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Father Joseph Gérard, o.m.i. An over-view of his life and the background events of his times

SOMMAIRE - La première partie de l'article décrit les efforts missionnaires des Oblats au Sud-Afrique. Avec Mgr François Allard à leur tête ils y arrivèrent en 1850 dans le but d'évangéliser les Zoulous. Concentrée à la mission Saint-Michel, leurs efforts apostoliques se sont soldés par un échec. On décide, en 1861, de se transporter au Basutoland où le roi les accueille et leur donne un terrain. C'est là que le père Gérard passera 52 ans de sa vie et sera connu sous le nom d'*apôtre des Basotos*. Il s'agit de la deuxième partie de l'article qui nous relate le zèle missionnaire de cet apôtre.

I. Father Joseph Gérard in South Africa

A. Background

Settling down after population movements in Southern Africa: Difaqane which caused Blacks to move away from the Zulus and settle in other parts of the land, thus causing more friction as they came into contact with the groups. Great Trek which brought Whites into the interior of the land.

Natal was a part of the British Cape Colony and had two main towns, Pietermaritzburg and Durban, neither of which were very large or well-developed. Durban had an estimated population of 150,000 Zulus and 2,000 Europeans (60 of them were Catholics). In this Colony were experienced the results and problems of the Difaqane and the Trek as Blacks and Whites had to work out a "modus vivendi", and it was the British authorities who dictated how this had to happen. One of the major results was the system of locations for the pagan and illiterate Zulus, who were regarded as inferior to the Europeans.

B. The First Missionaries

In 1850 Rome established the Vicariate of Natal, which covered the area which we know today as Natal, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Northern Cape and Lesotho. It was entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate because a religious congregation would have the necessary manpower to handle the situation and financial resources.

Blessed Eugène's first choice was Father Bellon, who was unable to take up the appointment due to ill health. The person chosen to be the first Vicar Apostolic was Jean François Allard. He spoke little English, was of a retiring disposition, and was known to have been a stern and rigorous religious and novice master. He was 45 years old when he came to Natal. Before beginning his task of evangelizing the Zulus, one of his main concerns dealt with establishing the following problems: what days of Obligation existed in Natal; what were the laws of fasting and abstinence; how did Trent's teaching on clandestine marriages between Catholics and Protestants affect Natal; and what were the predominant vices in Natal?

In November 1851 Allard and his team left Marseilles for Natal. He was accompanied by Fr. Sabon (33); Fr. Dunne (30); Deacon Logegaray (23) and Brother Compin. Their journey took two months, after which they spent six weeks in Cape Town. A seventeen-day ship's journey later saw them arriving in Natal, and on April 1, 1852 they embarked on a three-day oxwagon trip from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, where they settled.

By the end of the month Sabon was ill with malaria. He writes: "I learn English with great difficulty". In fact, Sabon never mastered English and was often criticized by Allard in later years for not preaching sermons. Dunne was the only missionary who was proficient in English, but by the end of September he could no longer handle the situation and left Natal, requesting a dispensation from his vows. He lasted longer than Brother Compin who had deserted Natal within two months of his arrival! Logegaray was ordained a priest in September, but his ministry did not last too long either. He was to leave the Catholic Church and become a Protestant. There is a lot of mystery surrounding his end, but one of the stories is that he landed up being

killed in Mozambique by cannibals!

By the end of the first year in Natal a chapel had been built in Pietermaritzburg and a few months later one was built in Durban, where Sabon had established himself.

C. Arrival of Joseph Gérard

In May 1853 Blessed Eugène sent reinforcements to Natal in the form of three very young missionaries: 22 years old Deacon Joseph Gérard; Fr. Barret (28) and Brother Bernard (27). They sailed via Rio de Janeiro to Mauritius, where they spent two months. Here Gérard came to know and work with Blessed Laval, who shared with him his missionary approach and influenced the young missionary. On arrival in Natal he was ordained to the priesthood on 19 February 1854 and began to learn English. By June he was proficient enough to preach in English. Obviously having a gift for languages he and Barret went to live among a Zulu tribe so as to assimilate the language and culture. In the absence of a grammar or dictionary he learnt well and by the end of the year he was fluent enough to be able to work among the Zulu.

D. St. Michael's

After Christmas in 1854 Gérard and Barret walked 144 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg to visit Chief Dumisa in the area of what is known as Umzinto today. Dumisa received the missionaries well and allowed them to choose a place to build a chapel. They returned briefly to Pietermaritzburg and on 27 February 1855 they set out to open their first mission among the Zulu. The journey took five days. On arrival at Dumisa's there was a dispute over payment for the building of huts, and the missionaries moved away from Dumisa, settling 14 kilometers away among the Amacele people.

Gérard and Barret spent their time building and visiting people. On 2 September the official opening of the mission took place. A hundred people attended the opening of the chapel. From now on they occupied themselves with visiting people and instructing those who attended the chapel. Neither of the missionaries knew much about building and it is not surprising that the chapel was destroyed by torrential rain some months later. As preparations were being made to build on a new site in May 1856, Dumisa attacked the Amacele. Gérard and Barret tried to persuade Dumisa's warriors to return to their kraals, but in vain so the Amacele fled. By July the Oblates decided that it was useless to remain in the area and packed their belongings to return to Pietermaritzburg.

E. Further Attempts at Zulu Evangelisation

Eugène de Mazenod had sent his Oblates to Natal to evangelize the pagan Zulus and expressed his disappointment at the failure of St. Michael's. For the next eighteen months, while Gérard and the missionaries worked in the town, we see constant attempts to find a way of getting close to the Zulus. In December 1856 there was a civil war between the sons of Mpande, the Zulu king, resulting in thousands of Zulu refugees coming into the colony of Natal. The Oblates grabbed at this opportunity by asking for forty children to enter their house and to be trained. The Colonial Government turned down this request because most of the refugees began to return to their homes within a few months.

The next attempts came in February when the Oblates asked for a grant of 700 acres, fortyeight kilometres outside of Pietermaritzburg in order to establish an industrial training school. This request was also refused. Undaunted, the missionaries asked for a grant of land in the area where they had originally worked among the Amacele. This time the authorities responded favourably and granted them 500 acres for the mission and an area of 6000 acres for the use of the Zulu who would frequent the mission. For a while the Oblates, albeit unwittingly, were to become cooperators with the Colonial Government's system of detribalizing the Zulus by placing them under "white chiefs".

During the time spent in Pietermaritzburg the missionaries ministered to the small group of Catholics. Bishop Allard's diary gives the number of communions at Sunday Masses averaging from 16-25 each week. Gérard kept himself busy by teaching catechism and visiting the Catholics. The diaries speak of some of the journeys he undertook outside of the town: to Durban and to Catholics "living in the bush" outside the towns.

F. The Second Attempt at St. Michael's

Blessed Eugène's impatience at the lack of Zulu converts grew during this period and was made very clear in his letters to Allard. In one he wrote:

As for the establishment you propose making in the midst of this numerous tribe, I advise you to go yourself to the site and choose the locality where the mission house and church should be built. It is too important a matter for you to leave entirely to our young fathers. I would gladly see you go and reconnaître your vicariate. Missionary Bishops do not settle in one residence and never move out of it¹.

Always obedient to his Superior, Allard responded to this letter and set out with Gérard to see and choose the site of the mission. They spent seventeen days in the area and returned to Pietermaritzburg to make final arrangements for the establishment of St. Michael's. On 15 February 1858 Gérard and Bompard walked to the area to start the new mission. Gérard describes the beginnings:

Your Lordship knows that the mission among the kaffirs was suspended for the last two years. During that time I helped Father Barret in the work with the little Irish congregation at Pietermaritzburg. Thanks be to God it was not time lost. I taught catechism to the children, heard their confessions and prepared in the best way I could for a new campaign.

For the last two months Father Bompard and myself have resumed the work. We had gone ahead to prepare a few huts for his Lordship and the brother in order to have some shelter during the building of the chapel. In less than a month, with the help of a kaffir, we erected three small huts, one about six feet in diameter for his Lordship, another of ten feet for the kitchen and our kaffirs, and a third of twelve feet for your three children and humble servants, Father Bompard, Brother Bernard and myself².

In April Allard arrived to stay at St. Michael's, no doubt in response to the following letter of the Founder:

I must say, my dear Lord, that your letters are distressing. Up till this your mission is a failure. Candidly, a Vicar Apostolic and a number of missionaries are not sent to take care of a few born Catholics. A single priest would have been enough to visit these Christians. Obviously the only reason for establishing your Vicariate is to convert the kaffirs. And there you are, after several years on the spot, doing everything except this. I truly believe that you are not carrying out your mission no matter how much good you are doing among the English settlers.

What particularly upsets me is that you have so much to complain about concerning your collaborators. Take stock before God of how you are dealing with them; maybe some modifications could be brought about in your manner of handling them. Never before have we met with such disaffection. Everyone admires your virtues, yet that quality is lacking in you which is able to turn admiration into affection and make it easy to submit and obey. The number of defections in your Vicariate is appalling: Brother Compin, Father Dunne, and finally Father Logegaray! And what about Father Sabon who has written to his sister for 1500 francs to take a passage home by sea? It would seem that he also wishes to leave. Right now you are not at all happy about Father Barret. Yet we had such hopes in him when we chose him. All this is most distressing and we shudder when it is a question of sending anyone to you.

While pointing out these facts, let me add that you seem to behave too much as though you were a bishop living in France. I mean to say that you neglect the active life too much in order to attend to administration. I see Vicars Apostolic elsewhere doing the works of any missionary. In certain Vicariates they take upon themselves the care of a mission; in others they explore the country personally, found posts here and there among the pagans, and then send missionaries to continue the work. In order to fulfill this mission confided to them they learn the local tongues however difficult this study may be. In a work, they take the lead in every venture that their zeal for souls inspires.

It seems to me that this is not your way of acting and that the failure of your mission up to the present among the pagans is perhaps due to your methods. It is an unheard of thing that a Vicar Apostolic - a bishop and three or four missionaries - sent to the pagans, should be unable to convert even one, let alone being unable to form a single centre of Christianity! I insist on this because it is not to be tolerated.

As to the fear which leads you to have no hope of success for some years, the difficulties do not call for delay but rather for action as in every other place where the work was begun right away. Six months are enough for our missionaries in Ceylon to learn the nevertheless difficult Cingalese language. It is the same in Oregon. Why does it take more than a year to get to know kaffir? Of course, however, a sense of duty is needed for this in order to stimulate and help in overcoming the difficulties. You can tell our fathers that I cannot believe that anyone would not be ready to begin the ministry within one year. But, I repeat you must set the example, for you have been sent to the kaffirs to bring to them the knowledge of the truth.

I earnestly beg you, my dear bishop, not to be upset by my remarks. I make them only with the best intentions and in order to fulfill a duty of conscience. You may be assured that I give credit to your good intentions and to the motives which always inspire your actions. No one knows better than myself how difficult it is to be in charge. That is why my long experience leads me to suggest to you that you should not try to force everyone into the one mould, but strive rather through kindness and consideration to get out the best in each one³.

The missionaries occupied themselves with building, as Allard writes to Blessed Eugène on January 8, 1859:

The chapel which is now being built is 40 feet long by 20 feet wide and 12 feet in height. It is constructed of posts or beams placed at intervals. In between is clay with a lacing of branches. The whole must be plastered with earth, thus to give the impression of a regular building of masonry. Such was the advice of the Fathers, who thought this plan the most expeditious.

Your Lordship will no doubt be astonished that such a slight building has taken such a long time to put up. The slowness has been caused by the difficulties we have had to meet. In town we could have finished the building in a month or two, for we would have found there materials and transport at hand, but this is not the case at St. Michael's where there is no wood for building purposes; we had to cart it from a forest which is two leagues away.

Again by mischance we were unable to bring from town a team of oxen on account of sickness which reigns among cattle and we would have brought this sickness among the cattle of our Natives whose wealth consists in their hearts. We have had to get cattle on the spot and train them. This was winter and fodder was wanting. In order to study our herd we had to allow them to rest half the time.

Often also labour was deficient; we were unable to obtain from the natives the work that we wished. We have had to do the building ourselves principally. The chief worker was Brother Bernard but our Fathers have not been remiss. At last the chapel is being thatched and we rejoice at the thought that soon it will be opened for religious services⁴.

Sixteen months later the opening of the mission took place on 17 July 1859. Allard's description from his diary deserves to be quoted exactly as he wrote it. It shows how poor the Vicar Apostolic's English still was, as well as giving us a glimpse into how a French Bishop opened a Church in the midst of a totally different and "strange" culture:

Today, the 5th Sunday after Pentecost and the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer, we have begun our mission for the Kaffirs at St. Michael. The assistance amounted at about one hundred persons amongst them very few women or girls or children. The ceremony has begun by the blessing of the chapel which went on on a Solemn manner. The vicar Ap. with Crozier and mitre was assisted by the RR. ff. Gérard and Bompard; and our B. Bernard.

The Kaffir having got entrance into the Chapel we began to sing in Zulu language *esprit Saint descendez en nous*, then F. Gérard explained to the Kaffirs that we were about to bless the Chapel, and the Mission after which the youth would behave themselves in the Chapel refraining from speaking and from taking snuff then a procession took place and all the assistance went out of the Chapel and the Clergy being before the front door outside then began the benediction according to the Roman ritual - the Bishop went around the Chapel throwing blessed water. Then the procession entering to the Chapel the benediction continued according to the ritual &... Throwing Blessed water at the upper part and lower part of the Chapel. Then we Sang a Kaffir Canticle of Thanksgiving on the air *Dit dieu D'amour*.

The Sermon came on preached by f. Gérard - the subject was 1. *why we are Come among the Savages*. 2. *what we are*. It lasted half an hour. We Sang again the Cantic of Thanksgiving - Lastly f. Gérard asked to one of the Kaffirs to repeat some part of the sermon and lastly the audience was dismissed - it was about one o'clock. The Kaffirs had listened with respect and in silence the preaching. Everything went on in good order. Men had their blankets the women and girls were also decently covered.

In the evening at 2^o before the supper of the community we concluded our meditation by the benediction of the most holy Sacrament to draw down the blessing from heaven upon our mission and to get new strength and courage to encounter the difficulties we could meet whit in that important undertaking.

A circumstance which is relating to the opening of our mission is the invitations our fathers had made to the Kaffir 10 day previous to the opening of the mission, to engage them to come faithfully - for the purpose they went to all the Kraals of the Chiefs and of their people. They say Dumisa, unjani, Catopi, um=Kumale and their people. The people of umjani and umKumale were faithful to come only but there was a single won from Katopi's or from dumisa's⁵.

Each Sunday after this the Zulus attended the church and were visited by Father Gérard during the week. Father Bompert describes something of their activity in a letter to Blessed Eugène:

Had your letter run to a hundred pages it would have been too short even then... The building of our chapel has delayed me in the study of the kaffir tongue which proves difficult on account of the "clicks" frequently found in it... Father Gérard pronounces all that as if he had spoken the language from his early years. You are aware of our difficulties among the kaffirs. The great obstacle is their deplorable habits. They gather in order to eat and drink ... the devil himself presides at these gatherings; they speak of nothing else but the means of having many women, to acquire cattle etc. Since the opening of the mission they also speak of what they have heard at the chapel; but it is only to laugh at what has been said or deny it or take up the attitude that conversion is out of the question...

They are usually gay, for they are nearly always occupied at dancing or singing in their huts. In their conversations they are serious and dignified. They show themselves proud and overbearing towards those who are dependent upon them. But what is outstanding is their cunning and their trickery. They never say openly what they think and always try to deceive. They go to extremes both in joy and in sorrow, their show of sentiment is short. The heart feels little especially as regards gratitude. If one adds that they are completely naked or very nearly so, one can imagine what their ideas of modesty and respect must be in that mixture of fathers and mothers and children. They have no sense of the dignity of marriage for they buy their wives and sell their girls. Such are the kaffirs of the Colony of Natal.

We have never ceased to pay them visits in their kraals, Father Gérard and I, to recall to them what they have heard at the chapel and thus learn what they thought about it. Using in turn mildness and severity we have always been able to get in, although at times they did not relish our presence too greatly. At times some closed their doors upon us; others ran away to the neighbouring streams or woods where we followed them armed with the word of God. We have spared nothing to be of service to them and nothing loath we are ready to continue to do the same... We cannot say that they absolutely refuse to become converts for they continually say to us: "We'll see, we'll see later on"⁶

The work of the missionaries showed no results. On 10 June 1860 Gérard writes:

At the present we find ourselves in the most painful circumstances; everything seems lost, and forever, in this locality. The kaffirs are becoming harder and harder of heart. The women, at first prevented from coming by their husbands, did come at last but it was either through fear or to curry favour. I was unable to obtain anything from them at catechism. Men with three or four exceptions answered in a most pitiful fashion, turning everything to mockery, pretending not to know anything, not even the name of God, the name of our Saviour Jesus.

How the heart suffers at times! The only prayer translated into Zulu, the Lord's prayer, is recited as playacting. They turn everything to ridicule when out for their amusement. Baptismal

water is not spared by them. The sermon on death made them scream; they threatened not to come back if that subject was again dealt with. The instruction on Hell did not worry them because they do not want to believe in it. Their objections against our holy religion are the same as the European unbelievers utter. Unfortunately they form but a compact whole with their chiefs. No one is strong enough to break away and become a Christian.

That is the position at St. Michael's. I am not discouraged; I am happy where I have been placed and if I had to begin again I would choose Kaffraria.

He also gives an account of the only baptism which he performed at St. Michael's:

A few weeks ago we baptized a little girl nine months old. The child was sick. We had to use stratagems to do it. With the pretext of giving her some remedy we started to wash her from head to foot and at the same time we formed the intention and recited the sacramental words. We then gave her a few grains of rice and a little sugar. The child lived long enough to allow the kaffirs not to see through our action. Since then God has taken her out of this place of abomination.

She is now an angel praying for us and her people⁷.

Blessed Eugène's reply contains encouragement and a note of prophecy:

Their obstinacy is deplorable and must be the cause of great distress to you. After so many years and not a single conversion, it is frightful; still one must not be discouraged. The moment will come when the merciful grace of God will seem to explode and your kaffir church will take shape. For that it may be necessary to strike deeper among the native tribes. If you should find some who have not been indoctrinated by Protestants and who have not had contact with whites, you would probably succeed better...⁸.

G. Our Lady of Seven Dolours

Later that month the missionaries decided to move South to the area where the Amacele had fled to several years before. They established themselves in the Umzimkulu district and in October opened a mission which they named "Our Lady of Seven Dolours" - an apt name for a mission which bore no fruit. It is interesting to note Allard's reference to the obvious affection which the people showed for Gérard. Another point of interest is Bompard's description of the mission:

This spot, situated in a deep wooded valley, had a character all of its own. It suggested the gates of hell, for there were to be found hippopotamuses, tigers, wolves, wild dogs, snakes without number and other animals with ferocious cries, and when this phalanx began its cacophony during the night one needed to make an act of contrition in order to be ready for any eventuality!!!

An outbreak of dysentery among the people as well as a lack of interest led to a dropping off of attendance on Sundays at the chapel and on 27 July 1861 the missionaries abandoned Our Lady of Seven Dolours and returned to Pietermaritzburg. Heeding Blessed Eugène's advice to find people who were more suitably disposed to work for the missionaries. Allard and Gérard began a journey through the Vicariate in November 1861. Travelling on horseback they looked out for Catholic families. Whenever they came across Catholics they would stay with them from two to eight days, instructing them, preparing the children for first communion, teaching catechism and distributing the sacraments. Among the places visited were Reddersburg, Harrismith, Bloemfontein, Smithfield and Fauresmith. From here they met the Basuto and the saga of failure changed to a success story. Was it a coincidence that success came after 1861 after the death of Blessed Eugène, or can it be said that the Founder was interceding for the work of his sons?

H. Was the Mission to the Zulus a Complete Failure?

By 1861 the mission "ad gentes" to the Zulus had been a failure. The speakers who follow me will analyze this in more detail. At this stage we can look at Blessed Eugène's impatience for Zulu converts as one of the reasons for failure. Gérard and his brother Oblates wanted to grant Eugène's wish and thus did not give themselves time to be with the people and learn from them and to be inculturated. They did not understand the Zulus and showed little respect for their Chiefs and their traditions. Apart from Gérard the first missionaries never

mastered the language. They also unwittingly became agents of the Colonial Government at St. Michael's in the reserve system. Bishop Allard himself, though a good man, was unsuited for his position. Barret is very critical when he writes:

The account of happenings at St. Michaels would make a humorous novel. The fathers sent there presented a sight of abject misery. They were poorly clothed: their linen consisted of two shirts and the rest in proportion. When surprised by a visitor they ran to hide themselves and put on their cassocks which only hid their misery under another no less revolting. Anecdotes of this time are full of the ridiculous and grotesque... During the whole time they spent there the fathers were employed in building, ceaseless cultivation, looking after pigs, raising rabbits, etc...

All this was done in the name of holy poverty, to strike the Caffres with admiration, to win their esteem and, no doubt, to dissuade them from begging from the missionaries or becoming Christians for material interest... No doubt religion does not buy conversions and offers no pay to its adherents; but about this Monseigneur has an obsession. Because a poor native woman interrupts a catechism class to ask when she will be given a dress: there she reveals a deeply ingrained perversity! This people is unworthy and incapable of receiving the light of faith!

I have heard the Bishop speak on this subject and each time it was plain to notice the excitement in his voice and the indignation on his face showing how deeply such dispositions affected him. But what is there to be surprised at? A poor cafre almost naked asks you for clothing: who knows? Perhaps there is in this some sense of modesty. He sees that all those who preach the gospel and make profession to follow it are well clothed; is it surprising that he sees religion as bringing him the benefit of clothing, housing, nourishment...

Through having wished to build up a great work on a shoestring Monseigneur has only succeeded in losing time and ruining the health of his fathers. Our fathers have not had a shadow of success at St. Michael's. It is because in embracing the Catholic faith the cafres could see no sufficient compensation for the sacrifices asked of them⁹.

It is good to note that when everyone was condemning Allard, Gérard never spoke against him. Although Allard was difficult to live with, Gérard never complained but loved him as a father.

In the long run was the mission a failure? No! The seeds were sown for a great harvest in Natal as we see today. The Oblates could have been discouraged and returned to France, but they did not. They persevered and the success of the Church in Southern Africa was built on their work.

Remembering that Gérard and Allard had no training to be missionaries - missiology, anthropology, sociology and psychology did not feature in seminaries then - we can see the years among the Zulu as a training period for later ventures. The greatness of Joseph Gérard is shown in these years: physical and mental suffering and apparent failure made him develop courage and the spiritual vision which made him a saint. The Joseph Gérard who went to the Basuto was a wiser man, who having learnt from his mistakes among the Zulu, was able to be a more patient instrument of the Lord, who called him and sent him to Southern Africa.

II. Father Joseph Gérard Among the Basutho

A. Background

In the previous talk we looked at the population movement in Southern Africa - the Difaqare and the Trek. The Basuto nation came about as a result of the former, where Moshesh was able to accommodate many refugees and form them into a nation. History shows Moshesh as a great leader: a man of peace, a diplomat and a strong person who cared for the welfare of his people. His was a mountain kingdom, centered around the stronghold of Thaba Bosiu. Close to the mountain was the Caledon River with its fertile banks, used by the Basuto for grazing and cultivation, especially in times of drought. It was here that the second population movement, the Trek, made itself felt in the life of the Basuto. The Boers had a different idea to the Basuto when it came to land ownership and claimed the land around the Caledon River for themselves. In times of drought the Basuto would come down to the River area, resulting in conflict. Raids and counter-raids became the story of the day and Moshesh was unable to control some of his sons and subjects. A number of wars resulted, with Basuto coming off worse every time. More about

Gérard's involvement later. Moshesh, realizing the hopelessness of his situation, appealed to Britain for protection. The result was that Basutoland became a British Protectorate in his lifetime.

Another important factor took place in 1833 with the arrival of the Protestant missionaries of the Paris Missionary Society. These men became friends of Moshesh and played an important role in the political development of the nation. By the time of Gérard's arrival they had established eleven mission stations and had many converts. Obviously their greatest desire was to convert the king; a competition into which the Catholic missionaries were also to enter!

B. Arrival Among the Basutho

Having closed the Zulu mission of Our Lady of Sorrows, Gérard and Allard then went to Moshesh in 1861. They were received by the king, who agreed to let them open a mission station and gave them a site. They returned to Natal to collect their belongings and in 1862 made the fifty four day journey to establish themselves among the Basutho. Allard's description of the journey is worth quoting as he wrote it:

It was not without a great many hardships and troubles we could reach a station. 1st The load of our wagon was too heavy = though we had left a m.Burg a part of it, - the span of oxen was too weak, and the season too much advanced, because of the grass being burnt. The consequence was that often we were journeying only half the day - to give rest to the oxen. On Drakensberg there waited for us a great trial on the same day all our oxen fell sick, they had eaten a poisonous grass. Three of them died and the others could not pull till they had taken many days of rest, those which were dead were replaced by three others we bought at Harrysmith being at Elands River, we were obliged to leave behind us on other ox; we did the same at Molapo's place for an other = in our station a Sixt one fell into the River and not having any aid, it died there, and the 7th died being exhausted thus we had lost the half our span. But those losses and trials were compensated by the blessings God gives to our mission, for though the public services for the Basutos do not take place, nevertheless many of them, have already asked to be members of the catholic church.

On arrival at their site they lived in tents until they had built a dwelling, measuring 15 X 20 feet!

Joseph Gérard was to spend the next fifty two years being the "Apostle to the Basotho". Of necessity this talk can only sketch the broad outline of his life and ministry and so I will touch only on the highlights. Over the next days the speakers will deepen many of the aspects of his spirituality and missionary approach.

On November 1st 1863 the mission of the Immaculate Conception was officially opened. Moshesh attended and made a long speech asking his people to search for the true religion. Moshesh also gave permission for the place to be called "Village of the Mother of Jesus", but everyone referred to it as Roma.

Gérard's method of approach was the same as among the Zulu; he learnt Sotho and visited the people in their homes, explaining why the Catholics had come to the country. Catechesis was all important for him and he wrote a catechism in Sotho which he had printed. Always he used the "line-fishing" method, working with individuals, patiently instructing them.

1865 was a memorable year for Gérard and the country. Firstly, Moshesh had asked the missionaries to send someone to teach his women how to make clothes. The Oblates, wanting to satisfy the king, asked for some Holy Family Sisters to come. Fr. O'Hara describes their arrival:

On February 17, 1865, two oxwagons left Pietermaritzburg with Bishop Allard, the two priest (Frs. Barthelemy and Hidien), the six Sisters, six Africans - and a following of 28 oxen, three cows, calves, chickens, dogs and ducks! They reached the mission only on April 26 and were given a right royal welcome by Moshoeshe. Resplendent in a French Admiral's uniform which the sisters had given him, he told of his conviction that their coming would ensure peace and prosperity.

They were to establish a school, instruct catechumens and to become a vital part of the fabric of the Sotho Church.

The second major event of 1865 was the war with the Boers. Gérard tells us about his

involvement:

It is on June 18, 1865, that war was definitely declared by the President of the Free State to Moshoeshoe. The cause as described in the letter of the President was as follows: 3 Boers had been captured and imprisoned by the people of Mopeli in the Free State... By Free State he means the fields sown by the Basotho, but which according to the decision of Governor Woodhouse are within the Free State. So the President demanded that the accused be handed over to the Free State and a fine of 70 heads of cattle be paid...

When King Moshoeshoe came to visit us at the village of the Mother of Jesus, a messenger sent by the President of the Free State brought an ultimatum of war to the King of the Basotho... Before returning home, Moshoeshoe asked for prayer. Immediately we all go to the poor little chapel... and at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we make a fervent prayer... I took a beautiful little statue of the Blessed Virgin and put it in the hands of the King who gazed at it with confidence.

During the month of August, 1865 the Boers encamped before Thaba Bosiu where resides Moshoeshoe. For weeks they have shelled the impregnable rock. But as thousands of cattle and horses had been brought there to get them away from the Boers, no one escaped; hunger, thirst and the guns destroyed everything, but Moshoeshoe remained firm¹⁰.

On August 10, 1865, the Boers appeared in Roma Valley... Aug. 11th was a memorable day for me, when I was granted a remarkable protection from Mary Immaculate... Some of the Boers had come back from the mountain, where they had taken 3 or 4000 heads of cattle. They began to shoot from above on the wood where I was in order to kill the Basothos that were hidden therein and drive away their cattle. I was alone near our baggage at the lower part of the forest when I heard a rapid shooting.. I naturally thought the Boers would follow the contours and would not spare the lower part where I found myself... Having no other idea to act otherwise I got into the tent of our Wagon... The army reaches a place beside the one where I am hiding, the firing tells me about it and I even distinguish the orders given by the General. Already seven bullets whistle past me... I resigned myself to God's will and prepare to die... Mother Mary, pray for me at the hour of danger... 3 bullets fly past me, one tearing the breviary near my feet (Fr. Gérard had the breviary of Fr. Hidién during this emergency). Undoubtedly, the hand of Mary deflected a great number of bullets, since they bore holes through the wagon... The storm passed over and Sister Mary-Joseph and Sister Mary of Jesus arrived deeply concerned to see if I had had any accident.

During the siege of Thaba Bosiu Gérard often visited the king, bringing him food and comfort, and risked his life in the process of passing through the Boers. It was during the war that Gérard came to be known and loved by the people around his mission. His example of Christianity in action brought many more to Church and increased the catechumens. He writes:

This war has helped greatly to make us known to the whole nation, for it has brought to our quarters a large number of Basothos fleeing from their enemies... We have had the opportunity of bestowing both charity and hospitality and that is the kind of language which is always very persuasive with the Basothos... e.g. we sheltered 2 old women, both infirm, who could not run away with their relatives. I found another, certainly 80 years of age, nearly dead of starvation and eaten up by vermin... I took her and carried her on my shoulders... The mercy of God showed itself as regards 2 Basothos that had been wounded by the Boers. For a whole month they were bandaged and looked after by the sisters... they died with the grace of baptism. (In his Diary, Sept. 28, 1865:) "The Boers stopped their siege of Thaba Bosiu last Monday the 25th. Yesterday we went to pay a visit to Moshoeshoe. He welcomed us cordially and seemed happy to see us. We celebrated a thanksgiving service for divine protection over the nation on this occasion. He is quite convinced that it was the work of God. I also spoke of the baptismal ceremony, week from Sunday. He will gladly come".

The third and greatest event of 1865 was the first solemn baptism of seven adults, in the presence of Moshesh. Remembering Blessed Eugène's prediction of an explosion of God's merciful grace. Joseph Gérard rejoices as he writes:

At long last, the day has come, forecast in all eternity, when the Lord would make his merciful love explode. So many years of expectation, of failure, made this day a marvellous one,

and such a novelty to us... Thank God, Mary Immaculate and thanks to the prayers of our brothers in Europe and elsewhere... The holy water was poured on the foreheads shining with happiness. Here are the names of the neophytes... Joseph (Jonas), Maria ('M'a Kimela)... After the ceremony the neophytes were escorted to the convent singing "Maria a bokhabane". There they paid their respects to the King. The feast continued with a banquet... The ceremonies impressed many people among the Basothos.

In 1870 Moshesh was ailing and both Gérard and the Paris missionaries doubted their efforts to convert him. The entries in Gérard's diary tell the story:

Jan. 26, 1870: We went to see Moshoeshoe... He was weakened by vomiting. I went close to his bed and inquired how he felt. Then suddenly he said: "What subjects did you instruct in last Sunday?" This unexpected question surprised me. I told him that Faith had been the subject of my instruction. I explained at length the principal elements of faith: 1) What is Faith? It is a conviction. When one believes, this conviction gives certitude of knowing. I believe i.e. I hold for certain. 2) What are the elements of faith? All that the Son of God taught when He came on earth. On this point the King was astonished. He said that he did not know that the Son of God had come on earth and lived there for 33 years. 3) When he ascended into heaven, He left His doctrine in the hands of the Pastors of the Church. It is essential for us to be in the Church. That is where God helps us, speaks to us, where the Holy Spirit dwells. As Moshoeshoe listened, he was very attentive. He then congratulated us for starting a school. He expressed his appreciation for our Holy Religion, praised us for remaining faithful to him during the war.

Feb. 4, 1870: We went in a pouring rain to visit Moshoeshoe, accompanied by Mother Superior, Sr. Mary de Jesus, Sr. Augustin, Filomena, Fr. LeBihan and myself. We had to sleep there. He received us well... Among other things he said: "I have 2 eyes, i.e. one looks at the calvinist ministers, the other looks at the Roman Catholics". At that moment the protestant minister Jousse, to push forward, said, "I will write to all the protestant ministers to come". Moshoeshoe replied: "Do as you wish, but let it not be myself who calls them".

March 11, 1870: During the last 15 days, my visits to Moshoeshoe were more frequent: always the same situation, i.e. warm welcome, but who could not see that he was unconverted? that he is trying to satisfy both catholics and protestants? However, if he showed preference, it seems that it would be for us because of the words he repeated a few times: "May the Mother of God pray for me"... Magdalena and Filomena also visited him for 2 or 3 days. He willingly spoke to them although very weak. Two protestants came to ask him if he did not wish to be baptized? to choose a religion? Magdalena and Filomena heard Moshoeshoe answer: "I cannot choose"... On the morning of March 11th, the poor man appeared before his Judge. I was on my way to visit him... I experienced such a deep sorrow, that I have never felt a greater sorrow in my life... I continued to the mountain to offer my sympathies to his sons Letsie and Masupha... The day of burial, Jousse and colleagues performed the ceremony... We attended the burial, as etiquette demanded it, but especially to honour the one who had been the instrument of God to help establish our Holy Religion in this country. Some of Moshoeshoe's sons... came to thank me for what I had done for their father.

1876 saw the new Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Jolivet, transferring Gérard from Roma. He spent some time visiting Natal to supervise the printing of his translation of Luke's Gospel as well as a History of the Church which he had written. On his return to Basutoland he and Barthelemy set out to start a new mission in the north of the country, with the sum of £13. Fr. O'Hara describes the journey:

It was a pleasant journey. One of their horses got caught in a ravine. Lightning twice struck the spot they had just left and hysterically revelers insulted them and pelted them with clods of earth. Molapo, a son of Moshoeshoe, gave them a site which, although excellent in other respects, was located on the edge of a marsh. The two priests arrived long before missionary Br. Philip Mulligan who was bringing up their provisions. As a result they were set upon by cold and hunger. It would have gone hard with them if Mafisa a kind Moshotho, had not provided them with food and lodging. At length Fr. Gérard, tired of waiting, went back for the wagon which he found overturned in the mud. He helped to drag it out and when at last it arrived, two months

after the date of departure, all they got for their trouble was two sacks of flour. However they had the good fortune to meet two staunch European Catholics. One was a Mr. Ryan who befriended them in their early days and left all he had to them on his death two years later; the other, Mr. Moran, helped in the building of their chapel and paid half the cost of the 50,000 bricks which they had to bake themselves. (p. 27)

Gérard named this mission "St. Monica's" and spent 21 fruitful years there. It was a life of hard work, prayer and penance. While here he ministered to the Sotho who lived in the present-day Orange Free State.

At the age of 66 in 1897 he returned to Roma to continue his "line-fishing", remaining here until his death in 1914. I was very struck by the following extract from his diary about his ministry to the sick, particularly considering he was 78 when this happened.

April 4, 1909: I was at St. Michael's Mission neighbouring Roma. After Mass a good Christian, crying, tells me her niece is very sick at a distance of 3 hours on horse-back. We go. Arrived at the village where the sick person suffering from T.B. was supposed to be, we are told that she has been carried to the mountains to breathe purer air... I have no guide, the place in the mountains is far, but Providence sends me the husband of the sick woman. He shows me the way, we go. It is slippery to go up and more so to go down. We go through "Bushman's Pass" (so-called because bushmen used to come down through here to steal Basothos' livestock, until they were exterminated or dispersed by the Basotho Chiefs. I baptized some bushmen at St. Monica's).

Finally we cross a large river, we go up another mountain and then we go along a plateau till about 8 p.m. when we arrived. How the joy of poor sick Ethelina was great! How many times she said "thank, thank you Father!" We say the rosary to the Sacred Heart, make acts of faith, hope and charity. The Chief of the village is the maternal uncle of Ethelina... He is a pagan witch-doctor. I get acquainted with him... we spoke of old King Moshoeshoe, his warriors and wars of past, famines, etc. etc.

They give us meat and maize bread and I sleep in their bed of goatskins with 2 of the woolen blankets. They welcomed us in a very friendly way. These are good people but immersed in the darkness of paganism. Before resting I speak of Sacraments to Ethelina to revive her faith in the ones she would receive. She is a good soul who had made her first communion 1 year ago... I listened to her confession and anointed her saying that I would say Mass at Nazareth outstation and would bring her the Eucharist. What joy she manifested on hearing this! Next morning, early, the whole village comes to prayer. I tell them that I have come for the great important things concerning Ethelina and that faith is necessary to understand them. I instruct Ethelina again, encourage and leave for Nazareth by the same way we came. Nazareth is an outstation of St. Michael's at the foot of the mountains. We arrive at night at Nazareth station. Josephina, the cook, responsible for Nazareth in Fr. Lebreton's absence gives us a meal.

Next morning I say Mass for a new Christian around Nazareth. Josephina brings me breakfast, but in such circumstances I am not hungry and I ask her to keep the porridge for this evening. We go back to sick Ethelina. We go up mountains and down valleys on our horses with my guide. On the way I am thinking: You are here, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, resting in the Blessed Sacrament on my breast! Let us eternally adore you in the blessed Sacrament! I must admit, this trip is inconceivably sweet in your presence.. no fatigue, there is awareness and alertness; the 4 hours of horse ride on terrible roads seems to be only a quarter of an hour! How we pray saying to the divine Master: "Have pity for so many souls lost in the solitude of these mountains... O Heavenly Father! look at the face of your Christ, Have pity! Have pity! Mercy!" Yes these hours are very short but precious! At last we arrive at the village around 11 a.m. I go into the hut of the sick Ethelina: no chair, no table... I lay my coat on the floor and put the Blessed Sacrament on it... We find two candles... we adore, we pray, we shed tears.. I have difficulty in controlling my emotion in order to speak a bit to sick Ethelina. Yesterday she confessed, was anointed... today she receives the Eucharist maybe for the last time before her eternal communion with God in heaven. She is well prepared, accepting the will of God... After giving her communion, I make the thanksgiving with her and for her, I remain a bit to encourage her for the great voyage to eternity. We recite the Rosary of the Sacred Heart and invocations

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my life. Rain clouds are gathering. Returned to Nazareth, I have a pleasant and prayerful evening with Fr. Lebreton.

Two highlights of Gérard's ministry in Roma were the baptism in 1898 of Masupha, one of Moshesh's sons, and the climax in 1913 when he baptized Chief Griffith, soon to become the Paramount Chief. Joseph Gérard died on May 29, 1914 and at his burial Chief Maama addressed the following words to Paramount Chief Griffith, which sum up the life of the man who gave his life for his people.

I offer you my condolences on the death of this priest... and I thank you for having come yourself to his burial. Fr. Gérard came to us a long time ago. At that time I was still a young boy and it was then that I got to know him. When I was older I met him often, and when I called to see him during his final illness he spoke so impressively that I shall never forget his words. It was Father Gérard who carried prayer and food to Moshoeshoe over there at Thaba Bosiu while the Boers were besieging it. How he passed through their lines I cannot understand... Fr. Gérard was certainly an extraordinary man, a man who never spared himself in his priestly ministry, who had the same concern for the chief and the pauper; he was a man who went into huts so dirty that even we Basotho would have found them repulsive. Yet, you could find him, our Father, on his knees beside a sick bed, praying and instructing the invalid in the things of God. Fr. Gérard was a man who, you might say, did not eat food but fed himself on prayer and if prayer is something with which one can feed the people, then he has fed us Basotho too for a very long time.

When Joseph Gérard died there were 15,000 Catholics in Basutoland.

Throughout his later life and after his death many miracles were attributed to Gérard. The miracle which Rome accepted for the beatification took place in 1928. Fr. O'Hara describes it thus:

Florina was a little girl who lost her sight in 1928 when she was only six years old. She was taken to Dr. Hertig, the mission Doctor, who diagnosed the affliction as incurable. She was taken then to Fr. Pennerath, the parish priest at Roma, who suggested a novena of prayer to Fr. Gérard. Her parents agreed; one of the sisters took a little bag of soil from Fr. Gérard's grave, tied it around Florina's neck, and they all began a novena to Ramehlolo. In 1940 when the life of Fr. Gérard was being officially investigated by the Church, Florina gave this evidence: *"One night during the novena a priest whom I did not know appeared to me; he put his hands on my eyes saying: "You will be cured my child and you will see again". When I got up in the morning...I was cured"*.

And indeed she was as eyewitnesses of the event testified. Florina went on to say:

I asked my mother to take me to the mission to see the Father who had visited me during the night when I was still blind. The Fathers were all there, having come for their retreat. I could not find the one I sought amongst them. Father Pennerath showed me six photographs of Fathers; on five I could not find him either, but on the sixth I cried out "That's him, he's the one who came to visit me at night".

The photograph was that of Father Gérard. In later life Florina was examined by two eye-specialists who, from the texture of the scar tissue in her eye, confirmed the original diagnosis of Dr. Hertig. Medically speaking she should still have been blind but her sight remained normal until her death, on 7 December, 1982.

What was the key to the success of the life of this wonderful man? He answers the question in his retreat Notes:

The answer is on every page of the Gospel: we must love them, love them, in spite of everything, love them always. The good God has wanted that we do good to a person in loving that person.

This is Joseph Gérard's legacy to us, his Oblate brothers!

Francis SANTUCCI, O.M.I.

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² Letter of Gérard to de Mazenod, April 5, 1858, in *Missions*, 1862, pp. 351. Original in French.

³ Letter of de Mazenod to Allard, April 1858.

⁴ Letter of Allard to de Mazenod, January 8, 1859, in *Missions*, 1862, pp. 318-319.

⁵ Allard's diary, July 17, 1859.

⁶ Letter of Bompert to de Mazenod, s.d., in *Missions*, 1862, pp. 366-369. Original in French.

⁷ Letter of Gérard to de Mazenod, June 10, 1860, in *Missions*, 1862, pp. 357-359. Original in French.

⁸ Letter of de Mazenod to Gérard.

⁹ Affaire Allard, Oblate General Archives.

¹⁰ Letter of Gérard to the Superior General, November 6, 1865.

Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée, des Sulpiciens missionnaires?¹

SUMMARY - The influence of the Sulpicians has manifested itself in the priestly life and the missionary spirit of Eugène de Mazenod. At the seminary of the Sulpicians, Mr. Emery, the Superior, and Mr. Duclaux, the spiritual director, have left their mark deeply on Eugène; they have taught him the most beautiful periods of the Church and the examples of all the sacerdotal virtues given by its saints. The missionary society and the reading of edifying letters on the Chinese and Japanese missions helped him to keep his missionary spirit. We recognize also the influence of Saint Sulpice on many articles of the oblate Rule and pious exercises. In Canada, the Oblates met the Sulpicians who served as their first guides in the ministry to the Amerindians. Mgr de Mazenod has found at Saint Sulpice the material and spiritual help that gives to new institutions stability and growth.

Dans le *Bulletin des Anciens élèves de Saint-Sulpice*, en 1930- 1931² paraissaient quelques articles intitulés: Des Sulpiciens missionnaires: les Oblats de Marie Immaculée. L'auteur, le P. Paul Huriet, o.m.i. (1871-1939), ancien élève des Sulpiciens, s'était-il laissé entraîner par une reconnaissance et un enthousiasme exagérés et peu éclairés envers ses maîtres, ou faisait-il une affirmation bien fondée au point de vue historique? C'est ce que je me propose d'étudier brièvement.

I. Les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée

Que les Oblats de M.I. soient des missionnaires, le fait est certain. Fondée à Aix-en-Provence, le 25 janvier 1816, par l'abbé Charles Joseph Eugène de Mazenod, la Congrégation des Oblats de M.I. avait d'abord pour but principal: les missions populaires. Elle porta d'ailleurs, le titre de Missionnaires de Provence jusqu'en 1826.

Éduqué en Italie de 1791 à 1802, puis au séminaire de St-Sulpice à Paris de 1808 à 1812, Eugène de Mazenod fixait d'abord un but limité à son Institut, mais voyait déjà les besoins de toute l'Église. Dès le début des premières Règles de 1818, il écrivait:

Les Missionnaires sont appelés à être les coopérateurs du Sauveur, les corédempteurs du genre humain; et quoique, vu leur petit nombre actuel et les besoins plus pressants des peuples qui les entourent, ils doivent pour le moment borner leur zèle aux pauvres de nos campagnes ... leur ambition doit embrasser, dans ses saints désirs, l'immense étendue de la terre entière.

La Congrégation se développa d'abord lentement mais resta fidèle à son but principal d'évangélisation des pauvres en Provence et dans les diocèses circonvoisins. Après 25 ans d'existence elle comptait une cinquantaine de sujets, prêtres et frères³. Eugène de Mazenod, devenu évêque de Marseille en 1837, attendait un signe de la Providence pour lancer ses maigres troupes hors du pays, à la conquête des infidèles. Le premier appel précis vint de Mgr Ignace Bourget, évêque de Montréal. Celui-ci avait besoin de prêtres pour les missions paroissiales auprès des catholiques et pour annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle aux Amérindiens.

Le départ des premiers Oblats de M.I. pour le Canada, en 1841, marque le début d'une expansion rapide de la Congrégation. Mgr de Mazenod avait déjà 59 ans; il répondit ensuite généreusement aux appels de la Congrégation de la Propagation de la foi afin de donner de son vivant la note spécifique qui distingua son Institut dans l'Église comme Congrégation éminemment missionnaire. En 1841-1842 ses fils partirent pour l'Angleterre, pour Ceylan (Sri Lanka) en 1847-1848, l'Algérie en 1849-1850 et l'Afrique du Sud en 1850-1852.

En 10 ans les Oblats ont également parcouru l'Amérique du Nord avec d'abord des établissements dans l'Est du Canada et des États-Unis, puis à St-Boniface et dans le Nord-Ouest

à partir de 1845, en Orégon et sur les côtes du Pacifique en 1847, au Texas et au Nord du Mexique en 1849-1852, sur les bords du Mackenzie et de la mer glaciale arctique après 1858⁴.

A la mort de Mgr de Mazenod, en 1861, la Congrégation comptait 4 provinces religieuses, 5 vicariats de missions et 414 Pères et Frères dont la moitié hors de la France⁵.

Les Oblats sont demeurés fidèles à l'esprit missionnaire légué par leur Fondateur. D'après le dernier personnel de 1987, les 5431 sujets travaillent dans environ 50 pays (24 provinces religieuses, 21 vice-provinces et 20 délégations). C'est surtout leurs missions auprès des Amérindiens et des Inuit qui les a rendus célèbres. L'écrivain Frédéric Rouquette a décrit cette activité et l'a qualifiée <<d'Épopée blanche⁶>>. Le Pape Pie XI avait également en vue les missions du Grand-Nord canadien quand il appelait les Oblats des spécialistes des missions difficiles⁷.

II. Influence sulpicienne sur la vie sacerdotale et l'esprit missionnaire d'Eugène de Mazenod

Lorsque Eugène de Mazenod se sentit appelé au sacerdoce en 1807-1808 il décida de s'y préparer au séminaire de St-Sulpice à Paris. Cette décision ne surprend pas. C'est là qu'avaient fait leurs études, au siècle précédent, son grand-oncle l'abbé Charles Auguste André de Mazenod et son oncle Fortuné, qui fut évêque de Marseille de 1823 à 1837⁸. Eugène avait d'ailleurs connu personnellement quelques Sulpiciens à Paris en 1805⁹ et au séminaire d'Aix¹⁰.

Il passa quatre années à Paris, trois comme séminariste jusqu'à son ordination le 21 décembre 1811, et une partie de l'année 1812 comme directeur après que Napoléon eût chassé les Sulpiciens.

MM. Emery, supérieur, et Duclaux, directeur spirituel d'Eugène, le marquèrent profondément. Âgé de 26 ans à son entrée, ayant une connaissance parfaite de l'italien et quelques notions de médecine reçues d'un confrère, il devint l'homme de confiance de M. Emery qui se laissa soigner par lui et qui eut recours à ses services dans ses relations avec les Cardinaux italiens exilés à Paris. Mgr de Mazenod écrivit à M. Faillon le 29 août 1842:

M. Emery me traita toujours en homme raisonnable. Il me donnait un accès facile auprès de lui et j'ai pu apprécier dans cette intimité, je ne dirai pas seulement l'amabilité de son esprit mais sa profonde sagesse, sa sagacité, ses vertus sacerdotales et surtout son amour pour l'Église, si cruellement persécutée à cette époque¹¹.

Eugène a été très près de M. Emery surtout lorsque celui-ci fut chassé du séminaire en 1810 et au moment de sa maladie et de sa mort au printemps de 1811. Le séminariste écrivit alors à sa mère:

[La mort de M. Emery] est la plus grande calamité qui pût affliger l'Église dans les circonstances actuelles... C'était une de ces âmes fortes, si rares de nos jours. Incapable de trahir son devoir, inébranlable dans ses principes, il avait le talent de conciliation au suprême degré... Je n'oublierai de ma vie les exemples de force et de vigueur vraiment sacerdotales qu'il nous a donnés jusqu'au dernier moment¹².

L'influence de M. Duclaux est moins apparente mais plus profonde. Avant d'entrer au séminaire Eugène l'avait déjà consulté sur sa vocation; il le choisit ensuite comme directeur et le considéra alors comme <<un des meilleurs directeurs qui existent dans le monde¹³>>.

M. Duclaux écrivit souvent à l'abbé de Mazenod, surtout de 1812 à 1816¹⁴ alors que celui-ci cherchait sa vocation précise comme prêtre au service du diocèse d'Aix et qu'il se demandait s'il devait continuer son ministère à Aix ou entrer chez les Jésuites ou chez les Sulpiciens¹⁵.

Au mois d'août 1812, deux mois avant de rentrer à Aix, l'abbé de Mazenod fit une retraite à Issy et écrivit dans ses notes:

Un puissant véhicule pour persévérer dans ces dispositions, ce sera le souvenir de toutes les vertus sacerdotales que j'ai vu pratiquer avec tant de persévérance sous mes yeux pendant quatre ans que j'ai eu le bonheur de vivre dans ce séminaire. M. Emery, M. Duclaux, ce saint M. Duclaux, et tous ses autres coopérateurs, et la très grande majorité de leurs élèves, mes chers condisciples, seront toute ma vie comme autant de soutiens, comme autant d'excitateurs

invisibles, qui m'empêcheront de déchoir, qui me pousseront pour avancer. Mon Dieu, que de vertus! Que je me trouve misérable à côté de tous ces saints ecclésiastiques! Et ce Tharin, et ce Teysserre, et ce Gosselin, à qui j'ai été associé pour diriger ce séminaire quand nos Pères nous furent enlevés, ils sont tous plus jeunes[s] que moi pour l'âge, mais à quelle distance ne suis-je pas d'eux pour la vertu. Cependant nous avons été élevés ensemble, nous avons crû à l'ombre des mêmes ailes tutélaires, nous avons reçu les mêmes instructions, participé aux mêmes avantages et aux mêmes exemples; mais, outre qu'ils étaient plus innocents que moi et par conséquent plus propres à recevoir les impressions de la grâce, combien n'ont-ils pas autrement profité que moi de l'abondance spirituelle au milieu de laquelle nous vivions¹⁶.

Mgr de Mazenod terminait également par ces mots sa longue lettre du 29 août 1842 à M. Faillon sur la vie de M. Emery:

Je remercierai Dieu tant que je vivrai de m'avoir fait la grâce de passer plusieurs années sous sa direction et, je dois dire, dans l'amitié d'hommes tels que M. Emery, M. Duclaux, M. Montagne et, quoiqu'il vive encore, laissez-moi ajouter Garnier aussi. Il me semble que par eux m'a été transmis la tradition des plus beaux temps et des plus saints personnages de l'Église ainsi que l'exemple de toutes les vertus sacerdotales... Leur souvenir est un baume pour mon âme; je n'ai qu'à penser à eux pour désirer de devenir meilleur et pour me reprocher ma lâcheté dans le service de Dieu. Quels hommes ou, plutôt, quels saints¹⁷!

L'esprit missionnaire d'Eugène de Mazenod s'est développé à St-Sulpice mais pousse ses racines bien au-delà¹⁸. Dès son arrivée à Venise et au moment de ses premiers contacts avec Don Bartolo Zinelli en 1794, le pré-adolescent a lu les *Lettres édifiantes sur les missions de Chine et du Japon*. Cette lecture éveilla son attention aux besoins des infidèles et suscita en lui le désir de se consacrer à leur conversion¹⁹. Il écrira lui-même à un de ses religieux, le 2 octobre 1855: <<Je n'avais encore que 12 ans quand Dieu fit naître dans mon coeur les premiers et très efficaces désirs de me vouer aux missions²⁰>>.

Ce désir ne s'était pas éteint peu avant son entrée au séminaire. Mlle Julie de Glandèves de Noizelles, à qui Eugène confia son projet de devenir prêtre, lui écrivit en 1808: <<Je sais que vous avez du goût pour ce genre de ministère>> [missions étrangères]²¹.

Au séminaire, Eugène fut un des membres du cercle missionnaire animé par son ami aixois Charles de Forbin-Janson. Ce dernier ne rêvait que d'apostolat en Chine; il en parlait toujours et à tous indistinctement. Eugène partageait son intérêt mais s'orientait toutefois, dans l'immédiat, vers le ministère à Aix où les besoins de l'Église étaient criants²², et où sa soeur, sa grand-mère et sa mère (celle-ci s'était toujours opposée à la vocation de son fils), seuls à Aix, l'attendaient depuis longtemps²³.

Cette participation au cercle missionnaire et les connaissances qu'il fit de futurs missionnaires, l'aidèrent à demeurer profondément missionnaire sans s'éloigner de la Provence. Il établit et fit progresser l'oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi à Marseille dès 1823²⁴, il accueillit toujours avec empressement, à l'évêché et au séminaire, les missionnaires de diverses congrégations qui s'arrêtaient à Marseille en attendant les bâtiments qui les porteraient en Afrique ou en Asie, il envoya également à l'étranger environ 200 de ses religieux oblates, il eut surtout sans cesse le zèle pour toutes les Églises²⁵.

III. Influence sulpicienne sur la Congrégation des Oblats de M.I.

Dans les brefs articles du Père Huriet, le troisième avait pour titre: L'esprit de St-Sulpice dans la Règle oblate, et le quatrième: L'esprit de St-Sulpice dans les exercices de piété des Oblats.

Sans faire une analyse minutieuse et détaillée de la Règle et des exercices de piété, mais en se basant simplement sur son expérience de vie au séminaire de St-Sulpice et dans la Congrégation des Oblats, le Père Huriet affirme que la Règle oblate est toute imprégnée de l'esprit sulpicien, surtout par son insistance sur l'imitation de Jésus-Christ, la grandeur du sacerdoce, l'amour de l'Église et la filiale dévotion à Marie.

Ces points essentiels de la Règle apparaissent déjà dans la spiritualité d'Eugène au cours des quatre années d'intense vie religieuse vécues à Venise de 1794 à 1797; il n'y a

cependant pas de doutes que les années de séjour à Paris lui ont permis de les mieux comprendre, de les vivre plus intensément et de les transmettre à ses fils religieux.

Les intuitions du Père Huriet ont, depuis, fait l'objet d'une étude beaucoup plus poussée, due aux patientes recherches du P. Georges Cosentino, o.m.i.²⁶. Ce Père fait d'abord une considération générale très juste:

Notre Fondateur, écrit-il, a été formé au séminaire de St-Sulpice à Paris; c'est pourquoi il n'est pas étonnant que la Règle sulpicienne ait pu influencer sur la nôtre.

Ici, par Règle des Sulpiciens, nous n'entendons pas seulement la Règle proprement dite, mais aussi et surtout les usages et la spiritualité de l'École française du XVII^e siècle, qui avait alors son centre à Saint-Sulpice...

Notre Fondateur, durant ses années de séminaire et nos premiers Pères au temps de leur formation cléricale ont été formés à cette école; c'est pourquoi, la spiritualité française du XVII^e siècle, ou plus précisément la spiritualité sulpicienne a profondément influé sur la spiritualité de notre Congrégation, dès sa fondation...

Et le Père Cosentino ajoute: <<On peut dire que l'influence de la spiritualité sulpicienne fut si profonde sur la spiritualité oblate que, au moins pour les débuts, notre Congrégation n'en a pas eu d'autre²⁷>>.

De là l'auteur consacre plusieurs pages à l'étude des points particuliers où cette influence a été plus évidente jusqu'au Concile Vatican II. Beaucoup de ces points ont changé depuis dans la lettre même de la Règle qui n'est plus celle de Mgr de Mazenod, mais on peut dire que les Oblats ont vécu de cela pendant 150 ans, et cet esprit demeure encore vivant, mais plus discret, dans la vie même de la Congrégation. Je ne ferai ici qu'une brève énumération des points étudiés par le père Cosentino²⁸.

A. Dans la Règle oblate

La Préface, qui a toujours fait partie intégrante de la Règle, traite surtout des besoins de l'Église et de l'importance de saints prêtres. On y trouve des idées chères à Tronson et Olier. Le Père A. Perbal, o.m.i., en présentant les articles du P. Huriet, a écrit à ce sujet:

La Préface, cette admirable Préface que les Oblats du monde entier relisent avec amour et qui fait la substantielle nourriture de leur foi et de leur zèle, rappelle le disciple de M. Olier: sainteté sacerdotale, amour de l'Église, ardeur d'apostolat, tout cela sonne Saint-Sulpice, la conception sacerdotale de M. Olier, le sacerdoce loyal et complet du cardinal Verdier²⁹.

Étaient d'inspiration sulpicienne les articles concernant la préparation et la durée de la méditation, l'étude de l'Écriture sainte, la méthode d'oraison du soir, la préparation éloignée à la communion, la durée de l'action de grâces et, surtout, les articles sur les grands séminaires, fin secondaire de la Congrégation des Oblats.

Le Père de Mazenod a suivi la lettre de la Règle de saint Alphonse, mais l'esprit qui inspirait tout était celui des Sulpiciens et, sur quelques points, celui des Jésuites.

B. Dans les exercices de piété

C'est ici que l'influence sulpicienne apparaît avec plus d'évidence. Étaient sulpiciennes les formules de la prière du matin, en partie celles de l'examen particulier, des prières aux repas et de la prière du soir, la manière d'entendre la messe, la méthode ordinaire de la méditation et celle de l'action de grâces après la communion, des visites au saint Sacrement et à la sainte Vierge, de la récitation du chapelet, de l'oraison du soir.

C. Dans les dévotions et les usages

Nos dévotions traditionnelles étaient presque toutes d'origine sulpicienne et également divers usages tels que la répétition de la méditation, la visite à la chapelle après les repas, la position durant la méditation, la messe d'action de grâces, le commencement et la fin des exercices, la lecture au réfectoire, le nom des saints aux portes des chambres, le règlement de nos séminaires, les directoires de nos maisons de formation, etc.

Après les études des Pères Huriet et Cosentino on voit comment le Père A. Rey, contemporain du Fondateur, l'un des premiers et des plus importants biographes, n'exagérait pas lorsqu'il écrivait à la fin du siècle dernier:

Mgr Eugène de Mazenod a toujours proclamé bien haut l'estime, l'admiration et la reconnaissance qu'il professait envers la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice.

C'est de l'esprit des pratiques et des traditions de l'illustre Compagnie qu'il s'est inspiré dans la formation de la famille religieuse qu'il a donnée à l'Église catholique, les maximes de M. Olier et de M. Tronson lui étaient devenues familières; il aimait à contempler dans ces grandes figures des types de sainteté sacerdotale. Le séminariste avait si bien profité des leçons puisées à cette école de perfection que pendant toute l'existence du prêtre et du pontife, l'attitude, la démarche, le langage, la régularité de vie du religieux Oblat de Marie-Immaculée offraient comme un air de famille avec celles des fils de M. Olier. Les vertus qu'Eugène avait admirées dans ses oncles, il les retrouvait vivantes dans ses maîtres vénérés; il reçut à son tour l'empreinte de ce *vieux moule ecclésiastique* que la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice a eu l'honneur et la belle mission de conserver dans toute son intégrité pour la gloire de l'Église de France. Nous verrons jusqu'à quel degré de fidélité Eugène s'est montré attaché aux usages et aux traditions de la fille aînée de l'Église, dont le dépôt était si religieusement gardé par les Sulpiciens. Son cœur adhérait d'autant plus que son esprit avait entièrement rejeté les opinions gallicanes, encore généralement enseignées au commencement de ce siècle. Romain par les convictions, il voulait rester Français par les moeurs, les traditions, les coutumes consacrées par le temps, la mise en pratique des plus saints exemples du passé³⁰.

D. Dans la vie de la Congrégation en France et au Canada

Les chemins des Sulpiciens et des Oblats se sont souvent croisés. Mgr de Mazenod a plusieurs fois parlé des usages des Sulpiciens dans sa correspondance avec les Oblats directeurs de séminaire à Marseille, Ajaccio, Fréjus, Romans et Quimper³¹. Lui-même et les Oblats ont parfois souligné l'accueil cordial et l'entraide fraternelle des Sulpiciens, par exemple lors de l'établissement des Oblats à N.-D. de Talence (Bordeaux) en 1851-1853³² et à N.-D. de Cléry (Orléans) en 1854³³. En 1891 les Annales de la Congrégation recommandaient aux prières l'âme de l'abbé Chaussinaud, sulpicien, supérieur du séminaire du Puy, bienfaiteur des Oblats vers lesquels il dirigea plusieurs jeunes désireux de devenir missionnaires³⁴.

Mais c'est surtout au Canada que les Oblats ont souvent rencontré les Sulpiciens qui, par une heureuse disposition de la Providence, ont été leurs premiers guides dans leur ministère auprès des Amérindiens.

Les Sulpiciens sont intimement liés à l'histoire religieuse du Canada. M. Olier fut l'un des membres fondateurs de la Société de Ville-Marie avec le Serviteur de Dieu Jérôme Le Royer de La Dauversière. Il désigna, avant de mourir en 1657, les premiers missionnaires sulpiciens qui devinrent propriétaires de l'île de Montréal en 1663. Malgré la prohibition de se recruter lors de la cession du Canada à l'Angleterre en 1763, ils reprirent vigueur dès 1793 avec la venue d'exilés de la révolution française.

A l'arrivée des Oblats en 1841, ils dirigeaient le grand séminaire de Montréal et étaient en charge de l'unique paroisse de la ville qui comprenait 22 000 catholiques³⁵.

Dans le choix de ses missionnaires pour le Canada, Mgr de Mazenod veilla à désigner de bons religieux. Il refusa par exemple le Père F. Bermond en lui disant qu'il n'était pas en mesure de travailler << dans un pays où l'on est accoutumé aux bons exemples des Sulpiciens, et où les Jésuites vont porter la bonne odeur de leur admirable discipline³⁶>>. Au Père Honorat, supérieur des six premiers Oblats envoyés au Canada, il écrivit le 9 octobre: <<Établissez chez vous, mettez-vous tout de suite à la Règle. Qu'il ne soit pas dit que les Sulpiciens et les Jésuites font mieux que vous...³⁷>>.

L'accueil du clergé canadien, en particulier des Sulpiciens, fut très amical. L'Évêque de Marseille écrivait encore au Père Honorat le 26 mars 1842:

Je remercie Messieurs les Sulpiciens de toutes les bontés qu'ils ont pour vous. Ces Messieurs savent combien je suis attaché à leur Congrégation et les rapports intimes que j'ai eus avec feu M. Emery et feu M. Duclaux. Je compte sur la continuité de l'amitié de ces Messieurs pour vous, comme ils doivent être assurés de la réciprocité de vos sentiments³⁸.

Peu de temps après leur arrivée, les Oblats demandèrent et obtinrent de Mgr Bourget la faveur de pouvoir travailler auprès des Amérindiens. Deux Sulpiciens furent parmi les premiers

sujets entrés au noviciat de Longueuil: Flavien Durocher qui travaillait auprès des Algonquins d'Oka depuis 14 ans, et Jean-Claude Léonard qui connaissait la langue iroquoise. Les Sulpiciens dirigeaient la mission indienne du Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes. L'un d'entre eux accompagna les premiers Oblats qui parcoururent chaque été, après 1844, les immenses régions du Nord du Québec, le l'Outaouais au Saguenay et jusque sur la basse côte nord du fleuve St-Laurent³⁹.

Pendant une vingtaine d'années c'est chez les Sulpiciens du Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes que les Oblats missionnaires des Amérindiens allèrent passer quelques mois chaque année pour se perfectionner dans les langues⁴⁰ et lorsqu'ils écrivirent les premiers dictionnaires et les premiers livres de prières, etc., dans les diverses langues des tribus amérindiennes, c'est encore avec l'aide même financière des Sulpiciens qu'ils le firent⁴¹.

Les Oblats eurent plus de difficultés, en 1848, à s'établir dans la ville même de Montréal où les Sulpiciens cédaient de mauvais coeur, même à Mgr Bourget, quelques morceaux de leur monopole⁴².

Les relations entre les deux Institutions furent cependant toujours bonnes et les Sulpiciens se montrèrent généreux comme ils le furent dès 1841. On sait en effet qu'il donnèrent alors des livres et firent un don de 50 Louis pour contribuer aux frais du premier établissement de St-Hilaire⁴³; ils donnèrent encore 25 Louis au Père Honorat pour la reconstruction du village de St-Alexis de la Grande Baie au Saguenay après l'incendie de 1846⁴⁴.

Il convient de terminer par un extrait de la biographie de Mgr de Mazenod par le Père A. Rey. Celui-ci cite plusieurs pages de la correspondance, malheureusement aujourd'hui disparue, échangée entre Mgr de Mazenod et MM. Duclaux, Jalabert, Tharin, Garnier, Faillon, Gosselin, Caron, etc., et écrit:

Le dépouillement de ces archives de famille nous a révélé des mystères de charité et d'amitié qui nous permettent de placer... la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice parmi les bienfaitrices insignes de la congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée. C'est une dette de reconnaissance que nous sommes heureux d'acquitter, en proclamant bien haut qu'au milieu des épreuves par lesquelles a passé cette fondation, Mgr de Mazenod a trouvé auprès des Sulpiciens les secours matériels et les secours spirituels qui donnent aux oeuvres naissantes la stabilité et l'accroissement⁴⁵.

Le P. Huriet n'exagérait pas lorsqu'il appelait les Oblats des Sulpiciens missionnaires. Cependant, ce titre de noblesse tend à perdre peu à peu de signification, alors que la Congrégation des Oblats de M.I. devient de plus en plus internationale et que l'influence de la spiritualité de l'école française diminue depuis le concile, en présence de l'évolution de la théologie et même de la spiritualité.

1^{er} janvier 1991

Yvon BEAUDOIN, o.m.i.

1 Cet article a été publiée dans le *Bulletin de Saint- Sulpice. Séminaire et esprit missionnaire*, n. 17(1991), pp. 146-157.

2 1930, pp. 235-241, 460-466, 576-583; 1931, pp. 112-118.

3 MacGEE, J.B., o.m.i., <<The state of the personnel of the Congregation, January 1840>>, dans *Études Oblates*, 20(1961), pp. 61-78.

4 PERBAL, Albert, o.m.i., <<Les missions acceptées par Mgr de Mazenod de 1841 à 1861>>, dans *Études Oblates*, 22(1963), pp. 227-284; 23(1964), pp. 114-147.

5 PIELORZ, Jozef, o.m.i., *Les chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, Ottawa, 1968, II, p. 141.

6 ROUQUETTE, Louis Frédéric, *L'épopée blanche*, Paris, Ferenczi, 1926, 257 p. Autres éditions en 1941 et 1955.

7 *Missions O.M.I.*, t.66(1932), p. 675.

8 LEFLON, Jean, *Mgr E. de Mazenod...*, Paris, Plon, 1957, I, p. 27; II, p. 75.

9 Eugène à son père, 16 août 1805. Aix, bibliothèque Méjanes: <<Il faut que je m'interrompe pour aller au bout du faubourg St-Germain chercher mon cousin [Émile Dedons] qui est dans une excellente pension, gouvernée et dirigée par plusieurs prêtres de la Congrégation de

St-Sulpice, qui donnent à leurs élèves une éducation parfaite sous tous les rapports. Il n'a pas fallu peu de temps pour trouver cet excellent collège dans Paris. Ce n'est pas qu'il en manque, car j'en connais beaucoup, mais tous plus mauvais les uns que les autres...>>

- 10 Dans sa correspondance de 1805 à 1808, Eugène parle souvent du grand séminaire d'Aix dirigé par M. Dalga, sulpicien.
- 11 Eugène à sa mère, 19 juin 1810, dans *Écrits Oblats*, vol. XIV, doc. n. 71.
- 12 Eugène à sa mère, 2 mai 1811, dans *Écrits Oblats*, vol. XIV, doc. n. 84.
- 13 Eugène à sa mère, 24 mars 1809, dans *Écrits Oblats*, vol. XIV, doc. n. 49.
- 14 Les lettres d'Eugène n'ont pas été retrouvées; de larges extraits de celles de M. Duclaux ont été copiés dans la biographie de Mgr de Mazenod par le P. Rey, I, pp. 143, 144, 151, 170, 176, 202, etc.
- 15 BAFFIE, Eugène, o.m.i., *Esprit et vertus de Mgr E. de Mazenod*, Paris, 1894, pp. 28-29, et Eugène de M. à Forbin-Janson, 12 septembre, 28 octobre 1814, dans *Écrits Oblats*, vol. VI, pp. 1-4.
- 16 Retraite d'Issy, août 1812, Arch. Post. o.m.i. DM IV-2.
- 17 Arch. séminaire St-Sulpice à Paris.
- 18 PERBAL, Albert, o.m.i., <<La vocation missionnaire d'Eugène de Mazenod>>, dans *Études Oblates*, 17(1958), pp. 289-319; 19(1960), pp. 23-73.
- 19 JEANCARD, Jacques, *Mélanges historiques sur la Cong. des O.M.I.*, Tours, 1872, p. 68.
- 20 Mazenod au P. Tamburini, 2 octobre 1855. Orig.: arch. Post. o.m.i. L M-Tamburini.
- 21 Lettre du 27 septembre 1808, dans REY, *Mgr de Mazenod*, I, p. 90.
- 22 PERBAL, Albert, *art. cit.*, 1958, p. 309 et suiv.
- 23 Le père d'Eugène et ses oncles se trouvaient à Palerme depuis 1798 et ne rentrèrent d'exil qu'en 1818.
- 24 Le diocèse de Marseille fournit 1000 francs en 1823; les recettes augmentèrent d'année en année et s'élevaient à 79000 francs en 1861, voir PERBAL, Albert, *art. cit.*, 1960, pp. 33-36.
- 25 LAMIRANDE, Émilien, <<Le zèle de toutes les Églises chez Mgr de Mazenod>>, dans *Études Oblates*, 19(1960), pp. 108-146.
- 26 COSENTINO, Georges, o.m.i., *Histoire de nos Règles... I: Rédaction et sources... 1816-1818*, Ottawa, 1955, 246 p., et *Exercices de piété de l'Oblat*, Ottawa, 1962, 466 p.
- 27 COSENTINO, Georges, o.m.i., *Histoire de nos Règles...*, I, pp. 167-168. Le P. Cosentino a étudié la spiritualité sulpicienne dans les Oeuvres complètes de MM. Bérulle, Coudren, Olier, Tronson, etc., dans leurs biographies et dans les ouvrages de Icard, *Traditions de la Compagnie...*,

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- Paris, 1886 et Létourneau, *Nouveau manuel du séminariste*, Paris, 1907, etc.
- 28 COSENTINO, Georges, o.m.i., *Hist. de nos Règles...*, pp. 168-176.
- 29 *Missions O.M.I.*, t.66(1932), p. 260.
- 30 REY, Achille, o.m.i., *Mgr E. de Mazenod*, I, p. 91.
- 31 *Écrits Oblats*, IX, 162, 215; X, 265, XI, 140-141, 198, etc.
- 32 *Missions O.M.I.*, t.36(1898), p. 192.
- 33 Mgr de Mazenod au Père Dassy, 11 février 1854, Arch. Post. o.m.i., L M-Dassy.
- 34 *Missions O.M.I.*, t.29(1898), p. 105.
- 35 CARRIERE, Gaston, *Histoire des O.M.I. dans l'Est du Canada*, Ottawa, 1957-1975, 12 vol.; voir I, pp. 22-23.
- 36 Mazenod au Père Bermond, 19 août 1841, dans *Écrits Oblats*, I, p. 7.
- 37 Mazenod au Père Honorat, 9 octobre 1841, dans *Écrits Oblats*, I, p. 17.
- 38 Mazenod à Mgr Bourget, 13 avril 1842, dans *Écrits Oblats*, I, pp. 21 et 23.
- 39 Mazenod au Père Vincens, 10 décembre 1843, dans *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 44 et CARRIERE, Gaston, *Histoire...*, IV, p. 49 et suiv.
- 40 Les Pères Laverlochère, Garin, Pian, Lebret, etc., voir CARRIERE, Gaston, *Histoire...*, III, p. 181; IV, p. 49; VII, p. 214.
- 41 CARRIERE, Gaston, o.m.i., *Histoire...*, VII, pp. 215-216; IX, pp. 42, 44, 305, 308.
- 42 CARRIERE, Gaston, o.m.i. *Histoire...*, I, pp. 169, 174-175; V, pp. 157-158; VI, pp. 10-12, 57-62; Mazenod à Mgr Bourget, 16 avril 1850, dans *Écrits Oblats*, I, p. 250.
- 43 CARRIERE, Gaston, o.m.i., *Histoire...*, I, pp. 110-137.
- 44 CARRIERE, Gaston, o.m.i., *Histoire...*, II, p. 282.
- 45 REY, Achille, o.m.i., *Mgr de Mazenod*, I, p. 141.

The Oblate "Establishment" in Rome (continued)

Part I, Vol. 48(1989), no. 2, pp. 275-289

Part II, Vol. 49(1990), no. 1, pp. 43-74

The First Oblate Community in Rome, 1863-1873

SOMMAIRE - L'auteur continue son étude sur l'établissement des Oblats à Rome. Après une période d'exploration (1861-1863) suit la période d'établissement comme telle, 1863-1873. Ça ne s'est pas fait facilement; on a dû changer d'endroit 5 fois en dix ans. Le premier endroit fut Sainte-Bridget; Piazza Farnese. C'est ce qui fait l'objet du présent article. Le père Tamburini, récemment nommé procureur auprès du St-Siège occupe, avec trois confrères, quelques appartements de Sainte-Bridget, propriété des Pères de la Sainte Croix du Mans. Quelques étudiants oblats se joignirent ensuite au premier groupe. L'article se termine par des commentaires sur la vie religieuse et l'esprit missionnaire à Sainte-Bridget. Dans le prochain article nous rencontrerons les oblats de Rome à la résidence sur la Via Montanara.

The last article in this series described the efforts made between 1861 and 1863 to explore and decide the establishing in Rome of the office of an Oblate Procurator to the Holy See. Such a decision was firmly reached and communicated in the General Council meeting of March 11, 1863¹.

In fact, more than a Procurator's office had been decided and was established: an Oblate community, consisting of the Procurator-Superior, two student Fathers and an Oblate Brother, was constituted in the Eternal City.

The next several articles will study the life and vicissitudes of this first Oblate "establishment" in Rome, of this first Roman Oblate community that changed the location of its residence five times in ten years and then abruptly ceased to exist.

The five different locations in Rome where this community resided are:

- 1863-1865: St. Bridget's, on the Piazza Farnese;
- 1865-1866: Via Montanara, 115;
- 1866-1870: Via Monserrato, 149;
- 1870-1871: Via S. Isidoro/Via della Purificazione, 54;
- 1871-1873: Piazza Poli, 8.

Each of these will be studied in the next several articles.

These first ten years of a regular Oblate presence in Rome (1863-1873) are an interesting decade that is marked by many significant events: Pius IX's encyclical *Quanta cura* to which the *Syllabus errorum* was attached (1864), the 18th centenary of the martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul (1867), Vatican Council I (1869- 1870), the Franco-Prussian War, the unification of Germany and of Italy, the fall of the Papal States (all in 1870). These and other events in various ways and degrees affected this first Oblate community in Rome.

I. St. Bridget's, Piazza Farnese (1863-1865)

A. Establishing the First Oblate Community in Rome

In his December 22, 1862 audience with Pope Pius IX, Superior General Father Joseph

Fabre had orally petitioned the Holy Father for authorization to set up an Oblate establishment in Rome. While the Pope "strongly approved of this", he also informed the Oblates at this audience that he at that time had no church in Rome which he could entrust to them; nevertheless, he was very much in favour that Oblates at least establish a Procurator's office in the City².

Having received this oral assurance, Father Fabre drew up a written petition, addressed to the Pope, requesting permission to set up such a Procurator's office in Rome. Since he himself was on the point of leaving Rome, he had his secretary, Father Achille Rey, entrust it into "safe hands" to deliver and to see to its progress through the channels of the papal bureaucracy³.

The official rescript from the Holy See authorizing the Superior General to establish a Procurator's office in Rome is dated February 20, 1863⁴. On March 11, 1863, Father Fabre "communicated the official establishment of a Procurator's Office for the Congregation in Rome"⁵. Juridically, an Oblate "establishment" in Rome was now in existence.

Father Fabre had also been looking for an Oblate who would fulfill the position of General Procurator to the Holy See. The General Council Minutes for January 2, 1863, already accepted the actual establishment of a Procurator's Office in Rome as being only a matter of time and a formality: all that remained was to find "a man who is prudent, wise, and skilled to serve the Congregation usefully" in that office⁶.

The Oblate chosen for this post was Father Ambroise Louis (Aloysius) Tamburini.

By February 20, 1863 -- the date of the Holy See's rescript -- Father Tamburini was already in the General House in Paris "to receive the instruction he needs to fulfill the post of Procurator in Rome"⁷. This appointment, however, was only made official in the March 6, 1863 General Council meeting⁸.

Once the Holy See's rescript had been received, the General Council decided that "the Reverend Father Tamburini will set out immediately"⁹. As had been decided on March 6th, Father Tamburini would "begin by making the trip all alone and wait (in Rome) for his companions when he has found a place to stay (for them)"¹⁰. It was therefore clear that other Oblates were scheduled to follow Father Tamburini to Rome: what was being established in that city was not only a Procurator's office, but a small Oblate community.

In Father Fabre's mind, therefore, this "establishment" in Rome was meant to be not only a business convenience and a means to regular and effective communications with the Holy See; it was also meant to be, as he put it, "a permanent witness to life of which Rome is the principle and centre"¹¹. The faith attitude towards the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, the Successor of Peter and the visible Head of the Church on earth, an attitude inherited from the Founder, had inspired in Father Fabre the keen desire to have an Oblate community in Rome: its very presence there would be a permanent witness to the entire Congregation's affection, loyalty and obedience to the See of Peter and to person of the reigning Roman Pontiff.

Father Tamburini's official obedience is dated March 11, 1863¹². He must have left Paris very shortly thereafter, for he arrived in Rome on March 19, 1863. As he writes:

On March 19, 1863, the feast-day of St. Joseph, our glorious Patron, I arrived in the city of the Apostles and was received at St. Bridget by the Religious of the Holy Cross of Mans (Religieux de la Ste. Croix du Mans). In this religious house, I am carrying out the mission which has been entrusted to me by our Most Reverend Father General, all the while awaiting the time determined by Providence when I shall be able to go and establish myself in a house where I may have the happiness of living together with (other) members of our dear Congregation¹³.

Father Tamburini notes that it was on the feast of St. Joseph, who, after the Immaculate Virgin and Mother Mary, is the chief Patron and Protector of the Oblate Congregation, that he effectively took up residence in Rome and thus began what was intended to be the first stable Oblate presence in "the city of the Apostles". The particular spirit of faith that animated the Oblates of the Founder's generation saw significance in what might otherwise be considered a simple coincidence.

Father Tamburini took up residence at St. Bridget's, the church of which has its facade on the "north" side of Piazza Farnese. It was here that Father Vincens had stayed when he was in Rome during May-June of 1862; and it was here that Fathers Fabre, Vincens and Rey had lodged

during their December 1862 sojourn in the Eternal City. Here, too, before returning to France, Father Fabre had provisionally rented some rooms in view of a future Oblate establishment¹⁴.

The General Council Minutes of January 2, 1863 read: "In this state of affairs, the most Reverend Father General limited himself to renting some rooms without a church and (thus) towards the month of March, two Fathers will be able to go and live in Rome¹⁵". Those of March 6, 1863, read: "Father Tamburini... will begin by making the trip all alone and wait for his companions when he has found a place to stay¹⁶". Father Tamburini's own entry into the Register of the Procurator's Office quoted above corresponds well with these General Council Minutes.

It would seem that the Superior General had rented space only for two Oblates until some time in March 1863. In the meantime, other plans had been made: the Roman "establishment" would consist of the Procurator's Office plus a small community, and that meant more than just two Oblate Fathers. In this perspective, the rooms rented in advance St. Bridget's were enough to provide two Oblates with temporary lodging. Once located there, these Oblates were expected to find something more permanent elsewhere and only then would the other members of the projected community come to join them.

In point of fact, things did not work out this way. The Oblates remained in a portion of the building owned by the Holy Cross of Le Mans Fathers (Pères de la Sainte Croix du Mans) for just over two years: from March 19, 1863 to March 31, 1865. Father Tamburini himself notes how this came about:

The Most Reverend Father General, wishing to grant me the advantages of living a life in community, first sent me a lay Brother and then two young Fathers who were to take courses in Canon Law at the Sapienza and take their degrees there. They are Fathers Lerond and Corne, and Brother Gandolfi, more commonly known as Brother François.

A little while afterwards, Providence gave us a postulant from the diocese of Ajaccio, where he had been in charge of a parish, whom I received as a novice on December 7, 1863, after having fulfilled the formalities prescribed by our Holy Rules and by the encyclical of the gloriously reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX. Since I did not find in the city a suitable locale where we could establish ourselves, I decided, after receiving advice from our Most Reverend Father General, to rent the apartments at St. Bridget's, where we form a separate community, observe our own Rule and have only a slight relationship with the Religious of the Holy Cross¹⁷.

The presently available sources give no indication as to what Father Tamburini would have considered to be a "suitable locale" for the projected Oblate community; nor do we know how long and thoroughly he had searched the City for the same, nor what places he visited in trying to find such a locale.

Before deciding to stay at St. Bridget's, Father Tamburini tells us that he discussed the matter with the Superior General, Father Joseph Fabre, and that it was on the latter's instructions that he had rented more space at St. Bridget's. Our present archives do not contain any consultation/decision letters on this point that must have passed between Fathers Fabre and Tamburini.

B. The Oblate Residence at St. Bridget's

We have already seen the circumstances in which Father Ambroise Vincens in April-June, 1862, and Fathers Joseph Fabre, Ambroise Vincens and Achille Rey in December 1862 came to reside at St. Bridget's during their stay in Rome¹⁸. This same house now became the locale of the first Oblate residence in Rome.

The church and house of St. Bridget's on the north side of today's Piazza Farnese in Rome has a long and interesting history that begins with St. Bridget of Sweden. She came to Rome during the Holy Year of 1350 and was at first given lodging by Cardinal Roger Hugues de Beaufort. In 1354, she had to seek a new home for herself and her household. A Roman friend, Francesca Papazuri, offered her a house which stood where the present complex of St. Bridget's now stands. Here she lived and here she died on July 23, 1373. Since that date, the room in which she lived and died has always been kept as a sanctuary. In 1375, her daughter, Catherine, came to Rome and lived in the same house until 1380. On January 8, 1383, Francesca Papazuri

gave the entire house as a gift to St. Bridget and her convent. The property functioned as an inn and hospice for Swedish pilgrims to Rome, and it was administered by two procurators appointed by the monastery of Vadstena in Sweden. Shortly after 1430 the buildings were repaired and a fairly large chapel -- the nucleus of today's church -- in honour of St. Bridget was established on the first floor.

With the Reformation in the 16th century, Lutheranism became the official religion of Sweden. The Order of Bridgettines broke off relations with the Swedish motherland and St. Bridget's house in Rome became a residence for Catholic refugees from Sweden. The material situation of St. Bridget's was rather problematical but conditions improved when the hospice came under the protection of King Sigismund and his sons. It was then stipulated that the business of the hospice was to help in the education of young Swedes for the good and in the interests of the Catholic Church in Sweden. The administrator and protector of the house was to be a Roman cardinal. The hospice's task was to see to the upkeep of three or four young men coming from Sweden, Poland or Hungary, students at the Roman German/Hungarian College. Upon the death of King Johan Kasimir the privileges of the Swedish-Polish kings were passed to Queen Christina, and the hospice's income went to support Swedish Catholic exiles and their descendants. Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Albani was administrator of the house and in 1693 two Bridgettine monks from the monastery of Altomuenster in Bavaria were appointed chaplains of the church. In 1700, Cardinal Albani became Pope Clement XI and he ordered the reconstruction of the house and its church, thereby giving it the form in which we know it today.

When the French revolution infested Rome in 1798-1799, the Bavarian monks left Rome to return to their monastery at Altomuenster. St. Bridget's house and church was now considered to be the property of the reigning Pontiff. In 1828, Pope Leo XII gave the church and hospice to the Canons of Santa Maria in Trastevere, on the condition that needy Swedish Catholics, who in the future might come to Rome, should be assisted from the income of the house. Towards the middle of the 19th century, the house was in much need of repair and the Canons of S. Maria in Trastevere in 1855 contracted the use of the building to the Fathers of the Holy Cross of Le Mans¹⁹. The latter had the necessary repairs carried out and also showed great concern for the rooms of St. Bridget and her daughter, Catherine. The Holy Cross Fathers remained at St. Bridget's until 1892²⁰.

The house at St. Bridget's during the time that it was in the hands of the Holy Cross Fathers disposed of some 40 rooms. The third floor was reserved to the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers. This meant that the locale of the Oblate community would consist of a number of rooms located on the second floor.

How many rooms had Father Fabre provisionally rented to begin with? Which rooms were they in the St. Bridget's house? Were they the same ones he had occupied with Fathers Vincens and Rey, two Oblate travelling companions? How adequate were they for the needs of a Procurator's office and an Oblate community? How much more space did Father Tamburini rent in order to make an Oblate residence viable? Where did the Oblates say their Masses, in the church of St. Bridget or in the oratory that had been once been the three rooms occupied by St. Bridget herself -- where Fathers Fabre, Vincens and Rey had said their daily Mass? How much rent did they pay to stay here? These are so many questions about which available sources are only too silent²¹.

C. The Four Oblates of this Community

The first permanent community of Oblates in Rome consisted of four men: Father Ambroise Tamburini, Procurator to the Holy See and Superior; Brother François Gandolfi; Fathers Charles Dominique Lerond and Jean Corne, who were both student priests.

The first community member to arrive in Rome was Father Ambroise Louis (Aloysius) Tamburini. Father Tamburini was a Corsican, born at Oletta in the diocese of Ajaccio, on July 18, 1821. He entered the Oblate novitiate on December 24, 1842 and made his perpetual oblation on Christmas Day, 1843. He was ordained priest on June 6, 1846.

In his letters, the Founder several times mentions Tamburini during the latter's novitiate and scholasticate days, usually in favorable terms. Already then it was clear that he needed to take good care of his health²².

His first obedience sent him to England where he arrived during the summer of 1846 at Grace-Dieu²³. Five years later he wrote to the Founder and asked to be brought back to Marseilles for reasons that are not clear to us²⁴. The Founder was planning to send him to the major seminary of Fréjus which the Oblates had just accepted to direct.

The Founder, however, quickly adopted another idea: because of Father Tamburini's knowledge of English, he decided to send him to Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka); but Father Tamburini begged to remain in Europe, pleading health reasons, and the Founder reluctantly accepted his viewpoint²⁵.

Father Tamburini was sent to Vico in Corsica, where he worked well in the juniorate²⁶, and began a long career as a parish priest and a very successful preacher of missions and retreats. He also proved to be a talented poet whose verse flowed smoothly, was simple, limpid in vocabulary, and addressed to the ordinary people.

Such is the Oblate who was chosen to be the Congregation's first Procurator to the Holy See, resident in Rome. Why was he and not another Oblate chosen for this position? Nothing in his training or ministry experience would especially qualify him for this task. Nor was he the only Oblate in the Congregation at the time who knew Latin well and spoke Italian. The available documentary sources, such as they are, do not reveal the particular reasons or reasoning process that led the Superior General and his Council to choose Father Tamburini as the "prudent, wise, and skilled" man who would "usefully serve the Congregation" as General Procurator in Rome.

As has already been mentioned above, Father Tamburini arrived in Rome on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1863.

The second member of the Rome community to arrive was Oblate Brother François Gandolfi, the first Oblate Brother to serve in Rome²⁷.

François Gandolfi was born at Bonifacio, Corsica, on July 16, 1824. Already as a young person he was noted for his simple and lively faith, tender piety, a spirit of patience and a faith-filled love for humiliation, work and suffering. This latter sometimes led him to do strange things, also in view of being considered a fool by others. He was somewhat short-sighted and thus not given to much reading. To compensate for this, he learned by heart a whole series of prayers and hymns, some of them quite lengthy (v.g. the Little Office of the B.V. Mary, the Office of the Dead, the seven Penitential Psalms); these he would sing aloud while working in the field and also in the church, even if he was there all alone. His love for God led him to care deeply for his neighbor and, in time of plague, to devote himself to those ill of cholera. He had a sister to whom he was much attached and did all he could to make sure that she could follow her vocation to the religious life. He himself wanted to be a religious but generously sacrificed this desire until he was 31 years old in order to see to the needs of his aged parents.

When he was finally free to do so, he decided to enter the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as a Brother. He began his novitiate at Vico on January 6, 1856, made his first vows there and remained in that community until 1860. He was then transferred to Marseilles where he served in the house of Le Calvaire and at the shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde. Superior General Father Joseph Fabre received his perpetual vows at Montolivet on February 17, 1862. In March of the same year he was sent back to Vico in Corsica and it was here that he received his obedience for Rome sometime between March and September 1863.

He considered his religious vocation as one of the greatest gifts he had received from God and he especially esteemed his status as an Oblate Brother: he said that he preferred it to all the dignities on earth. As a religious, he continued to work hard and in an orderly way. He especially honoured the saints who were revered as models of humility and mortification. In his own mortifications, he often lacked prudence and had to be closely watched by his superiors on this point. He was especially united to Jesus suffering and crucified and in this he wanted to imitate St. Francis of Assisi. As Father Tamburini has testified, "He was always very much in love with the cross. He wore it in his heart as well as on his breast, and always liked to keep it in sight. In his room and in the places where he worked, he put several crosses on the walls so that he could always contemplate it... The sufferings of our Lord and the sorrows of the Bl. Virgin were his favourite devotion. In every letter he wrote he mentioned the cross, Calvary, and the necessity of suffering to enter Heaven. This love for Jesus crucified inspired in him a zeal and a

devotedness that enable him to rise above every difficulty and accept the most difficult tasks in order to be of service to his Brother²⁸.

Brother Gandolfi arrived in Rome shortly after Father Tamburini, but we do not know the exact date²⁹. In Rome, his task was to cook, to look after all the domestic services, and to provide for the house's material needs. As Father Tamburini notes, when Brother Gandolfi was sent to Rome, "what especially consoled him was not so much being in Rome but rather having an opportunity to apply all his zeal to serve the community well. In fact, though all alone and having to take care of all domestic services, he knew how to extend himself and see to all our needs, and that without omitting his spiritual exercises. He even managed to do the latter with the community". In other words, he did in Rome what he had already done as an Oblate at Vico and in Marseilles³⁰.

The sending of Brother Gandolfi to Rome was most likely consequent to a policy decision that had been taken by the Superior General. This policy decision determined the arrival of two more Oblates to make up this Roman community. Sources available to the author are reticent on this point except for the following two indications.

Aimé Martinet, the superior of the scholasticate at Autun, when referring to the 1864-1865 academic year, wrote to Father Fabre: "It was at that time that your Paternity began to send men to Rome in order to take degrees in philosophy, theology and canon law there³¹".

We also read in the General Council Minutes for July 23, 1863:

The first question treated was placing the priests of the last ordination (group). Two of them, Fathers Lerond and Corne were judged fit to follow courses of theology in Rome. Each of them are to be assigned to teaching³².

Oblates had been teaching the sacred sciences in seminaries and the Oblate scholasticate from 1827 onwards, but none of these many professors had been given the opportunity for higher studies to qualify themselves for their task. It would seem that a new policy in this regard had now been adopted and was being implemented: some Oblate priests would be sent to Rome in order to get ecclesiastical degrees in the sacred sciences there and these Oblates would afterwards be assigned to seminary and scholasticate teaching.

The first two Fathers selected as a result of this new policy arrived in Rome around October 20, 1863³³.

Father Charles Dominique Lerond was born at Peltre (Crépy) in the diocese of Metz on October 31, 1859, and made his perpetual Oblation on February 17, 1861, Montolivet, Marseilles: since the Founder was ill, Archbishop Hippolyte Guibert of Tours received his vows. He was ordained priest at Autun on July 5, 1863³⁴.

Father Jean Corne was born at Dompierre in the diocese of Besançon on April 10, 1840. He entered the Oblate novitiate at N.-D. de l'Osier on April 6, 1860, after he had already spent some 18 months in the major seminary of Besançon. Because of his frail health, there was some hesitation in admitting him to vows; because he was such a model novice, however, there was equal reluctance to send him away. He was allowed to stay in the novitiate of Nancy and at the same time follow courses in the Nancy major seminary. As his health improved, he finally made his perpetual oblation at Nancy on August 15, 1862. He was then sent to the scholasticate at Autun where he was ordained priest on June 12, 1863³⁵.

By the end of October 1863, then, the first resident Oblate community in Rome was complete. It consisted of four Oblates: Father Tamburini, General Procurator and Superior, 42 years old; Brother Gandolfi, responsible for the material needs of the house, 39 years of age; and two student Fathers, Lerond (age 26) and Corne (age 23). The latter two were no longer scholastics in first formation; rather, they were Oblate priests taking higher studies as a preparation for a future teaching ministry. Of the four Oblates in this community, two had health problems (Tamburini and Corne), whereas the other two seemed to be robust and in good health. It should not be forgotten that Rome in those days, besides its usual climatic vagaries and hazards, was also an area where malaria was not uncommon.

It is significant that both of these student Fathers saw the studies they were about to undertake as a "mission" that they had received from the Superior General³⁶. Father Tamburini

too considered his post in Rome as a "mission" entrusted to him by the Superior General³⁷.

D. Settling in at St. Bridget's

Father Ambroise Tamburini, Procurator to the Holy See and Superior of the group, had moved in at St. Bridget's on March 19, 1863. His chief aide, Brother François Gandolfi, arrived some time after. There was time enough to explore the possibilities for a more suitable residence elsewhere in the City and, failing to find one, to get things organized at St. Bridget's for a longer than anticipated stay there. The two student priests, Fathers Charles Dominique Lerond and Jean Corne, only arrived in Rome around October 20th.

We know of at least one other location for a permanent Oblate residence in Rome other than St. Bridget's that was investigated, though without result. It was the church of Sts. Ildephonse and Thomas of Villanova plus the monastery attached thereto, located on the Via Sistina. We read in the Minutes of the July 23, 1863 General Council meeting:

The Most Reverend Father General communicated his hope that he would receive in Rome a church that goes by the name of St. Ildephonse. It would be through the Spanish Government which can dispose of it. It is probable that the Sisters of the Holy Family will have enough influence at Madrid to obtain for us this favour³⁸.

Was it Father Tamburini who had inspired this "hope" in the Superior General? That may well be, but he himself does not mention anything at all about this matter in the Régistre de la Procure. Or did this "hope" come from something the Holy Family Sisters initiated in Madrid? That too is possible, though the former hypothesis would seem to be the more probable. In any case, as the "Codex Historicus" of the Roman Scholasticate notes: It was a vain hope that led nowhere³⁹.

E. The Arrival of the Student Priests

We do not know by what route or traveling means (sea or land) Fathers Lerond and Corne traveled to Rome. Still, they themselves do tell us something about their inner sentiments when they arrived and the warm welcome they received:

Leaving the shores of France around the middle of October, we were soon at the gates of the holy City. It was night; Rome was hidden from us. And yet, we could see it: not the material city, the city perceived by one's senses, but the city of the Catholic Church, the City of Christ - we could feel it beating in tune with our hearts. Our reverend Father Procurator welcomed us with open arms⁴⁰.

Arriving by night in an unknown city that as yet had no electricity to light its houses and streets, a city with small, winding, narrow streets quite unlike the Rome of today (very much changed since by the Governments of Italy since 1870 and especially by Mussolini), would indeed be an experience that tests the senses and challenges faith!

Their Roman stay began with the same routine that has been followed by countless others before and after them: a flurry of visits wherein motives of pilgrim devotion and tourist curiosity merge. As they put it:

Our Reverend Father Procurator welcomed us with open arms. Here we would like to pay him a just tribute of gratitude and affection that his devotedness and kindness during our stay require from us. Guided by him, we dedicated the first days to the joys of devotion and the thirst of curiosity. To visit the great basilicas, to pray at the tomb of the Saints, to take an overall look at the City, is that not the first duty of every pilgrim in Rome⁴¹?

This lasted only until November when, as they say, it was "time for classes" and they had "to reopen the books". For they had come to Rome to study, this was, as they saw it, their "mission" in the City of Peter.

F. The Study Life and Program

Besides Father Corne's several letters to the Superior General, Father Joseph Fabre, the Oblate General Archives also contain two lengthy documents that describe the study life and program which Fathers Lerond and Corne lived in Rome from November 1863 to August 1865. One is a 12-page handwritten letter of Father Corne, addressed to the Superior General and dated Rome, August 1865, the entire purpose of which is to give such a description; the other is

an item co-authored by both Fathers Lerond and Corne, dated Autun, September 20, 1865, also addressed to the Superior General, and published in *Missions...* under the title: "Deux années de séjour à Rome"⁴²ⁿ.

Father Lerond and Corne had already completed their scholastic studies and formation. They were no longer Oblate scholastics but student priests. In terms of the sacred sciences, they had received as much or as little as was at that time offered to all Oblate scholastics at Autun in France. Both were slated to be seminary or scholastic professors and they were now being given an opportunity to take higher ecclesiastical studies in Rome as a preparation for a future teaching ministry.

For their study purposes, they had four Roman institutions of higher learning to choose from:

- "La Sapienza" or the University of Rome. This offered courses in civil law, mathematics, medical and other sciences, as well as the sacred sciences. The professors were clergy for the latter and laity for the others. The student body was composed of a vast majority of laymen, with Churchmen a definite minority.
- The Roman College, operated by the Jesuits. It offered courses from the level of secondary education to that of university calibre, which included the humanities, philosophy and theology as well as of Church history, sacred Scripture, philology, plus the basic notions of law (the "institutiones"). Its student body was very large here and also consisted of young layman and Churchmen, with the latter being the vast majority.
- The Roman Seminary, directed by the secular clergy. It was the minor/major seminary of the diocese of Rome and thus, like the Roman College, offered courses from the level of secondary education to that of university calibre (for the latter only in the sacred sciences). It offered a serious course in civil and canon law comparable to those given at "La Sapienza". Its main student body were minor and major seminarians; but outsiders could also follow certain courses.
- The College of St. Thomas, commonly referred to as "La Minerva" because of its location in the City. This was a Dominican institution and specialized in St. Thomas Aquinas. It offered courses in philosophy and theology. Its student body was made up of Dominicans and others, but limited in numbers, so that it usually had only about forty students in all.

The two student priests were complete strangers to the Roman academic world and they had to explore this domain as naive beginners: those who were to come after them would reap the benefits of their pioneering and learn also from their mistakes. As they themselves say:

Since we were on entirely new ground, we had to walk with caution. What were for us the best colleges to attend, the most convenient hours, the most useful subject-matters? Time and experience alone could teach us that⁴³.

At the end of their first year in Rome, Father Jean Corne -- one gets the impression that he functioned on occasion as the scribe for Father Lerond also -- was able to send to the Superior General, at the latter's request, a rather detailed and at times delightful description of the Roman academic scene.

Father Corne begins by describing the subject-matters that are offered in Rome:

Each day there are three classes in theology: one in *de re dogmatica*, another in *de re sacramentaria*, and a third in *de re morali*; and further in several colleges a fourth, *de locis theologicis*, that is, on the Church, on Tradition, on the holy Fathers. The full course of theology lasts for four years. Each day there is also a class in Church history and sacred Scripture, subject-matters which are part of the examinations for the doctorate at the Sapienza.

Philosophy is done in three years: one year for logic, the two others for metaphysics and ethics. Mathematics and physics go hand in hand with philosophy.

For canon law there is one year of "Institutiones"⁴⁴ⁿ, two or three years of "Texts". Civil law goes hand in hand with canon law. At the Roman College there is in all only one year of "Institutiones" of canon law; at the Minerva I believe there is nothing at all.

Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean and Arabic are languages that are professionally taught pretty

well everywhere, especially at the Sapienza. The same is true for archeology...

The Roman College and the Roman Seminary also give all the classes we offer in our minor seminaries in France. I have seen the list of authors taught in the Roman College: all the pagan classical writers are on it, not a single Christian one.

Next, Father Corne talks about the class schedule, the days of school and holidays, the examinations and formal debates:

Classes begin at 8.00 o'clock and go until noon, and again three hours before the Angelus. Each lecture lasts for one hour. At the Sapienza and the Roman College the professors are exact in starting at the established time; at the Seminary they usually exempt themselves from the first quarter of an hour; at the Minerva, for the dogma class that we are following, the professor comes in pretty well when he wants to and his lecture will hardly last more than half an hour.

Vacations begin in the month of September and go until All Saints. The month of August is dedicated to examinations for the year's end or for degrees. At Christmas, Carnival time or Easter there are 1 or two weeks vacation; then there is a day off for each feast of an Apostle, the Bl. Virgin, etc., and when it snows. Thus, if we subtract the days of ordinary or extraordinary vacation, there remain about six months of classes.

Examinations for degrees can be taken when convenient at the Sapienza and the Minerva; at the Roman College one has to follow their courses for two years before being admitted to these tests. The formalities to be carried out are innumerable: testimonies regarding studies, letter from the Bishop, permission from the Congregation of Studies, etc.; further, you have to start planning things far in advance and be resigned to many arrangements and counter-arrangements.

At the end of the course each establishment usually schedules public sessions. In these a student defends a number of theses determined in advance against all the objections that three examiners choose to pit against him. Many attend these sessions: sometimes several Cardinals take part therein. Each person who comes receives a printed sheet listing the theses the student is prepared to defend⁴⁵.

Father Corne's description then proceeds to speak of the professors, who they were and the manner in which they teach their classes:

The professors at the Sapienza are recruited from pretty well everywhere: I have seen there Dominicans for dogma, a Carmelite for moral theology, a Conventual Franciscan for the sacramentary, a Benedictine for Arabic, an Augustinian for Hl. Scripture, and Archbishop for history, a Canon for canon law, an ex-Jesuit for philosophy, a secular priest for Hebrew, a Superior General of the Servites for rhetoric, a Cardinal as Arch-Chancellor. The professors for all the other subjects are laity. The Roman Seminary has no lay teachers: all are ecclesiastics, parish priests, Canons, clergy employed at the Congregations... Finally, at the Roman College and the Minerva the teachers are exclusively members of the religious order concerned. When they are exercising their ministry, the professors must wear their toga and biretta...

The lecture begins and ends with a prayer... The teacher seats himself, wipes his nose, his forehead, arms himself with his spectacles -- preliminaries to which all are faithful -- and then the session is open. The author is generally the professor; too bad for the student, he will during the whole time of the class have to engrave on paper the oracles of the master...

Latin is the tongue used in all teaching, and that is no difficulty either for the teacher or for the student...

Very rarely is the course dictated; the professor himself speaks, but slowly and at the same time with the greatest clarity, so that it is very easy to note down the substance and almost the words of the doctrine being taught...

All the professors excel in their specialty; that is because their whole life is a continual study and directed to the same branch of learning...⁴⁶.

This leads Father Corne to a major assessment and comment:

The quality which, in my view, especially distinguishes the teaching in Rome is the clarity

and ease with which the disciple can grasp the mind of the master. We see that the latter does not seek the vain merit of a display of erudition but rather that of an instruction appropriate to the power of the minds before him. What one would rather expect to find among men who have so much knowledge and who speak to so many persons, I mean a manifestation of self-sufficiency, of being conscious of their worth, of cold solemnity and other such small faults from which perhaps none of our teachers in France are exempt, all that is generally not found in Rome. The master speaks, converses, holds forth with gravity and seriousness, but not as a professor: he does not posture or proclaim like Cicero on the rostra in the Forum. From time to time some bit of humour, a word which relaxes is mixed into the lesson. I admire, I admit, this mixture of dignity and relaxation, this authoritative word of the master and this simple, easy exposition of a friend. To me that seems to be the true model of a master and a man of learning⁴⁷.

This in turn leads Father Corne to make a broader consideration, on that compares what he has observed in France with what he has experienced in Rome:

The Italian has a taste for the intellectual life; perhaps in appearance he applies himself less intensely than the peoples of Northern Europe, but he will persevere longer. His honest mind is very observant and will seek instruction in everything. All the heresiarchs since Pelagius are from the North; you will find none in Italy. That is an astonishing fact and a good testimony to the Italian's rectitude of mind and intellectual docility.

We do not have the Romans' calm reflectiveness, in the field of knowledge, I mean; and thus from true principles we have often drawn strange consequences because we exaggerate them. This is well known here and it is also expressed, though without malice: *Oh, la furia francese*: the French know no limits, for them everything is either all good or all bad, there can be no purgatory for them. If we choose to be ultramontain, we are such more than the Pope himself is; as Gallicans we defend ourselves in good faith by advancing the greatest absurdities. The Frenchman is a military man and he does everything in a military fashion.

And yet they love the French character: who wouldn't love it? But they do not go for this zeal, this warlike ardor whose aim is to turn everything in its path upside down. They also poke fun at our skill at fabricating rights as well as at the ease with which our Bishop's to make laws and inflict censures, at their autocracy, at the great respect they demand for their dignity.

This is because here in Rome the ancient law is indeed held in veneration; if one cannot keep it, one asks for a dispensation, but the law always remain a law that is of itself binding. Here the government of the bishop is very paternal and also according to the prescriptions of the law and in no way authoritarian. Access to dignitaries is most easy and not at all embarrassing and many times I have heard it said it was easier to present oneself to the Pope than to a French bishop.

The masters of knowledge are as easily accessible as are the dignitaries of the Church; to any question whatever they reply with a kindness and simplicity that is a pleasure. Several times we have consulted either our professors or other learned men and always received the same welcome reception...⁴⁸.

Finally, Father Corne gives us some details about the students with whom he and Father Lerond frequented the Roman institutions of higher learning;

The vast majority of the students are Romans and Italians. Among foreigners, France has the largest number, then Belgium, Germany, England or Ireland. Each of these countries has its own college for its own nationals. The two Americas also have their own. Add to this several colleges founded by the Italians and that gives you an idea of the number of these establishments... but these houses are rather houses of education than of instruction: for their classes they pretty well all have to send their students to the Roman College which is like a sea into which every river flows.

The courses of theology and philosophy at the roman College are attended by several hundreds of students; at the Sapienza there are at best a few; the Roman Seminary has especially the students of the diocese of Rome who are destined for the priesthood and besides reside there as seminarians. As for the College of the Dominicans, it is almost deserted: besides the students or the Order, one can scarcely count 25 to 30 students.

The Roman University, it is true, has courses of theology; but they are little frequented. It is more a lay college than an ecclesiastical one. And thus the laity are the greater number there, a flock that is hard to keep in order... The ecclesiastical students there are generally quite edifying and pleasant towards foreigners. As for study, their facility and memory is almost an embarrassment to them! They thrive on beautiful Latin and they already speak it as *emeriti*.

All at the Roman seminary wear the *soutane*, even though some are scarcely out of the cradle, they have the grave and composed exterior of the ecclesiastic: this makes people say that the Roman is born to be a priest just as the Frenchman is born a soldier...⁴⁹.

Father Corne also explains why the Roman College has such a large student body and the Minerva such a limited one. His explanation reveals several details about the context in which he and Father Lerond had to live and study in Rome:

What is the reason for this? I think there are several. As I have already mentioned, most of the Colleges are by their founding bulls bound to send their students to the Roman College; that already makes quite a crowd and the other foreigners who would be free to go wherever it seems best for them to go, are attracted to the Jesuits by the big number and also by the renown, the noise, the influence that here as everywhere else the members of the Company know how to wield so well. Moreover, one must admit that the Dominicans are doing nothing to attract the current: their classroom is poor, small, with bad lighting; the lessons, though well done, are not at fixed hours and last only half an hour; there is none of the pomp and the solemnity which is somewhat fascinating at the Roman College, no solemn examinations of public theses. And then, let us say this among ourselves, the Dominican scholastics reflect too much their own Order which is in need of reform: negligent in their attire and conduct, little assiduous at the lectures and very garrulous, they are a sharp contrast with the scholastics at the Roman College. Furthermore, the Jesuits do all they can to justify the confidence placed in them: their professors are usually superior men; perfect order reigns in the house; everything there is pleasing and attractive...⁵⁰.

Father Corne, however, did have some reservations about the Jesuits also. He tells Father Fabre:

Nevertheless, I admit that I do not agree with everything in their teaching methods. It seems to me that they give too much attention to erudition and controversy and not enough to the substance of doctrine. In their lectures as well as in their books I would like to see a little less of this luxury of research and quotations and a little more exposition and development of doctrinal principles and suitability of dogma instead...⁵¹.

G. The Studies and Degrees the Two Fathers Followed

During first year in Rome (1863-1864), Fathers Lerond and Corne took courses in Canon Law at the Roman Seminary. Because the time of these lectures conflicted with that of the theology lectures at the Roman College, they followed courses at the Minerva in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. In line with the latter, they took courses in the philosophy of St. Thomas at the Sapienza; here too they followed lectures in Church history.

During their second year in Rome (1864-1865), they continued the same studies and courses and added a course in Hebrew at the Sapienza. During the same year they frequented a number of academy sessions or conferences in the City, went to consult privately with several persons well-known for their expertise in doctrine and the situation of the Church, and also familiarized themselves firsthand with the Holy See's Sacred Congregation of the Council.

At the end of this second year they successfully passed the written and oral examinations for the doctorate in Canon Law at the Roman Seminary, in Theology at the Minerva, and Philosophy at the Sapienza⁵².

The two Fathers were very pleased with their experience in the studies in Canon Law. It would seem that this was something quite new in their studies and formation. In their joint report we read:

The study of canon law, something new for us, required a regular course. We became students once again and took our place on the benches of the Roman Seminary... The professor of Law, who taught the same subject at the University gave us one hour in the morning and one

in the evening. Following the text of the Decretals, he explained and commented on them, and, adding laws that are more recent, presented us with a complete body of Church law... None of the dryness or aridity one expects to find in the study of law, in the presentation of the thousand and one laws which complicate things which either explain or contradict each other, and for which the reason at first sight seems to be simply the will of the legislator! The thorns were removed for us by the skillful teaching of the professor; there only remained the flower and the fruit... the contemplation of this ensemble of laws that are so wise and at the same time so full of kindness and firmness, a veritable mosaic not of Michelangelo but of God's Spirit⁵³.

Among their professors, there were two others that they singled out for special mention.

A secular priest, brother of Archbishop Cardinal Pecci of Perugia⁵⁴, has been teaching philosophy for 25 years, is an ardent disciple of St. Thomas and -- so say the experts in this domain -- knows him better than anyone else in this world does, is now teaching at the Sapienza the incomparable doctrine of the Master: he makes people admire the astonishing fecundity of this Master and shows how appealing he is and capable of answering the myriad of systems begotten in our times. We could not fail to leave him out, he was our preference⁵⁵.

The other was their professor in Church history:

For several months of course in Church history also had us as students. How could we forbid ourselves that? The professor was an authority in history, known by Rome and the learned world. Disciple of the famous Cardinal Caprano, and having dedicated his entire life to the study of history, Archbishop Tizzani of Nisibis⁵⁶, presented to his students, alas, only a dozen at the most, the annals of the Church, with a solidity of doctrine and a charm of speech that still delights us. Why is such a man abandoned? Would it not be, as this eminent prelate himself has said, because history does not appear to be useful in this world inasmuch it does not lead to a social position⁵⁷?

Just before they were about to take their examinations at the Sapienza for their doctorate in philosophy, Fathers Lerond and Corne suffered an unexpected surprise when they received a letter from the Superior General, Father Joseph Fabre, telling them not to take this degree for it was a "useless" specialization. Father Corne, who seems to have discovered in Rome just how useful philosophy was, even for missionaries, must have felt deeply upset inside: this assessment of the Superior General went directly against one of his most cherished convictions and yet he did want to remain a truly obedient Oblate son. He wrote to the Superior General to explain why the two of them had gone ahead and taken the examinations for this degree anyway:

Our examinations in philosophy have just ended at the Sapienza. So it is practically from the field of battle that I am sending you this bulletin bearing the news of victory. When we received your last letter in which you told us that, if it was not too late, we should take these examinations, were unfortunately already too paid out, the very next morning already set for the first written examination, the Cardinal Arch-Chancellor had received my letter of request, in a word, all had been arranged as far as the preliminary formalities were concerned. To withdraw at this late moment appeared to be difficult, such was the view of our Reverend Father Superior. Wanting to nevertheless to escape from this examination, since you deem this degree useless, we went to consult the Rector of the University, Father Mura, the General of the Servites, and we simply exposed this matter to him, told him that for special reasons we had received a counter order and asked him if we could honestly not go ahead. He answered us that he could not in truth force us, but he thought it would be to the Congregation's honour to take the examination, given the steps we had already taken. To this view, which was also that of our Superior, must be added a reason which dates from last year. In fact, at the end of the last course, seeing that they did not want to accept our request to take the examination for the degree in theology at the Minerva, and keeping the hope that this would be granted during the coming year, we then approached the same Rector at the Sapienza so that we could take this degree there. Thus, after two requests, if we had given up on the second he could have conceived the idea that we were abusing the University. And so Father Superior told us to go ahead. That is what we have done, somewhat saddened, I admit, to bear the troubles and anxieties that are inseparable to these public examinations, and that to obtain a degree which you regard as useless and about which you will consequently not be glad. So this year will have been one in which we were feeling our

way: the false steps that we have taken will benefit our successors and while we can leave them some examples to follow we leave them some others to avoid⁵⁸.

Father Corne continues in the rest of his letter to describe how their written and oral examinations proceed, a description that is both objective and at the same time imbued with the joy and relief of some who has met a test successfully and is glad that it is over. The two Fathers had still to go through the same ordeal in the realm of Canon Law, however. It was a happy pair of Oblate priests who after two years of intense study received three doctorates:

Soon we received the insignia of the doctorate: on our head they placed the biretta with four ridges, a sign that we were empowered to teach anywhere in the world; on our finger we received the ring, a sign that we were wedded to wisdom; and the one who thus knighted us in this way gave us a brotherly accolade, speaking the while the words Isaac used when he blessed Jacob⁵⁹.

H. The Benefits of Rome and the 1864 Summer Vacations

The available evidence shows that both Fathers Lerond and Corne enjoyed their studies in Rome, deeply appreciated the opportunity that the Oblate Congregation had given them by sending them to do higher studies in the City of the Popes. This opportunity had its price and took its toll on them, as we shall see below, but it also had its fringe benefits. One of these was the many things besides studies that Rome had to offer, and both Fathers took full advantage of them. In their own words:

...Christmas, the period before Lent, Easter each gave us a good week of holidays. Slowly and at length: *chi va piano va lontano*; that is the Italian principle, we, in our *furia francese*, say: swift and short. Who is right? Whatever it may be in theory, we were in Rome, and so we had to live like the Romans do. Besides, if we withheld something from the mind, it was in order to give it to the heart. The majesty of the ceremonies, the papal Masses, some moments spent on two occasions at the feet of Pius IX, a descent into the catacombs -- all that happened at different intervals to move with delight our souls⁶⁰.

Then there were the almost three months of the 1864 summer vacation. The two Fathers' joint report published in *Missions* takes up five whole pages on this topic and is a vivacious, somewhat romantic and sensational account of two young Oblates still in their twenties energetically and enthusiastically making a whirlwind tour and experience of Rome and environs. This narrative must be balanced by another fact that had preceded, namely, the two Fathers had asked the Superior General to spend these vacations in France and had been refused.

We learn about this fact in a direction letter written by Father Corne to the Superior General on December 27, 1864, in which we read:

You did not consider it appropriate to grant the request we addressed to you concerning the place for our vacations, and you did well, Reverend Father, I believe that and did not have any difficulty in believing it from the very first moment. But I seemed to perceive in your very just refusal the pain that our request had caused you. I told myself: our beloved Father has found us to be very demanding, we the privileged children of the Family. I hope that I have been wrong; however, I did feel I should express to you this feeling that I have felt since then and which is still as painful to me. That is, in fact, that which we asked for would indicate sentiments in us that are quite different from those which our mission in Rome should inspire in us if we perceived it as separated it from the circumstances in which we found ourselves then. Completely laid low with fatigue, disgusted with everything and also exhausted in moral and physical forces, I did what sick people do, I looked for some means to change a condition so painful to nature. The thought came of spending the holidays in France and immediately the imagination, taking hold of this idea, gave it colour and impelled me to putting it into effect. It is then that I wrote to you, Reverend Father, for in this matter I must claim the main part of it. When your reply had been scarcely received, everything changed. Impossibilities, fears, terrors disappeared: God had spoken, his grace sweetened everything and even spared me the sacrifice he could have required of me; instead, enable me to find right here real rest and a vigor of health above all that one can hope for...⁶¹.

In this revealing passage we also discover how hard the Roman life was for these two young Fathers, at least for Father Corne who did not enjoy the best of health at any time. It also

betrays what could be called the element of "journalistic intent" that pervades the joint report published in *Missions*, an element that does not falsify its basic content but raise question-marks on its overall mood and tone.

There are other passages in the letters of Father Corne that show that he experienced what many student priests experience when they are immersed in higher studies. It is also an insight into what was lived by some Oblates of the first community in Rome. In the same letter to the Superior General we read:

Casting a retrospective glance at the general state of my soul since our arrival in Rome, I am happy... to note... that tranquility and joy reign there for most of the time. Love for my religious vocation, carrying out the sweetest part of the sacred ministry, and study which is so calm an occupation are surely the cause of this. Worries and real temptations, I have hardly experienced any of these. It seems that the good Lord has not yet weaned me the mild of sweetness and I think I have discovered the reason for this, for I notice with how little vigor I have supported the only suffering that Providence has send my way lest I become too soft, namely, my weak health. Many times, especially this bygone year, I had to spend days without being able to work or work only with great difficulty at best. Seeing before me materials that must absolutely be studied and feeling myself bereft of the strength to undertake such work, fulfilling the greater part of the exercises of the Rule only with difficulty, asking for dispensation for the most demanding ones, all that seemed to me to be a very heavy load to carry...⁶².

In another letter to the Superior General, Father Corne is able to speak about his bouts of illness in a bit of a lighter vein -- he is referring to what happened to him during Holy Week of 1865:

Holy Week at least, since it frees from classes, was to offer me some moments of leisure. There too I did not count on Him who disposes of everything and countermands our plans. During this week, when I was planning to be free and all eyes and ears in imbuing myself with the marvels of Catholic worship at its centre, in this sacred week in which one rejoices even from afar, I had to strictly keep to my cell, confined and as though held under arrest by a will more powerful than mine. A rather wicked and devastating flu forcibly kept me company from Palm Sunday until Easter Day...⁶³.

Christian and priestly piety is quite evident in the way Fathers Lerond spent the months of August, September and October 1864 in Rome. They went out in the mornings to say Mass at the tombs of martyrs: Sts. Lawrence, Agnes and Cecilia are specifically mentioned. They benefited to the full in taking part of the Roman celebrations of major feasts, v.g. St. Ignatius Loyola at the church of the Gesu (July 31), St. Peter in Chains in the church of the same name (August 1), St. Alphonse de Liguori (August 2), St. Dominic at the church of the Minerva (August 8), Our Lady of the Snows in St. Mary Major's (August 5). In their own words:

All these splendid solemnities of which Rome alone holds the secret could not but appeal to us. On other occasions, at the first light of day, we would go to offer in holocaust the King of Martyrs over the bodies of his army's chiefs... How great are Rome's delights for a priest! How kind and strong are the voices Rome speak to his soul, if he is attentive! As Oblates of Mary, we have the much venerated shrines of our august Mother; as missionaries and religious we have the remains of the Apostles, of Ignatius Loyola, Philip Neri, Paul of the Cross, Leonard; as those who want the knowledge of the departed who still speak to us, we have Gregory the Great, Leon, Jerome, Chrysostom⁶⁴.

With the famous Cardinal Pitra as their guide⁶⁵, they visited Holy Cross in Jerusalem and St. Paul's outside the Walls⁶⁶. In all of these and other visits, we see the two priests very eager and moved by the relics of saints kept on the various places; their piety in this regard is spontaneous and of the type that our generation would label as "uncritical", perhaps even "naive".

The two Fathers also assisted at a public Consistory during which Archbishop Henri-Marie-Gaston de Bonnechose of Rouen received the red hat. And on September 18, 1864, they attended the beatification of Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, to whom the Lord had revealed the mysteries of his Sacred Heart, a devotion that was most dear to the Founder and the first generations of Oblates.

Today a visitor to Rome can spend hours viewing ruins of ancient Rome that are the

remains of the old imperial forums, the Roman Forum, Capital Hill and surrounding areas, but nearly all of these things were never seen by Fathers Lerond and Corne: it was only the excavations done under Mussolini that brought most of them to light. Hence it is not surprising that the two Fathers report next to no visiting of this sort. While they did visit the Vatican Museums, they rather went to the environs of Rome as soon as the main summer heat was passed. Thus they went and they also took some walks on the old Via Appia. They also went to Tivoli where they visited the Villa d'Este, Hadrian's Villa, and proceeded as far as Horace's villa further in the mountains.

It was therefore a rather busy three months that they spent as pilgrims and tourists who were trying "study the book of the life of Rome"⁶⁷. All in all, they seemed to have been rather thorough in their pursuit. And yet, one notes that, like Fathers Vincens, Fabre and Rey before them, they too make pious visits of Rome without any reference to Blessed Eugène de Mazenod who had been the first Oblate to pray and live in Rome.

I. Visit of Bishop Henri Faraud

Henri Faraud, O.M.I., Bishop of Anemour and Vicar Apostolic of the districts of Mackenzie and Athabaska in Canada, was on November 30, 1863, ordained to the episcopate at Tours by Archbishop Joseph Hippolyte Guibert, O.M.I. Thereafter, he undertook a tour of France to familiarize the Church there with his far-flung missions and to collect some funds for the same. In May of 1864 he also went to Rome:

In the month of May Bishop Faraud went to Rome *ad limina apostolorum*. He was given a most kind welcome by the Supreme Pontiff. The Holy Father deigned to bless the entire Congregation in Bishop Faraud's person and expressed to the latter in a most polite way the satisfaction he received from the work the Fathers are doing in the missions, wherever these may be...⁶⁸.

Father Tamburini, who had already much to do in regard to Bishop Faraud's appointment to the post of Vicar Apostolic⁶⁹, records this visit of Bishop Faraud to the Oblate community of St. Bridget's in these terms:

In the first days of the month of May of the year 1864, we received at St. Bridget's Bishop Faraud, Bishop of Anemour and Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska and Mackenzie, who had come to Rome to pay his respects to the Holy Father. He stayed some twenty days with us, during which he edified us by narrating the work blessed by God and the sufferings our Fathers endure in those glacial regions of the extreme regions of America⁷⁰.

This visit by an Oblate missionary Bishop from the Canadian Far North must have been a major event for the Oblates at St. Bridget's. This was the first Oblate from elsewhere to visit them, and that alone would have made this a memorable one, one that merited at least a terse entry into the Procurator's records.

We do not know the exact date of Bishop Faraud's arrival in Rome: we know he came in the first days of May and that he stayed with the Oblates at St. Bridget's for twenty days. He himself, in his letter to the Superior General, says that he left Rome during the course of the morning of Trinity Sunday: in 1864, this feast was on May 22nd.

Nor do we know all that he did during this stay here: we have some indication of the business he came to do, but we do not know how much he visited Rome. He was much afflicted with rheumatism in his legs and with digestive and intestinal trouble, and thus he did not have the energy to go gadding about. For his business matters, he would certainly need the services of the General Procurator, Father Tamburini. If he did go out to pray or visit places in the City, did he do so alone or guided by one or other of the Oblates in Rome? We do not know.

We have some concrete details about the audience that he had with Pope Pius IX on this occasion⁷¹. Father Tamburini most probably accompanied him to the Vatican; from the Bishop's description of the audience, however, it is clear that only he was admitted to see the Pope. He shared in writing the details of this audience with several people and it would be more than strange if he did not share the same with the Oblates at St. Bridget's.

In his May 14, 1864 letter to the Superior General, a letter written immediately after the audience, Bishop Faraud wrote:

As you may know... I came to Rome with the idea of asking the Holy See not for a coadjutor but for the power of appointing him myself. The idea seemed childish to me and the request imprudent because never, as far as I know, has anything of this nature ever been granted to the missions in America. After my arrival, I shared with Cardinal Barnabo this key idea that had brought me to Rome. "I don't see anything impossible in that", he said to me. "Make out a report with the reasons for and against, present it to the Holy Father and if they then speak to me about it, I will approve your request".

I drew up the report, and since the Holy Father was ill and not receiving any visitors, I gave up hope of seeing him myself, and so I sent my report to the Cardinal himself. Now, two days later, a messenger from the Holy Father arrived at my door and informed me that the Holy Father wanted to see me, even if he was ill in bed. And so I went⁷².

After having kissed his venerated hand⁷³, I arose and he said to me: "How are you?" "Both well and not well at the same time, Holy Father!" "Well, then," he said to me with an ineffable smile, "You are like the Pope! I am unwell in my legs but my chest is very well. Now," he added, "I want you to be Pope completely: I give you the power to name a bishop; I have already given the order that the bulls are to be drawn up and it will be you who will enter thereon the name of him whom you will know through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit⁷⁴". Then he entered in detail into the reasons I had given him and which the Cardinal had communicated to him, mentioning them one after the other, and he said to me: "Even if you don't have (the use of) your legs, you have at least not lost (the use of) the word, for you ask in such a manner that one can refuse you nothing, and so I grant you everything⁷⁵". Then he asked me about everything concerning our missions and he said, at each narrated instance, moved unto tears: "Deo gratias! mirabilia quae fecit Dominus cum apostolis suis⁷⁶!"

I then spoke to him about our dear Congregation and he said to me: "I have blessed it and I bless it again! Its title (name) constitutes my glory and its sons are Apostles. How can one be an Oblate of Mary Immaculate and not work miracles?"

In the account given in *Missions...* and quoted above, there is an understandable silence about the special powers the Pope granted to Bishop Faraud; it is regrettable, however, that in a publication that was meant to animate the Congregation and to strengthen the family bond between its members, the terse account in *Missions* omits so much background on this audience and the special interest shown and comments made by the Holy Father on the Athabaska-Mackenzie missions and its missionaries. The only thing that is mentioned is the Pope's blessing for the Congregation: even that is truncated and done in routine terms. How good it would have been for all Oblates to know the Pope's comments on the Congregation! But that was not communicated to them. This silence is all the more reprehensible when we consider how the Pope's comments affected Bishop Faraud himself. He writes in his letter to the Superior General:

How happy I would have been if all our Fathers had been able to hear these words coming from the venerable mouth of Pius IX! It seems to me that the fervor of the fervent would have increased and the tepidity of the lukewarm would have been changed into fervour. How painful it is when one considers that we are less good than people think we are! God permits this and Mary Immaculate too so that we can accomplish good enveloped in a halo of holiness that is attributed to us. He also allows this to that, ashamed of our cowardice, we can rush forward in the Lord's battles like giant soldiers of Christ and under the banner of his Mother. Being children of the same Mother with Jesus, who loved the souls of sinners to the point of dying for them, and not follow Him in the same career has always seemed to me to be the lowest depths to which our minds and hearts can sink.

It is more than likely that Bishop Faraud communicated these same sentiments to the Oblates at St. Bridget's. The Pope's prayerful reflection that what Oblate missionaries were doing in Northern Canada was truly comparable to "the marvels that the Lord did with his Apostles", must have reminded Bishop Faraud of what the Founder had written to him on May 28, 1857:

I have read... the admirable account of the La Nativité Mission that you sent me... I felt called... to give thanks to God for his continual help and for the miracles he has designed to work by means of your ministry... In spirit, I pressed you to my heart, touched to the point of tears by all that you have had to suffer to conquer those souls for Jesus Christ... One has to go back to

the first preaching of St. Peter to find anything similar. An apostle like him, sent to proclaim the Good News to those savage nations, the first man to speak to them of God, to bring them to knowledge of Jesus the Saviour, to show them the way that leads to salvation, to give them rebirth in the holy waters of baptism - one can only prostrate oneself before you, so privileged are you among your brothers in the Church of God by reason of the choice that he has made of you to work these miracles⁷⁷.

Bishop Faraud left Rome and the Oblate community at St. Bridget's during the course of the morning of May 22nd, Trinity Sunday. His own mission to Rome had been a total success and he had been a welcome tonic to the Oblates in Rome. One is nevertheless surprised to find no mention of this visit in what remains of the items written thereafter by Fathers Lerond and Corne: was such a mention perhaps edited out of the account of their 2-years stay in Rome published in *Missions...*? Or was this visit momentarily not remembered when they were writing their reports and letters?

In his letter to the Superior General, Bishop Faraud also mentions some precious details about the Oblates in Rome:

Father Tamburini is a very kind man. You were well inspired to send him here. He knows how to make himself loved by all who know him. Msgr. Nardi is actively trying to find us an establishment, a church in Rome: that is a difficult undertaking but I sense that he will succeed. I would have myself spoken about it to the Holy Father if he had not been ill.

Concerning the Pope's illness at this time, Bishop Faraud wrote to his sister on May 26, 1864:

Our Holy Father the Pope is still sick. He was in bed when he received me in audience. His illness is an impoverishment of the blood which is decomposing into vapor. Fortunately this vapor goes to his leg, otherwise we would have the sorrow of having lost him already. And let it be said between ourselves, even though it can be supposed that he will have periods from time to time when he is better, it seems unfortunately only too true that his condition offers no guarantee of a long prolonging of his life. I beg you very much to pray and to have others pray because, while it is true that we are certain of the divine promise that God will not allow us to be orphans for long, it is sure that it would be a great misfortune for the Church in general to lose this illustrious Holy Father at this present time⁷⁸.

Very shortly after he must have received Father Tamburini's letter of ca. May 26th in which he read:

Isn't it amazing, My Lord? The Holy Father really did officiate on the day of Corpus Christi. It is true that he was carried, as the custom is, on a platform *ad hoc*, but he was able to remain for over one hour in a posture that is quite clumsy, wearing the papal vestments and constantly holding the Blessed Sacrament. And what is even more amazing is that everyone was enthused at his face which was radiant with health. Yesterday he received several priests in audience. If Your Lordship had been able to foresee such a change in the Holy Father's health, you would not have been in such a hurry to leave from here⁷⁹.

It is probably this letter from Tamburini which prompted Bishop Faraud to speak a little differently about the Pope's health when he wrote to Archbishop Taché on June 16, 1864: "The Holy Father's health was almost restored when I left Rome and Father Tamburini has written to me since that it is in a very good condition".

J. An Oblate Novice at St. Bridget's

Father Tamburini tells us that, after his Oblate community had arrived and was settled in:

A little while afterwards, Providence gave us a postuland from the diocese of Ajaccio, where he had been in charge of a parish, whom I received as a novice on December 7, 1863, after having fulfilled the formalities prescribed by our Holy Rules and the encyclical of the gloriously reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX⁸⁰.

In Father Tamburini's May 26, 1864 letter to Bishop Faraud we also read: "The community is doing well and joins me in offering to Your Lordship our respect and homage. Only Father Perretti, who was in the grip of a fever for two days in a row; but he is getting better⁸¹".

In the *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticat we find this entry:

In the month of December, a Corsican priest, who had been "in charge of a parish" came and asked to be an Oblate, and he was received as a novice by Reverend Father Tamburini on December 7th. The "register" does not give us his name and so we cannot say whether he persevered or not; but it is certain that he was not authorized to finish his novitiate in Rome⁸².

The above three texts are all that seems to be available in our present-day sources about this novice at St. Bridget's. One is struck by what seems to be a total silence in the correspondence of Fathers Lerond and Corne and also in the unusual way in which Father Tamburini himself refers to this man. He mentions no name when he enters his reception as a novice in the Procurator's register -- it is our own conjecture that the Father Perretti he mentions in his May 26th letter to Bishop Faraud is the name of this novice. Father Tamburini gives no details on the outcome: did this novice persevere and make vows as an Oblate? did he finish his novitiate elsewhere? We don't know.

Father Tamburini does say that he admitted this novice "after having fulfilled the formalities prescribed by our Holy Rules and by the encyclical of the gloriously reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX". This almost reads like a post-factum justification for an exception deed that did not turn out so well.

Father Tamburini says he followed "the formalities prescribed by our Holy Rules": it may well be that he fulfilled all the "formalities", but the 1853 edition of the Oblate Rules did not give him the right to receive novices in the name of the Congregation -- unless he had been officially named novice master by his major superior. Nor was it the practice in the Congregation to have local Superiors accepting novices on their own authority: the Congregation did have juridically constituted novitiates to which candidates were regularly sent -- how then do we explain this apparent novitiate "ad personam" that Father Tamburini was conducting at St. Bridget's? Just what "encyclical" of Pius IX could he be referring to in this connection? The acts of this Pope reveal no such "encyclical". Is Father Tamburini perhaps referring to the January 25, 1848 Decree *Regulari disciplina* of the then Sacred Congregation on the State of Regulars, a decree binding on the reception of novices in Italy and its dependent Islands?

We can suppose that Father Tamburini must have known this "Corsican priest" from Ajaccio, a locality where Father Tamburini had been active as an Oblate prior to his appointment as Procurator in Rome, and that it was because of this acquaintance that Father Perretti -- if that is indeed his name - addressed himself to Father Tamburini. We can further suppose that Father Tamburini, so precise and meticulous and scrupulous in obedience and regular observance, also in this matter acted with the knowledge, consent and enabling powers of his major superior, who, in his case would be the Superior General. Most of the correspondence between Father Tamburini and Fabre, in both directions, seems to have disappeared, and so this matter cannot be further described.

Thus we are left with unanswered questions. Why does Father Tamburini make an entry into his register that is both precise in some details and imprecise in important others? How was it possible to have a novitiate "ad personam" at St. Bridget's when such was not the practice in the Congregation? How was the separation between professed Oblates and the novice maintained in a limited locality such as the rented space in St. Bridget's must have been? Was this poor priest-novice kept in some kind of lonely isolation? And how long did this novitiate last and how did it end? We do not know.

K. Oblate Religious Life and Missionary Spirit at St. Bridget's

Above we have already read Bishop Faraud's assessment of the Oblate community at St. Bridget's and of Father Tamburini, its superior. Another revealing text is from Father Corne's December 27, 1864 letter to the Superior General:

Naturally inclined to be orderly, to regularity, the common life is not difficult for me; rather it responds to a need, to my desire... I try to faithfully observe the Rule: that is for me the ideal of perfection. You have given me the chance to enjoy a good example of holiness according to the Rule. One cannot live even a short while with our Father Superior without being struck by this regularity that is gentle, lovable, but persevering to the point of desperation. Beloved Father, I thank you for having put me in the school of such an example. I would be very happy to be able

to reproduce it in my own religious life...⁸³.

Besides the passage from Father Tamburini's May 26th letter to Bishop Faraud already quoted above, there are other passages in his correspondence with the Bishop that reveal things about Oblate life and attitudes at St. Bridget's:

I thank you, My Lord, for the news that you were good enough to send us. We were very pleased to receive them. Even though we are rather close to the centre of the Congregation⁸⁴, we nevertheless receive very little news, and every time some news does come in, they help us spend some happy recreation periods. There is indeed the book of our annals which brings us lots of news every three months⁸⁵, but even though these news are always interesting, they are often old by several months or even two to three years. The only journal we receive here is *La Civiltà Cattolica* which comes out only twice a month. So we know rather little of what is happening in the Congregation and in the world.

What you tell us about the weakening of your health and the precautions that the doctors advise you to take gives us new motive to pray very specially for you, My Lord. The mission entrusted to you is so important that we cannot but direct to Heaven fervent prayers for your health so that the Vicariate which has just come to birth be not so quickly deprived of your proven zeal and long experience. I have passed on your news to the Good Shepherd Sisters and have recruited them to pray for Your Lordship. As for myself, I often remember you in my poor prayers, at the holy altar and in the visits that I have the happiness to make to the venerable shrines of Rome. I forget none of the Congregation's members, but I especially pray for those in the foreign missions because I regularly perceive them more than the others living in privations and sufferings of every kind.

While I gladly pray for my brothers, I nevertheless feel the need to be helped by the prayers of others. I am in Rome, it is true, at the centre of grace, but I am not yet in Heaven. The number of persons who have sanctified themselves in Rome is great, but there are also some who found perdition here... And so I recommend myself to your fervent prayers, My Lord, and to those of all our Fathers in Athabaska and Mackenzie... The Fathers and Brother François join me in offering you their humble and respectful homage⁸⁶.

I take advantage of this occasion to renew to Your Lordship the expression of my affection and veneration and to offer you at the same time the respectful homage of the Fathers and the Brother who make up the little community of Rome. All of us accompany you, My Lord, with our best wishes and we do not cease praying for Your Lordship's prosperity and for that of the Fathers of the Vicariate Providence has entrusted to you⁸⁷.

In Father Corne's correspondence quoted above there is a good deal of information about the life and activities of the Oblates at St. Bridget's. One more passage from his correspondence deserve to be quoted:

In regard to the future, I am keeping my heart perfectly open to everything: I desire nothing in terms of work I am to do, of where I am destined to be. I had always been keen on the idea of the foreign missions, and now, I confess, this idea still wields the same charm, the same attraction for me. But even if I desire this always, I do not build any hope on it: may the good Lord accept at least my good will and because of it give me some little share in the sufferings of our far away missions.

With no reservation at all, Reverend Father, I bless the happy inspiration that you have had to send us to Rome to draw from its vast reservoirs of knowledge; however, I admit it, I would not like to continue too much longer to pursue studies, to have so many irons in the fire as we are obliged to have at the present time⁸⁸.

Finally, it is good to recall here Father Tamburini's entry into his register which reads:

Since I did not find in the City a suitable locale where we could establish ourselves, I decided, after receiving advice from our Most Reverend Father General, to rent the apartments at St. Bridget's, where we form a separate community, observe our own Rule and have only a slight relationship with the Religious of the Holy Cross⁸⁹.

At the same time, we know that he kept on trying to find another, more suitable location.

The first Oblate community in Rome was located in several rented rooms at St. Bridget's

on the Piazza Farnese. This location was within walking distance to the places Father Tamburini had to frequent as Procurator to the Holy See as well as to the institutions of higher learning that the student Fathers had to attend; it was not so ideal for its community purposes and so Father Tamburini was always on the lookout for another, more suitable location elsewhere in the City. At the same time, Msgr. Francesco Nardi was trying to find for the Oblates a church in the City which they could use both for their own needs and for some specific ministry to people.

The Oblate presence at St. Bridget's lasted from March 19, 1863 to March 31, 1865. During that time the Oblates lived a regular Oblate community life there, while maintaining only minimal relationships with the Religious of Holy Cross in whose building they were located.

The community living was regular, that is, organized according to the Oblate Rule and practice at that time. This would mean that there was a precise program which would have included at least the following daily features: early rising, morning prayer and meditation in common, Mass said individually by each priest in the community, a rapid continental breakfast, the end of which would terminate the period of "grand silence" begun the evening before. After breakfast, the student Fathers would leave for their classes and Father Tamburini and Brother Gandolfi would go about their respective work. Somewhere around 1.00 p.m. there would be particular «examen» and the litanies of the Congregation in common, followed by the "midday" meal with recreation thereafter. By about 3.00 p.m., the student priests were off to further classes and the others resumed their tasks. In the late afternoon or early evening there would be «oraison» in common, the evening meal, the singing of the *Salve Regina*, recreation, then night-prayers in common. From then on began the "grand silence". To be noted in such "regularity" are the elements of program, of community prayer and exercises, of community periods of recreation. Whatever work each had to do, it was done in an atmosphere and observance of silence.

This "regular" program was flexible enough to allow other features too: individual Fathers saying Mass at various holy places in the City, going to Roman shrines and basilicas for personal prayer and devotion, visiting museums, churches, ruins, the catacombs, attending papal liturgies and other religious solemnities celebrated in the City, attending academic and other conferences.

Each of the Oblates in this community clearly knew why he was there, what his task was, and what he was expected to do. Father Tamburini was at the service of the entire Congregation as Procurator to the Holy See and had to deal especially with the Superior General, with Provincials and Oblate Bishops, all of whom sooner or later had business with the Holy See. He was also the local Superior and as such had to serve his community and was answerable to the Superior General and not to any Provincial. At St. Briget's he was considered to be a good Superior by all - something that will not be the common opinion later on⁹⁰.

Brother François Gandolfi was busy doing all the domestic duties in the community (cooking, cleaning, repairing) and most likely also purchasing food and other needed supplies in the markets and business places nearby.

Fathers Charles Lerond and Jean Corne were busy with their studies and related activities, an ample picture of which has already been given above. They knew that they were here for only two years, whereas Father Tamburini and Brother Gandolfi were more permanently assigned in Rome.

Striking is the sense of "mission" and the "missionary spirit" as well as the sense of "belonging to the Congregation" in this community. Father Tamburini sees his work in Rome as Procurator to the Holy See as a "mission" he has received from the Superior General; and the two student Fathers also see their study-stay in Rome as a "mission" entrusted to them by the same authority. While both of these young priests zestfully inserted themselves into the Roman world of higher ecclesiastical studies, it did not diminish their desire to serve the Congregation in its missionary work, either as mission preachers or as missionaries "ad gentes". They appreciate a missionary Bishop's visit, they pray for him and his missionaries, they remain in touch with other missionaries in the Congregation⁹¹, and maintain a prayerful solidarity with all Oblates everywhere. Still, they feel cut off somewhat from the rest of the Congregation: news in letters from other Oblates is shared in community and always appreciated. Like other houses in the Congregation, they too receive *Missions...* and give this Oblate publication the appreciation it

deserves.

Father Joseph Fabre had been elected Superior General on December 5, 1861, and from the very outset realized that his task of holding together the far-flung Oblate Congregation had to be based on a somewhat different basis than that which had served Bishop Eugène de Mazenod. The latter was not only the Superior General but the Founder of the Oblate Congregation and this latter capacity had often served him to steer the Congregation on a regular course. Now the Founder had died and Father Joseph Fabre could succeed him only as Superior General.

It would seem that Father Fabre saw this new basis to consist in the Founder's memory, example and words, and especially in the Oblate Rule, the best expression of the Founder's ideal and one that had the Church's highest approval. Father Fabre thus insisted relentlessly on fidelity to the Oblate Constitutions and Rules: here was the Founder still alive in the midst of the Oblates on earth, here was the Oblate way of life that could not be challenged, here was the rock which would give stability and unity and direction to an expanding and ever more diversified Oblate Congregation.

Thus, in rapid succession, a series of circular letters addressed to all the Oblates emanated from the new Superior General:

- Circ. 10 (December 10, 1861): He presents himself as the new Superior General.
- Circ. 11 (March 21, 1862): 30th Anniversary of the papal approval of the Rules.
- Circ. 12 (April 29, 1862): 1st anniversary of the Founder's death. This circular was accompanied by Circ. 9 which is a detailed description of the Founder's last days and death.
- Circ. 13 (November 21, 1863): A veritable examination of conscience as to how Oblates live the main elements of the Rule.
- Circ. 14 (May 20, 1864): Sends a copy of 2 key circulars and a written work of the Founder on Rules.
- Circ. 15 (March 19, 1865): 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation and the celebration of January 25th.
- Circ. 16 (May 25, 1865): Oblate Manual of Prayer and Ceremonial is promulgated.

This adds up to a total of 102 printed pages in vol. 1 of the collection *Circulaires administratives des Supérieurs Généraux aux Membres de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*. It is to be noted that Circulars ## 13-16 came out during the years that Tamburini, Lerond, Corne and Gandolfi made up the Oblate community in Rome and these missives of the Superior General must surely have been sent also to the house in Rome. Yet, not the faintest echo of them appears in any of documents that survive from this period. It is just not conceivable that these Oblates would ignore these items from their Superior General. How then does one explain the silence?

On December 8, 1864, Pope Pius IX published the encyclical *Quanta cura* to which the *Syllabus errorum* was also attached, two formidable documents that created a veritable furor in Europe and parts of America, a reaction for and against that was every bit as strong as the reaction concerning Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae* has been in our time. Yet, here too we find total silence in the surviving documents that relate to the Oblate community at St. Bridget's.

However, if we consider what we do know about the Oblates at St. Bridget's and their attitudes towards the Holy Father, as well as the fact that they were subscribed to *La Civiltà Cattolica*, we can legitimately infer that they fully accepted and supported the content of these two papal documents.

Like the rest of the Oblate Congregation at this time, the Oblates at St. Bridget's believed profoundly in Rome and in the Pope as indispensable key values in an authentic Christian life and for the Church as a whole. Their faith in Rome as the City of Peter, in the Pope, and in the person of the reigning Supreme Pontiff was solid and unconditional. These Oblates lived these realities as life-giving values. Rome was the Eternal City over which a special Providence was vigilant, a City hallowed by the blood of so many martyrs and the holy existence of so many saints, a City of sacred shrines and tombs, a centre of ecclesiastical learning, the centre from

which the Catholic Church was governed, an artistic, cultural, historical centre beyond compare. It was an apostolic City where Peter still lived in his successor, the Bishop of Rome, who was the very Vicar of Christ on earth. Being in Rome and seeing the Pope was a precious privilege that was the desire of every Oblate, and the Oblates at St. Bridget's enjoyed this privilege as an unexpected endowment.

This staunch and faithful loyalty to the Holy Father extended also to his capacity as the temporal sovereign of Rome. Revealing in this regard is what Father Corne wrote to the Superior General on April 22, 1865:

Last Wednesday Rome celebrated the feast of April 12th which this year was delayed until the octave because of Holy Week, a feast that marks Pius IX's return from Gaeta⁹² and also his miraculous preservation when in 1855 the room collapsed at St. Agnes⁹³. I imagine the public newspapers will speak about this double festivity. But what they will not say and cannot say is the enthusiasm with which it was celebrated. I saw the Holy Father go in the afternoon to St. Agnes outside the Walls and return from there in the midst of a huge crowd lining the route for a league in length. I saw all the houses lit up right to the roofs, all the public places lit up by thousands of lights arranged as an arch of triumph in the ancient style, as a gothic portal, a Roman facade, an oriental portico. I saw the crowds moving about the streets in order to take pleasure in their work, for the costs of this demonstration were paid by pledges from private sources. I saw all this and I could hardly believe my eyes. What must one think of a Sovereign who is so celebrated! And what must one think of a people who know their King so well! I hope that the 100,000 foreigners -- this is the number that is said to have come for Holy Week -- will not leave the City without having understood what this means⁹⁴.

We have now come to the point where the Oblates in Rome will leave St. Bridget's and take up residence on the Via Montanara, 115. That will be the topic of the next article.

Aloysius KEDL, O.M.I.

(To be continued)

- 1 Régistre des Conseils Généraux (abbreviated as RCG henceforth), March 11, 1863.
- 2 REY, Achille, O.M.I., "Notes de Voyages", dans *Missions...*, II(1863), p. 286; FABRE, Joseph, O.M.I., Letter to all the Members of the Congregation, February 17, 1863, dans *Missions...*, II(1863), p. 9.
- 3 REY, Achille, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, pp. 570, 575. "Safe hands" presumably meant an agent who could be relied upon both to deliver it to the Holy See (and not forget and leave it undelivered or even lose it) and then to see that it made its normal way through the Holy See's administrative channels. We are not told who this agent was and so we can only speculate concerning his identity. This agent was most likely Monsignor Francesco Nardi. Born on June 18, 1808 in Vazzola (Veneto), this prelate began his career by teaching biblical exegesis at the diocesan seminary of Ceneda, thereafter in Venice and finally he taught ecclesiastical law and philosophy at the University of Padua, of which University he also became the Rector. Because of his competence, he became Auditor of the Sacred Roman Rota for the Austrian Empire and thus he established himself in Rome in 1850. Later, he became Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Between 1848 and 1862 he published a number of studies in Church law and in defense of papal temporal sovereignty. He died in Rome on March 22, 1877. He was still Auditor of the Rota when Father Fabre conferred with him on December 24 and 27, 1862. How Father Fabre came to know Msgr. Nardi and why he felt it useful to discuss his affairs with this prelate is not clear to this author. Father Rey did note the Monsignor's kindness, good will and readiness to be of service. There is no doubt that from this encounter with Father Fabre onwards, the relationship between the Oblates and Msgr. Nardi remained one of cordial friendship.
- 4 *Régistre de la Procure* (abbreviated RP from henceforth), 1863-1881, 1. Procurator Father Ambroise Tamburini opens this "Régistre" by reproducing Father Fabre's written petition addressed to the Holy Father, to which petition the rescript from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars is penned; PHILIPPOT, Aristide, O.M.I., "Conférence historique sur la Maison de Rome (1825-1931)", in *Missions...*, LXVI(1931), p. 681. A copy of this rescript is contained in the *Codex historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, pp. 54-55.
- 5 RCG, March 11, 1863.
- 6 RCG, January 2, 1863.

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- 7 REY, Achille, O.M.I., "Notes de voyage", in *Missions...*, III(1864), p. 142.
- 8 *RCG*, March 6, 1863.
- 9 *RCG*, March 11, 1863.
- 10 *RCG*, March 6, 1863.
- 11 FABRE, Joseph, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 9.
- 12 Copy in *RP*, 1863-1881, 1-2. The *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, pp. 55-56 has also copied the text.
- 13 *RP*, 1863-1881, p. 3. (Author's translation).
- 14 *RCG*, January 2, 1863.
- 15 *RCG*, January 2, 1863.
- 16 *RCG*, March 6, 1863.
- 17 *RP*, 1863-1881, pp. 3-4. (Author's translation). The *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. 1, p. 57 reads: "The house of the Fathers of Holy Cross was to be for two years and twelve days the residence of the Oblates of M.I. Father Tamburini's efforts to find apartments for rent did not, in fact, succeed and so the Most Reverend Father General had authorized him to settle down provisionally at St.Bridget's and to form a separate little community in this religious house". (Author's translation).
- 18 *Vie Oblate Life*, 49(1990), pp. 51 and 64-65.
- 19 CATTÀ, Etienne and Tony, *Le T.R.P. Basile-Anoine Moreau (1799-1873) et les origines de la Congrégation de Sainte Croix*, Montréal, Fides, 1952: vol. II, pp. 230-270, for a detailed description of the events and motives which resulted in this contract.
- 20 These historical details about the house and church of St. Bridget's in Rome are gleaned from *La Casa e la Chiesa di Santa Brigida nella Storia*, Rome, 1979, a pamphlet distributed by the Bridgettines who are again in possession of this house and church.
- 21 The St. Bridget's archives for the period of 1844-1982 are now part of the General Archives of the Holy Cross Fathers in Rome. They do not include a plan of the St. Bridget's house as it then was. They contain only the slightest references to an Oblate presence at St. Bridget's, all of them in the account books. Thus, an entry for April 29, 1862 notes that 18.60 écus had been paid by Father Vincens and on June 4, 1862, 3.72 écus was reimbursed to him. Two entries for December 25, 1862 (Christmas Day!) mention that the Reverend Oblate Fathers (Fabre, Vincens, Rey) paid 33.46 écus for their lodging and another 3.72 écus for the use of the St. Bridget's oratory. An entry for May 19, 1863 mentions that Father Tamburini had paid 39.00 écus for the lodging owed up to that time. No other mention of the Oblates occurs in the account books; it is true that some of the relevant pages in these books are missing and that there are a good many global entries identified simply as: "Payment for lodging received". It is quite possible that after the May 19, 1863 payment, the Oblates may have made a special arrangement with the Holy Cross administration of the St. Bridget's house.
- 22 *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 39; *Oblate Writings*, X, p. 41: "... I am extremely satisfied with Brother Tamburini..."; *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 43; *Oblate Writings*, X, p. 45; *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 47; *Oblate Writings*, X, p. 49; *Écrits Oblats*, X, pp. 61-62; *Oblate Writings*, X, p. 64; *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 71; *Oblate Writings*, X, pp. 73-74: "I have with me in the country here (the country estage of St-Louis near Marseilles) our good Brother Tamburini who is improving in this place. We do our spiritual exercises together: he is thereafter free to do what he likes while I am in my study. His health is better and better, but I shall probably let him make a short appearance in Corsica, if only to prove that he is not dead, as had been rumored".
- 23 *Écrits Oblats*, III, p. 17; *Oblate Writings*, III, p. 17; *Écrits Oblats*, X, p. 144; *Oblate Writings*, X, p. 152. He was assigned to Grace-Dieu in the General Council meeting of June 22, 1846; the General Council meeting of September 18, 1846, mentioned that he was second assessor, admonitor and bursar in that community; that of April 23, 1847, mentions that all is going well in that community and its apostolate. When Grace-Dieu was given up by the Oblates, he and the other members of the community were transferred to Everingham, in *RCG*, March 24, 1948.
- 24 *Écrits Oblats*, III, p. 84; *Oblate Writings*, III, p. 79: De Mazenod to Casimir Aubert, July 20, 1851) "Father Tamburini has written to ask that I recall him to Marseilles. I think we ought not to refuse him. I am going to reply that he can come unless you interpose a veto. But you must pose no veto because I am going to utilize him here. The Bishop of Fréjus has just put our Congregation in charge of his seminary. Father Tamburini can be very usefully employed there, so let him return without demur and without regret on your part, for I conclude from this letter that he can no longer hold out in England. Do not tell him where I will send him but have him leave as

soon as possible"

- 25 *Écrits Oblats*, IV, pp. 89, 91, 93, 102; *Oblate Writings*, IV, pp. 89, 91, 93, 101. On January 21, 1852, the Founder wrote to Father Etienne Semeria that he was sending "a sizeable contingent" of three Oblates to Ceylon, Father Tamburini among them. On April 16th, however, he wrote: "I have another misfortune to tell you of, and that is that the third missionary whom I was intending to send you, Father Tamburini, has given his health as a reason for not being able to accept my invitation. To make up his mind to go, an obedience according to the Rule would be necessary, and that is something I will never do. To expose you to the risk of regrets and even complaints would be to send you a very bad present". The Founder returns to this topic in his letter of July 2, 1852, to Father Semeria: "I have been able to send you only two missionaries, too few for your needs, but I hope that others will present themselves. This time, it must be said to his shame, Father Tamburini has shown a lack of courage. He even said to me, "If you order me, I will obey". That is not the thing to say to me if one wants to be sent to a distant country".
- 26 On October 2, 1855, Bishop de Mazenod wrote him an interesting letter about his work with the youth there, in *Écrits Oblats*, XI, pp. 284-286; *Oblate Writings*, XI, pp. 284-286. In this letter the Founder also says: "What you tell me of your present attitude pleases me very much. Isn't a person happy when he is assured of doing God's will by conforming himself to what obedience prescribes? The Lord takes it upon himself to reward such fidelity to one of our most sacred commitments".
- 27 The Oblate General Archives contain only the oblation sheet of Brother François Gandolfi. *Notices Nécrologique des Membres de la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, I, pp. 511-517, has an item on him; a summary of his life prior to coming to Rome is in the *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, pp. 58-60.
- 28 *Notices nécrologiques*, I, p. 516. (Author's translation).
- 29 PHILIPPOT, Aristide, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 681.
- 30 *Notices nécrologiques*, Paris, vol. I, 1868, pp. 511, 516. (Author's translation).
- 31 MARTINET, Aimé, O.M.I., reporting on October 12, 1866, on the scholasticate at Autun, in *Missions...*, V(1866), p. 620. (Author's translation).
- 32 *RCG*, July 23, 1863. (Author's translation).
- 33 *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, p. 57. In *Missions...*, II(1863), p. 547, Father J.J. Magnan, O.M.I., the Superior of the Oblate house in Paris, mentions that Father Lerond had passed through Paris at about that time. In their report to the Superior General, written at Autun on September 20, 1865, Fathers Lerond and Corne say that they had left "the shores of France" for Rome "towards the middle of October" 1863, in *Missions...*, 4(1865), p. 616.
- 34 The Oblate General Archives in Rome possess a substantial file as well as other documents on Father Lerond.
- 35 The Oblate General Archives in Rome possess a substantial file as well as other documents on Father Corne. A summary necrological sketch on him has been published in *Missions...*, 53(1919), pp. 364-368.
- 36 "Deux années de séjour à Rome", in *Missions...*, 4(1865), p. 616.
- 37 *RP*, 1863-1881, p. 3.
- 38 *RCG*, July 23, 1863. (Author's translation). The church dedicated to Sts. Ildephonse and Thomas of Villanova was built in 1619 by the Spanish Hermit Fathers who followed the Rule of St. Augustine. It is located on the left side of the Via Sistina as one progresses towards Trinita dei Monti from the Piazza Barbarini.
- 39 *Codex Historicus* of the Roma Scholasticate, vol. I, p. 57.
- 40 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., "Deux années de séjour à Rome", in *Missions...*, IV(1865), pp. 616-617. (Author's translation).
- 41 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 617. (Author's translation).
- 42 *Missions...*, IV(1865), pp. 615-627. The original of this is not in the Oblate General Archives. We do not know whether this published text is the original or an edited version.
- 43 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 617. (Author's translation).
- 44 There was as yet no systematic Code of Canon Law such as was elaborated under Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914) and published by Pope Benedict XV in 1917, a revised edition of which was issued by Pope John Paul II in 1983. There was instead the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, collection of legal documents of all sorts, spanning the centuries and at times in apparent contradiction with each other. This was the "text" that was studied; the "institutions" were the general principles that underlie and flow from the old Roman code of civil law and the Church's legislation. Thus the studies of canon law done by Fathers Lerond and Corne were far more complex than they

are today. Father Tamburini as Procurator to the Holy See likewise had a more difficult task: the Church's law had indeed accumulated but was not codified.

45 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

46 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

47 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

48 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

49 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

50 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

51 J. Corne to J. Fabre, August 1865. (Author's translation).

52 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., "Deux années de séjour à Rome", in *Missions...*, IV(1865), pp. 616-617.

53 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 617. (Author's translation). It should be noted that Michelangelo, a most versatile artist who composed verse, played a musical instrument, excellent in architecture, fresco painting and especially in sculpture, never attempted or did any mosaics!

54 Giuseppe Pecci, brother of Cincenzo Gioacchino Pecci (Cardinal Archbishop of Perugia and the future Pope Leo XIII), had entered the Jesuits in 1824. When the Revolution was master in Rome from 1848-1850 and the Jesuits in Rome had to disperse, Father Giuseppe Pecci remained hidden in Rome. Once the papal sovereignty had been restored, Pecci did not feel inclined to rejoin his Jesuit brothers and left the Company. His brother called him to Perugia where he taught philosophy in the seminary there. In 1861 he became professor of philosophy at the Sapienza. He was deprived of this chair in 1870 when he refused to swear allegiance to the Italian Government. Leo XIII put him in charge of the Vatican Library and Secret Archives and also made him a Cardinal. As such, he had a major part in elaborating and afterwards implementing Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* which promoted the study of Thomism in Catholic institutions of higher learning. In 1889, he rejoined the Jesuits. He died in Rome on February 8, 1890.

55 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, pp. 618-619. (Author's translation).

56 Vincenzo Tizzani was from 1832 a Canon Regular at the Lateran in Rome. In 1838 he became professor of Church history at the Sapienza. In 1839 he was Procurator of his Order and Abbot of St. Agnes on the Via Nomentana. In 1843 he was made Bishop of Terni. In 1847, Pius XI allowed him to resign his See for health reasons and restored him to the Chair of Church history at the Sapienza, and made him Titular Archbishop of Nisibis. He became blind in his old age but continued to study and teach Church history. He was also most useful to Pope Pius IX in a wide range of delicate matters: the Pope esteemed him greatly and valued his help especially during the period of Vatican I. He died in Rome on January 19, 1892.

57 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 619. (Author's translation).

58 J. Corne to J. Fabre, June 11, 1865. (Author's translation).

59 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 627. After the Apostolic Constitutions *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* of Pope Pius XI in 1931 and *Sapientia Christina* of Pope John Paul II in 1979, such a quantity of doctorates would now require at least four times as many years of study!

60 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, pp. 619-620. (Author's translation).

61 J. Corne to J. Fabre, December 27, 1864. (Author's translation).

62 *Ibidem*. (Author's translation).

63 J. Corne to J. Fabre, April 22, 1865. (Author's translation).

64 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, pp. 622-623. (Author's translation).

65 Cardinal Jean-Baptiste Pitra, O.S.B., was born at Champforgeuil in France in 1812. After some years as professor in major seminary of Autun, he entered the monastery of Solesme in 1841. In 1843 he became prior of St-Germain in Paris and there had a great deal to say as to which works were included in the collections of the Latin and Greek Fathers of the Church published by Migne. He was called to Rome in 1858 and travelled in Russia and Austria during 1859-1860. Pope Pius IX made him a Cardinal in 1861 and put him in charge of the Vatican Library. His many published works especially focused on the Fathers of the Church, the Byzantine canonists, Greek Hymns. He died in Rome on February 9, 1889. He was a friend of the Oblates. At this time he guided French ecclesiastics in Rome to certain basilicas of the City.

66 St. Paul's, destroyed by fire in 1823, had just been rebuilt and must have appeared even more dazzling in its newness then than it does today.

67 LEROND, Charles, O.M.I., CORNE, Jean, O.M.I., *Ibidem*, p. 620.

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- 68 *Missions...*, III(1864), p. 445. (Author's translation).
- 69 Henri Faraud file, Oblate General Archives, Rome.
- 70 *Régistre de la Procure* (abbreviated RP from henceforth), 1863-1881, 5 (Author's translation). This same entry is reproduced in the *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, wol. 1, p. 66, where it is introduced as follows: "A pleasant visit came to bring rest to our students from their work" (Author's translation). Whether this visit by an Oblate Bishop who was coming to Rome for the first time and that on business would actually be a rest for the two student Fathers is perhaps an open question.
- 71 Bishop Faraud gives some details about this audience in his letters to: the Superior General, Father Joseph Fabre (May 14, 1864); his sister, a Visitation nun (May 26, 1864); Archbishop Alexandre Taché of St. Boniface (June 16, 1864); Father Florent Vandenberghe (September 4, 1864); to Father Isidore Clut (September 22, 1864). All the passages from these letters that will be quoted in the Author's translation.
- 72 This gives the impression that the Bishop was to follow the messenger and that the audience would take place immediately. It would seem that this audience took place the next day, however. A 4-page formal petition, drawn up in French, in Father Tamburini's hand-writing, and addressed to the Holy Father, bears the date: "Rome, Maison Ste Brigitte, 13 mai 1864". This is most likely the day on which the messenger had come and the audience took place the day after, that is, on May 14th.
- 73 In his June 16, 1864 letter to Archbishop Taché, Bishop Faraud says: "The Supreme Pontiff was quite ill when I went to see him; he was in bed, in the small bedroom in which, forgetting grandeur, the great Pius IX makes himself little and is against a monk".
- 74 In his letter to Archbishop Taché, Bishop Faraud's description reads: "As soon as I had kissed his venerated hand and I had arisen, the pleasant Pontiff said to me with a smile: "How are you?" "Both well and unwell at the same time, Holy Father!" "Then," he rejoined, "you are like the Pope. My leg is unwell, but my chest is very well". "May God keep you a long time yet for us to love, Holy Father!" "I hope so," replied, and then he said to me: "Since you are like the Pope, I want you to be Pope, and I give you all my powers, even that (this is a secret that only you alone must know) of naming bishops. You are too ill to stay in those terrible regions; you will appoint a bishop, you will ordain him and you will withdraw to a less deprived country and work for the missions there". Let us note that Bishop Faraud told in writing this top secret item to the Superior General, to Archbishop Taché, to Father Vandenberghe and to Father Clut!
- 75 In his letter to Father Clut, Bishop Faraud says: "I have to tell you in this regard that I had written a long report and submitted it to Cardinal Barnabo, the Prefect of Propaganda, which he himself presented to the Pope, and -- this is a remarkable thing -- which the Pope kept with him and which he knew almost by heart. He said to me almost immediately after I had come in: "I know all about your matters and your missionaries and am very much edified thereby. I grant you all the powers you are asking for".
- 76 The Latin means: "Thanks be to God! These are the marvels that the Lord accomplished with his apostles!" In his letter to Archbishop Taché, Bishop Faraud says: "This holy and beloved Father next asked me for some details on our missions and from time to time he joined his hands and in tears would say, "Deo gratias! mirabilia quae fecit Dominus cum apostolis suis!" And in his letter to Father Clut, Bishop Faraud writes: "In Rome I received a perfect welcome from the Supreme Pontiff. I saw him when he was in bed and very ill and yet he showed a very special interest not only in what concerns our missions in general but each missionary specifically... I thus went into such details as were apt to bring joy to his father's heart and at each instance he brushed away a tear and said with an ineffable expression of goodness and kindness: "Mirabilia quae fecit Dominus cum apostolis suis".
- 77 E. de Mazenod to H. Faraud, May 28, 1857, in *Écrits Oblats*, II, pp. 154-155; *Oblate Writings*, II, p. 146. The Founder reiterated like sentiments in his December 9, 1859 letter addressed to both Fathers Clut and Faraud at Athabaska, in *Écrits Oblats*, II, p. 231; *Oblate Writings*, II, pp. 218-219. In his January 8, 1847 to Father Ricard in Oregon, his June 28, 1855 letter to the Fathers in Red River, and his April 17, 1860 letter Father's Végreville and Moulin at Ile-à-la-Crosse, Bishop the Mazenod expressed similar ideas, in *Selected Texts Related to the O.M.I. Constitutions and Rules*, # 145, 154, 163.
- 78 We can make some allowances for the Bishop's strange medical ideas: they were current in those days. As to his apprehensions about the Pope's longevity, it should be noted that Pius IX died in 1878, some 14 years later! Nor was he a feeble sick man or invalid during those years!
- 79 Tamburini to Faraud, ca. May 26, 1864. (Author's translation). The feast of Corpus Christi in 1864 was on May 24th.

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- 80 *PR*, 1863-1881, p. 3. (Author's translation).
- 81 Tamburini to Faraud, ca. May 26, 1864. (Author's translation).
- 82 *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, p. 57. (Author's translation).
- 83 J. Corne to J. Fabre, December 27, 1864. (Author's translation).
- 84 Rome is certainly "rather close" to Aix/Marseilles/Paris in comparison to the Bishop's Vicariat of Athabaska-Mackenzie.
- 85 He is referring to *Missions...*, which made its regular appearance from 1862 onwards.
- 86 Tamburini to Faraud, August 20, 1864. (Author's translation).
- 87 Tamburini to Faraud, December 1, 1864. (Author's translation).
- 88 J. Corne to J. Fabre, December 27, 1864. (Author's translation).
- 89 *RP*, 1863-1881, pp. 304.
- 90 In the *Codex Historicus* of the Roman Scholasticate, vol. I, p. 62, we read the following entry: "The lack of documents concerning Reverend Father Tamburini forces us to say nothing about him. What we do know about his Superiorship in Rome is that the first group of students was very satisfied with him; the second, a little less; the third not at all. His virtue seems to have been of the severe type and thus perhaps less acceptable to the younger lot as he advanced in age. He was 42 years old when he came to found the Procuratorship and the House of Studies; and 48 when he passed his post on to Father Corne". (Author's translation).
- 91 In his December 27, 1864 letter to the Superior General, Father Corne is jubilant at having just received a letter from Father Claude Gigoux in Ottawa who had asked him to obtain a quantity of rosaries and medals blessed by the Pope and forward them to Canada.
- 92 When revolutionary forces triumphed in Rome, Pius IX fled on November 24, 1848, to the Kingdom of Naples where he resided at Gaeta. Bishop de Mazenod was personally quite involved in the Pope's exile at Gaeta and in the possibility of his coming to France and staying in Marseilles, in LEFLON, Jean, *Eugène de Mazenod*, III, pp. 249-281. After France under Napoleon III had sent an expeditionary force, the revolutionary movement in Rome was defeated and Pius IX returned to his City on April 12, 1850.
- 93 On April 12, 1855, the Pope in full vestments was in a small room adjacent to the basilica of St. Agnes along with some 130 other persons when the floor collapsed and all fell down a height along with the mortar and other debris. The Pope was completely unhurt, no one was seriously hurt, a small number had a few scratches.
- 94 J. Corne to J. Fabre, April 22, 1865. (Author's translation).

Victor Lelièvre, o.m.i. 1876-1956

SUMMARY - These few notes on Father Lelièvre are a testimony of an Oblate who has known him very well and who owes him his vocation. Father Lelièvre has been a great apostle of the Sacred Heart. His preaching was based on the Gospel. His ministry, mostly centered around Québec City where he founded the retreat house called "Jésus-Ouvrier", has radiated throughout the Province of Québec and elsewhere. He has been the apostle of the working class, specially the poorest one. During 58 years, he never ceased his preaching the love for the Sacred Heart and his effort to establish His reign. All his life has been a stirring answer to the asking of Jesus to the rich youngman: "Leave all and follow me".

I. Ses origines

A. Son pays: la France

Victor Lelièvre était un vrai français, il en avait la fougue, l'esprit, les sautes d'humeur et la facilité de parole. Il fut de résidence à Québec pendant 58 ans, cependant quoiqu'il se soit vite adapté à la vie québécoise, à sa langue et à ses coutumes, il n'a jamais manifesté le désir de la citoyenneté canadienne. Il est demeuré français, avec les belles qualités d'un français.

B. Sa région, la Bretagne

Un vaillant Breton, carré, solide, musclé, d'une vigueur extraordinaire, une santé de fer. Têtu comme les habitants de sa presqu'île, sa ténacité cependant, était tempérée par son grand respect de l'autorité.

Un homme de foi, d'une foi à transporter les montagnes, comme les Bretons de son siècle, à la Botrel.

II. Ses études et ses engagements

Primaires, chez les Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne. Apprenti dans une infirmerie, à Vitry, de 13 ans à 18 ans, ce n'est qu'à ce moment qu'il reçoit ses premières leçons de latin du Vicaire de Notre-Dame de Vitry, M. l'abbé Denoual.

Un cours classique abrégé, deux ans à St-Lazare de Montfort, 1894-1896.

Noviciat à Angers, septembre 1896 suivi des vœux 1897.

Service militaire, un an.

Grand séminaire diocésain de Fréjus, sous la direction des Oblats, quatre ans.

Vœux perpétuels, le 26 juillet 1900.

Prêtre le 24 juin 1902, ordonné par Mgr Arnaud, évêque de Fréjus.

Première messe à Notre-Dame de la Garde, à Marseille le 25 juin 1902.

III. Ses obédiences

Il est nommé tout de suite à la maison d'Angers, où il sera sous la direction du Père Grelaud, un fameux prédicateur du peuple, qui lui mettra en main le livre qui fut le sien pour une vie: l'Évangile. Du Père Lemius, lors d'un pèlerinage à Pontmain en 1893, il avait hérité de la dévotion au Sacré-Coeur, spécialité de cet Oblat.

Quand Victor Lelièvre s'embarquera au Havre le 30 mai 1903, pour gagner le Canada et Québec, il transportera dans ses malles deux clefs efficaces dans tous les pays et capable d'émouvoir et de transformer bien des cœurs: <<Le Père Lemius m'a donné le Sacré-Coeur et le Père Grelaud m'a donné l'Évangile>>.

Obéissance à St-Sauveur de Québec où il arrive le 8 juin 1903

St-Sauveur du temps couvre tout un quartier, 13 à 15,000 âmes entassées dans d'étroites rues non pavées, des bouts de trottoirs en bois, des masures en grand nombre. Des familles nombreuses d'ouvriers souvent en chômage. Des gens de foi sans doute, mais pas tous des anges. Le prêtre occupe une large place dans ces quartiers, où il y a si peu de professionnels. La religion également. L'Église, c'est souvent le théâtre de ces petites gens, en tout cas, à peu près leur seul lieu de réunion. Le presbytère St-Sauveur abrite un curé et neuf vicaires, les uns font, à l'occasion, de la prédication hors paroisse.

Qu'était alors Victor Lelièvre? Un homme de 27 ans, sans beaucoup d'expérience pastorale et sans aucune connaissance du peuple qu'il venait évangéliser. Mais dès les premiers mois, même les premiers jours, l'oeil exercé de son supérieur, le Père Tourangeau, a deviné chez ce jeune prêtre, une âme ardente dans laquelle le Sacré-Coeur a allumé un feu dévorant, une volonté inébranlable de faire connaître son amour, de le faire régner, de lui tailler une place partout où l'oblat passera, à n'importe quel prix.

<<Il m'a envoyé évangéliser les pauvres>>, c'est la devise de la congrégation à laquelle il appartient. <<Il faut qu'il règne>>, c'est le mot d'ordre des dévots du Sacré-Coeur. L'Évangile à la main, le nom de Jésus sur les lèvres et inscrit dans tous ses gestes, Victor est à la conquête de chacun et de tous. Il stimule les fervents, il presse les retardataires, il éveille les endormis, il fait naître partout et sans cesse des apôtres de toutes trempes, des laïcs, bien avant la naissance de l'action catholique. Les âmes, à son contact, sentent le besoin de se donner. C'est un tourbillon d'action, c'est une tornade, c'est un volcan qui ne tarit pas, au contraire, qui grandira sans cesse en puissance, en influence et en réussite, parce que dans le coeur de cet homme, le Coeur de Jésus est là, il nourrit sa foi, il avive sa confiance, il lui insuffle une audace incomparable, un désir toujours plus grand de le faire connaître dans son amour, dans son pardon et dans sa miséricorde. <<Venez à moi vous tous qui peinez>>. Quels furent ses moyens pour atteindre les âmes et réaliser son but de faire régner le Sacré-Coeur? Le Seigneur Dieu a cent moyens différents d'arriver à ses fins.

Le Père Lelièvre fera naître cent moyens souvent originaux, toujours audacieux qui déroutent ses confrères, qui épatent les gens, mais souvent inquiètent ses supérieurs. Il déplace des masses, on verra jusqu'à cent milles hommes à ses fêtes du Sacré-Coeur. Chaque premier vendredi du mois, pendant plus de 25 ans, trois milles ouvriers en sortant des usines, en habit de travail, envahiront l'Église St-Sauveur. Des heures saintes naîtront de onze heures à minuit, dans chaque église de la ville. Des statues du Sacré-Coeur seront placées par les ouvriers eux-mêmes dans toutes les usines et les foyers. Des monuments coûteux du Sacré-Coeur de Montmartre seront installés à la porte des églises, dans les parcs et les lieux publics.

Sa parole n'est jamais éteinte, il parle le jour, la nuit, ici le matin, à cent kilomètres de là, le soir, aux ouvriers, aux carmélites, aux étudiants d'université, aux travailleurs sur leur chantier, aux prisonniers. L'Évangile, rien que l'Évangile, toujours l'Évangile. Il trouve dans ce petit volume <<des choses nouvelles et des choses anciennes>>. Il fait sortir Lazare de son tombeau, <<déliez-le et laissez-le aller>>, ça veut dire arrachez ce pécheur à ses mauvaises habitudes et laissez-le enfin libre comme un enfant de Dieu.

Madeleine est aux pieds de Jésus, elle pleure, elle implore son pardon. Le Seigneur assure que de tout temps, on louera son geste généreux et son adoration. <<Si tu savais le don de Dieu>> dit le Sacré-Coeur du Père Lelièvre à la Samaritaine et le bon Larron reçoit l'assurance du Royaume de Dieu.

Les gens ne se fatiguent pas d'entendre ces récits toujours nouveaux. <<Ce que tu fais au plus petit, c'est à moi, à Jésus, que tu le fais>>.

Oui, parfois, certains ont dit: <<Père Lelièvre, changez de sermon>> sa réponse est celle d'un vrai français: <<Changez de péché, je changerai de sermon>>. Et ce feu a duré 58 ans. Même dans les tous derniers mois de sa vie, il s'arrachait à son lit pour descendre dire un mot aux retraitants à Jésus-Ouvrier. Cette maison de retraite fermée fut peut-être sa plus belle oeuvre. Lui qui pouvait atteindre et émouvoir à la fois des milliers de personnes, a compris, à 50 ans, que pour durer, le travail comme la grâce, devait aller en profondeur. Pour ce faire, il fallait prendre les gens par petit groupe et les garder près de la chaleur du Coeur de Jésus, pendant au

moins deux jours et deux nuits. Ce genre était tout à fait nouveau en 1923, à la naissance de l'oeuvre et davantage pour la classe ouvrière à laquelle le Père s'adressait. Aidé d'un groupe d'apôtres armés d'une générosité à toute épreuve, l'oeuvre est née et s'est maintenue jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Trois groupes de 25 par semaine, au début, puis de 50 et 75. Des hommes d'abord, ensuite des femmes et des couples. Le grand nettoyage, on cherche et on retrouve l'âme dans sa candeur. <<Si vous ne devenez semblables à de petits enfants, vous n'entrerez pas>>. Ces gens là partent heureux, transformés, transfigurés; à leur tour, ils poussent les autres vers la source de pardon et de joie qu'est le Jésus de Jésus-Ouvrier.

Et voilà, hélas! même les hommes extraordinaires ont une fin sur la terre. Une centaine de prêtres sont nés de son zèle à chercher des successeurs. Quelle moisson! Le 16 novembre 1956, dix milles hommes suivaient à pieds le cercueil de Victor Lelièvre, de la maison Jésus-Ouvrier, lieu du décès, à l'église St-Sauveur, une distance de quatre kilomètres, où il avait commencé son ministère le 8 juin 1903.

Victor Lelièvre, o.m.i. un grand amant de l'Évangile et du Coeur infiniment miséricordieux de Jésus. En somme, l'explication de cette vie est simple; quoique pauvre, Victor a répondu affirmativement à la demande de Jésus au jeune riche: <<laisse tout et suis-moi>>. Il a vraiment *tout* laissé et l'a suivi pour vrai.

C'est lui qui m'a amené au sacerdoce et à la congrégation des oblats, j'ai vécu comme étudiant à Jésus-Ouvrier de 1927 à 1929. Et comme prêtre, j'ai travaillé et habité à Jésus-Ouvrier à partir de 1936, j'étais encore là en 1956. Ces lignes sont mon témoignage.

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Ubald VILLENEUVE, o.m.i.

Oblate Evangelization of Youth

SOMMAIRE - La mission spécifique des oblats est d'aller aux pauvres, aux abandonnés, aux démunis, aux sans voix. Parmi ceux-là se trouve une catégorie qu'on est porté à oublier, les jeunes. Une équipe de la province centrale des États-Unis (Oblate Youth Mission Band) s'est penché sur ce problème. Comme le Fondateur l'a fait au début de sa carrière sacerdotale ils ont organisé des retraites pour les jeunes. L'équipe composée de prêtres, d'une religieuse et d'un jeune homme ont rejoint les jeunes à la façon oblate. Soeur Mulkey et le père Schoenhofen nous entretiennent sur leur travail et leurs méthodes dans l'évangélisation de la jeunesse.

Introduction

Eugène de Mazenod evangelized the dock workers, the servant class, the youth of Marseilles in the early 19th century. As Oblates entering the 21st century, we continue to reach out to those who are the most abandoned, powerless and voiceless in our respective cultures. We tend to direct our apostolate to the economically poor, to ethnic minority groups and to those who are geographically isolated. But we often fail to take into account the perceived neglect, the sensed inability to make a difference, or the felt lack of skills to verbalize one's thoughts, emotions, hopes, fears, experiences and frustrations which marginalize young people within most cultures today.

Personally called, some years ago, to evangelize youth in our own particular cultural environment, we soon discovered that young people today form their own significant "sub-culture" within our society. Our response had to be geared to the needs and understanding, the spiritual and psychological maturity level of those to whom we were ministering. But we also knew that our response would be animated by the Oblate charism as it has been experienced in the lives of those involved in the apostolate. Thus we found ourselves proceeding through five steps.

SEEING YOUTH AS A SUB-CULTURE: As is the case with many adults in contemporary western cultures, we often tend to "fear" young people - not because of who or what they are, but because we do not know or understand who or what they are. We do not remember our own youth very well, or, if we do, our youth seems alien compared to what we see and hear from young adolescents today. They speak a different language, one which seems to change almost from day to day, from place to place.

FORMING OUR RESPONSE TO YOUTH AS YOUTH: Rather than wait until the youth have matured and have become adults, an age group with which we usually feel on safer grounds, we are challenged to seek out youth and, in turn, challenge them with the Christian message, based on Gospel values and centuries of lived traditions, in ways and words that make sense to them. We must model not only Jesus Christ, but also His family, the Church, as we call young people to seek out the God-experiences in their own lives and identify them as such.

TAKING PRACTICAL STEPS: The challenge of youth ministry for Oblates and for those who minister with Oblates is how to establish both a horizontal and a vertical relationship with youth. We must learn to reach up to the level of ideals while remaining firmly rooted in the earth of experience; we must reach out for help even while offering assistance, advice and guidance. As youth ministers, we need to exercise the horizontal dynamics of friendship while encouraging respect for the authority that comes from age and experience. While ministry to adults may call upon the one being evangelized to open himself/herself up to the love of God and the salvation offered through the cross of Christ, ministry to youth demands that the one who is evangelizing open himself/herself, to share who and what Jesus Christ and His love are in one's own life - an approach that is obviously more risk-taking.

LIVING THE OBLATE CHARISM IN REGARDS TO THE YOUNG: Not every Oblate is gifted with the qualities required of a competent evangelizer of youth. One's priesthood or vows

are not guarantees of a successful young ministry. Yet our Oblate charism calls us to seek out not only the abandoned and poor, but also the very best of our God-given gifts and talents; not only to challenge the non-believer or the complacent, but also to challenge ourselves to stretch out beyond the ministerial limits we have sometimes erected within our own minds.

BEING ROOTED IN AND INSPIRED BY DE MAZENOD: Eugène de Mazenod wrote, "I will concentrate on the youth. I will make every effort to preserve the young people from the evils that are threatening them¹". The youth of 1992, like the youth of 1813, are threatened; the only change has been the addition of new evils: drugs, AIDS, socially-accepted sexual promiscuity, materialism, etc. The contemporary situation calls us to be as involved and as concerned as was Blessed Eugène for the young people.

I. Youth as a Sub-Culture

Our global society consists of many cultures: national, ethnic, religious, etc. Historically, changes in a culture take place only over a prolonged period of time. Buried within the various cultures are sub-cultures, groups oftentimes identified by means of transitional factors (v.g. income, locale, or age). While one retains his or her national ancestry, traditions and beliefs, one can move from poverty to wealth/from wealth to poverty, from city to countryside/countryside to city, each of which has its own particular sub-culture.

While such transitions are based on either exterior circumstances (v.g. loss of job/income) or interior volition (v.g. choosing to move), movement from one age-based sub-culture to another relies on neither external variables nor internal options. And just as the poor will be always with us, so shall we also always have the youth. The individuals will move on, but the phenomenon of the youth sub-culture will remain as a permanent part of each culture.

While the youth sub-culture could be further broken down into even smaller sub-cultures, based on the nationality, ethnicity, etc. of the youth themselves, for our purposes, we will consider the youth sub-culture as a whole.

Every culture will have its own particular youth sub-culture; and while our experience has been mainly with youth in an American (specifically the United States) setting, the problems and needs we have encountered are probably not significantly different from those encountered in most first-world countries. As Oblates, we approach the youth, even of our own nation and culture, as missionaries to a foreign land, respecting the youth sub-culture as a separate, valuable and contributory element.

The past 200 years have seen an increase in the number of youth, not only due to the growth of the world's population, but also because "adulthood" has been deferred by a significant number of cultures. An "adult" of fifteen years of age was a wage-earner or home-maker, often with a family, in 1813. In 1992, a "youth" of fifteen is a student, living in his/her parents'/parent's home and only beginning to consider choices involving career or selection of a life-long spouse. The adolescent period for one born in 1813 was only a few years if it existed at all; for one born in 1977, adolescence lasts a considerable length of time. This extended time period intensifies the problems which are inherent in the movement from childhood to adulthood.

No longer pampered and privileged as they were when they were children, but not yet respected and trusted as adults, the members of the youth sub-culture seek their identity through acceptance and conformity. Acceptance is sought no longer from one's parent(s) but from one's peers. Conformity to moral, ethical, social and intellectual standards which are in direct opposition to those of adults is seen as the key to unlocking the door to adulthood; thus, paradoxically, youth see rebellion against society as their means of initiation into that same society.

For the purposes of our discussion, let us consider culture/sub-culture as "a set of symbols, stories, myths, and norms for conduct that orient a society or a group cognitively, affectively and behaviorally to the world in which it lives²".

We need to view adolescents as members of such a distinct group. They act and re-act as past of a sub-culture that is distinct from that of their parent(s) as well as from that of the pre-adolescent. The ideas, values and conduct involved are, to a great extent, determined by the

group or by what the individual teenager perceives to be the expected norm set by the group.

More often than not, we fail to look below the surface. We judge the youth as a miniature adult or an overly-large child - though there are exaggerated traits of both present. In trying to force the teenager to fit into one of these patterns, we don't see - and therefore don't appreciate - the good qualities inherently present in them. And what we do see on the surface, because it is not something with which we can presently identify, scares us.

Especially in Western cultures do we see youth using the elements of clothing and ornamentation, hair styles, "coded" language, music and dance styles, pseudo-religions and the occult as signs and symbols of their independent identity. Their stories and myths center on their heroes and heroines, and their standards are often reflections of those espoused by their idols.

Posters of seemingly nightmarish rock singers decorate walls. Upside-down crucifixes are used as jewelry. Songs are filled with explicitly sexual or extremely violent references. A young girl wears the number "666" on her forehead, when asked why, she responds, "I don't know what it means, but I know that it drives my parents wild!" Two-third of Catholic youth say they believe in astrology, while only one-fourth see their faith as an important element in their lives³.

Adolescence brings with it an identity crisis that seems to be a two-edged sword. Youth are unsure as to who they really are and, at the same time, sure that, whoever they may be, that person is limited, inferior, unloved, and, in all probability, unlovable. This being the case, most teenagers seek to merge with a group, thus achieving two goals: gaining acceptance and camouflaging their own personal "worthlessness".

The group's - and, therefore, the individual's - heroes and heroines tend to be the rebellious boat-rockers of one's culture, either national or international in scope (v.g. Chairman Mao, Madonna) or local (v.g. a friend whom parents have warned teenage son/daughter to avoid). The youth identify with the heroes/heroines, vicariously celebrating their achievements and thus finding vindication of their own identity.

Some individuals have no heroes or heroines with whom to identify or, even worse, choose negative, destructive role models (v.g. local gang member, drug abuser, rock star/group whose lyrics are despairing and self-abasing). As a result, some youth end up either trying to escape their poor or even non-existent self-image through alcohol/drugs on a temporary basis or attempting suicide as a permanent solution to their problem.

Much of the poor self-image which many teenagers have is in proportion to their perceived lack of personal intimacy. Adolescents, like anyone else, need to receive love on a personal basis. Parental or familial love can be seen as stifling, restricting independence, and undeserved - "They HAVE to love me; they're my parents". While this, perhaps, is not a new phenomenon among teens, contemporary society in the first world countries has put a new spin on the old condition.

Intimacy is difficult, at best, in a family structure that is on the verge of, going through, or compensating for a separation/divorce. If no model of intimacy between parents exists, the youth may see the parents in a situation that the teens deem to be as bad as, if not worse than, their own. Those upon whom the youth looked, even if only subconsciously, for an example of intimacy now appear to be as equally devoid of the ability to love and to be loved as the youth perceive themselves to be.

In situations such as these, youth often find themselves torn between the parents, as the two compete for their children's attention, affection and approval. Failure to sustain an intimate relationship by their parents may cause the youth to despair of achieving any degree of intimacy or, at least, intimacy on a permanent, committed basis.

Separated/divorced parents, in attempts to win the approval or affection of the youth, sometimes lower restrictions or limits that had been previously imposed. Teenagers experience not only decreased accountability to parents but also can interpret this to mean less concern on the part of the parents for their well-being.

Torn free of most psychological moorings, the youth drift, often throwing overboard what they see as "failed" attributes that had been stressed by their parents. Among these can be

morality and any objective base for decision-making. Existentialism and subjectivism often become the principles which underlie teenager's priorities of values at that point.

And now we have youth who are "in crisis". Vandalism occurs when the youth resent others' having things while their world disintegrates around them. Stealing/shop-lifting can make the youth seem "victorious" in a battle with the adult world. Sexual promiscuity results as youth will use anything, including themselves, to hold on to someone who appears to love or, at least, accept them. Violence, rape and even murder are means of striking back at a society or culture which has not prevented the perceived hopelessness of the teenager's life.

Poor self-identity and the desire for intimacy tend to re-enforce one another. If one is worthless, then one cannot be loved - and if one is not loved, then one is even more worthless than previously thought - and if one is more worthless than previously thought... etc. etc. It is both a vicious circle and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, not all aspects of an "adolescent sub-culture" are problematic. The struggle both for identity and for intimacy, while upsetting for teenagers as well as those around them, provides the occasion for many positive opportunities for growth: emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. The youth who seem the most confused and lost usually are the individuals who are the most likely to gain from any given experience.

Since adolescents who are seeking a self-identity usually avoid any and all identification with parents, those with whom the youth come in contact - including those involved in youth ministry - provide alternative models. Teens who reject certain standards, beliefs, norms, etc. because they are those of their parent(s) may be open to accept those same standards, beliefs, norms, etc. if discovered in someone else. In today's world a person with a strong faith-life can be just as much of an iconoclast as Mao or Madonna.

In terms of intimacy, the adolescents seek a committed and almost unconditional love. While they may fail to find this in the family and among their friends, they still cling to the hope that such a thing is possible in their lives. For this reason, more and more adolescents are at least willing to listen to someone - even someone they know to be in ministry - speak about a God who offers them such a love.

Some adolescent traits, which can seem to be irritable or challenging to adults, are really part of the "charism" of the youth sub-culture, understanding charism to mean a gift from God to an individual or group for the service of the Church and the larger community. Energy, enthusiasm, creativity, generosity, frankness, spontaneity, sense of humor, gregariousness and disdain for any sign of hypocrisy need to be channeled to the service of others but not stifled.

Faced with such a hodge-podge of the adolescents' feelings, emotions, challenges and experiences - all of which are often not expressed verbally, either for fear of misunderstanding and/or condemnation, or for lack of ability to interpret and/or communicate clearly - those who minister to youth need to set aside pre-conceived notions of the adult evangelization process and to approach the youth sub-culture on its own terms.

II. One Oblate Response to Youth

Not every adolescent is open to evangelization at any given moment. And, as has already been stated, not every Oblate is gifted with the skills needed for youth ministry. And even an Oblate who has the required skills will not be able to reach every youth open to hear the Good News.

In 1985 three Oblate priests were assigned to youth retreat ministry. In choosing a name for their program, they reverted back to a former popular Oblate ministry: the Oblate Mission Band, a group which traveled from parish to parish, conducting missions and retreats. To distinguish the "new" mission band from the older ministry, they added the word "Youth" to their title. Thus, the Oblate Youth Mission Band came into existence, its goal being to take teenage evangelization on the road, journeying from parish to parish, from school to school, to conduct retreats for adolescents.

While all of the Oblates shared some of the gifts needed for evangelizing youth, it soon became evident that other gifts were required to reach a greater number of young people. How

could three males both exemplify Church as well as act as role models for the youth they met when half of the youth they encountered on their retreats were female? Very often, the examples taken from their lives and used by the Oblates did not correspond to the experiences or perspectives of the young women retreatants.

Therefore it became necessary, if the evangelization process was to be more fruitful, to add the feminine dimension, both in terms of a woman's viewpoint, and of modeling Church and active feminine involvement within it. A religious sister was sought because she would have both the availability for prolonged trips on the road and her own base of community support. A Franciscan sister, whose personal gifts and attributes complemented those of the priests already on the team and whose community charism was compatible with the Oblates', was added to the team within the first year.

Now, while the team reflected both masculine and feminine approaches, there was a growing awareness among the team members that the youth saw them (all of whom were in the 40's and 50's) as belonging to a different generation (hence, to a different sub-culture) and of being "professional" religious people. That problem solved itself when a young man, who had just completed his second year of college, asked if he might join the team in order to experience Church ministry and as a means to discern further his own personal vocation.

The inclusion of a younger team member brought blessings to as well as stretched the older team members. The young man had an immediate sense of credibility with the youth. Not a priest or seminarian (although he did later enter the Oblate formation program and started his novitiate in 1991), he was "one of them". He spoke directly from his experiences, naturally using the language of the youth themselves. While lacking theological training, he also was free of the theological jargon which sometimes veils and obscures our message. He brought the patented gifts of youth: energy and enthusiasm, initiative and creativity.

The addition of such a person forced the more experienced members of the team to put their method and its philosophical and theological underpinnings into words in order to assist in mentoring him. It was not enough to refer to him as a member of the team; the other members had to involve him in both decision-making and the theological reflection that was an on-going part of the ministry.

Due to the success of the initial year's experience, the team grew to include two college-age members, ideally one male and one female, each year as a normal matter of course.

The three priest who were the original members of the team had all had exposure to the Oblates' charism and approach to youth work from their own teenage years. Thus, the specific way in which youth were approached, which was shared with each new member as he or she joined the team, reflected "Oblate culture", the "symbols, stories, myths and norms of conduct" that are a part of the on-going wisdom tradition that is found within our community.

That approach was, first of all, OBLATE. Blessed Eugène told the poor of Marseilles that they were loveable. And only then could he hold up before them the cross of Christ as a symbol of that love. But de Mazenod had first to love the people before he could tell that they were loveable. If that basic love is absent, no effective ministry can be done. "God loves you" has an impact only if the person being addressed can sense that the speaker is filled with that very love.

As Oblates today, we still preach the love of God for each and every human being. But before preaching that love, we live that love. And once youth begin to experience that they are being loved, then they can grasp the fact that they are truly loved by God and find themselves drawn to Him - to celebrate first the transforming aspect of that love in the forgiveness of sins, and then the unifying perspective in the sharing of Christ's ultimate gift to them, the gift of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Secondly, the approach used is one that is geared specifically to YOUTH. De Mazenod used the patois of the working class in Provence to spread the Good News in his day. In the 1990's we must speak in the language of youth, a language that is more often spoken by the heart than by the mouth. Our ministry must be to, with, by and for young people. The need is to see things through the lens that adolescents have for their own lives, to understand their way of looking at things.

To appreciate fully what youth are saying, Oblates and their collaborators need to listen to the music; to read the body language and facial expressions; to become acquainted with the movies and television programs, the magazines and the video games; to know the pressures that exist in the areas of pre-marital sex, drug and alcohol use/abuse; to appreciate their fears when the topic of conversation turns to AIDS or nuclear holocaust. This is the patois of the youth today.

Ministry for us has always been one that is MISSIONARY. The history of the Oblates is filled with the stories of men who evangelized a given people/area for a time; yet, once the Church was rooted and beginning to bear fruit, the missionary handed on the apostolate to others and moved on to another people, another area.

Those Oblates involved in full-time parish ministry today have little time to spend with their youth, given the declining numbers in personnel. Missionaries must be willing to move into an area, evangelize the youth specifically, and then move on. But it is important that there is someone there who will follow up, who will continue to nourish the tender shoot until the faith has reached full bloom. The Oblates and their collaborators need to make sure that a youth minister, a director of religious education or some other member of the local Church be present with the youth during the process of evangelization as well as later, once the missionaries have moved on.

In order to reach the greatest number of youth and to be a microcosm and model of Church, those involved in ministry to youth today usually work as a BAND or a team. This is not a new approach. In the chapter on the parish missions in the Oblate Rule of 1818, Eugène de Mazenod wrote, "We will never go out alone on missions; we will be at least two together⁴".

In the very early days of the Oblate Congregation, the "team" idea meant more than one Oblate conducting a parish mission or retreat. Today, we need to broaden that idea by including other religious and laity as part of the preaching team. In working with youth, the addition of young people, secure in their faith and inspired by a love of God and their brothers and sisters, is necessary to the evangelizing effort.

Oblates, unlike most other congregations, are not known by one specific term such as "teachers", "foreign missionaries", "health care ministers", or even "preachers". The trait which normally is associated with Oblates is one of "flexibility" or "adaptability". Our Founder has challenged us to leave nothing undared in bringing the saving news of Jesus Christ to those most in need of hearing it. Today's young people require us to seek new ways of bringing the timeless truth of God's love for all.

III. Practical Steps in Youth Evangelization

The first Evangelizer, Jesus Christ, sought to reach the crowds and touch their hearts by means of story-telling. When He spoke with His disciples, He often reflected on His own story, especially in regard to His relationship to the Father. The apostles, disciples and other followers of Jesus, in seeking to carry the Good News to others, spoke and wrote of their own lives and how they had been affected by their experiences with God.

Blessed Eugène often reflected, in both his writings and his homilies, on the Good Friday encounter with God that had such a profound effect upon his life. In our own formation, stories of the Founder and early members of the congregation, as well as those of "characters" within our own provinces, served as edifying and encouraging - and sometimes entertaining - illustrations of Oblates in ministry.

Neither Jesus nor Blessed Eugène felt that a constant repetition of the Ten Commandments or religious regulations would suffice in engaging their hearers to acceptance of and growth in Christian living. "Learning content, analyzing, and asking questions are not sufficient for religious education aimed at developing whole persons, at helping them link faith and life in a way that changes them, and allows them to be touched by God⁵".

As Oblates and collaborators, working with a particular group of youth for only a short time, we are not called upon to provide the basics of Christian/Catholic religious education. Most often these youth have already been presented with the "catechism" of beliefs; but all too often the youth have not been evangelized to the point of accepting and/or experiencing Jesus Christ

and, therefore, have nothing to which they can link the catechesis they receive.

In such a milieu, we need "to help young people explore and identify their life experiences with self, others, God and Church as experiences of the Christian faith in the Roman Catholic tradition. We challenge them to reflect upon these relationships by making our own lives transparent, i.e. by sharing our faith-stories with them"⁶.

There are many books filled with stories, some true and some fancied, that may be more dramatic or emotional than our own personal narratives. But by relating our own experiences, we let the young people know that we respect and honor them to the point of making ourselves vulnerable. For whenever we share who and what we are and how we have reached that point, when we speak not only of our strengths but also of our weaknesses, we give people power over us.

Youth have an innate ability to pick out the truth. A story "borrowed" for our purposes and attributed to ourselves will be detected by them. Using a true story of someone else, even if it is more momentous than one dealing with ourselves, will lack the immediacy and personalness of one of our own.

Above all, it is the telling of our story to them that shows how far we are willing to go out of love for them.

When we look back at our own teenage years, we can recall the moments when we were forced to come to a decision, to undergo metanoia, to make a profound change. Perhaps we decided correctly; perhaps we didn't. Or we can remember those people and events which had a part in the shaping of our lives - sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. And we look back at all these, with the wisdom that the intervening years have brought with them, and see how God did indeed touch our lives, even - and especially - at those moments when we doubted His presence there.

Some of the stories are humorous, and those we can tell with laughter. Others can be serious, and these we may tell with tears. In either case, we need to paint a verbal picture, as Jesus did in the parables, and use our facial expressions and body language to attract and hold the interest of a generation that is geared towards visual stimulation.

Evangelization is a process that brings together the Creator and His creation. The question arises: What do we use as our starting point? Is it better to move from the individual to God or from God to the individual? Especially in youth, we find a great deal of confusion in their imaging of God. How can they find their image of God when they cannot find or appreciate their own image? How can they begin with the concept of a loving God when they do not yet believe that they are loveable? "So the point of departure of evangelization has to be the concrete situation, the very people who are evangelized, with their culture, their human values, their expectations in life"⁷.

When a missionary enters into a non-Christian or pre-evangelized culture, he/she will look for the good that already exists there and which is consistent with Christian values, for Jesus, God's eternal Word, both proceeds and accompanies the evangelizer. Similarly, when approaching the youth sub-culture, we need not only discover but also point out the good that can already be found there. We must, as it were, remove the scales from their eyes and thus allow the young people to see themselves for what they really are: special, unique, one-of-a-kind sons and daughters of a loving divine Parent.

The need for a positive self-identity for the Youth can be met in several ways. One practical way is to affirm each youth by calling the individual by his/her given name. A "Hello, John!" or a "Thanks, Mary" is much more affirming than a generalized "Good morning" or "You in the red jacket" or even the relational "You're James and Jane's kid, aren't you?" Using the youth's name is a sign that the evangelizer values the individuality of the young person, thus affirming that, if the minister has sought to learn and remember the name of the teenager, he/she must be important and worthwhile.

Another method of fostering a better self-image for the youth is to trust them, not just with our stories, but with the material goods we might have or use in our ministry. It would be counter-productive to say, "You are good and worthwhile", and then turn around and tell them, "Don't

touch that radio (tape recorder, Bible, etc.) - that's mine!" The more trust and respect we show youth, the more they realize that we do see the God-given goodness that each possesses.

Above all, one who ministers to youth must have the patience to listen to them. One needs to remember that they are still searching for their own "adult" vocabulary; sometimes their questions or responses will be couched in extremely vague and clumsy terms. One must recall that, when a young person doesn't know something, no question he/she asks is dumb. And no answer from a youth, no matter how erroneous or even objectively heretical it might seem, receives a simple, flat rejection. Rather, the one ministering to the youth works with the young person in exploring his/her reasons for the particular response as well as in examining the answer that the wisdom community (the Church) would give and its basis in reasoning.

At times there will arise the need for the individual correction of a youth. This takes place in private, never in front of the young person's peers. A public calling-to-task is embarrassing for many, and such an event can foster a growth in a negative self-image. A private correction, done in a loving way, can even help the youth's image of self-worth.

Once a youth begins to realize that his/her self-identity is not as bad as was first imagine, then the adolescent can dare to hope that attaining some form and degree of intimacy is within the realm of possibility. There are two major groups with whom youth need to establish relationships, some of which can and hopefully will lead to intimacy: the family of parents (and brothers and sisters) and the family of friends.

Until this time in their lives, most of the youth have felt comfortable in their dependence upon the family unit. As they begin to quest for independence, they no longer value the protective and nurturing role of parent(s) and other relatives. Yet, at the same time, they question whether or not they can successfully merge with their friends/peers, most of whom, in the minds of the youth, seem "superior" to them in many ways, possessing gifts, talents, physical attractiveness, etc. that most youth feel the individually lack.

Since one ministering to youth often has no clue as to how the youth inter-act with their families, and since, even if peer inter-action has been observed and noted, the youth probably will not accept the word of one who is (in their minds) an "outsider" on the subject, a way must be found to enable the youth to confront and understand their relationships with others.

If the direct, evaluative approach is out, then a "back-door" means must be found. One solution is to play a game. This serves several functions: it breaks up routine, it allows for physical activity, it provides a "fun" element, it allows youth to drop their usual defense systems momentarily, and - most importantly - it gives entrance into self-confrontation. It is important that the game be playable by even the least athletic youth in the group. There are countless books of possible choices; a creative youth minister can come up with his/her own that particularly fits the group of the aim of the youth event.

Take as an example a game called "Swamp", designed by the Oblate Youth Mission Band. An un-even number of foot-square blocks of wood (floor tiles, rug squares, etc.) are positioned on the floor-ground, forming a large "X". The area between the top and the bottom of the "X" is declared a swamp, impassable to all involved. The only way to cross the swamp successfully is by stepping on the "rocks" (the blocks of wood/tile/etc.). The youth are divided into two groups. Every member of both groups is given a handicap or weakness: one-fourth are not permitted to speak during the activity; one-fourth are not allowed to use their hands or arms in any way; one-fourth will be blindfolded; the remaining one-fourth will have their ankles tied together making it impossible for them to walk.

Allow both groups two minutes during which all members are still free of handicaps in order to plan their strategy. A signal is given after this time; all involved are now "handicapped" (blindfolds and ankle-ties put in place, etc.). When all have done this, a "Go" signal is given and the two groups attempt to get all of the group's members safely to the other side. (Anyone stepping into the swamp is sent back to start over). Handicaps remain in effect until both groups have successfully made the journey.

Throughout the activity, from the strategy sessions on, the youth minister(s) take(s) notes, jotting down who said what and who did what. These comments will be used non-judgmentally in the debriefing session that follows the "game". [Note: once they understand the

non-judgmental approach, other youth can also be effective as observers and reporters.]

After all materials have been collected and the youth have re-gathered into one large group, the youth minister(s) begin(s) to report back to the participants what was heard and seen. This should be done without using labels such as "Good" or "Bad", "Right" or "Wrong". The one reporting back simply "mirrors", i.e. reflects back to the youth, the words and actions noted.

Usually what has been noted includes the following:

- some people took immediate charge in the strategy sessions
- some were completely oblivious or apathetic to any plans being made
- some took it upon themselves to help those whose vision or mobility was impaired
- some traversed the swamp and then just watched the other members of their group struggling to cross without interacting with them
- some used an opportunity to disrupt the progress of the other team or even of their own
- some broke the rules, either surreptitiously or blatantly
- some blocked members of the other team from using the center block while others waited patiently for the block to be free
- some who had the use of sight and speech shouted directions for their visually handicapped teammates, while others yelled incorrect information to the members of the opposing team
- etc.

Since all of the mirroring was done in a non-judgmental, morally neutral way, no one feels singled out for either praise or blame. At this point the minister elucidates on the similarity between one's behaviour in a game and one's conduct in life. The youth are then called upon to make a judgment on their own individual participation (or lack thereof) in the game just completed. If leaders, what kind of leadership did they exercise: collaborative or authoritarian? If passive by-standers, are they satisfied to relate to others in their lives in such a re-active rather than pro-active fashion? If the completion of the task or winning of the game was more important to some than the other people involved, are they content with placing goals and status above interpersonal relationships in their lives? Are those who served as aides for people with more severe handicaps willing to perform this role in real-life situations? If some were disruptive influences in the game, do they see themselves as desiring to be considered such by friends and family? The youth make their own moral decisions about their style of relating to others and choose either to continue in that behavior or to change their way of acting.

Very often young people have the wrong idea (or no idea at all) of how other people might view them. Nor do they fully comprehend the consequences of their own behavior on others. Besides clarifying these points to a certain degree and affirming the youth by allowing them to make the moral decisions concerning their own actions, this combination of Game = Mirror-to-Life is a non-threatening way of placing Christian-orientated behavioral alternatives before them as a means of repairing deteriorating or of establishing new relationships with others.

Another solution is to allow time throughout the youth event for the young people to speak to and listen to each other. If all the words come from the mouths of those ministering to the youth, those words take on the semblance of Mt. Sinai tablets at best. One means of allowing the youth to interact is occasionally to break them up into small groups of four to eight young people, assigning youth randomly to break up usual "friendship groups".

In such instances, each of the small groups should choose one of their number to serve as spokesperson. Placing the responsibility for naming a small group discussion leader in the youths' own hands could be seen by them as a sign of trust. Usually they will make a good choice. At other times they might deliberately choose the one least suited for the role. It is best not to interfere but to allow their choice to fill that role. Either the person will prove to be a poor spokesperson and thus the group will learn that there are logical consequences to their decision-making (note: the poor spokesperson should be affirmed by the minister in some other way); or

the individual chosen will rise to the occasion, displaying abilities heretofore unseen by the others - as well as the individual himself/herself - and thus gain some degree in self-confidence and self-identity.

Specific goals or questions should be presented to the small groups and the spokespersons told that they are responsible for seeking the contribution of each member of the small group in achieving the goal or in formulating answers. The spokesperson should know, too, that he/she will report back to the entire assembly what the results of his/her small group discussion were.

It is beneficial at the outset to stress three points: first, whatever is said within the small group remain there since confidentiality is important; second, everyone should feel free to participate as fully or as minimally as he/she prefers, and everyone's contribution should be seriously received and listened to respectfully rather than held up as a source of amusement or joke by anyone else in the small group; and third, that when the spokesperson reports back to the entire assembly, specific statements, suggestions or answers should not be attributed to a particular individual by name.

Discussion in small groups, without the intimidating presence of one of the "adults" present, enables the youth to speak about their beliefs, values, commitments, questions, etc., something that they may normally be too afraid or embarrassed to bring up in a conversation with their peers. By having the spokesperson give each one a chance to add to the achievement of the goal or the formulation of an answer, the extroverts can articulate their ideas, helping them define them for themselves, while the introverts are stretched to put their ideas into words in order to share what they may have defined for themselves long before.

Those who are gregarious will feel right at home within any group. Those who tend to be loners will find themselves brought out of their isolation and listened to. Very often the young people will discover themselves engaged in a form of peer ministry without even realizing it. "Ministry means: discovering that we have something to spend and spending it; discovering our talents and gifts and offering them to people and to the world in service and caring; discovering that as human persons we are unique, with immense possibilities for self-giving love for our brothers and sisters; discovering as Christian believers that we have been gifted by God, called to offer those gifts to others; recognizing that what we have been doing all our lives to love and care for others in response to their needs is, in fact, Christian ministry⁸".

Game, mirroring, small group discussion and other practices will not automatically allow the youth to negotiate successfully the developmental passage to intimacy. But the activities, even when experiences in the confines of a one-day event, can serve as a catalyst to help them develop or refine their capacity for intimacy. They can provide an insight that there is for them a doorway to intimacy, that they can open that door, or that they can walk through it - depending upon the stage of development they have reached - and that the same doorway can be either locked or unlocked on their side by their style of inter-relating, v.g. with parents and peers.

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied that it was to love God with all one's heart, soul and mind and to love one's neighbor as oneself. In ministering to youth, we find ourselves re-iterating the words of Christ, but in a reversed format. It is first necessary to help young people love themselves, for if they are not (in their own mind) loveable, then their love is of no value. Once they have come to love themselves, they are able to begin loving others. In beginning to face the two developmental tasks of their adolescence, self-identity and intimacy, the young people also begin to discover God within themselves and others. And the God, who may have been vague, indistinct, even menacing before, now becomes revealed as a loving Friend, even if still vague and indistinct at times.

IV. Oblate Charism Focused on Youth Evangelization

Because youth, as a separate sub-culture, have their particular problems and needs, special gifts and strengths, and ways of looking at things, we must re-focus our Oblate charism when engaged in youth evangelization. What do we, as Oblates, bring with us that can enable us to reach out to contemporary youth in a meaningful way?

Exactly what "Oblate charism" means has been, and no doubt will continue to be, defined

and re-defined. This lack of explicit denotation has been with us since the beginning of the Congregation. Blessed Eugène wrote, "Nothing is contrary to our institute except whatever offends God"⁹. The question is not so much "What is the Oblate charism" as it is "What is the Oblate charism today"?

In his presentation "La formation oblate face aux défis de la mission d'aujourd'hui", published in the Avril/April 1990 edition of *Vie Oblate Life*, Superior General Most Rev. Marcello Zago, O.M.I., set forth, "some essential foundations, which may not be exclusive to us but which, for us, will have a certain nuance and certain points of emphasis"¹⁰ regarding contemporary Oblate formation. We will use those six foundations as means of focusing upon our approach to youth evangelization.

First of all, the Oblate charism calls upon us to have a *radical evangelical approach*, to be an ardent follower of Jesus Christ. To approach youth on a purely humanistic or sociological level is to make ourselves just one of the many adult voices heard, and usually ignored, in the adolescent environment; more importantly, it removes that which is the *sine qua non* of the apostolate - the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In conducting workshops and seminars for those in the youth evangelization/ministry apostolate, we most often hear the question, "What's the most important thing in being a youth worker"? The answer is simple: pray, and pray, and then, pray again. One must have the determination to have a passionate love for Jesus Christ and the openness to allow Him to re-evangelize oneself continually. Unless one spends time with the Lord, the time spent with youth is fruitless. One's own spirituality must continually be deepened through prayer forms both personal and traditional, including those which bring us closer to Mary, the Mother of all children in the Church.

One's interior faith life will carry over into the ministerial activity of bringing Christ to be present in local circumstances. The youth evangelizer's life then serves as witness to the Lord and to Gospel values in both word and deed. In doing so, one ministers as the conscious and willing co-operator with Jesus, not as an unwitting and co-opted instrument in His hands.

In dealing with youth, one expresses his/her own personal prayer life as a response to the experiences of God that one has recognized. The youth are encouraged to seek out and explore their own "God-moments" and invited to make use of prayer to understand, deepen, celebrate and even multiply those moments. And finally, youth need to be brought to a sacramental encounter with that God, especially in Reconciliation and Eucharist. The best principles of liturgical inculturation have to be applied, for one must "bring" the celebration of the sacraments to the youth if the youth are to bring themselves to the celebration of the sacraments.

Secondly, the *sense of mission* is part of today's Oblate charism. It springs from our relationship with and love for Jesus Christ and it carries us to share that with all, especially those who are poor, abandoned, voiceless and powerless. We need to feel the sense of urgency, to find new words and new ways to bring the timeless truths of our God and the richness of our Catholic tradition to all the world - for it is the whole world which has been called to be Church.

The interior attitude of the missionary must be that of one for whom life and mission are interwoven. The needs, values and aspirations of the marginalized - including the youth - must become one's own. Jesus Christ, the Prophet, must become incarnate in today's world in the missionary. Faced with the spiraling complexity of modern cultures, one must find within oneself the creativity, spontaneity, resourcefulness and daring to speak God's word in an increasingly Godless world.

Externally, the missionary strives to liberate people to and for Christ. One carries the Good News to all, regardless of age, wealth, intellect, physical appearance, nationality, etc. In some case, it is the first evangelization that the people hear, the first mention of the name of Jesus Christ. For others, baptized into a faith that has never been personally accepted or that has fallen into a dormant state (conditions youth often find themselves in), it is the animating of re-awakening second evangelization that the missionary needs to bring.

As one approaches youth, it is important to speak in words and terms that are suited to the sub-culture with which one is inter-acting. The good within the sub-culture (v.g. in some of their music and activities) is pointed out and affirmed. Liberation - *from* their sins, guilt, feelings of

inferiority, skepticism towards intimacy, family scars, etc. and *for* acceptance of self, family and friends, and a closeness with Jesus Christ - is offered to them as a redemptive possibility within their own lives.

Next we need to focus the Oblate charism on youth from the point of view of the human and Christian maturity of the one ministering, i.e. *the apostolic man*. Our spiritual and psychological growth brings us to a point of responsibility not just for ourselves but also for others. We ourselves need to be firmly grounded in who we are as children of God and brother/sister to others so that we can accept others (i.e. speak with them, listen to them, understand their thoughts, feelings and emotions) without losing our own identity and be of service to them and to the Kingdom.

One's apostolic ministry not only influences and affects other people, but it also creates the opportunities for one's continuing integral personal development. Living with tension and accepting and loving people whose background and even religious faith differ from one's own are the hair-shirt and the discipline of modern-day asceticism. Bridging gaps in age, beliefs, physical metabolism and cultures stretches one and provides the occasion for growth in the youth minister. The challenges faced in the apostolate bring one closer to sainthood or to the asylum, depending on how open one is to responding to the situations encountered in a Christ-like manner.

The apostolic nature of the minister to youth is evidenced in one's availability and openness to all, especially the weak and the abandoned, the misunderstood and the oppressed. It is seen in one's being firmly rooted in reality, yet able to handle the scepticism and indifference, the anger and the discontent, the distrust and the despair that is sometimes apparent and, at other times, bubbling just below the psychological surface of many adolescents. One will cry with the sorrowful and laugh with the joyful, for one must be for each youth the gift of Jesus' presence.

The hallmarks of youth are vitality, energy and enthusiasm. The one who ministers to them needs to exhibit those traits, too, if not physically, at least and more importantly, spiritually and psychologically. A smile costs nothing, but it will open more doors to the hearts and minds of youth than whatever equipment one can purchase. Remembering that the mind can absorb only what the seat can endure, one needs to balance words and actions, reflection and activity. Breaks in the schedule of any organized youth event provide not only physical stimulation, but they also offer the opportunity for one-on-one chatting which can and often does, at a later time, lead to trusted personal dialoguing/counseling/spiritual direction.

[Most Oblates, when reflecting upon their own personal calls from God, tend to cite a particular Oblate priest or brother who, for them, played a pivotal role in their decision to join the congregation. Most often we were impressed by the zeal, the love, the personal concern of this Oblate as he touched our lives. We saw Christ in him and so chose to follow this model, to see if even someone like ourselves could become more like him... and Him. While the focus and intention of our involvement in youth ministry should not be to secure vocations to our community, if we are truly apostolic in our lives - as human, as priest, as Oblate - then, for those whom the Lord is calling, the invitation is extended].

Fourthly, whether an Oblate lives with others or alone, he is still a *man of communion*, one whose ministry is nourished by a sense of connectedness to others. Community and ministry cannot be isolated, one from the other. If we have never really had a genuine community experience, we will probably not be able to work with others, Oblates or laity, nor be able to animate the ecclesial community. Without dialogue, cooperation, communication and collaboration, no Oblate community - nor any Oblate ministry - can survive. Youth are desperately seeking a connectedness, a relationship; they will not be drawn to one who seemingly lives in psychological or spiritual isolation.

One needs to see life in community and life in the apostolate as two sides of the same coin. It is important to develop within oneself not just the inevitability of working with others, but the desire to share one's ministry and one's self with others. Called to a life of constant conversion, moving from a self-centered to an other-centered spirituality, one learns to exercise openness, loyalty, kindness, understanding, humility and self-sacrifice for one's brothers and sisters. The Oblate community is a charismatic (i.e. possessing charisms, although no one

person has them all) body blessed with specific yet complementary gifts for the sanctification of its members as well as for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

As part of a community, one looks to the New Testament apostolic church (*koinonia*) as the ideal or model to be emulated. One's giftedness by God is not given just for one's own spirituality but for the living out of the scriptural imperatives of loving God and loving one's neighbor as oneself. One seeks to empower others rather than do things solo. Within community, weaknesses as well as strengths are shared so that each gives what the other needs and receives what one lacks. Ministering with the laity is a natural prolongation of an Oblate's traditional way of working in and for the Church.

True to the Oblate tradition of being close to the people, one involved in ministering to youth calls forth the best traits of the young people, including, in some, the talent for leadership. This requires a deep asceticism in letting go of one's own will or way of doing things and permitting God to work through those whom one has empowered. The youth minister exemplifies not the "guru" nor the "peer" approach, but rather the "shepherd in the midst" pattern, one who is both for and of the community - an example the youth hopefully can follow. Thus, youth-to-youth (peer) ministry can be fostered both through youth members of the evangelizing team and through the enabling of those being evangelized to have confidence in their own giftedness and to respond to the challenge of caring for others. One serves as example not just of one who has been evangelized but of one who is an evangelizer. Allowing youth to identify within themselves their God-experiences, to share them with other youth, and to draw inferences for the living out of their individual and societal God-relationships builds up the community of Church.

A fifth aspect of the Oblate charism calls us to *reflection and study*. In our formation as Oblates/ministers/evangelizers, we spent years with scriptural interpretations, moral and dogmatic theological principles and beliefs and liturgical rubrics, along with matters of psychology, sociology and Church history. If our ministry was to be fruitful and effective, we had to be well versed in all of these areas. However, knowledge in these fields did not cease to grow and expand the day we passed our comprehensive exams. Not all learning in these areas is to be found on bookshelves. Much can be found within ourselves as we reflect upon our own experiences of ministry in the light of our ever-maturing faith.

A lapse of on-going study and reflection would cause one's ability to inculturate the Good News into the present milieu to become stagnant. While maintaining the respect for the magisterium of the Church - especially as it resides in the pope and bishops -one must, upon prayer, reflection and study, learn to adapt creatively to the needs of the culture of the Church community in one's specific locale. At the same time, one should stay connected with and have a disposition of listening to the *sensus fidelium* in order to articulate more faithfully the Word of God as being enfolded and expressed today.

While bringing one's knowledge and expertise to a specific ministry, one should not be surprised if that ministry does not, in turn, refine, polish and add to that knowledge and expertise. For example, while a youth's understanding or interpretation of a scriptural passage may not be the same as one learned in books, that understanding or interpretation is valid for that youth and supplies the youth minister with a new way of perceiving God's Word. On the other hand, calling young people to become familiar with the scriptures or inviting them to read Church documents to understand the reasons that impelled the magisterium to reach a certain decision on a contemporary issue can be pointless and even hypocritical - youth can tell whether someone is speaking from the heart or mouthing platitudes - when one doesn't put into personal practice what he/she is saying.

Because the sub-culture to which the youth worker ministers is so rapidly changing, there is more need than ever for one continually to reflect upon the ministry and re-evaluate the means being employed to carry the Good News to those who need to hear it. Awareness of the changes within the youth sub-culture - in areas of language, dress, music, interests and crucial issues - will cause one to seek out new ways of evangelizing young people. Just because something was an effective tool three years ago does not mean it is still effective today. Roman documents which deal with various approaches to evangelizing different cultures and sub-cultures should be re-studied in the light of the youth group with whom one is working. If one is involved in ministering

to youth as part of a "team approaches", he/she should pray, reflect and study not just individually, but also with the other members of that evangelizing team.

Lastly, we look at youth ministry from the point of view of *discernment*. We are required to possess and exercise the aptitude to examine and make decisions concerning our own spiritual growth and that of the youth entrusted to our ministry. We live a life whose limits are defined by the Ten Commandments and the Eight Beatitudes. Much of our life is clearly covered by one or the other; but there are also things that seem to fall somewhere in between the two or even outside of them - and this is where discernment becomes so important. Is this idea, urge, sense of calling, even a restlessness, etc. from the Lord or not? Our anchor is two-fold: our own personal relationship with God as developed through prayer and reflection on our experiences; and the collective wisdom of the Faith Community (another name for tradition) as found within either the evangelizing community (Oblates) or a spiritual director or both.

Through an individual process of prayer and reflection, one must first of all come to a decision about his/her involvement in the area of Youth Ministry. One may have all of the spiritual gifts requisite for the apostolate but lack the physical/psychological dimensions that the ministry calls for. Does one have the physical stamina to push past one's physical limits and be other-centered enough to be open to receive youth at whatever time and place that the young people find best for them? Does one have the patience and endurance to persevere when the young people invariably test and confront adults with whom they are involved? Conversely, one who has the physical/psychological ability should also possess the spiritual gifts which pertain to youth ministry. Does one have the gift of being able to present the paschal Mystery - through evangelization of the Word of God - in a credible way? Is one sure enough of and happy with one's ministerial identity and commitment? These are questions which need discernment in order to be answered.

Externally, the youth minister needs to be available as part of the discernment process for the youth. It is more important to be a sign or an example of one who is able to discern than to become an "infallible" source of wisdom to which the youth can turn for pronouncements as to what they should or should not do. One's goal is not to be one who discerns for the young people but to be one who enables youth to learn how to discern for themselves, to be able to distinguish between what is inspiration and what is temptation. If one trusts the guidance of the Spirit within one's life, then one should also be able to trust that the Spirit is also discernable by the youth in their own lives.

In practical ways, the young minister is there to serve as a sounding board as the young men and women try to discern God's touch within their lives. This can run the gamut from the mundane (v.g. in regards to rock music, one can ask which groups or which lyrics reflect the values of the youth himself/herself as well as the values of Christ) to the sublime (v.g. in regards to one's call from God, one can ask what life style - single, married, religious, cleric, etc. - satisfies both their deepest desires and what they feel the Lord is calling them to). One reminds the youth to expect, look for and follow God's guidance in their lives and yet be willing to be surprised by God when He calls them beyond their ordinary expectations. God speaks to each one differently, in one's own language. He speaks to the head, the heart and/or the gut - the intellectual, the affective, the intuitive - and youth needs to learn to listen for and to recognize that voice in their lives. In doing so, they become people of prayer, ardent followers of Jesus Christ.

V. In the Tradition of Blessed Eugène de Mazenod

Blessed Eugène de Mazenod's ministry reflected both the man himself and the events which had shaped him. When first beginning pastoral ministry, he was asked by Bishop Jauffert of Metz (who at that time was also administrator for the diocese of Aix) what he wished to do. He responded "my ambition was to devote myself to the service of the poor and of the youth¹¹". Perhaps his enthusiasm to reach out to youth was the result of his own experience in being evangelized as a teen-ager.

At the age of twelve, Blessed Eugène found himself uprooted and moved to a foreign land. As Jean Leflon stated, "... everything at that time tended to lower his morale; exile with its change of surroundings and its instability, financial problems plaguing his parents who were

forever at the end of their resources, anxieties casting a gloom over those he loved¹²". The saving grace of his moving to Venice was his association with Don Bartolo Zinelli, the local priest who would have such a tremendous influence not just on Eugène de Mazenod, the teen-ager, but on Eugène de Mazenod, the priest.

Monsignor Milesi (the pastor), Don Bartolo and Blessed Eugène's parents all had concern for the spiritual well-being of the adolescent. However, all were intelligent enough to realize that their will and desire would amount to nothing unless the youth himself freely chose to be fully evangelized and catechized. While it was the adults who set up the "spontaneous" opportunity for the young man to seek Don Bartolo's guidance ("... their gentle hearts inspired them to pull the wool over my eyes¹³", as de Mazenod later wrote), it was left to Blessed Eugène to take the step on his own.

Don Bartolo's time with the Founder was divided into four areas: structured studies, informal discussions, shared recreation and set prayers. In this way was the adolescent de Mazenod evangelized during those years that he himself later referred to as the "decisive period" of his life.

As a young priest, Blessed Eugène saw an urgent need to establish sodalities for the youth. In many ways, their structure was reminiscent of Don Bartolo's program for the young de Mazenod. There was time spent in direct catechesis as well as in prayer together. Some of the religious instruction was done under the guise of games. But above all, de Mazenod saw each youth as a special child of God. "As for the Abbe' [de Mazenod] himself, he showed them the love and affection of a real father...; he treated a cobbler's son as cordially and affectionately as he did the son of a high court official¹⁴".

As we follow the example of Blessed Eugène, seeking out and evangelizing those who are abandoned, marginalized and voiceless in our contemporary world, we cannot neglect youth who often feel as the Founder did as an adolescent, adrift in a world which seemed to lack roots, connections and stability. Directly and through other Oblates, de Mazenod cared for the spiritual welfare of adolescents, not because he saw them as a source of future members of the congregation (though such might have been the case in some instances), but because he saw them as sons and daughters of a loving God, lacking, yet seeking, a deepening relationship with the Christ who had suffered and died for their salvation. He was inventive and creative in establishing approaches which reached the youth, as he had been reached himself by Don Bartolo. "The youth apostolate, especially among the most neglected, will be held in high esteem in the Congregation¹⁵".

The challenge to Oblates around the world today does not differ from that faced by Don Bartolo Zinelli in Venice, by Blessed Eugène in Aix, or by the fledgling religious community in southern France.

Catholic youth are not the Church of the future; they are the Church of the present. And we are called to be present to them: to preach the Good News; to share their laughter and their tears; to let them know that their experiences of life (at home, at school, at play, etc.) are all experiences of their own Paschal Mystery which can for them be redemptive.

Not all youth will respond to the gospel call, but this should not dissuade any of us from accepting the challenge of Blessed Eugène. Even when he began his first sodality in Aix, there were those who refused to open themselves to the message; de Mazenod had to limit his initial association to about twenty because "a certain number of black sheep who had slipped into the fold had to be eliminated¹⁶".

Even if there is but one soul who will be stirred into a search for God by our ministry, then that ministry is fruitful. We have no record of any other youth who was inspired by Don Bartolo to live his/her Christian life to the fullest. All we can do is prepare the ground; it is still Jesus Christ who is the Lord of the Harvest.

It was a decisive period in my life, for it was during that time that a true man of God struck the foundations of faith and piety in my soul which he had prepared beforehand by his skillful direction, aided by the Holy Ghost Whose instrument he was. And upon these same foundations did God, in His mercy, build the edifice of my spiritual life. For I first learned to scorn the vanities of the world and to acquire a taste for the things of God, at the feet of this holy priest¹⁷.

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