of the day, there was an opportunity for the Capitulars to give thanks to God for the past six years of service by the outgoing Central Government. The Vicar General, Fr. Eugene KING presided and preached.

### **Day 16 (23/09/2010): Talking about elections**

The beautiful autumn day in Rome began with a conversation about the nomination of the new Superior General. The Steering Committee proposed a method designed to bring forth names of a possible successor to Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING. After lengthy debate about various aspects of the proposed method, it was accepted by the capitulars. The election is scheduled for Tuesday, September 28.

The capitulars continued discussing and suggesting various aspects of conversion in the areas of mission, formation, community and leadership. They also discussed the type of document they hope to create for the animation of the Congregation after the Chapter.

Then, in the late afternoon, they took the first steps toward the election of a new Superior General. Each capitular was invited to propose the names of three possible candidates, as well as three qualities that are particularly important in the Oblate who will lead the Congregation at this point in its history.

### **Day 17 (24/09/2010): More votes on governance**

At times, people need the promise of something good in order to motivate them to work harder. The “something good” promised the capitulars today was the prospect of having both Saturday and Sunday free to relax or do the things that tourists do.

But before they could begin their long weekend, they had much work to do in the Chapter Hall. Earlier in the week, they began to consider the proposals from the Government Committee mandated by the 2004 Chapter. Today, it was time to attempt to complete that work. It was

a long and sometimes tedious day of voting on proposals and amendments to proposals. We will give a summary of the major issues voted upon at a later time. The capitulars managed to vote on 28 of 31 proposed changes. There are still three awaiting them.

At the end of the day, the capitulars received the names of the candidates for Superior General. The six names were given in alphabetical order. There had been other names proposed, but some chose not to stand for election for personal reasons. Over the weekend, the six will have the opportunity to pray over their own decision to remain a candidate. A definitive list will be published on Monday morning.

### **Day 20 (27/09/2010): A day in the Cenacle**

At the Sunday Mass in the General House chapel on September 26, the presiding celebrant, Fr. Patrick TOWE (Central Province of South Africa), likened the present experience of the General Chapter to the Cenacle of the Acts of the Apostles (1:13-14): *“All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”*

It was in this spirit that not only the capitulars but Oblates and their associates throughout the world spent this day, asking the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the selection of the 12<sup>th</sup> successor of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

On this day of retreat for the capitulars, in the morning, Fr. Ron ROLHEISER from the Canada-United States Region set the tone of the day with a meditation on the Chapter theme of conversion. He entitled his talk: “Three biblical challenges.” He referred specifically to the image of Jesus standing on the borders of Samaria, as an image to help define where we stand today. Then he spoke of the loaves that fed the multitude, an image to help us grasp what our real resources are. The final image was that of Jesus taking off his outer garments to wash the feet of others, an invitation for us to find our deep, inner identity.

In the afternoon, the capitulars entered into

another prayerful moment of discernment known by its Latin name: “murmuratio.” This method of discernment is borrowed from a centuries-old Jesuit tradition. Capitulars gathered in groups of two or three to “murmur” their thoughts about prospective candidates and to ask questions of those who know the candidates well. This quiet and prayerful exercise is in sharp contrast to the strident speeches that often occur during secular electoral campaigns. “Murmuratio” takes place in an atmosphere of fraternal trust and openness to the many ways the Spirit makes known to us God’s Will.

There was also a straw ballot in the early afternoon. It was one more phase in the discernment process. They received the results of that ballot on Monday evening: the names of candidates and the number of votes they had received.

As a follow-up to last Friday’s sessions, when many of the proposals on structural changes were considered, we mention here only a few of the many results of the voting. One could safely say that the major proposals to change the

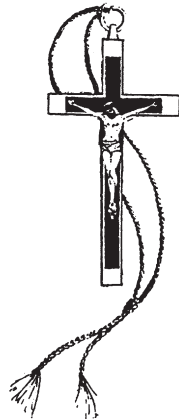
government of the Congregation were defeated, either on September 20 or on September 24.

A major proposal that was defeated on September 24 was the one that would have permitted some regions to exercise government authority (C 75). That constitution remains unchanged.

Accepted was a new rule designed to enhance the role of the Oblate Brothers in the regions: *R123f: An Oblate Brother representing his region will participate regularly in certain meetings of the regional conference.*

Defeated, however, was a proposed change to Rule 128a (1) that determines the number of delegates for a region at a General Chapter; therefore the rule remains the same as it is now.

After lengthy discussion about a formula to assure an adequate participation of Oblate Brothers at a General Chapter, it was decided that the Superior General, after consultation, will invite one Oblate Brother from each region in the congregation. [New Rule 128a (6)].



OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication  
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
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Printing: Kamal Mendis  
Circulation: Théophile LePage