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ASSOCIATION OF OBLATE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

WARREN BROWN, OMI

In the first volume of “Oblatio” in 2012, we introduced the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning (AOIHL). We described the history of this group of Oblate educators dedicated to the Oblate mission of education in the Spirit of our Founder, St. Eugene. As explained earlier, the AOIHL is a grass-roots group of Oblates developed in the Spirit of the 2004 General Chapter in Rome. The AOIHL is a network of support for our Oblate ministry of education and all those trained in various fields of expertise. The AOIHL executive includes the presidents or rectors of our Oblate institutes of higher learning and tries to serve as advocates for all Oblates and collaborators involved in the ministry of education and formation throughout the congregation.

For our Founder, the formation to holiness was necessary for each Oblate; as bishop of Marseilles, he worked assiduously for the ideal of the Christian life for all the faithful. Our Founder accepted the ministry of seminary formation as a necessary way to ensure the renewal of the Church in France. At this time, the clergy had been attacked and killed during the French Revolution, and those clergy that remained were poorly educated and formed. St. Eugene believed that all people are called to salvation and holiness. He famously said in the Oblate Constitutions and Rules for the Missionaries of Provence: In our min-
istry toward people, we must strive to «lead people to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and finally, we must help them to become saints.»

This ideal has promoted several very different and unique institutes of higher learning among the Oblate Congregation. Several of these institutes began as seminaries to train Oblates and diocesan clergy. Eventually, they developed to serve other educational needs of the people the Oblates were called to serve, both Christians and non-Christians alike.

The AOIHL includes the following Oblate Institutes:
– Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. (our first and oldest institute)
– Notre Dame University, Cotabato City, Philippines.
– Université De Mazenod, Kinshasa, Congo.
– Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, USA.
– Oblate Scholasticate, Obra/Chair of Missiology, Warsaw, Poland.
– St. Joseph Theological Institute, Cedara, South Africa.
– De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy, Chennai, India.

The AOIHL executive is not a closed group, but it has welcomed other Oblate Institutes of Higher Education as they have developed and grown. Among these, the Maritime Academy of Nusantara in Cilacap, Indonesia, is a recent AOIHL associate member. The Academy was established under the guidance of Fr. Charlie Burrows and was administered recently by Fr. Yohanes Damianus. In an article within this issue of “Oblatio”, Fr. Damianus explains the creative inspiration for this school where young men and women study and train for the merchant industry of the sea.

One of the first decisions of the AOIHL group was to schedule an annual meeting at one of our Oblate institutes. These visits have provided tremendous opportunities for the group to know the work of the Oblates in other contexts and have provided a rich sharing of experiences and knowledge. An essential benefit of the visits has been to develop intercultural professional and personal relationships among our Oblate educators and collaborators. These growing relationships have enabled an expansion of our Oblate missionary endeavors in the field of
educational formation and a sharing of resources, personnel, and creativity. Below is a listing of the sites where the AOIHL has held meetings in the past decade:


On behalf of the AOIHL and the Oblate Congregation, we express gratitude for the creative and untiring efforts of Oblates and Oblate lay collaborators who have served as leaders of the institutes. The following is a list of the Presidents or Rectors of the various institutes since the AOIHL has begun. Please excuse if someone has been overlooked.

Saint Paul University, Ottawa: Dr. Chantal Beauvais;
De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy, Chennai: Frs. Arokiasamy Rayappan and Harry Immanuel;
Notre Dame University, Cotabato: Frs. Eduardo Tanudtanud, Charlie Inzon, and Francis Zabala;
Oblate Institute of Higher Learning, Colombo: Frs. Oswald Firth and Rohan Silva;
Obra Scholasticate/Warsaw Missiology Faculty: Frs. Antoni Bochm, Jósef Wcisło, Sebastian Łuszczyk, Jarosław Różański, Wojciech Kluj, (Fr. Grzegorz Ruránski is our present Obra contact);
Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio: Fr. Ron Rolheiser, Dr. Scott Woodward;
St. Joseph Theological Institute, Cedara: Bp. Sylvester David, Frs. Neil Frank, and Joe Phiri;
Univesité de Mazenod/Institut St. Eugène, Kinshasa: Frs. Baudoin Mubesala, Anaclet Dupar, and Mane Macaire Manimba.

Besides these leaders of the institutes, the AOIHL executive has included two liaison members whose focus is on studying the Oblate congregation and the Oblate charism. These liaisons are the Director of the General Service of Oblate Studies, Fr. Fabio Ciardi, and the Oblate who holds the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Fr. Frank Santucci. They have offered their expertise and support to the AOIHL meetings and network. Since 2017,
the AOIHL meetings have included the annual lecture sponsored by the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies.

One of the more critical projects that the group worked on in the past years was to articulate some commonly held principles for Oblate education at the institutes of higher learning. The Administration and the Oblates at Saint Paul University in 2015 initiated work on this document, and the entire AOIHL group gave their input at an annual meeting. The Oblate Central Government in Rome also gave some suggestions and approved the final product. We will only list here below the titles of the significant principles agreed upon after our joint reflection and sharing. The complete document is available for those who would like to read it. The AOIHL believes that these areas genuinely represent our Oblate charism and vision for our mission in education in the contemporary world. This text is an ongoing project.

“Elements of a Vision for an Oblate Catholic Institution of Higher Learning” 2015

1. Academic Excellence
2. Dialogue with Human Sciences
3. Listening… Signs of the Times
4. Internationality
5. Social Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
6. Formation of Christian Disciples and Leaders
7. Commitment to the Church as Communion
8. Community Life: Source and Goal of Oblate Higher Education
9. Global Solidarity Among Oblate Institutions of Higher Learning
10. Training for Dialogue with Other Religions and Cultures

Before we close this preface, we would like to take a moment to thank especially Dr. Chantal Beauvais, Rectrice of Saint Paul University in Ottawa, and Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, of Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. In distinctive and creative ways, these two long-serving leaders of their institutions have embodied the Oblate charism and made an Oblate mark on their institutions, whether in the actual structures and mission of the individual schools or just in the day-to-day academic life. They have imparted a lasting Oblate ethos through their leadership and deserve special recognition and gratitude.
We hope the reader will enjoy reading these stories about our Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning and how they are following the charism and mission of St. Eugene de Mazenod to bring the good news to the poor and most abandoned in many places around the globe. We thank all of our donors and collaborators for their support, prayers, and charity, without which these institutes would not exist. God bless all, and let us dare to prepare leaders of the community of Jesus Christ for the 21st century and beyond.

Our guideline to Ongoing Formation, from our Oblate Constitutions and Rules: «God is ever at work in the world; his life-giving Word seeks to transform humankind, to build his People. We are instruments of that Word. We have thus to be open and flexible, learning how to respond better to new needs, how to find answers to new questions, discerning all the while the movement of the Spirit who renews the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104: 30)» (C 68).

ASSOCIATION DES INSTITUTS OBLATS D’ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR


Pour notre Fondateur, chaque Oblat devait être formé à la sainteté ; évêque de Marseille, il a travaillé assidûment à l’idéal de la vie chrétienne pour tous les fidèles. Notre Fondateur a accepté le ministère
de la formation dans les séminaires comme un moyen nécessaire pour assurer le renouveau de l’Église en France. Le clergé avait beaucoup souffert pendant la Révolution française ; l’éducation et la formation de ceux qui avaient survécu étaient bien déficientes. Saint Eugène croyait que tous les hommes sont appelés au salut et à la sainteté. On connaît le célèbre passage des Constitutions et Règles des Missionnaires de Provence : « Il est pressant de rendre les hommes raisonnables, puis chrétiens, enfin de les aider à devenir des saints. »

Cet idéal a entraîné la création de plusieurs instituts d’enseignement supérieur très différents au sein de la Congrégation, chacun avec son originalité. Plusieurs ont débuté comme séminaires pour former les Oblats et le clergé diocésain. Par la suite, ils se sont développés pour répondre à d’autres besoins éducatifs des personnes, chrétiens et non-chrétiens, que les Oblats étaient appelés à servir.

L’AOIHL comprend les instituts oblats suivants :
- Université Saint Paul, Ottawa, Canada. (le premier et plus ancien institut)
- Université Notre Dame, Cotabato City, Philippines.
- Université De Mazenod, Kinshasa, Congo.
- École oblate de théologie, San Antonio, États-Unis.
- Scolasticat oblat, Obra / Chaire de missiologie, Varsovie, Pologne.
- Institut théologique St Joseph, Cedara, Afrique du Sud.
- Institut de philosophie De Mazenod, Chennai, Inde.
- Institut oblat d’enseignement supérieur, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

L’exécutif de l’AOIHL n’est pas un groupe fermé, il a accueilli d’autres instituts oblats d’enseignement supérieur au fur et à mesure de leur développement et de leur croissance. Parmi ceux-ci, l’Académie maritime de Nusantara à Cilacap, en Indonésie, est un membre associé récent de l’AOIHL. L’Académie a été établie sous la direction du P. Charlie Burrows et était administrée récemment par le P. Yohanes Damianus. Dans un article de ce numéro d’”Oblatio”, le P. Damianus explique l’inspiration créative de cette école où des jeunes des deux sexes étudient et se forment pour la marine marchande.

Une des premières décisions de l’AOIHL a été de programmer une réunion annuelle dans un des instituts oblats. Ces visites ont fourni au groupe d’excellentes occasions de connaître le travail des Oblats dans
d’autres contextes et ont permis un riche partage d’expériences et de connaissance. Un bénéfice essentiel de ces visites a été de développer des relations interculturelles professionnelles et personnelles parmi les éducateurs oblats et parmi leurs collaborateurs. Ces relations croissant-tes ont permis une expansion de nos efforts missionnaires oblats dans le domaine de la formation éducative et un partage de ressources, de personnel et de créativité.


Au nom de l’AOIHL et de la Congrégation, nous exprimons notre gratitude pour les efforts créatifs et infatigables des Oblats et des collaborateurs laïcs oblats qui ont travaillé comme responsables des instituts. Suit une liste des Présidents ou Recteurs des différents instituts depuis les débuts de l’AOIHL. Veuillez nous excuser si quelqu’un a été oublié.

Université Saint Paul, Ottawa : Dr. Chantal Beauvais;
Institut de philosophie De Mazenod, Chennai : PP. Arokiasamy Rayappan et Harry Immanuel;
Université Notre Dame, Cotabato : PP. Eduardo Tanudtanud, Charlie Inzon et Francis Zabala;
Institut oblat d’enseignement supérieur, Colombo : PP. Oswald Firth et Rohan Silva;
Scolasticat d’Obra / Faculté de Missiologie de Varsovie : PP. Anto-ni Bochm, Jósef Wcisło, Sebastian Łuszczki, Jarosław Różański, Wojciech Kluj, (le P. Grzegorz Ruránski est notre actuel contact Obra),
École oblate de théologie, San Antonio : P. Ron Rolheiser, Dr. Scott Woodward;
Institut théologique St Joseph, Cedara : P. Sylvester David, PP. Neil Frank, et Joe Phiri;
Université de Mazenod/ Institut St. Eugène, Kinshasa : PP. Bau-douin Mubesala, Anaclet Dupar et Mane Mâcaire Manimba.
Outre ces responsables d’instituts, l’exécutif comprend deux membres liaison avec le projet d’étudier la Congrégation oblate et le charisme oblat. Ces membres liaison sont le directeur du Service général des études oblates, le P. Fabio Ciardi, et l’Oblat qui tient la Chaire Kusenberger d’études oblates à l’École oblate de théologie de San Antonio, le P. Frank Santucci. Ils ont apporté leur expertise et leur soutien aux réunions et au réseau de l’AOIHL. Depuis 2017, la conférence annuelle parrainée par la Chaire Kusenberger d’études oblates est au programme des réunions de l’AOIHL.

L’un des projets les plus critiques sur lequel le groupe a travaillé ces dernières années a été de formuler quelques principes communs pour l’éducation oblate dans les instituts d’enseignement supérieur. L’administration et les Oblats de l’Université Saint Paul ont commencé à travailler sur ce document en 2015, et l’ensemble du groupe AOIHL a apporté sa contribution lors d’une réunion annuelle. Le Gouvernement central oblat à Rome a également présenté quelques suggestions et a approuvé le résultat final. Nous n’énumérons ci-dessous que les titres des principes significatifs retenus après notre réflexion et notre partage communs. Le document complet est disponible pour ceux qui voudraient le lire. L’AOIHL pense que ces domaines expriment véritablement notre charisme oblat et la vision de notre mission d’éducation dans le monde contemporain. Ce texte reste en travail.

“Eléments d’une vision pour une institution catholique oblate d’enseignement supérieur” 2015

1. Excellence académique
2. Dialogue avec les sciences humaines
3. Écoute... Signes des temps
4. Internationalité
5. Justice sociale, paix et intégrité de la création
6. Formation de disciples et de dirigeants chrétiens
7. Engagement envers l’Église communion
8. Vie communautaire : Source et but de l’éducation supérieure oblate
9. Solidarité entre les établissements oblates d’enseignement supérieur
10. Formation au dialogue avec les autres religions et cultures
Avant de terminer cette préface, nous aimerions prendre un moment pour remercier tout particulièrement le Dr Chantal Beauvais, Rectrice de l’Université Saint-Paul à Ottawa, et le P. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, de l’École oblate de théologie à San Antonio. De façon distinctive et créative, ces deux leaders de longue date de leurs institutions ont incarné le charisme oblat et ont laissé une marque oblate sur leurs institutions, que ce soit dans les structures et la mission des écoles particulières ou simplement dans la vie académique quotidienne. Ils ont transmis un éthos oblat durable à travers leur leadership et méritent une reconnaissance et une gratitude spéciales.

Nous espérons que le lecteur sera heureux de lire ces histoires sur nos Instituts oblats d’enseignement supérieur et sur la manière dont ils sont fidèles au charisme et à la mission de saint Eugène de Mazenod, pourporter la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres et aux plus abandonnés dans de nombreux lieux du monde. Nous remercions tous nos donateurs et collaborateurs pour leur soutien, leurs prières et leur charité, sans lesquels ces instituts n’existeraient pas. Que Dieu les bénisse tous. Osons préparer des leaders de la communauté de Jésus Christ pour le 21ème siècle et au-delà.

Notre ligne directrice pour la formation continue, selon nos Constitutions et Règles oblats (C 68) : « Dieu est sans cesse à l’œuvre dans le monde et son Verbe, source de vie, transforme l’humanité pour en faire son Peuple. Les Oblats, instruments du Verbe, doivent demeurer souples et ouverts; ils doivent apprendre à faire face à des besoins nouveaux et à chercher des solutions aux questions nouvelles. Ils le feront dans un constant discernement de l’action de l’Esprit qui renouvelle la face de la terre (cf. Ps 104, 30).»

**ASOCIACIÓN DE INSTITUTOS OBLATOS DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR**

En el primer volumen de “Oblatio” del 2012, presentamos la Asociación de Institutos Oblatos de Educación Superior, conocido como AOIHL por sus siglas en ingles. En tal presentación describimos la historia de este grupo de educadores oblatos dedicados a la misión oblata.
de la educación en el Espíritu de San Eugenio, nuestro Fundador. Como se explicó anteriormente, la AOIHL es un grupo de base de Oblatos formado en el espíritu del Capítulo General del 2004 en Roma. La AOIHL es una red de apoyo tanto para nuestro ministerio oblato en la educación así como para todos aquellos que han sido capacitados en diversos campos de especialización. El comité ejecutivo AOIHL esta compuesto de los presidentes o rectores de nuestros institutos oblatos de educación superior e intenta de hacer su servicio abogando por todos los oblatos y colaboradores que participan en el ministerio de la educación y de la formación en toda la congregación.

Para nuestro Fundador, la formación a la santidad era necesaria para cada oblato; como Obispo de Marsella, trabajó asiduamente por el ideal de la vida cristiana para todos los fieles. Nuestro Fundador aceptó el ministerio de formación en el Seminario como una vía necesaria para asegurar la renovación de la Iglesia en Francia. En ese momento, el clero había sido atacado y hasta asesinado durante la Revolución Francesa, y el clero que quedaba tenía poca educación y formación. San Eugenio creía que todas las personas estaban llamadas a la salvación y la santidad. En las Constituciones y Reglas Oblatas para los Misioneros de Provenza, dijo la ya muy conocida frase, que en nuestro ministerio con la gente, debemos esforzarnos por «llevar a la gente a actuar como seres humanos, en primer lugar, y luego como cristianos, y finalmente, debemos ayudarles a convertirse en santos».

Este ideal ha impulsado diversos institutos de educación superior muy diferentes y únicos dentro de la Congregación Oblata. Varios de estos institutos comenzaron como Seminarios para formar oblatos y clérigos diocesanos. Con el tiempo, ampliaron su objetivo para atender otras necesidades educativas de las personas a las que los oblatos estaban llamados a servir, tanto cristianos como no cristianos.

La AOIHL incluye los siguientes Institutos Oblatos:
– Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. (Nuestro primer y más antiguo instituto)
– Notre Dame University, Cotabato City, Filipinas.
– Université De Mazenod, Kinshasa, Congo.
– Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, EEUU.
– Oblate Scholasticate, Obra/Chair of Missiology, Warsaw, Polonia
– St. Joseph Theological Institute, Cedara, Sudáfrica.
– De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy, Chennai, India.

El grupo ejecutivo de la AOIHL no es un grupo completamente cerrado, sino que ha dado la bienvenida a otros Institutos Oblatos de Educación Superior a medida que se han desarrollado y han crecido. Entre ellos, la Academia Marítima de Nusantara en Cilacap, Indonesia, es un miembro asociado reciente de AOIHL. La Academia se estableció bajo la dirección del P. Charlie Burrows y fue administrado recientemente por el P. Yohanes Damianus. En un artículo de este número de “Oblatio”, el P. Damianus explica la inspiración creativa detrás de esta escuela donde hombres y mujeres jóvenes que estudian y se forman para la industria mercantil del mar.

Una de las primeras decisiones del grupo AOIHL fue la de programar una reunión anual en alguno de nuestros institutos oblatos. Estas visitas han proporcionado tremendas oportunidades para que el grupo conozca el trabajo de los oblados en otros contextos y han proporcionado un rico intercambio de experiencias y conocimientos. Un beneficio esencial de las visitas ha sido el desarrollo de relaciones interculturales tanto profesional como a nivel personal entre nuestros educadores y colaboradores oblados. El crecimiento de estas relaciones ha permitido una expansión de nuestros esfuerzos misioneros oblados en el campo de la formación educativa y en el intercambio de recursos, de personal y de creatividad. A continuación figura una lista de los lugares donde la AOIHL ha sostenido reuniones en esta última década:


En nombre de la AOIHL y la Congregación Oblata, expresamos nuestra gratitud por los esfuerzos creativos e incansables de los oblados y colaboradores laicos oblados que han servido como líderes de los institutos. La siguiente es una lista de los Presidentes o Rectores de los
distintos institutos desde que se inició la AOIHL. Disculpe si alguien ha
sido pasado por alto.

Saint Paul University, Ottawa: Dr. Chantal Beauvais;
De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy, Chennai: Pbro. Arokiasamy
Rayappan and Harry Immanuel;
Notre Dame University, Cotabato: Pbro. Eduardo Tanudtanud,
Charlie Inzon, and Francis Zabala;
Oblate Institute of Higher Learning, Colombo: Pbro. Oswald Firth
and Rohan Silva;
Obra Scholasticate/Warsaw Missiology Faculty: Pbro. Antoni Bo-
chm, Jósef Wcisło, Sebastián Łuszczyk, Jarosław Różański, Wojciech
Kluj, (Pbro. Grzegorz Ruránski es nuestro actual contacto de Obra, Po-
lonia);
Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio: Pbro. Ron Rolheiser, Dr.
Scott Woodward;
St. Joseph Theological Institute, Cedara: S.E. Mons. Sylvester Da-
david, Pbro. Neil Frank, and Joe Phiri;
Univesité de Mazenod/ Institut St. Eugène, Kinshasa: Pbro. Bau-
doin Mubesala, Anaclet Dupar, and Mane Macaire Manimba.

Además de estos líderes de los institutos, el comité ejecutivo de
la AOIHL ha incluido a dos miembros como intermediarios o de en-
lace, cuyo enfoque es el estudio de la congregación oblata y el carisma
oblato. Estos intermediarios son el Director del Servicio General de
Estudios Oblatos, el P. Fabio Ciardi, y el Oblato que ocupa la Cátedra
Kusenberger de Estudios Oblatos en la Escuela Oblata de Teología en
San Antonio, el P. Frank Santucci. Ellos han ofrecido su experiencia y
apoyo a las reuniones y a la red de la AOIHL. Desde 2017, las sesiones
de la AOIHL han incluido la conferencia anual patrocinada por la Cáte-
dra Kusenberger de Estudios Oblatos.

Uno de los proyectos más críticos en los que el grupo trabajó en
los últimos años fue de articular algunos principios comunes en la edu-
cación oblata dentro de los institutos de enseñanza superior. La admi-
nistración y los oblatos de la Universidad de San Pablo iniciaron en
el 2015 el trabajo de tal documento, y el grupo de la AOIHL dio su
aportación en una reunión anual. El Gobierno Central de los Oblatos en
Roma también ofreció algunas sugerencias y aprobó el producto final.
A continuación sólo enumeraremos los títulos de los principios signi-
ficativos acordados tras nuestra reflexión y puesta en común. El documento completo está disponible para aquellos que quieran leerlo en su totalidad. La AOIHL cree que estas áreas representan genuinamente nuestro carisma oblato y la visión de nuestra misión en la educación en el mundo contemporáneo. Este texto es un proyecto en curso.

“Elementos de una Vision para una Institucion Catolica Oblata para la enseñanza superior” 2015

1. Excelencia Académica
2. Dialogo con las Ciencias Humanas
3. Escuchar … los Signos de los Tiempos
4. Internacionalidad
5. Justicia Social, Paz, e Integridad de la Craación
6. Formación de Discípulos Cristianos y líderes
7. Compromiso con la Iglesia como Comunión
8. Vida Comunitaria: Fuente y objetivo de la Educación Superior Oblata
9. Solidaridad Global enentre las Instituciones Oblatas de Estudios Superiores
10. Frormación para el Dialogo con otras Religiones y Culturas

Antes de cerrar este prefacio, nos gustaría tomar un momento para agradecer especialmente a la Dra. Chantal Beauvais, Rectrice de la Universidad Saint Paul en Ottawa, y al P. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, de la Escuela Oblata de Teología en San Antonio. De maneras distintivas y creativas, estos dos líderes de larga trayectoria en sus instituciones han encarnado el carisma oblato y dejado una marca oblata en sus respectivas instituciones, ya sea en las estructuras y la misión de las escuelas o simplemente en el día a día de la vida académica. Han transmitido un espíritu oblato duradero a través de su liderazgo y merecen un reconocimiento y gratitud especiales.

Esperamos que el lector disfrute de la lectura de estas historias sobre nuestros Institutos Oblatos de Enseñanza Superior y de cómo siguen el carisma y la misión de San Eugenio de Mazenod para llevar la buena noticia a los pobres y a los más abandonados en los diversos lugares del mundo. Agradecemos a todos nuestros donantes y colaboradores por su apoyo, sus oraciones y su caridad, sin los cuales estos institutos no
existirían. Que Dios los bendiga a todos, y que nos atrevamos a preparar líderes de la comunidad de Jesucristo para el siglo XXI y más allá.

De acuerdo a nuestras Constituciones y Reglas Oblatas, nuestra directriz para la formación permanente es: «Dios sigue actuando en el mundo, y su Palabra fuente de vida, transforma a la humanidad para hacer de ella su Pueblo. Los Oblatos, instrumentos de la Palabra, deben permanecer abiertos y flexibles; deben aprender a hacer frente a nuevas necesidades y a buscar soluciones a nuevos problemas. Lo harán en un constante discernimiento de la acción del Espíritu que renueva la faz de la tierra (cf. Sal 104, 30)» (C 68).

Warren Brown, omi
Rome, Italy
brown@omigen.org
Cet article veut être une contribution à l’étude d’un aspect de notre vie oblate qui mérite des approfondissements, même si son sujet ne touche pas à l’essence de notre charisme. C’est la dimension intellectuelle de notre formation, initiale et permanente.

À première vue, cela peut paraître un peu étrange, étant donné que nous ne sommes ni Dominicains ni Jésuites, même si un vieux Petit Larousse définissait les Oblats des “espèces de jésuites des campagnes”…

L’étude est certainement un aspect de notre vie, et surtout de notre mission, auquel le Fondateur a attaché une importance particulière. Nous y trouvons une allusion déjà dans la fameuse « supplique » aux vicaires capitulaires d’Aix, dans laquelle il demandait la permission pour sa petite communauté de s’établir dans l’ancien Carmel d’Aix, « pour y vivre en communauté sous une règle dont ils vont vous exposer les points principaux ».

Un de ces points concerne l’emploi du temps à l’intérieur de la communauté : « Leur vie sera donc partagée entre la prière, la méditation des vérités saintes, la pratique des vertus religieuses, l’étude de la sainte Écriture, des ss. Pères, de la théologie dogmatique et morale, la prédication et la direction de la jeunesse ».

Un peu plus loin, lorsqu’il parle de ce que ces jeunes prêtres zélés feront dans la communauté au retour de leurs courses apostoliques, il
indique deux moyens *par* lesquels ils se prépareront à rendre leur ministère plus fructueux encore : la méditation et l’étude\(^1\).

Il est donc clair que pour le jeune Eugène l’étude, au sens propre du mot, était un composant essentiel de la vie de la communauté et de chacun de ses membres, en vue de rendre leur ministère chaque fois plus fructueux.

Eugène puisait certainement à son expérience de jeune séminariste à St. Sulpice, lorsqu’il étudiait toutes ces matières qui l’avaient préparé à être ce qu’il était.

Le père Marius Nogaret a fait une étude sur les cours qui étaient dispensés à St. Sulpice au temps du Fondateur. Dans les conclusions générales, il y a un paragraphe où il parle d’Eugène de Mazenod :

**Mazenod a reçu durant son séminaire un enseignement fortement et même uniquement marqué par le 18\(^{\text{ème}}\) siècle et l’Ancien Régime. Dans ses notes, il ne se présente pas comme un spéculatif ; les problèmes abstraits ne l’intéressent guère, ses résumés sur ces questions sont faibles et parfois l’on peut se demander s’ils sont fidèles. Il est plus à son aise dans les questions pratiques et de ministère pastoral. D’ailleurs en 1811, il ne sera choisi ni comme professeur de dogme ni de morale, mais comme maître des cérémonies, charge où son tempérament pratique et organisateur se trouvera davantage chez lui\(^2\).**

Eugène a étudié à St. Sulpice de 1808 à 1812. De 1808 à 1809 il a fait la philosophie, de 1809 à 1811 la théologie et de 1811 à 1812 il a été directeur et maître des cérémonies.

Dans son étude sur la vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod, le père Pielorz consacre quelques brefs paragraphes à sa formation intellectuelle. Il y écrit, entre autres, que si la formation spirituelle d’Eugène fut excellente, il n’en fut pas ainsi de sa formation intellectuelle. Cela est dû au fait qu’on ne disposait pas de beaucoup de temps pour préparer ces prêtres à leur ministère. « Pour le moment, répétait souvent


\(^2\) *Dossier Cours St Sulpice*, dactylographié, Archives générales OMI, Rome s.d.
M. Emery, … formons sans hâte excessive, mais le plus rapidement possible, des prêtres munis de la science indispensable… Cette préoccupation de combler les vides laissés par la Révolution dans les rangs du clergé, continue le père Pielorz, a fortement contribué à la baisse du niveau intellectuel du Séminaire ; des nécessités plus urgentes prennent le pas sur la science. Ainsi l’abbé de Mazenod finira ses études théologiques en trois années, sans avoir fait préalablement un cours normal de philosophie ».

Cela ne veut pas dire que l’enseignement théologique reçu par l’abbé de Mazenod à St-Sulpice fut superficiel, mais il ne fut pas très profond non plus. À l’époque, les professeurs de dogme et de morale utilisaient Bailly comme manuel de classe, tout en cherchant soit à assouplir son gallicanisme, soit à tempérer son rigorisme. S. Thomas et S. Alphonse de Liguori ne figurent pas parmi les auteurs les plus cités. L’abbé de Mazenod a donc reçu une formation théologique suffisante pour devenir un bon prêtre ; moins solide et profonde cependant que celle qui est donnée aux séminaristes d’aujourd’hui.

Cette formation est marquée par la mentalité du XVIIIe siècle et de l’Ancien Régime ; c’est pourquoi, si Eugène est ultramontain dans ses opinions dogmatiques, et probabiliste, au sens liguorien du mot, en morale, il ne le doit certainement pas à l’enseignement reçu au séminaire. Celui-ci est de tendances gallicanes et tutioristes. Nous avons dit “de tendances tutioristes” : sans être tutioriste, au sens strict de ce mot, comme celui des jansénistes, il reste, en effet, loin du probabilisme de S. Alphonse ; il est à mi-chemin entre les deux.

E il conclut : « Tel était le milieu dans lequel tomba Eugène et qui imprima, sans doute, des traces profondes dans sa vie spirituelle »³.

LES ÉTUDES DANS LA PENSEÉ DU FONDATEUR

Ces quelques observations du père Pielorz donnent l’envie d’en savoir davantage, de connaître surtout quel fut l’impact des études du séminariste Eugène à St. Sulpice sur sa vie sacerdotale postérieure et sur sa spiritualité missionnaire. Un aspect qui demeure très présent dans

³ La vie spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod, 1782-1812, étude critique, Ottawa, éditions des Études oblates, t. 14, 1956, p. 207.
sa correspondance est celui de l’importance des études, surtout mais
pas seulement théologiques, pour combattre les erreurs de son temps.
De ses missionnaires il attendait surtout deux choses : d’un côté, que
par l’étude des écritures et des autres disciplines plus importantes pour
la mission qui leur serait confiée, ils soient à mesure de ranimer la foi là
où elle avait été éteinte, que ce soit par les conséquences de la Révolu-
tion ou par d’autres causes, et de l’alimenter dans le cœur des personnes
qui, s’en étant laissé toucher, étaient revenues à la foi ; de l’autre, que
des études solides permettent à ses missionnaires de faire un bon discer-
nement et de combattre les erreurs qui sont toujours aux aguets et qui
risquent de compromettre ou de réduire à néant tant d’efforts de la part
de ses missionnaires.

Dans une lettre du 3 janvier 1831 au père Mille, supérieur à Billens,
en Suisse, il écrit :

Je ne saurais trop recommander de ne jamais négliger l’étude, je
ne dis pas seulement de la théologie et de la philosophie, mais des
belles-lettres aussi. Il faut combattre les erreurs du siècle avec les
armes du temps. Je suis toujours plus étonné de voir tant de jeunes
gens dans les rangs ennemis écrire si bien, avec tant d’art et de ta-
lent, pour soutenir le mensonge et les déceptions de toute espèce. Il
faut se rompre même à ce genre de combat. Que l’on sache bien sa
langue, qu’on s’exerce à la manier. Ce sera un temps bien employé.
Faites sortir du feu de la pierre ; il faut frapper pour cela, l’étincelle
n’est produite que par le choc.

Par cette allusion à l’étincelle, il souligne l’effort qu’il faut mettre
dans les études, le prix qu’il faut payer pour que ces études fournissent
au missionnaire l’équipement nécessaire, pour qu’ils produisent leur
effet. Pour Eugène, les études ne sont pas finalisées à elles-mêmes, leur
importance est déterminée par la mission qu’elles doivent servir. C’est
pour cela qu’il continue par ces paroles :

Mais ne perdez jamais de vue que c’est pour Dieu que vous tra-
vaillez, que la gloire de son saint nom y est intéressée, que l’Église
réclame ce service de vous. C’est vous dire de surnaturaliser vos études,
de les sanctifier par une grande droiture d’intention, lais-
sant tout amour-propre de côté, ne vous recherchant en rien ; par ce
moyen les auteurs profanes peuvent vous élever à Dieu comme les Pères de l’Église⁴.

Que de sagesse et de spiritualité en ces paroles ! Surnaturaliser ses études, les sanctifier pour qu’elles nous élèvent jusqu’à Dieu ! Eugène revient sur ce même sujet quelques mois plus tard, en écrivant à ce même père le 15 avril de la même année. Il est bien conscient que ce père a des occupations pastorales qui lui prennent une bonne partie de son temps, cependant il revient et insiste sur le sujet des études. Voici ce qu’il lui écrit :

« … Tout ce que je demande, c’est que les études n’en souffrent pas. Nous vivons dans un siècle où il faut absolument se mettre à même de combattre les mauvaises doctrines autrement que par les seuls bons exemples. Je voudrais que quelques-uns du moins se rendissent propres à la polémique pour laquelle les ennemis de la foi ont tant de facilité et montrent tant de talent ».

Les cours d’apologétique suivis à St. Sulpice, le souci de défendre la foi chrétienne et l’Église devant les erreurs et les attaques venant du monde extérieur, ont allumé en Eugène un feu qui ne s’est jamais éteint. Dans la même lettre, nous lisons encore :

Tenez à ce que l’on parle et que l’on écrive bien. Inventez quelque exercice qui en donne la facilité. Secondez les dispositions de chacun. Cultivez le latin. Je verrais avec plaisir que notre cher Pons formât des écoliers qui réussissent aussi bien que lui. Je lui recommande de pousser ceux qu’il connaîtrait avoir des dispositions pour cela⁵.

Quelques semaines plus tard, le Fondateur envoie deux frères à Billens, et demande au père Mille de leur donner tous ses soins. En cette même lettre, du 6 juin 1831, il revient sur le même sujet avec ces recommandations :

En somme, il faut qu’à tout prix les sujets, quels qu’ils soient, se prêtent à tout pour perfectionner leurs études et se rendre ainsi propres

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⁵ Ibid., p. 20.
à servir l’Église qui est attaquée dans ses doctrines par des hommes à qui l’habileté ne manque pas. Je me mets peu en peine que l’éducation se prolonge. L’essentiel est que rien ne demeure enfoui, que chacun tire parti de la dose de talents que le Seigneur lui a déparis, en un mot que l’on se mette à même de défendre la vérité et le sacre dépôt de la foi, non seulement par la prière, mais par la parole et par les écrits s’il le faut.

Une fois de plus, Eugène donne les raisons de cette insistance. Avec le besoin et l’urgence d’avoir « de bons soldats » pour étendre le Règne de Dieu, nous ne saurions passer sous silence l’expression « je me mets peu en peine que l’éducation se prolonge ». Elle dit, en des mots si éloquents, combien Eugène avait à cœur la formation, même intellectuelle, de ses missionnaires. Il y a là certainement quelque chose à apprendre même pour notre temps.

En une lettre au père Tempier, le 4 octobre 1835, Eugène demande que le père Pons fasse une classe de belles-lettres aux scolastiques, en remplaçant le père Mille qui faisait cette classe avant, mais qui avait été appelé à Marseille par le Fondateur. Le père Pons faisait aussi une classe de théologie à toute la communauté. « C’est ainsi, écrit le Fondateur, qu’on doit faire partout. Être toujours prêt à faire de bonne grâce ce qui peut concourir au bien de l’Église et à l’avantage de la Congrégation. On ne se demande pas si cela doit donner de la peine ou du dérangement »

Cette conviction demeure très forte et bien enracinée en son cœur. Si bien qu’en écrivant au père Honorat le 1er mars 1844, il souligne une fois de plus l’importance, voir la nécessité, d’une formation intellectuelle bien achevée en vue de la mission :

Au nom de Dieu, ne nous encombrons pas des médiocrités. Il est inutile de se flatter qu’on se formera plus tard, non ; si on n’achève pas les études quand il est temps, on reste ignorant. Cependant dans les missions plus qu’ailleurs il faut être instruits, puisqu’on n’a pas toujours le secours des livres et qu’on ne peut pas consulter. Que la

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Ibid., p. 176.
théologie soit donc enseignée comme il faut et que l'on ne néglige pas non plus la composition, car un missionnaire ne doit pas se persuader avoir le privilège de prêcher en dépit du bon sens, sans style, sans méthode et sans doctrine, etc.\textsuperscript{8}.

De préoccupation semblables reviennent aussi dans la correspondance entre Eugène et le père Semeria, à Jaffna. Deux lettres de 1848 en témoignent. Le Fondateur lui a envoyé des missionnaires tout jeunes, qui devront faire ou poursuivre leurs études en pays de mission, mais en ligne de principe il préfère que ces missionnaires terminent leurs études avant de partir en mission : « … je tiens à ce qu’ils aient fini leurs études théologiques pour être plus utiles à la mission et ne jamais se compromettre ; en les pressant trop, on les exposerait à ne jamais apprendre ce qu’il faut savoir »\textsuperscript{9}.

La même pensée revient dans une lettre du 4 mars 1849 au père Aubert :

Nous avons ici de bien excellents jeunes gens qui ne soupirent qu’après les missions… Mais nous sommes décidés de leur faire terminer leurs études théologiques avant de les livrer. Sous prétexte qu’il n’est pas nécessaire de savoir tant de choses pour évangéliser les gens de la brousse, on les expédie parfois trop tôt dans vos contrées. Ce n’est point mon avis et quelque impatients que soient nos jeunes gens je les retiendrai jusqu’à la fin de leurs études\textsuperscript{10}.

Le manque d’éducation des peuples auxquels nous sommes envoyés ne justifie nullement une préparation limitée aux éléments essentiels de la doctrine, pour ainsi dire ; au contraire, elle peut même exiger une préparation mieux soignée ! Ce texte nous révèle en quelle considération Eugène tenait les peuples et les gens auxquels ses missionnaires étaient envoyés. Ce souci revient dans une lettre de la même période à Mgr Guigues, dans laquelle Eugène dit son mécontentement et sa désapprobation par rapport à un parcours de formation trop rapide, qui endommage « des enfants sans science et qui se ressentiront toute leur vie de ce défaut d’instruction ». Et il continue :

\textsuperscript{8} “Écrits oblats”, 1, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{9} Le 22 novembre 1848, “Écrits oblats”, 4, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{10} “Écrits oblats”, 1, p. 220.
Aussi suis-je décidé à ne plus envoyer que des sujets qui auront terminé leurs études et passé un temps suffisant, dans l’intérieur de nos maisons, à se former à la pratique des vertus religieuses. Je préfère mille fois que vous attendiez plutôt que d’avoir à me reprocher de n’avoir pas pourvu aux besoins de nos sujets et de m’être exposé à compromettre leur salut, celui des âmes qu’ils ne sauraient pas diriger et l’honneur de la Congrégation. Quand j’ai consenti à vous envoyer, sur votre demande, de simples oblats, c’était dans la ferme persuasion qu’on les formerait soit à la science ecclésiastique, soit à la piété.\footnote{Le 25 mars 1849, ibid., p. 222-223.}

\textbf{LES ÉTUDES DANS LA PENSEÉ DU PÈRE SOULLIER}

Une étude sérieuse de ce sujet prendrait maintenant en compte la pensée et les écrits des successeurs d’Eugène, les Supérieurs généraux, ainsi que les documents issus des Chapitres généraux et d’autres publications qui ont trait à ce sujet. Même si cela n’est pas l’objectif de cet article, nous voudrions nous arrêter sur l’un ou l’autre de ces points, sans prétendre à être exhaustifs en cette matière.

Parmi les premiers successeurs d’Eugène à la tête de la Congrégation, celui qui a insisté davantage sur les études dans la Congrégation, surtout dans la formation initiale, est certainement le père Soullier.

Le deuxième volume des \textit{Circulaires administratives} contient les lettres adressées par le nouveau Supérieur général, le père Soullier, depuis son élection pendant le Chapitre de 1893 (11-23 mai 1893). Ce sont les circulaires 53 à 61. Même si son généralat fut très bref, surtout si on le compare à celui de son prédécesseur (5 ans à peine, contre les 31 du père Fabre), le père Soullier a laissé une marque importante par ses lettres et ses activités. Trois circulaires sont particulièrement importantes : la circulaire 57 (le 26 mars 1894) dans laquelle il publie les actes du 15\textsuperscript{ème} Chapitre général ; la circulaire 59 (le 17 février 1895), un véritable traité sur \textit{La Prédication du missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée} et la circulaire 61 (le 8 décembre 1896) au sujet \textit{Des études du missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée}. Le 5 octobre 1897 le père Soullier s’endormait dans le Seigneur. Une partie de son héritage spirituel se trouve en ces lettres.
De la prédication du missionnaire OMI


La deuxième partie de cette circulaire aborde le sujet des qualités du prédicateur. Elle en souligne deux : la sainteté d’une part, la science et le travail de l’autre. Deux extraits peuvent suffire pour nous donner une idée du ton et des contenus de cette circulaire.

Néanmoins, si belles que soient la piété et la vertu, elles réclament, pour faire le vrai missionnaire, un complément essentiel : la science. « Il est manifeste, dit la Sacrée Congrégation, et démontré par une constante expérience, qu’on attendrait vainement une prédication solide, ordonnée et fructueuse de la part de ceux qui ne sont pas nourris de bonnes études, principalement d’études sacrées, et qui, confiants dans une certaine facilité naturelle de parole, montent témérairement en chaire avec peu ou pas de préparation. Ceux-là, d’ordinaire, ne font autre chose que battre l’air et attirer sur la parole divine, sans s’en apercevoir, le mépris et la dérision. C’est pourquoi il leur est dit justement : Quida tu scientiam repulisti, ego repellam te, ne sacerdorio fungaris mihi. (Os., IV, 6). (p. 25)

Le père Soullier invite à méditer ces paroles de la lettre sur la prédication :

Le prêtre, le missionnaire, qui n’a pas la science nécessaire, Dieu et la Sainte Église le repoussent comme indigne d’être l’ambassadeur de Dieu. Il attire sur le Verbe divin la dérision et le mépris, celui qui, n’ayant pas la science requise et se fiant à son facile verbiage, monte en chaire, et, avec peu ou point de préparation, s’improvise orateur sacré. Comment donnera-t-il à son auditoire une prédication qui soit à la fois solide quant au fond, ordonnée quant au développement et, quant aux effets, fructueuse pour les âmes ? (p. 25-26).

De notre côté, nous faisons tous les sacrifices pour procurer à nos scolastiques les études les plus solides et les plus complètes, et nous veillons à ce qu’aucun ne franchisse les degrés du sacerdoce sans avoir donné des preuves suffisantes de capacité et de travail. Mais,
une fois ces sujets remis aux mains des Supérieurs provinciaux et locaux, nous voulons que ceux-ci observent strictement les prescriptions de nos Saintes Règles et de nos Chapitres généraux : les examens annuels, les trois années sans ministère habituel spécialement employées à la préparation immédiate des missions, les conférences théologiques, etc. (p. 26)

Le père Soullier cite ici un extrait de la lettre 474 de St. Alphonse de’ Liguori, où le saint adresse aux jeunes pères une recommandation particulière, c’est-à-dire de ne pas nourrir un impatient désir de prêcher : « Le désir impatients que je voudrais leur voir, c’est celui de plaire à Jésus-Christ». Même la prédication doit être régie par l’obéissance : « Je vous le demande à tous, mais surtout aux jeunes Pères : revoyez bien, étudiez bien ce que vous devez dire en public, ne fût-ce qu’une allocution. On prêche maintenant sans préparation ; pourquoi nous plaindre alors si on nous reproche de prêcher sottement » (p. 27-28). On avait donc les mêmes situations et les mêmes « problèmes »…

Il peut y avoir des circonstances qui exigent une improvisation. C’est un sujet abordé sérieusement et minutieusement dans cette lettre. Le point de départ est que « Le Supérieur ne permettra pas aux missionnaires de prêcher avant qu’ils aient écrit et appris par cœur leurs sermons. Le texte est formel : pas d’improvisation ! Le Supérieur ne permettra pas de prêcher avant ce travail préalable. L’Église nous rappelle elle-même le devoir d’une préparation sérieuse » (p. 28).

Les paragraphes qui suivent parlent de l’improvisation dans la prédication : « Ne voit-on pas de jeunes débutants se fier témérairement à leur grande facilité ? Parce qu’ils auront pris un certain nombre de notes et qu’ils espèrent pouvoir gloser pendant une demi-heure sur un sujet, ils s’imaginent pouvoir affronter la chaire sacrée avec ce minimum de préparation » (p. 28).

Le texte admet un certain niveau de flexibilité « pour ceux qui sont bien pénétrés de la science divine ». Il y a donc de la place pour l’improvisation, mais à des conditions :

Trois caractères doivent marquer l’improvisateur : il doit être un homme ayant l’habitude de la chaire, suffisamment instruit, ayant de la facilité d’élocution. Deux inconvénients doivent être écartés : péril de rabaisser la dignité de la chaire, danger de frustrer l’attente et
les besoins de l’auditoire. L’improvisation peut avoir lieu surtout en mission, où il est nécessaire de faire face à des ennemis imprévus, de parler dans des circonstances qui surgissent tout à coup. (p. 30).

Il s’agit ici d’une improvisation « sérieuse », et non d’une de ces productions instantanées, qui ont fait quelquefois dire de certains prédicateurs : « Ils montent en chaire sans savoir ce qu’ils vont dire ; ils parlent sans savoir ce qu’ils disent, et ils descendent sans savoir ce qu’ils ont dit » (p. 30).

La deuxième partie de cette circulaire termine par une invitation à ne jamais se contenter de ce qu’on a acquis, à toujours se perfectionner dans l’art de prêcher la loi de Dieu, à préparer de nouveaux matériaux en vue de missions nouvelles. Sur ce point, il cite le Fondateur : « Il faut, disait-il, posséder toute la science sacrée, si l’on veut être parfait missionnaire. Arriver en mission avec son siège fait d’avance serait s’exposer à une défaite ; mais, quand on a son arsenal bien rempli, on tire, au fur et à mesure des besoins de la guerre qu’on livre au démon et aux passions, les armes appropriées aux diverses circonstances dans lesquelles on se trouve. » (p. 31).

Le père Soullier termine la deuxième partie de cette lettre sur la prédication en invitant à travailler sans relâche et jusqu’à la fin. Ne nous contentons jamais de prendre, ça et là, dans les sermonnaires jeunes ou vieux, la trame et le développement de nos instructions, allons aux sources. Ne disons jamais non plus : « C’est assez. J’ai une mission, des retraites pour chaque catégorie d’âmes, je puis me reposer. » (p 31). Non, nous devons toujours essayer de trouver mieux et de mieux dire.

Combien cela est encore actuel aujourd’hui ! Au lieu de ces « sermonnaires jeunes ou vieux » dont parle le père Soullier, nous allons puiser à l’internet, à ces moteurs de recherche appelés Google, Bing ou Yahoo, qui nous présentent des homélies « prêt-à-livrer » qui ne disent presque rien parce qu’elles ne viennent pas du cœur et de l’expérience vécue. Il y a là matière à réflexion et conversion.

Des études du missionnaire OMI

Le père Soullier nous a laissé une partie de son héritage spirituel dans une autre lettre circulaire, où il aborde le sujet des études dans
la Congrégation (m. 61, le 8 décembre 1896). Cette lettre se divise en trois parties : la nécessité de l’étude, l’objet des études et le caractère surnaturel à donner à l’étude dans la Congrégation.


Pour traiter des études en rapport à l’Oblat, le père Soullier nous conduit au cœur même de notre spiritualité, à ce qu’il appelle « l’idéal oblat » tel que conçu par notre Fondateur, cet idéal que nous sommes appelés à réaliser. Eh bien, dit-it, cet idéal nous le trouvons bien esquissé dans la première page de nos Constitutions : « Finem habet ista Congregatio... officia et partes, si fieri possit, suscipiendo pro tot tantisque religiosis institutionibus, a gallicana perturbatione sublatis, quorum eversio Religionem matrem longo et in dies crescente viduitatis luctu afficit ». Et en voici l’explication :

La Révolution avait passé son niveau destructeur sur tout ce qui florissait en France d’instituts religieux : plus de prière et de chants sacrés montant des solitude ; plus de voix apostoliques retentissant parmi les foules ; plus d’apôtres et plus de vierges. L’Abbé de Mazenod contemplait ces vides lugubres lorsque la Religion se montra à lui sous les traits d’une mère en deuil. Sa douleur lui perça l’âme, une douleur qui, loin de s’amortir avec le temps, y puisait tous les jours un aliment nouveau ; et il conçut un dessein sublime : celui de créer un Institut qui à lui seul fît revivre tous les Instituts disparus. Était-ce possible ? Il se posa la question sans y répondre : Si fieri possit : il était poussé par l’esprit de Dieu, et il jeta les bases de cette Congrégation à laquelle nous avons le bonheur d’appartenir (p. 47).

Cet idéal demeure notre idéal, même si les solitudes se sont repeuplées, même si les voix éteintes se sont ranimées, même si les Instituts abolis ont repris leur place dans l’Église...

Le but de la Révolution était celui de détruire la Religion elle-même. La ruine de la vie religieuse n’en avait été qu’un corollaire. Un but
qui avait été bien atteint, malheureusement. Le regard du jeune abbé de Mazenod avait vu ces peuples tombés dans le paganisme hideux qui était le leur avant que la croix n’eût brisé les idoles. Ému jusqu’au fond de l’âme, il sonda ces plaies, et à la source de ce mal il découvrit une ignorance extrême, l’ignorance des choses du salut. Populi in supina rerum salutis ignorantia proni computrescunt. Inde defectio fidei, morum corruptela et cuncta flagitia quibus horrendo veluti comitatu stipantur. (Const., Praef.) Et c’est de cette constatation de l’ignorance des peuples comme source de toutes leurs maladies morales que naquit l’Oblat. Et puisque l’ignorance se guérit par la doctrine, nous pouvons dire que, à ce point de vue, l’Oblat naquit, avant tout, homme de doctrine. « En fait, continue le père Soullier, l’Oblat doit être tout à la fois homme de perfection et homme de doctrine ; car, d’une part, ce qu’il fallait faire revivre des Instituts religieux comportait ces deux choses ; et, d’autre part, la parole qui ne s’accompagne pas de la prière et de l’exemple, si doctrinale qu’elle soit d’ailleurs, est une parole stérile et inefficace» (p. 49).

Aussi, trouvons-nous inscrits au frontispice de nos Constitutions ces deux mots de saint Paul qui les contiennent en raccourci : Attende tibi et doctrinæ ; attention à toi-même et à ta doctrine ! à toi-même, pour te sanctifier ; à ta doctrine, pour sanctifier les autres ; attende ! non pas une attention sériouse à toi-même et une attention diminuée à ta doctrine, mais une attention égale à toi-même et à ta doctrine ; la doctrine, d’ailleurs, favorisant le développement de la sainteté, et la sainteté conférant toute efficacité à la doctrine. Attende tibi et doctrinæ. D’où il suit que l’Oblat qui n’est que saint, ou qu’homme instruit (si tant est que l’on puisse être saint en négligeant ce qui est de l’essence même de sa vocation), cet Oblat n’est qu’une moitié d’Oblat, ne réalisant qu’à demi l’idéal conçu par notre Vénéré Fondateur. (p. 49).

De cette double fin de l’Institut, c’est toujours le père Soullier qui parle, nous déduisons la nécessité pour l’Oblat de la science et de l’étude, et les Règles tracent la voie qui mène à cette double fin. Il est donc tout naturel que, directement ou indirectement, elles imposent la science et l’étude.
Pour savoir combien le Fondateur jugeait la science théologique nécessaire à ses Oblats, qu’il suffise de lire l’article 10 du premier paragraphe du troisième chapitre des Règles :

Peracto Missionum tempore, in domus suæ sanctæ receptum lætantes revertentur Missionarii, ut debito tempore, spiritum propriæ vocationis renovent, legem divinam meditentur, Scripturæ sacrae studio, sanctorumque Patrum, theologiae dogmaticæ et moralis, aliarumque ecclesiasticæ scientiæ partium incumbant ; studebunt insuper novas, ad proximas Missiones, comparare dicendorum materias.

(c. III, § 1, a. 10)

Cet article marque nettement le partage que l’Oblat doit faire du temps qui lui est ménagé dans l’intervalle de ses travaux, un temps qui doit être divisé en trois parties : l’une consacrée à la piété, l’autre à l’étude théologique, la troisième à la composition de nouveaux sermons. Trois devoirs dont l’Oblat est appelé à s’acquitter scrupuleusement. La pensée du Fondateur est claire : dû à son caractère exclusivement doctrinal, la prédication doit nécessairement s’alimenter à la théologie ; composer un sermon, c’est mettre en œuvre les matériaux théologiques ; étudier la théologie, c’est les recueillir et les préparer. Sans compter, dit encore le père Soullier, « que l’Oblat n’a pas seulement à prêcher, mais encore à confesser, et que dans toute circonstance il doit paraître pourvu de toutes les connaissances qui conviennent à un prêtre éminent. De là, cette distribution du travail intellectuel en étude et composition » (p. 52).

En venant à traiter de l’étude en rapport avec l’Oblat des missions étrangères, s’il fallait résumer la pensée du Père général à ce sujet, il faudrait dire que les exhortations dont il a parlé jusqu’ici s’appliquent à plus forte raison à ces Oblats qui sont engagés dans les missions étrangères : « Ce que nous disions à ces chers Missionnaires, nous le répétons à tous nos Pères de nos Missions d’Amérique, d’Afrique et d’Asie. Point de prêtres à qui incombe plus qu’à vous le devoir du travail intellectuel ». Le père Soullier nous partage, à ce sujet, une expérience personnelle qui n’a pas besoin de commentaire :

Nous nous sommes convaincus dans la visite de vos missions qu’il s’y perd un temps considérable. Par défaut de prévoyance et de règlement, tels missionnaires se causent à eux-mêmes et à la partie es-
sentielle de leur tâche apostolique les plus grands dommages. Tout est donné à l’extérieur et aux travaux matériels ; la part de l’âme et de la Règle, de l’intelligence et de l’étude, est reléguée au second plan et ne trouve souvent pas de place. On passera de longues heures à jaser avec des … découvriers et l’on croira ne pas avoir le temps de faire ses exercices ni de se livrer à de sérieuses lectures. Cette disposition à s’abandonner sans mesure aux convenances souvent indiscrètes des gens ne mérite pas le nom de zèle, attendu qu’elle ne profite généralement à personne et nuit considérablement à la vie religieuse et intellectuelle du missionnaire. (p. 58).

La deuxième partie de cette longue lettre traite des différents domaines et disciplines qui font l’objet des études de l’Oblat : l’Écriture Sainte, la Patrologie, la Théologie dogmatique, la Théologie morale, le Droit canon, la Prédication, la Philosophie, l’Histoire ecclésiastique. Trois courts titres terminent cette partie :


Études des professeurs dans les Juniorats et les Collèges. L’avenir de la Congrégation étant entre leurs mains, le Supérieur général leur demande de considérer l’enseignement comme un vrai ministère : « Oh ! mes bien chers Pères, ne regardez jamais le temps du professorat comme une sorte de stage qui vous achemine aux consolations de l’apostolat : tous vos soucis, toutes vos préoccupations et toutes les énergies de votre âme doivent se porter au présent, à ces enfants qui vous entourent,
en qui vous devez former l’homme, le chrétien, le religieux, le futur prêtre et le futur missionnaire, dont vous devez cultiver l’intelligence, façonner le cœur, tremper le caractère» (p. 108). Un mot spécial est réservé ici aux Oblats qui enseignent à l’Université d’Ottawa et à ceux qui œuvrent dans le nouveau Collège de Colombo.

Études des professeurs dans les Scolasticats et les Grands Séminaires. À ces derniers le père Soullier applique une doctrine de St. Thomas qui demande aux évêques d’être parfaits car ils sont appelés à perfectionner les autres :

On peut appliquer cette doctrine aux formateurs de la jeunesse cléricale et religieuse ; et, pour nous borner à notre sujet, si l’on demande aux autres Pères de tendre à la science parfaite, on leur demande à eux de la posséder. (…) Continuez, bien chers Pères, à vous montrer dignes de la haute mission qui vous a été confiée. Redoublez encore de courage et de dévouement ; et, pour ce qui est notamment de l’étude, ne vous persuadez jamais avoir un acquis suffisant, qui vous autorise au repos ; mais faites de la parole de nos saintes Règles : Studio instanter incumbant, la devise de toute votre vie. (p. 110-11)

La troisième partie de cette longue lettre porte sur le caractère surnaturel à donner à l’étude. Dans notre langage, nous pourrions dire que le père Soullier esquisse ici une sorte de “spiritualité de l’étude”, en expliquant le caractère surnaturel de l’étude, dans la fin que ce travail doit poursuivre aussi bien que dans la forme qu’il doit revêtir.

La conclusion de cette lettre circulaire offre au père Soullier la possibilité de se livrer à des considérations finales, qui rendent raison de sa longueur. Quelques questions résument bien son souci par rapport à ce sujet et à son importance capitale pour toute la Congrégation. Les voici :

La Congrégation pourra-t-elle atteindre sa fin, accomplir ses œuvres, si ses enfants ne sont pas en possession d’une science vaste, profonde et solide ? Auront-ils cette science s’ils ne se livrent assidûment à l’étude ?

Pourront-ils se sanctifier, former en eux-mêmes Jésus-Christ s’ils ne l’étudient avec une attention persévérante, qui produise un amour toujours plus ardent ? Et s’ils n’arrivent à cette connaissance et à cet amour, qui les identifiera avec le divin Maître et fera d’eux d’autres
Jésus-Christ, seront-ils capables de communiquer sa vie aux âmes, de la développer en elles et de lui donner tout son épanouissement ? (p. 126).

Nous arrêtons ici notre lecture de cette lettre si importante. Nous n’en avons souligné que des aspects, dans le but de susciter une sainte « curiosité » qui pousse à la reprendre en main et à la lire dans son intégralité, car elle mérite réellement d’être lue et méditée, dans nos maisons de formation mais aussi à n’importe quel stade de notre vie et de notre ministère.

Loin de vouloir être exhaustif dans ces quelques pages, mon objectif est celui de créer un certain intérêt par rapport à ce sujet, et de susciter en d’autres confrères l’envie de continuer la recherche et l’étude sur ce thème. Les 200 ans de notre histoire, l’expérience et l’enseignement de notre Fondateur, la tradition et les sources oblates (les lettres de nos Supérieurs généraux, les Actes de nos Chapitres généraux, une abondante littérature oblate et beaucoup d’autres recherches) nous ont légué du matériel abondant qui peut aider en cette recherche. Il suffit de s’y passionner…

Je voudrais terminer ces quelques considérations avec un texte très connu et un peu plus récent, où le père Jetté nous partage ses attentes par rapport à la formation initiale de nos candidats. C’était pendant une rencontre avec les scolastiques d’Europe, le 16 juillet 1979. Dans sa causerie, il cherche à répondre à deux questions : Qu’attendez-vous de la formation pour le service de l’Église actuelle ? Qu’est-ce que la Congrégation attend des scolastiques aujourd’hui ? Les six points dans lesquels s’articule sa réponse à ces deux questions méritent d’être relus et médités ; ici, je me limiterais à citer le sixième de ces points :

Des hommes qui, au plan philosophique et théologique, possèdent une solide base doctrinale, laquelle les rend capables de stabilité en même temps que d’accueil et de discernement, face aux divers courants qui passent. Aujourd’hui surtout, et en raison de la vocation qui est nôtre, cette solidité doctrinale est indispensable. Autrement, selon les circonstances et ses propres tendances, on devient la proie facile des courants qui passent, la proie de l’intégrisme, ou du
marxisme, ou des sciences cosmiques, ou de la recherche du merveilleux, alors qu’on devrait être un guide évangélique, et un guide sûr, de l’homme d’aujourd’hui.

Bien sûr, on comprend mieux cette réponse en tenant compte des circonstances historiques et culturelles de l’époque, et le père Jetté lui-même en est conscient ; c’est pourquoi il ajoute :

C’est une constatation assez générale, et pas seulement chez les Oblats. En plusieurs pays, le niveau des études philosophiques et théologiques a diminué. Et c’est là une cause de préoccupation pour l’avenir. Des adaptations étaient nécessaires ; une plus grande souplesse s’imposait mais, à cause des circonstances surtout (diminution des scolastiques, fermeture de plusieurs scolasticats, changement dans les systèmes d’éducation…) on a réduit considérablement le temps consacré à l’étude de la philosophie et même à la formation théologique proprement dite, et cela à une époque où les laïcs se spécialisent davantage et deviennent plus exigeants pour le prêtre, comme conseiller et animateur spirituel.

Le père Jettè cite ici le père Arrupe et la question qu’il se pose dans son Rapport sur l’état de la Compagnie en 1978 : « Quand on constate de quelle façon plusieurs de nos jeunes ont fait leurs études en ces provinces et la pauvreté de leurs connaissances, on se demande si ces prêtres seront capables d’exercer leur ministère comme l’Église et la Compagnie l’exigent ». Et, revenant aux Oblats, il conclut par cette invitation :

Je vous mentionne la chose pour que, de votre côté, vous teniez beaucoup à la formation doctrinale et que vous vous y donnez de tout votre cœur. Elle est indispensable à la mission évangélisatrice de l’Oblat. Et si un jour, quelqu’un parmi vous se sentait des dispositions et un attrait spécial pour une spécialisation en philosophie, en théologie, en spiritualité, en missiologie…, il ne devrait pas hésiter à le dire. La Congrégation a besoin d’hommes comme ceux-là, d’hommes spécialisés dans les sciences ecclésiastiques et dans les sciences de l’homme en vue de la mission.¹²

Ce texte m’a fait penser à un passage du rapport du père Jetté au Chapitre général de 1980, dans lequel il traite de trois « problèmes sérieux » : Le premier est la pénurie de formateurs compétents et le troisième est celui de l’intégration des jeunes Oblats à leur Province. Le deuxième est très lié au sujet de cette étude. Voici ce que le père écrit :

Un deuxième problème est celui des maîtres à penser et des divergences qui existent entre théologiens sur des questions aussi importantes que le mystère du Christ et de l’Église, la nature du sacerdoce, les fondements de la loi naturelle, le rôle du Magistère ecclésiastique… Les candidats doivent être conscients de l’angoisse pastorale qui existe face à des situations humaines apparemment insolubles ; ils doivent, en même temps, fonder leur savoir théologique sur les certitudes de la foi « en pleine communion avec le Magistère authentique de l’Église […] ». Autrement ils auront beaucoup à souffrir eux-mêmes et deviendront facilement pour l’Église cause de souffrances.

À ce propos, le père Jetté cite les paroles de Jean Guitton qui observait, quelques années auparavant, « le prestige étrange, extraordinaire » des maîtres de l’incroyance dans les milieux catholiques (L’osservatore romano, 1er septembre 1967). Le Père Général a plus d’une fois associé à ces maîtres les « maîtres du soupçon ». Tous, ils exercent sur la formation des influences nombreuses et fort variées. Leurs doctrines peuvent être une richesse, mais c’est une richesse qui exige, de la part des formateurs, beaucoup de compétence et de discernement.13

Ces derniers textes nous mettent en contact avec la réalité de nos jours. Les « maîtres du soupçon » n’ont fait qu’augmenter, et d’autres ont surgi, paladins de nouveaux messianismes. Cela nous demande, de manière plus pressante et urgente que jamais, de nous pencher sur les courants de la pensée contemporaine, de nous mettre à l’étude pour apprendre de quelle manière nous, missionnaires Oblats du 21ème siècle, nous pouvons dialoguer avec ce monde qui est toujours aimé par Dieu mais qui semble avoir perdu tout repère.

Il reste tant d’autres textes, dans les écrits du Fondateur et dans la tradition oblate, que l’on pourrait consulter pour enrichir cette recherche. La jeune Association des Instituts Oblats d’Enseignement Supérieur (AOIHL en est l’acronyme en anglais) pourra peut-être organiser un symposium pour nous aider dans cette réflexion et dans cette tâche.

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Vita et Missio

SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA, CANADA

PASCALE THERIAULT - SCOTT FOWLER

A HISTORY OF SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY

The origins of Saint Paul University date back to September 26, 1848, when the College of Bytown was founded by Bishop Joseph-Eugène Guigues, OMI. In 1856, he officially entrusted the College to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

In 1861, the College of Bytown was renamed College of Ottawa; it was granted university status by the Government of the Union of Canada in August 1866. By letters of Pope Leo XIII, dated February 5, 1889, College of Ottawa was granted the pontifical charter.

To meet the requirements of Pope Pius XI’s Apostolic Constitution Deus Scientiarum Dominus, on the reorganization of Catholic universities, the administration revised its pontifical charter, which was approved by Rome on November 15, 1934. The civil charter, which had been rewritten, was approved on April 18, 1933, by the Ontario Legislature, and the University was henceforth officially known as the University of Ottawa.

By 1965, the University had established nine faculties and four schools. On July 1, 1965, through an Act of the Ontario Legislature and after laborious negotiations between the University and the provincial government, the institution that had until now been designated the University of Ottawa became Saint Paul University; it nonetheless kept its civil and canonical charters. At the same time, the provincial government formed a new institution, to be known as the University
of Ottawa, to which Saint Paul University conceded the majority of its holdings. The two universities became a federated complex and, according to mutual agreement, were to share faculties.

Both universities consider themselves complementary institutions. Saint Paul University appoints eight members to the Board of Governors of the University of Ottawa. The Rector of Saint Paul University is a member of the Senate of the University of Ottawa, and the faculties of Saint Paul University are also represented in the academic Senate of the University of Ottawa by their dean, secretary and a professor elected by his or her colleagues. Moreover, the two universities benefit from a mutual exchange of professors, and they mutually recognize their courses.

In addition to conferring its own degrees, Saint Paul University reserves the right to present its candidates to the Senate of the University of Ottawa for the joint conferment (Saint Paul University – University of Ottawa) of its certificates, diplomas and civil degrees. With its strong Catholic tradition, Saint Paul University is fully aware of its special mission and possibilities. Located in Ottawa and federated with the University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University and its diverse teaching staff are committed to delivering quality academic training in both official languages and to preserving the institution’s distinct Catholic intellectual culture.

ACADEMIC OFFERINGS

Today, Saint Paul University offers a wide range of programs across its four faculties: canon law, human sciences, philosophy and theology.

Faculty of Canon Law

Saint Paul University received the authority to confer ecclesiastical degrees in Leo XIII’s Apostolic Letter Cum Apostolica Sede of February 5, 1889. In 1929, the Faculty of Canon Law was established as distinct from the Faculty of Theology, and after Pope Pius XI’s Apostolic Constitution Deus Scientiarum Dominus of May 24, 1931, the faculty was reorganized. Following Vatican II (1962–1965), the program was
updated to conform to the needs of today’s university teaching and the demands of modern pastoral activity.

Following the wishes of Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana of April 15, 1979, the Faculty of Canon Law cultivates and promotes the juridical disciplines in the light of the law of the Gospel and instructs its students in these, so as to form researchers, university and seminary teachers, and others who will be trained to hold special ecclesiastical offices, such as chancery and tribunal positions, and to serve as advisors to bishops and religious superiors.

In 2002, the Holy See promulgated new norms for the teaching of canon law. These required a complete revision and expansion of our programs, effective 2004–2005. The programs and course descriptions reflect the application of the new norms.

Ecclesiastical degrees are granted in virtue of the 1889 pontifical charter, and civil degrees are granted jointly by the Senate of Saint Paul University, in virtue of its 1866 civil charter, and by the Senate of the University of Ottawa, which is federated with Saint Paul University.

Members of the international teaching personnel are actively involved in serving the Church beyond the walls of the University through their publications and expert advice to the Holy See, to bishops and religious superiors, as well as to clergy and laity alike.

Twice a year, the faculty publishes the journal Studia canonica. This publication, which is the only canon law journal in Canada, enjoys a solid international reputation.

Although the majority of its students come from Canada and the United States, many other countries and continents are represented. The student body is composed of priests, deacons, religious – women and men – and many lay persons. Although several are studying canon law after years of service in various sectors of Church and society, an increasing number of young students are interested in undertaking the ministry of canon law.

Faculty of Human Sciences

The Faculty of Human Sciences offers programs in five distinct fields of study: Conflict Studies; Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality; Social Communication; Social Innovation; and Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.
School of Conflict Studies

The need to understand, explain and reconcile deep-rooted conflicts is ever increasing. The School of Conflict Studies seeks to advance the field of conflict studies through cutting-edge research, best practices and educating a new generation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding experts. With programs from the bachelor’s to the doctoral level, the school promotes in-depth, multifaceted exploration of conflict and resolution possibilities – from interpersonal disputes to global conflicts.

School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality

In our global multicultural environment, there is a desire to explore the spiritual dimension of everyday life. The School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality seeks to fulfill this desire by incorporating spirituality and exploring how it influences and informs human relations. Through its programs – which range from bachelor’s to PhD – the school seeks to foster a community of scholars and practitioners who are committed to academic excellence, to the creative development of the individual and to research in new areas of pastoral practice.

School of Social Communication

Social communication explores how information is perceived, transmitted and understood. It also considers the societal impacts of various mediums, as well as the cultural, political and sociological aspects of communication. The School of Social Communication seeks to equip its students with the critical thinking and communications skills they need to navigate and work in this ever-changing field.

Élisabeth-Bruyère School of Social Innovation

Founded in 2016, the Élisabeth-Bruyère School of Social Innovation is the first school of social innovation in Canada. Its approach to social innovation is clear: the objective must be social transformation. Practising what it preaches, the school offers a one-of-a-kind education model featuring intensive teaching blocks for mandatory courses. This approach allows for more consistency between courses, more practical experiences and a more in-depth exploration of each subject.
All students in social innovation are members of the Mauril-Bélanger Social Innovation Workshop (the Atelier), a centre for training and collaboration for people and organizations that want to have a positive impact on the community. As part of the Élisabeth-Brûyère School of Social Innovation, the Atelier serves as a dynamic hub that cultivates innovative projects, social entrepreneurship and social innovation research. Students are supported by the Atelier as they work on social innovation projects in partnership with community groups.

_Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality_

Launched in 2017, the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality is home to programs that offer a progressive, multidisciplinary approach to exploring and developing leadership capabilities. Students engage with the latest research on the intellectual, spiritual, personal and professional dimensions of leadership. Combining a focus on self-reflection and critical thought, they develop their capacity for transformative leadership to mobilize resources to address contemporary systemic challenges and to enact holistic, inclusive and meaningful change.

_Faculty of Philosophy_

The Faculty of Philosophy offers top-quality training in a reflective and open intellectual environment. With small class sizes and highly qualified professors, students can benefit from intellectually challenging discussions, participate in scholarly research and delve into the questions raised by our society and tradition.

At the undergraduate level, the faculty offers programs in Ethics. These programs provide a basic understanding of ethics while giving students an opportunity to expand their knowledge of various aspects of the subject, according to their needs and aspirations.

At the graduate level, the Faculty of Philosophy offers programs in public ethics where students analyze in-depth questions related to government ethics: ethics and democracy; ethics and the legislator; political and economic ethics; institutional and politico-administrative ethics; the ethics of international relations; and ethical concerns of those who act in the public realm. They also examine social ethical questions:
social justice; the redistribution of riches and resources; concerns of various communities; values and principles at the basis of contemporary social organization; the role of civil society and social actors in the dynamics of social and political life; and social ethics projects.

**Faculty of Theology**

The Faculty of Theology is one of the founding faculties of Saint Paul University. Based in scripture and tradition, the faculty’s theological research is enriched by a solid understanding of biblical and patristic sources in accord with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

In keeping with the ecumenical teaching of Vatican II, the faculty, in collaboration with the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, offers a program of Anglican Studies at the bachelor level and welcomes students from various ecclesial communities.

The Faculty of Theology values sound research and teaching that serve the Church and the common good of the wider society. It offers various programs for people who are preparing for a particular ministry or who seek to pursue critical research in one of the fields of theology, including Biblical Studies, Eastern Christian Studies, Ethics, Spirituality, Systematic and Historical Theology, as well as Practical Theology.

Just as the University has evolved to meet contemporary needs, so too has the Faculty of Theology. It is going through a revitalizing process, which includes developing courses and programs that explore contemporary issues through the lens of theology.

**GOVERNING VALUES**

**Our Identity**

We are a research and higher education community entrusted to the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

We freely explore knowledge according to the Catholic intellectual tradition, which is open to continuous conversation between faith, reason and culture.

We commit ourselves to seek the truth; to promote human dignity, justice, peace and the integrity of creation; as well as to put education at the service of the poor, while respecting Oblate values.
Bilingual and inclusive, we foster mutual understanding between believers of all traditions and non-believers, as well as between cultures.

_Our Mission_

Saint Paul University integrates learning and research with social engagement, thus making it possible to offer a unique student experience. The University participates in dialogue on contemporary issues and is strongly focused on social justice.

_Vision_

To support transformative leadership on the part of individuals and communities for
- the well-being of the planet;
- the healing of broken human relationships; and
- a respectful dialogue with Canada’s First Peoples.

_Values: Engaged. Human. Open. Spiritual._

To be human is to recognize the ephemerality of life and acknowledge one’s limitations and vulnerability; to recognize that one can find the true meaning of life only through one’s relationships with nature, with others, and with God. We firmly believe that in our age of increasing globalization, university research and teaching should contribute to the modern project of making our world a better, more humane community.

Saint Paul University offers an open and safe environment where no one is a stranger or an outsider. Our university welcomes all who want to journey together along the pathway to learning, discovery, excellence, service, and personal growth.

The Catholic identity and the ecumenical character of Saint Paul University favour a learning environment that allows students to explore existential questions following the Catholic intellectual tradition. This helps our students to understand and navigate the pluralism so characteristic of today’s world, and to interact confidently with that world.
In September 2018, Saint Paul University (SPU) engaged in a renewal process for its strategic plan, entitled *Dare to Change*. The new version of the plan was launched in 2020.

Our objective was to determine how we could remain relevant in the years ahead. This meant interpreting the needs, realities and expectations of the entire community as well as the context in which the institution is evolving.

The development of our strategic plan was guided by a shared vision, which is to support transformative leadership on the part of individuals and communities for

– the well-being of the planet;
– the healing of broken human relationships; and
– a respectful dialogue with Canada’s First Peoples.

The 2020–2025 strategic plan is centred on the following four priorities:

– Each person is welcomed into a strong learning community, develops a real sense of belonging and has a unique holistic experience.
– Saint Paul University fills a unique niche in the post-secondary environment and plays a leading role in the region, in Canada and abroad.
– Engagement with society inspires all experiences at Saint Paul University.
– Saint Paul University extends its action by focusing on a collaborative and innovative approach.

This new strategic framework allows us to take action and to embrace opportunities to better meet the needs of our university community and the broader community. It also gives us the opportunity to strengthen the innovative nature of our institution.

**How Saint Paul University Meets Present-Day Challenges**

*Identity struggle*

The modern era has brought many crises and struggles upon the Church and society. All around the globe, finding a balance between individuality and community has become more and more challenging.
An underlying tension is dividing communities. As wounded people, we risk carrying that tension with resentment without proper guidance, perspective and spiritual intelligence.

**Guiding Transformation. Together**

Saint Paul University responds to the needs of the local Church and society by fostering a spiritual environment that empowers individuals and awakens the transformative leadership that resides within every member of the community.

With its respectful, interconnected and transformative approaches, Saint Paul University welcomes all who want to journey together along a path of learning, discovery, excellence, spirituality and personal growth. In fact, through collective and individual empowerment, Saint Paul University drives change and self-actualization that are needed in modern society.

**Audacious and practical**

More than a university specializing in human sciences, canon law and theology, Saint Paul University is a community seeking to guide the transformation necessary to building a more humane and just society on a global scale. Pursuing Eugene de Mazenod’s mission, true to the Oblate charism, Saint Paul University is both audacious and practical, a nimble institution that responds quickly to present-day challenges.

Our pedagogical approaches are centred on teaching students critical thinking, writing skills, analytic approaches and research methods to maximize students’ potential of becoming ethical participating citizens, prepared and confident to address modern global issues and insights within the scope of social change.

In addition to its programs of study, Saint Paul University promotes innovation and social development through its services and centres.

**Mauril-Bélanger Social Innovation Workshop (The Atelier)**

The Atelier aims to offer a space for working collaboratively, for training and knowledge transfer, as well as to support initiatives, organizations and social innovation enterprises. The Atelier also wants to ensure a link between the community and the Élisabeth-Bruyère School.
of Social Innovation by creating partnerships with local organizations and giving students the opportunity to have an experience that will complete their general formation.

**Centre for Informal Dispute Resolution**

The Centre for Informal Dispute Resolution, an organization with a practical orientation that was created in 2018, is managed by the School of Conflict Studies. The centre’s role is to develop skills and research in the area of informal dispute resolution. Saint Paul University has been at the forefront of Canadian innovators in this field for over 20 years through its Conflict Studies programs at the bachelor’s, master’s and PhD levels. Through practical training provided by our conflict resolution experts, students strengthen their negotiation, dialogue, conciliation, mediation and arbitration skills to prevent, mitigate, manage and/or peacefully resolve disputes and conflicts in a professional context within society.

**Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre**

The Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre offers counselling and psychotherapy in English and French. Services are provided by master’s and doctoral students in Saint Paul University’s School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality. The counselling interns are supervised by professionals who are certified and accredited by a recognized professional association.

The centre welcomes individuals dealing with various issues, such as anxiety and mood disorders, relationship problems, life transitions and personal growth challenges, spiritual questions and diverse communication and assertiveness difficulties. It also helps couples and families dealing with relationship problems, grief, separation and divorce, communication difficulties, connection and intimacy-related concerns, infidelity and reconciliation, premarital counselling and personal growth processes.

**Indigenous Initiatives Services**

Acknowledging the conflicting and challenging history of Oblate missionaries with Indigenous communities, Saint Paul University is
paving a new path alongside Indigenous Peoples. Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s call, the University is leading a change of paradigms by nurturing and promoting Indigenous leadership within and outside the institution. This commitment began five years ago and resulted in significant investments in its infrastructure, administrative and human resources to promote respectful dialogue, collaborative action and partnerships with First Nations communities. Saint Paul University has established Indigenous Studies programs and created an Indigenous Initiatives Centre. The services provided are geared to creating a safe and inclusive space to support Indigenous students throughout their university career as well as increasing awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues. Developed in collaboration with First Nations community members in Kitigan Zibi and Pikwakanàgan, our initiatives resonate locally, provincially and nationally and contribute to social change.

Centre for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons

The Centre for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons works to help eliminate the threat and trauma of sexual abuse in society and within the Church. To reinforce this mission, the centre focuses on research and education, promoting prevention strategies and offering healing assistance to those affected by sexual abuse.

The centre offers a variety of academic programs and professional development services, including seminars, on-demand learning and workshops. The centre also provides direct services, including consultations and audits for community organizations that wish to evaluate and improve their safeguarding practices and policies.

Partnering with the Community

Saint Paul University has also continued building relations and partnerships with the extended community. To name a few among many, we are partners with the National Newcomer Navigation Network to develop e-learning programs, providing opportunities for professional development, education, networking and sharing of resources to staff working in hospitals and community centres across Canada. We currently have students registered from eight provinces. We also estab-
lished a partnership with the Kiuna Institution, the only First Nations College in Quebec, and the Cégep de Victoriaville (human sciences, community development profile) to offer a new DEC-BAC Option to its graduates, giving them an opportunity to obtain an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Social Innovation from Saint Paul University.

*Saint Paul University’s Abidance to the Oblate Charism*

Charism, as Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, defines it, is an attempt to meet and experience the presence of God and the cosmic world in order to come into a community of life and celebration with them. Charism, therefore, is embedded in spirituality.

“The tree lives from its roots.” The past is a root, a living reality which helps us live; it is not a tomb, something definitely dead, archival material! We study the past to interpret the present and to have the key of how to respond to contemporary needs and to prepare in a creative way for the future: the Founder does not hold back, he is “ahead of us, calls us, leads us.” (Father Léo Deschâtelets, OMI)

The This wisdom is precisely the spiritual philosophy that animates the Oblate charism and furthermore inspires Saint Paul University to build on acquired knowledge and lessons of the past.

With its particular combination of actions and identity characterized by Favoring a deep sense of community, actualization and innovation, Saint Paul University has maintained its missionary vision predicated on the conviction that compassion must be collective to be effective.

Saint Paul University has developed a specialized curriculum that focuses on transformative leadership and collective empowerment. The curriculum posits that everyone can become a complete person (the best version of himself or herself and an authentic Christian) with the help of the power of the Gospel.

Two centuries of Missionary Oblate history has taught us that higher education is one of several paths in helping the less fortunate. Well aware of the challenges of this mission, Saint Paul University has committed to providing inclusive and quality education, training and research opportunities to democratize learning. When the needs of the poor and the marginalized are at stake, Saint Paul University is ready to give its best and to embrace integral human development.
Oblate charism can be recognized within our institution by our commitment to the following principles:

1. *Academic Excellence*

   We excel by learning from the best practices of the academic and professional community, submitting to public standards and peer review of research, teaching, programs and professors. In every field of learning, we promote the standards of professional ethics and administrative best practices from a Christian perspective.

2. *Dialogue with Human Sciences*

   In the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes*, we are academic missionaries who love the world. We welcome every academic discipline that helps to transform the conditions of the poor. We welcome an open dialogue with everyone, seeking always to better understand and develop people, culture, society and history. Hence our specialization in the human and social sciences.

3. *Listening to the Signs of the Times*

   Beyond what is formally analyzed from texts, studies and research of all kinds, education is all about what is encountered through the senses. All education, formal and informal, happens in some place and time, has a geography and a history. Hence, we give the commitment of Oblate education to contextual learning, to reading the signs of the times, to reverencing the integrity of creation and responsible stewardship of the earth.

4. *Internationality*

   We all need to change our ways of seeing and hearing: the imperative of the moment is dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. This requires a full commitment to the mix of cultures and to communion within the family of nations.
5. Social Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Our actions are guided by justice, peace and the integrity of creation as an integral part of community development. Our institution lives from the hope that the face of the earth can be renewed, when the wisdom of multigenerational and multicultural communities joins hands in solidarity with the research and teaching of educators.

6. Development of Christian Disciples and Leaders

Oblate higher education draws from the best practices of modern studies in human, social and religious fields to prepare both disciples and leaders to become lifelong learners for the good of both society and the Church.

7. Commitment to the Church as Communion

Saint Paul University puts communion in action by leading individuals to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and finally helping them to become citizens of the world. The influence of its founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, is reflected in all aspects of the institution’s development: educating for co-responsibility, teamwork, consultation, collaboration, freedom, democracy and weaving the fabric of community in sharing and service.

8. Community Life – Source and Goal of Oblate Higher Education

We nurture strong beliefs that the best ways of learning are in community, through community and for community. Knowledge grows through shared experience, collaborative research and the symposium of critical reflection.

9. Global Solidarity among Oblate Institutions of Higher Learning

Through organic links, Saint Paul University’s efforts are rich and resilient. By networking using their own resources and partnering with the broader communities, Catholic institutions and churches, we promote stronger ecclesiastical studies and learn to benefit from the public standards of professional associations. At the same time, we remain ac-
countable to stakeholders: the poor and most abandoned, Church and civil leaders, and professionals.

10. Training for Dialogue with Other Religions and Cultures

Dialogue is imperative for the future if peace is to prevail in the modern world, where many long-established religions and spiritual movements must co-exist. Our institution strongly believes that dialogue is the condition of learning from one another.

A Sharing of Knowledge and Research

Jean-Léon Allie Library and Archives

Saint Paul University can proudly depend on the Jean-Léon Allie Library and Archives to embrace the principal languages and intellectual traditions in its areas of specialization: theology, philosophy, canon law, human sciences, and related topics. Its collection contains over 500,000 volumes, 1,000 current periodicals and some 100,000 microforms. Created in 1937, the library of the University of Ottawa’s seminary was founded by the late Father Jean-Léon Allie, OMI. Father Allie devoted much of the next more than 40 years to the library, first as Acquisitions Librarian and then as University Librarian Emeritus, until his death in 1996. Starting with only four books, the library immediately began to grow through generous donations from other religious institutions as well as through the founder’s judicious purchases; it went on to become the largest library of its kind in Canada. The excellent quality of the library has long been recognized by scholars in philosophy, medieval studies and theology. As early as 1963, in a survey conducted for the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, Edwin E. Williams of Harvard University stated, “Ottawa (i.e. Saint Paul University) has nationally outstanding collections for philosophy and religious history, with advanced research holdings for work in … medieval studies.” As a research library, our institution seeks to embrace a non-circulating research facility; the Jean-Léon Allie Library serves an international student population with a high percentage of students at the post-graduate level.
Research

Strongly geared toward excellence in research, Saint Paul University currently leads a number of important research initiatives:

Research centres

- Research Centre for Vatican II and 21st Century Catholicism
- Centre for Religious Education and Catechesis
- Research Centre in Public Ethics and Governance
- Centre for Research on Conflict
- Lonergan Centre
- Centre of Excellence for Research in Psychotherapy and Spirituality
- Center for Research on Innovations and Social Transformations

Research chairs

- Research Chair for Religious History of Canada
- Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross (Soeurs-de-Notre-Dame-de-la-Croix) for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons
- Mercy and Presentation Sisters Chair in Religious Education and Catechesis
- Research Chair in Clinical and Organizational Bioethics

Research groups and laboratories

- Attention, Behaviour, and Cognitions Lab
- Research Group on Social Reconciliation, Just Peace, and Development

Pascale Theriault - Scott Fowler
Ottawa, Canada
Notre Dame University is located in Cotabato City, Mindanao, Philippines. Cotabato City is situated within the newly-created Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). BARMM is one of the poorest, if not the poorest of the regions in the whole country. For so long, the poorest provinces in the Philippines are in this region. People have not only been struggling with poverty; this has also been the site of decades-long armed conflict and rebellion.

Not so long ago, in 2019, after the long process of negotiations, the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front were able to enter into an agreement that resulted in the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It is hoped that this would finally lead to the long-desired peace, development and prosperity within the area. It is hoped that BARMM will succeed for the sake of all the peoples within this region.

This region is a home for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This is where they do their mission and ministry. This is also where Notre Dame University is. This is where Notre Dame University serves as an Oblate-owned educational institution.

The Beginnings: The Magnificent Seven

Notre Dame University’s history can never be dissociated from the story of the pioneering Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Philippines.

The Oblate mission in the Philippines began with seven pioneering Oblates from the United States. These seven are now known as the Magnificent Seven. They were indeed magnificent. Three of
them would become bishops. All of them, however, would have leg-
endary contributions to the Oblate missions in the Philippines. The
Magnificent Seven – Archbishop Gerard Mongeau, Bishop Francis
McSorley, Bishop George Dion, Fr. Emile Bolduc, Fr. Joseph Boyd,
Fr. Cuthbert Billman and Fr. Egide Beaudoin – would always have
a special place of remembrance in the history of the OMI Philippine
Province.

Right from the beginning, their missionary expedition was seem-
ingly bound to failure. The Oblates arrived in 1939. Two years after,
the Second World War broke out. Thus, instead of tending to thriving
missions, the early Oblate missionaries ended up in a Japanese concen-
tration camp. After liberation, still reeling from the horrors of war, they
could have opted to go back to their home country. But, true to their
missionary calling, they stayed and started all over again.

Eight decades after, the work of evangelization began by these
early Oblate missionaries and continued by many others is a wonderful
sight to behold. There are many concrete signs of mission and evan-
gelization in the territories ministered to by the Oblates, e.g., the or-
ganization of more ecclesiastical territories, the establishment of the
diocean clergy, the growth of local Oblate vocations and the sending
of missionaries abroad, the founding of a society of nuns and a Secular
Institute, the establishment of strings of schools, mass media entities,
hospitals, clinics, housing projects for the poor, social action programs,
ministry to the Indigenous Peoples, Inter-religious Dialogue with the
Muslims, involvement in peace-building efforts and many, many more.
So many blessings indeed – not without pain, not without struggles, not
without challenges. God, in the inscrutability of his grace, has blessed
the mission of the Oblates.

THE BIRTH OF THE FIRST HEI IN THE EMPIRE PROVINCE OF COTABATO

When the OMIs arrived in the Philippines in 1939, there was only
one high school for the entire Empire Province of Cotabato. The Em-
pire Province of Cotabato was a vast territory that included then the
provinces now of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, North
Cotabato, and Sarangani, as well as the cities of Cotabato, Tacurong,
Koronadal, General Santos, and Kidapawan.
The total land area of the original Cotabato before its division was 2,296,791 hectares, or about one-thirteenth of the whole country, which has an area of about 30 million hectares. So big was the original province that its area was about the size of the central plain of Luzon and bigger than six states in the United States, including the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The total land area of the Hawaiian Islands (now a U.S. state) is only about three-fourths that of Cotabato. (https://cotabatoprov.gov.ph/about/our-province/).

Ever close to the people, listening to their cry, seeing a most urgent need for education, with only one high school in such a vast territory, Oblates ventured into education ministry. Such venture resulted in the phenomenal establishment of strings of schools named Notre Dame, meaning our Lady referring to Mary, our Blessed Mother.

According to Archbishop Mongeau, the first archbishop of Cotabato (his missionary life should also merit a closer look in another study):

The opening of a Notre Dame school in Cotabato immediately after the (Second World) war sent a magnetic current through the whole (empire province of Cotabato). Every town began and continued for years to ask for a Notre Dame. Thus, the chain of Notre Dame begun.

The story is quite interesting! Immediately after the opening of Notre Dame of Cotabato, delegates from Marbel, Lagao, and Midsayap came to Cotabato, in spite of hardships of travel, to request the opening of Notre Dame Schools in their towns.

Eventually, Notre Dame schools would be established not only in the Empire Province of Cotabato but also in Sulu and Tawi Tawi as well as the Visayas and Manila, even in Hong Kong (which for a time was still part of the OMI Philippine Province).

Just a few years after responding to the need of establishing schools for basic education, an urgent appeal to also cater to tertiary education soon followed. A college was needed. Thus, in June of 1948, Notre Dame College was born – he very first Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Empire Province of Cotabato.
THEEmergence of a University

When the first 128 students began their college education to become the first collegiate “Notre Damers”, they were entering an institution that came about as a felt need of the area by the people of Cotabato … They had petitioned, then, Fr. Gerard Mongeau who was the OMI Superior to open a tertiary institution and it became a dream of his – dream fulfilled in 1948… The needs of the community and area have always played a major role in the planning of Notre Dame Colleges of Cotabato as the institution grows into Notre Dame University. (Fr. Eliseo Mercado Jr., OMI)

Notre Dame College started simply as a teacher training institution in 1948. Eventually, it offered Liberal Arts, Commerce, and Elementary Education, the most basic programs needed in the context. With the increasing enrollment in the succeeding years and the growing needs of the community, new programs, e.g., Law, Nursing, and Engineering, were opened. Twenty-one years after, in 1969, this college was elevated to university status. Notre Dame College became Notre Dame University.

Notre Dame University’s history has been marked with successes, triumphs, and victories. However, it has also been colored by debilitating challenges, struggles, and difficulties. Various disasters (natural and human-made) happened along the way. To give a very few examples:

– At the height of the MNLF wars in the early 70s, NDU was not spared from the conflict. The skirmishes affected not only the peace and order situation but also the economy. NDU was swarmed by soldiers belonging to the 21st and 25th Army Battalions who were on lookout for rebel snipers within the vicinity of the University. The student population at the University suddenly dropped to less than 2,000 by 1973. One student was killed, and two others were wounded on different occasions by stray bullets.

– At a time when the University was heading towards development, the unexpected came. At about 12:13 midnight on August 17, 1976, a strong earthquake of tectonic origin rocked Cotabato City, causing damage to buildings, roads, schools, houses, and other structures. Then came the tsunamis wiping out thousands of houses in the coastal areas. Thousands of people died, and tens of thousands more were left homeless.
The destructive force of the earthquake did not spare NDU. The Administration-Science-Auditorium Building collapsed. The Burke and Technical Buildings suffered severe cracks.

Fast forward to the present times: prior to the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, a plebiscite was held connected with the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. But before this could happen, a huge explosion took place in the commercial district of downtown Cotabato City. Fear and anxiety pervaded the air. Then, during the same year, a series of earthquakes rocked different places in Mindanao which but recalled NDU’s horrific experience in 1976 which again added anxiety to people. And now, the pandemic...

Through the years, NDU has rejoiced in the achievements in its context and struggled in its adversities. NDU’s journey has not always been smooth-sailing. In its history, it suffered with the people in the experiences of conflict, tension, violence, war, earthquakes, fire, flooding, now, the pandemic—and so on. In all of these, NDU has persevered and striven to remain steadfast to its mission and ministry as an Oblate educational institution in Mindanao.

**NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

In 2005, Notre Dame University rearticulated its vision and mission. A series of sessions were conducted and participated in by the administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Thus, it resulted in this vision:

Guided by the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod and committed to excellence, NDU is a pioneer Catholic Oblates of Mary Immaculate educational institution in Central Mindanao. We envision being a leading institution for social transformation in Mindanao.

Our mission goals are:
1. to develop graduates who are locally and globally competitive;
2. to form persons with social conscience and responsibility;
3. to foster a culture of peace and dialogue of faiths and cultures;
4. to facilitate community empowerment for total human development especially among the poor;
5. to promote holistic institutional growth; and
6. to nurture a community of internal stakeholders and external partners valuing and sharing this vision and working towards its attainment.

_As a Catholic Oblates of Mary Immaculate educational institution_

Notre Dame University offers itself in service to all, non-Christians included, acknowledging, preserving, and promoting the spiritual and moral goods found among these persons, as well as the values in their society and culture.

For Academic Year 2020-2021, there are approximately 6,000 students enrolled in the different levels and programs of the University. One distinct feature in the composition of students is the continuous increase in the number of Muslim students. This is proportional to the Philippine Statistics Authority data (2010-2015) indicating that 76% of the Cotabateños are Muslims.

In compliance with the policies and guidelines of the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education, and its context of religious and cultural diversity, NDU has carefully prepared the different curricula anchored to the University’s vision and mission.

A unique feature of the curricula is the inclusion of Religious Studies as a subject, taught separately for Muslims and Christians from elementary to the tertiary level. Further, at the tertiary level, all students enroll the three-unit subject, Peace Education. The Graduate School offers Master of Arts in Peace Education and Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Development.

Part of the holistic and inclusive formation of students is the conduct of annual integrated recollections for non-graduating students and retreats for graduating students, Seminar on Inter-Religious Dialogue, Peace Orientation Workshop, Symposia on Christmas (Duyog Pasko), and Ramadhan (Duyog Ramadhan).

Notre Dame University views its personnel as lay partners of the Oblates in its missionary works. Around 72.71% of the personnel are Roman Catholics, 20.66% are Muslims, and 6.63% are Non-Catholic Christians. Although the personnel is predominantly Catholic, NDU organizes inclusive formation activities for Muslims and Non-Catholic Christians.
As an educational institution committed to excellence

Through the years, NDU has remained steadfast in its ministry of teaching and service by undergoing program accreditation. An accrediting body evaluates a specific program in the areas of instruction, faculty, laboratories, library, physical plant, administration, and community extension. The University has also undergone and achieved the ISO certification. Noteworthy is the performance of its graduates in licensure examinations with topnotchers in the Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Teacher Education, Nursing and Law programs.

As a leading institution in education for social transformation in Mindanao

In its seven decades as an educational institution, NDU continuously provides quality education to the youth and professionals through its basic, tertiary, and graduate education programs within the context of multiculturalism amidst the challenges of Mindanao conflict and poverty in the region.

Such quality education, which is inclusive, holistic, and transformative, gives students opportunities to know their purpose in life and leave nothing undared, that is, they learn and develop their abilities to their full potential and help others to the best of their abilities in the service of God and others.

As they participate and get themselves involved in personal, social, and civic activities, students become transformative leaders who live the values of faith, integrity, respect, excellence, and service (the core values of NDU) and practice charity (a distinctive trait of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate).

NDU hopes that these transformative leaders may be able to introduce a positive social change in Cotabato City (with a population of 299,438), Region XII (population: 4,245,838), and the BARMM (population: 3,781,387) as future entrepreneurs, employees of the private and public sectors, elected officials, and holders of key positions in the barangay, cities, nearby municipalities and provincial government units.
Facilitating community empowerment for total human development, especially among the poor

NDU has always been guided by the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod in embracing the poor. In the context of multiculturalism, NDU has designed its Community Extension Program that serves the needs of Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous Peoples.

The University Extension Program provides the adopted community with technical assistance through functional education, community organizing with a workshop on the culture of peace, health programs, cooperative formation, capability building, women in development, income-generating projects, and technical and loan assistance.

The Academic Extension Program refers to the integration of community extension in the offering of core courses. In these academic subjects, students must submit projects and studies that are community-oriented, apply community extension principles, and help empower the poor/disadvantaged in the identified community or the University’s adopted barangay (village/district).

CURRENT CONFIGURATION: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NEW NORMAL

In the midst of the global pandemic, NDU continues its service of providing quality education and opportunities in both basic (Kindergarten to Senior High School) and higher education (Tertiary, Law and Graduate School) through flexible learning, aligned with its vision-mission of education for social transformation.

Abrupt changes were made to adapt to the “new normal”. There was a sudden shift from seven decades of face-to-face operation to blended online and limited onsite enrollment and online as well as modular delivery of instruction. The University’s ICT, specifically in the area of internet connectivity, has been upgraded to support the demand for virtual spaces for various educational needs. Faculty trainings on the utilization of online teaching-learning platform were done.

A blend of asynchronous and synchronous modes of instructional delivery is utilized taking into account the capacity of all the members of the class in terms of Internet access. Faculty members’ monitoring of
the capacity of students specifically for synchronous classes is crucial to ensure inclusivity.

To monitor and ensure the quality of instruction, the Deans and Program Heads of each College are made members of all the class groups’ online accounts. This way, supervisors have access to all classes all the time.

The higher education sector offers 31 currently running programs from Graduate School, College of Law, and its five Colleges, namely, Arts and Sciences, Education, Business and Accountancy, Engineering and Computer Studies, and Health Sciences. The curricular offerings are based on the policies, standards, and guidelines set by the Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines.

MOVING FORWARD

20/20 is often associated with clear vision. Year 2020, however, conjures an ugly, murky picture. It was in this year that lockdowns and quarantines started in the Philippines because of the coronavirus pandemic. There were disruptions which led to an abrupt transition – from the so-called old normal to a new one. It is year 2021 now. Yet, NDU still continues to deal with this ongoing transition.

It has been more than a year now since the initial lockdown in the country. Unfortunately, instead of looking at the end of the crisis, there is even a recent surge and upsurge of Covid cases. In spite of this development, NDU dares to move forward even if circumstances still continue to remain volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

God is most kind. Grace and blessing abound in spite of numerous threats looming in the horizon. One of NDU’s best blessings is the granting of Autonomous Status to the University by the Commission on Higher Education. As the article in the Oblate-owned newspaper Mindanao Cross reported:

For demonstrating exceptional institutional quality and enhancement as well as outstanding performance as a Higher Education Institution, Notre Dame University has received Autonomous status from the Commission on Higher Education.

In one of his novels, Charles Dickens once wrote: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” In parallel, NDU’s best achieve-
ment was accomplished at the worst time—the time of the pandemic. With the *pandemia* as a backdrop, such achievement has become more meaningful, more significant, more sweet.

NDU is a Catholic school in the Bangsamoro context. *Afire with zeal*, Notre Dame University’s vision for social transformation lives on. Inspired by the Oblate model of reaching out to the most abandoned and responding to the most urgent need in a boundary-breaking mission and ministry, NDU moves forward with faith, hope and love in spite of various challenges encountered in the context. Through the loving intercession of Mary, Notre Dame, may God continuously bless NDU’s journey.

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Delma Ausan Yuarata

Mindanao, Philippines
Depuis presque quatre décennies, les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée du Congo sont impliqués dans l’enseignement supérieur, notamment à travers la formation théologique et missiologique. En 2018, au terme de plusieurs années de réflexion sur l’avenir de l’Institut Saint Eugène de Mazenod, ils ont décidé de créer l’Université de Mazenod (UDMAZ), ouvrant ainsi la porte de l’université à des milliers de jeunes Africains, religieux et laïcs, désireux de se former pour participer à la construction de l’Afrique et de l’Église locale de demain.

Je voudrais, dans les lignes qui suivent, tenter de relater brièvement l’histoire de cet établissement d’enseignement supérieur, donner sa configuration actuelle, indiquer son rôle et sa mission, montrer comment l’engagement des Missionnaires Oblats dans cette œuvre d’éducation répond effectivement aux besoins de la société et de l’Église locales ainsi qu’à la mission de la Congrégation. Je terminerai mon exposé en relevant les principales difficultés auxquelles l’Université de Mazenod fait face actuellement sans oublier de scruter les perspectives ouvertes sur la voie large de l’avenir.

Même délimité de la sorte, le sujet abordé ici reste vaste. Je ne compte donc pas examiner en détail les éléments de sa mise en route. J’essaierai surtout d’en retracer l’origine et l’évolution jusqu’à sa configuration actuelle, avec une emphase sur son rôle et sa mission dans la société et l’Église locales. Il est évident que ces quelques pages n’épuiseront pas le sujet ; celui-ci mérite un travail beaucoup plus ample.

**Brève histoire de l’Université de Mazenod**

En 1931, les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée venaient de Belgique pour s’installer dans la partie orientale de la mission jésuite du Kwango dans l’actuelle République Démocratique du Congo. Le but...
de cette fondation était de propager la foi, la fraternité et de « construire une société chrétienne à l’abri de mauvaises influences»¹. Cinq décennies plus tard, soit en 1981², le diocèse d’Idiofa, fondé par eux, avait connu un extraordinaire développement. Une méthode d’apostolat avait été mise au point ; des communautés ecclésiales vivantes (CEV) avaient été fondées ; des églises, des chapelles, des écoles primaires et secondaires, des centres de santé, des hôpitaux avaient été construits ; un innovant projet de développement communautaire, le Développement Progrès Populaire (DPP), avait été lancé et intégré dans une planification économique et sociale ; des centaines d’agents pastoraux laïcs avaient été formés ; un clergé diocésain autochtone parmi les plus dynamiques du pays s’était constitué, etc.

Il faut reconnaître qu’indépendamment de la force surnaturelle qui accompagne toute expansion missionnaire, l’action apostolique des Oblats au Congo a été l’occasion d’un enrichissement humain et spirituel immense. Car elle a permis à d’humbles hommes qui normalement seraient restés perdus dans l’anonymat de gagner au Christ des millions d’âmes et d’édifier sur la généreuse terre d’Idiofa une Eglise africaine authentique au service de la justice et de la réconciliation. Il s’agit là d’un héritage que les ressortissants de ce grand territoire congolais ne seraient pas prêts à oublier.

En 1981, le débat dans la vice-province du Congo portait sur des thèmes beaucoup plus problématiques que celui d’une simple “passation des pouvoirs” et se cristallisait particulièrement autour des questions liées à l’avenir de la mission oblate au Congo. La direction des Missionnaires Oblats, au Congo et en Belgique, attendait avec anxiété le moment du passage de flambeau. Elle comprenait bien que, pour marquer profondément l’ancrage du charisme oblat dans la réalité sociale congolaise, il fallait tout essayer en priorisant la formation religieuse et intellectuelle de la nouvelle génération d’Oblats congolais. C’est ainsi que fut fondé le scolasticat Saint Eugène de Mazenod avec un théologat intégré. Celui-ci se rendit disponible à accueillir les pre-


² En 1981, les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée célébraient à Ifwanzondo le cinquantenaire de leur présence en République Démocratique du Congo.


à former une élite capable de promouvoir le développement de l’Eglise et de la Nation congolaise.


Comment se présente aujourd’hui cet établissement d’enseignement supérieur ?

**Configuration actuelle de l’Université de Mazenod**

En l’espace de presque quatre décennies, l’Institut Saint Eugène de Mazenod a subi une transformation considérable. A peine transformé en université, le nouvel établissement d’enseignement supérieur s’affirme désormais comme un important centre de réflexion, de formation académique et de recherche.

Déployée sur l’unique campus de Kintambo à Kinshasa, l’Université de Mazenod est divisée en six facultés et offre à quelque six cents étudiants et de nombreux auditeurs des parcours de formation diversifiés en Théologie, Missiologie, Economie, Sciences informatiques, Administration des affaires. D’autres facultés seront ouvertes dès la prochaine rentrée académique : Droit, Sciences environnementales, Communication et Information.

L’Université organise des enseignements de premier et deuxième cycles dans toutes les facultés, en conformité avec le système LMD (Licence-Master-Doctorat) en vigueur depuis novembre 2020. Les études du 1er cycle s’appellent licences et durent trois ans, tandis que celles du deuxième cycle s’appellent maîtrises (Master) et durent deux ans. Le cycle doctoral n’est pas encore envisagé.

Près de cent professeurs, appuyés par un personnel administratif qualifié, se dévouent pour assurer un enseignement de qualité. Leur
proportion par rapport au nombre d’étudiants et de facultés est satisfaîsante.


L’Université de Mazenod est organisée de sorte à assurer le bon fonctionnement continu administratif de l’établissement. Elle est dirigée par un Comité de gestion nommé par le Supérieur provincial en conseil (Pouvoir organisateur). Le mandat de ce comité dure trois ans, et peut être renouvelé une fois. Le Comité de gestion est composé de trois membres : le Recteur, le Secrétaire général académique, le Secrétaire général administratif. Ceux-ci sont assistés de plusieurs secrétaires, d’un aumônier universitaire, d’un conseiller juridique et d’un service comptable.

Le Recteur coordonne toutes les activités de l’Université. Il présente annuellement un rapport d’activités au Conseil d’administration dont les membres sont, eux aussi, nommés par le Pouvoir organisateur.

Aujourd’hui, l’Institut Saint Eugène de Mazenod transformé en université jouit d’un bon rayonnement national, cultive son ouverture au monde grâce aux synergies avec des acteurs locaux et internationaux et se distingue par la polyvalence de son enseignement et de sa recherche, visant toujours l’excellence dans tous les domaines qu’elle choisit d’investir.

Qu’en est-il du rôle et de la mission de l’UDMAZ dans la société et l’Église locales ?

MISSION DE L’UNIVERSITÉ DE MAZENOD

On ne peut guère comprendre, comme il faut, la mission de l’UDMAZ dans la société et l’Église locales ni apprécier à leur juste valeur les projets de réformes suggérés par le Comité de gestion sans tenir compte du contexte sociopolitique, culturel et ecclésial du Congo dans

L’Église est passée d’un contexte missionnaire à un contexte de chrétienté relativement bien assumé. Elle est souvent au cœur des bouleversements et des drames que vit le pays. Au cours des trente dernières années, plusieurs prêtres, consacrés et laïcs – ont témoigné jusqu’au don de leur vie de l’amour universel de Dieu pour les humains, manifestant par là que le Christ aime le Congo et chacun de ses habitants. Mais c’est aussi une Eglise qui doit encore travailler en profondeur pour « établir sa carte d’identité religieuse pour le développement intégral de l’homme [...] et progresser dans la prise de conscience d’elle-même et de sa personnalité »\(^3\). Autrement dit, l’Eglise du Congo a encore du chemin à faire dans l’accomplissement de sa mission d’évangélisation et d’humanisation. Car, malgré sa forte influence sur les populations congolaises, elle peine toujours à peser de façon significative sur les grands enjeux de société dans un pays où la majorité des hommes et des femmes politiques se disent chrétiens et ont été formés dans des écoles catholiques et protestantes.

Sur le plan sociopolitique, malgré quelques avancées, les espoirs suscités à la suite de la proclamation de l’indépendance ont été déçus. On est passé, en 1967, du multipartisme au monopartisme avant de revenir au multipartisme intégral en 1990. La transition démocratique, commencée au début de la décennie 90, laisse toutefois espérer l’avènement d’un nouvel ordre politique. Mais cela pourra encore prendre du temps. Cette évolution sociopolitique est malheureusement accompagnée de crises politiques récurrentes avec leur cortège de misères sociales. Le Congo est aujourd’hui marginalisé et exploité au sein de la communauté internationale, où domine une globalisation qui ignore la solidarité. Le pays connaît la division intérieure, avec un fossé qui va s’élargissant entre riches et pauvres. Les conditions politiques et économiques qui y prévalent engendrent pauvreté, luttes et crises de toutes sortes qui, à leur tour, créent des situations de violence, d’injustice et d’insécurité. A côté de ce spectacle désolant, on assiste partout à la prolifération des institutions académiques qui n’ont d’université que le

nom. L’université congolaise « a ainsi perdu une part de son prestige. La prolifération des universités et leur spécialisation ont créé une situation de grande disparité : certaines jouissent d’un prestige incontesté, d’autres offrent à grand ‘peine un enseignement de qualité médiocre ». Conséquence, elle « n’a plus le monopole de la recherche » et, ce faisant, elle contribue à la fragilité des jeunes négativement influencés par la culture du moindre effort.

Aujourd’hui, l’Eglise se sent interpellée par le sort de la jeunesse congolaise, qui est désémparée dans une société où les esprits flottent, incertains, entre l’espoir et le doute. Dans l’accomplissement de sa mission, elle ne peut pas ne pas prendre en compte les effets néfastes des politiques publiques sur l’avenir de la “relève” des jeunes générations, victimes expiatoires de la précarisation généralisée et anxieuses face à leur avenir bouché.

Dans ce contexte, néanmoins, l’université apparaît comme l’espace où mûrissent les attentes des jeunes en quête de sens, d’identité et de repères. Cela signifie, pour l’Église locale, qu’il est nécessaire de s’engager dans l’apostolat auprès des jeunes, à travers un projet éducatif audacieux et ambitieux. Car « l’université et, plus largement, la culture universitaire constituent une réalité d’importance décisive. En ce milieu, des questions vitales sont en jeu et de profondes mutations culturelles aux conséquences déroutantes suscitent de nouveaux défis ».

La consultation et les nombreuses rencontres d’évaluation avec le Pouvoir organisateur et le Conseil d’administration ont mis en évidence le caractère apostolique de notre présence dans l’enseignement supérieur et universitaire. Toujours au cours de ces rencontres, toutes les instances de décision ont souhaité que l’UDMAZ se distingue des autres universités congolaises par une volonté affirmée d’assurer un leadership fort dans la quête et la transmission des savoirs, afin de participer à l’édification d’une société meilleure. C’est pour cette raison que l’UDMAZ entend « être au cœur de la société congolaise une Université qui innove, forme à l’excellence et engendre une élite capable de promouvoir le développement de l’Eglise et de la Nation ».

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5 Ibidem., Note préliminaire.
De cette vision découlent six priorités établies dans notre *Plan stratégique institutionnel* : veiller à l’assurance-qualité pour assurer la bonne gouvernance ; assurer un enseignement de qualité, qui réponde effectivement à l’adéquation entre l’offre de formation et la demande du marché ; organiser et améliorer l’activité de recherche, en cibler les thématiques pertinentes dans toutes les facultés ; procéder à un investissement important en personnel enseignant/administratif et en moyens financiers pour permettre à l’université d’assurer un enseignement de qualité et d’améliorer les conditions de travail des enseignants et des apprenants ; accroître les capacités d’accueil, améliorer la qualité des infrastructures et des équipements ; recenser concrètement les actions opérationnelles à prévoir pour une période de dix ans dans le but de mieux faire connaître l’Université. 

Il importe de rappeler ici que l’Université de Mazenod est née dans un contexte particulier où l’université publique congolaise se trouvait déjà plongée dans une crise sans cesse aggravée. On parle encore aujourd’hui de certaines antivaleurs qui ont détruit le système universitaire congolais : la corruption des enseignants, l’arbitraire dans l’évaluation finale des étudiants, « les points sexuellement transmissibles », la vente obligatoire de notes de cours par les enseignants pour se faire de l’argent, la banalisation de la tricherie, la multiplication des taxes arbitraires pour rançonner les étudiants...

La vue de ces désordres a amené les Oblats du Congo à descendre dans l’arène et à imaginer autrement l’université en veillant à ce que le Projet UDMAZ soit construit autour des valeurs qui se traduisent par une approche pédagogique tournée vers la réussite et le bien-être des apprenants et du personnel enseignant et administratif. Parmi ces valeurs il y a la foi en Dieu, l’exigence de la vérité, l’honnêteté, l’innovation, la créativité, la solidarité, la mixité, la discipline...

Je voudrais dire, à ce niveau, que l’Université de Mazenod accomplit essentiellement une mission de recherche, d’enseignement et de service à la société et à l’Église locales.

*Une mission de recherche*

L’Université de Mazenod travaille à la promotion et à l’accroissement de l’activité de la recherche grâce à l’apport des instruments cognitifs qu’offrent ses centres de recherche et de documentation. Les

**Une mission d’enseignement**

A l’Université de Mazenod, la formation académique vise principalement le développement intégral de la personne, aussi bien sur le plan humain, culturel, intellectuel, spirituel et apostolique. Pour cela, le travail de formation est mené dans un « effort de renouvellement sans cesse sollicité par l’évolution de la société, le développement de nouveaux secteurs de connaissance, les requêtes des économies en crise »

Il faut reconnaître que depuis 1982, la province OMI du Congo a procédé à un investissement important en personnel et en moyens financiers pour aider à améliorer la qualité de l’enseignement dans toutes les facultés. Dans les entretiens avec le corps enseignant, l’Equipe dirigeante insiste souvent pour que le parcours des étudiants soit enrichi sur les bénéfices associés à la mise en place des partenariats locaux ainsi que sur le rôle que l’Université pourrait être amenée à assumer sur le plan national.

Parmi les objectifs poursuivis dans le domaine de l’enseignement il y a l’amélioration et l’accroissement de la qualité de la formation académique et scientifique, la diffusion des savoirs et des connaissances culturelles, scientifiques ou techniques éprouvées ainsi que l’accélération du processus d’arrimage de l’UDMAZ au système Li-

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6 *Ibidem.*
cence-Maîtrise- Doctorat (LMD), tout en redéfinissant les curricula en fonction de ce processus. Dans ce but, nous avons procédé à la création des commissions d’études, spéciales ou permanentes, fait appel aux experts pour évaluer et ajuster les programmes d’études et aider à redéfinir les curricula en vue du passage de l’UDMAZ au système LMD, mis en place une structure de formation culturelle, marqué la formation académique d’une empreinte internationale, trouvés un mécanisme pour vérifier les capacités pédagogiques des enseignants, établis des critères d’évaluation clairs, harmonisé les normes typographiques pour les publications (articles et ouvrages) et la rédaction des travaux de fin de cycle, des concerts, des activités en rapport avec la solidarité et le volontariat.

Une mission de service à la société et à l’Eglise

LA PRÉSENCE OBLATE DANS L’ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET UNIVERSITAIRE RÉPOND-ELLE À LA MISSION DE LA CONGRÉGATION ?

La réponse à cette question n’est pas à chercher loin. Notre projet éducatif est une œuvre de zèle que la charité sacerdotale a inspirée dans l’exercice des saintes missions qui est la fin principale de notre réunion. Il rentre donc bien dans ce qu’il convient de présenter comme une des caractéristiques du charisme oblat : lorsque les conditions de la société sont telles qu’elles rendent difficile un authentique travail d’évangélisation, il s’agit d’améliorer le sort des humains. Car « aucun ministère ne nous est étranger, pourvu que nous ne perdions jamais de vue la fin principale de la Congrégation : l’évangélisation des plus abandonnés ».

Les Oblats du Congo ont mis longtemps avant de se lancer dans la création d’une université, institution qu’ils perçoivent comme une entreprise missionnaire répondant à un réel besoin : la formation d’une élité capable de promouvoir le développement de l’Eglise et de la Nation. Assurer cette formation est, pour eux, une manière nouvelle d’appuyer « les laïcs dans leurs efforts pour discerner et développer leurs propres talents et charismes et les encourager à prendre les responsabilités qui leur reviennent au sein de la communauté chrétienne ». Car malgré ses imperfections, l’UDMAZ est appelée à demeurer, « avec les autres Institutions d’enseignement supérieur, un lieu privilégié d’élaboration du savoir et de la formation, et à jouer un rôle fondamental pour préparer les cadres dirigeants de la société ».

La formation d’une élité responsable dans un pays en crise apparaît dès lors comme un défi que les Oblats se doivent de relever dans leur mission d’annoncer l’Évangile à des masses humaines grandissantes, dont « la condition réclame à grands cris une espérance et un salut que seul le Christ peut apporter en plénitude ». Mais cet engagement dans l’œuvre éducationnelle demande tout d’abord d’élaborer

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7 OMI, *Constituions et Règles*, Préface, Manuscrit de 1825.
8 OMI, *Constituions et Règles* (2018), R 7b.
9 *Ibidem*, R 7f.
10 Congrégation pour l’Education catholique – Conseil pontifical pour les laïcs – Conseil pontifical de la culture, *La présence de l’Eglise dans l’Université*.
et de communiquer une vision qui motive les membres de la Province et les pousse à participer activement à la mission de l’Eglise. Et quand le leadership d’une institution comme la nôtre a une vision qui a du sens et qu’il la communique efficacement, quand il a de l’audace créatrice et des idées novatrices, tous les membres sont prêts à consacrer plus de leurs énergies, de leur temps et de leurs talents au service du projet commun. Un sentiment d’appartenance et de motivation les saisit et les pousse même à vouloir collaborer malgré les difficultés qu’ils peuvent rencontrer.

**Difficultés et perspectives d’avenir**

Même si nous envisageons l’avenir de l’Université de Mazenod avec beaucoup d’optimisme, nous constatons néanmoins qu’il y a encore des ombres au tableau, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les structures de gouvernement, l’enseignement, la recherche et les infrastructures.

*Structures de gouvernement.* On note, à cet égard, des tensions entre les différents niveaux d’autorité à cause des structures inadaptées. Le problème, c’est que les structures actuelles de gouvernement datent de l’époque où l’Institut Saint Eugène de Mazenod fonctionnait comme un institut supérieur de théologie et de missiologie. Ces structures n’ont pas été adaptées aux nouvelles exigences universitaires. D’où la nécessité d’accueillir favorablement les réformes structurelles que demandent les temps nouveaux et que le Comité de gestion propose.

*Enseignement.* L’insuffisance d’infrastructures et d’équipements peuvent influer négativement sur la qualité de l’enseignement surtout si elle ne permet pas d’assurer aux enseignants et aux étudiants des conditions de travail motivantes et sécurisantes. Il faut aussi dire que le fait de trop compter sur les enseignants à temps partiel limite notre contrôle des programmes d’enseignement et de la pédagogie. Autres faiblesses de nos programmes d’étude – liste non exhaustive : une attention insuffisante à la fragilité des étudiants, le petit nombre d’Oblats bien préparés pour assurer les cours dans les nouvelles facultés.

*Recherche scientifique.* L’insuffisance de ressources financières peut influer sur l’organisation de l’activité de recherche ainsi que sur la performance des chercheurs. Les résultats de recherches parus dans *RASM* n’ont souvent pas bénéficié de vrais avantages de publication.
Infrastructures et équipements. L’UDMAZ étant dans sa phase d’extension, avec l’accroissement inévitable du nombre des étudiants dans toutes les facultés, les infrastructures et les équipements qu’elle possède vont bientôt se révéler inadaptés et insuffisants.

Malgré ces zones d’ombre, l’avenir de notre Université paraît prometteur. Le processus de restructuration en cours va certainement contribuer à accroître l’efficacité des services et à développer les capacités des acteurs engagés dans notre projet éducatif. Même si nos moyens financiers sont encore limités, notre esprit de famille nous pousse tout de même à gérer les ressources disponibles dans la coresponsabilité, la transparence et le partage. Cela répond justement à la recommandation de notre Supérieur provincial concernant le système comptable de l’Université. Quant à notre attitude vis-à-vis des finances, elle suppose à la fois la confiance en la Providence et la confiance que nous accordons à la compétence des gestionnaires.

Une bonne nouvelle pour terminer. Le nouveau Plan stratégique institutionnel élaboré par le Comité de gestion de l’Université vient d’être approuvé par le Supérieur provincial en conseil. Ce plan prévoit, d’ici à 2031, d’accélérer le processus de restructuration en vue d’adapter les anciennes structures de gouvernement aux nouvelles exigences académiques, d’améliorer la qualité de la formation scientifique, d’accroître l’activité de la recherche, d’assainir et de maximiser les finances et d’accroître les capacités d’accueil de l’Université, qui se prépare à accueillir des milliers de jeunes étudiants africains désireux de réaliser leurs projets d’études chez nous. A court terme, il faudra construire sur le campus de Kintambo quatre auditoires, une résidence pour les membres du Comité de gestion, une salle de promotion, un centre culturel et d’évangélisation. Pour la réalisation de ce vaste programme d’extension des infrastructures d’accueil, les Oblats du Congo comptent bien évidemment sur leurs propres moyens mais aussi sur la générosité des Bons Samaritains qui, à travers le monde, voudraient bien soutenir l’œuvre d’éducation promue par les fils de Saint Eugène de Mazenod.

Il est toutefois clair qu’avec le nouveau plan stratégique, nous n’allons pas tout réaliser en même temps. Confiants toutefois en la Providence, nous essaierons de faire les choses petit à petit en fixant annuellement des priorités et des objectifs réalisables. Le moment venu,
le travail accompli sera évalué afin de constater les progrès accomplis et quel chemin il reste à parcourir, toujours dans le souci de « garantir sous une forme institutionnelle une présence chrétienne dans le monde universitaire » et de former une élite capable de promouvoir le développement de l’Église et de la Nation.

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What is now known as Oblate School of Theology began in 1903 as the *San Antonio Philosophical and Theological Seminary*. Through an agreement between Fr. Joseph Lefebvre, OMI, Most Rev. John Anthony Forest, Bishop of San Antonio, and Most Rev. Euloge Gillow, Archbishop of Oaxaca in Mexico, construction began with groundbreaking on December 23, 1902. The seminary was built on land owned by Archbishop Gillow that was sold to the Oblate US Province for a minimal amount. Both Bishop Forest and Archbishop Gillow wanted to send secular seminarians to this soon-to-be constructed seminary in San Antonio. In return for accepting seminarians for the then Diocese of San Antonio, Bishop Forest allowed the Oblates to open a “public chapel” on the grounds since it was on land considered within the bounds of St. Mary’s Parish where Oblates served.

Classes began October 5, 1903 in the incomplete building welcoming Oblate scholastics and seminarians from Texas and Mexico. This mixture of religious and secular seminarians was a foreshadowing of the present day. Just one year later, in 1904, the newly formed Southern US Province took responsibility for the seminary. Diocesan seminarians left the school in 1911 to study elsewhere. In 1920, the seminary was in need of more space so it moved to the former convent of the Sisters of Divine Providence in Castroville, just southwest of San Antonio. It was renamed Sacred Heart Scholasticate. The original site became known as St. Anthony’s College and Apostolic School, a preparatory academy. It is the present day St. Anthony High School in San Antonio.
OST remained at this location in Castroville until 1926 when additional space was needed once again. A new facility was built outside the city limits of San Antonio, a place known to scholastics as “Rattlesnake Hill.” Apparently the rattling residents of the hill far outnumbered the new occupants. In 1927, the new De Mazenod Scholasticate opened to serve Oblate scholastics, preparing them to serve in Texas, New Mexico, and Louisiana. Mexico was lost as a mission after the revolution of 1910. Oblates returned to Mexico in 1943. Still later graduates served in mission in the Philippines and Zambia, which remains a delegation of the US Province. Through several name changes, this location remains home to the present Oblate School of Theology. The original 1927 building still stands as the Benson Theological Center on campus. Newer buildings on campus include the Whitley Theological Center and conference hall, the Immaculate Conception Chapel, the Pat Guidon Center, and the Donald E. O’Shaughnessy Library. The school also manages the Oblate Renewal Center on the west side of the campus. Between these two “sides” of the campus stands the Lourdes Grotto and Tepeyac Shrine, a ministry of the Oblates that is separate from the school.

In 1970, students from the archdiocesan seminary, Assumption Seminary, began attending classes at OST, a sort of return to the school’s historic roots. Fr. Pat Guidon, OMI, was president at the time. Around the same time, Fr. Guidon opened classes to religious women, and later, to lay students. It was then that the school began offering the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree to serve students who were not seminarians. Seminarians usually pursued the Master of Divinity degree. The MTS degree was dropped in favor of the MA in Pastoral ministry and the MA (Theology) in the 1990’s. The school was first accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1968 and by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in 1982. It remains accredited by ATS to offer masters and doctoral degrees.

Current configuration of teaching

OST is a graduate, theological school offering 7 graduate degrees; 5 at the Masters level and 2 at the Doctoral level. The student body in 1903 was international and bilingual, English and Spanish. The present student body ha those same characteristics. In the Spring semester of
2021, OST has students from 24 different countries speaking at least 11 different languages. The student body is about 50% seminarians and 50% students in other studies such as lay students in MA programs, PhD students, priests, religious women and men in both doctoral and masters programs. Spring 2021 student enrollment in degree programs is 183. The mainstay of the institution is the Master of Divinity degree (MDiv) that primarily serves seminarians from dioceses and religious communities as well as some students from the African Methodist Episcopal Church and other historically African American traditions. OST also has 4 Master of Arts degrees – in Theology, Spirituality, Sacred Scripture, and Pastoral Ministry. The MA in Pastoral Ministry is offered in English and Spanish. The MA (Spirituality) was the first entirely online degree OST offered. Today the MA (Spirituality), MA in Sacred Scripture, and the MA in Pastoral Ministry are all available online. The MA in Pastoral Ministry and the MA in Sacred Scripture are bilingual, English and Spanish. Doctoral degrees include the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The Doctor of Ministry is an advanced professional degree with concentrations in Pastoral Administration, Spiritual Formation in the Local Community, Spirituality and Ministry, African American Pastoral Leadership, and US Hispanic/Latino Ministry. This degree is offered so students may remain in ministry and attend class in two-week intensive sessions in January and June. A doctoral project and paper serve as the final project. The PhD is in Spirituality serving a wide array of interests. The major focus is Contemporary Spirituality with Christianity serving as the lens through which it is viewed. Students from various Christian traditions and countries around the world come to study Spirituality at OST. OST is shaping scholars who will return to their home country to teach and form ministers in places such as Vietnam, Uganda, and Kenya.

OST also has the Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus (STB) through a joint offering with St. Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Students complete their studies and exams at OST. Once approved by the faculty at St. Paul, the degree is awarded from St. Paul University. There are 17 students in the STB in 2021.

184 students are enrolled in various certificate programs. The Instituto de Formación Pastoral (IFP) is a two-year certificate program for parish volunteers offered in English and Spanish. It is fully online.
serving locations throughout Texas and at the Shrine of the Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL. IFP is also inside the Texas Prison System being offered to men who have 5 years or less remaining on their sentence. It is part of the program preparing the men for reentry into society. It also builds Church leaders inside the prison who guide prayer and scripture study with other offenders inside the walls. Frequently, these men assist outside volunteers who prepare men for Baptism, First Communion, or Confirmation.

Espiritualidad y Dirección Espiritual prepares spiritual directors who work in Spanish. The ACTS Spiritual Companion program works with those who have attended an ACTS retreat and are now designated as Spiritual Companions for those retreats. The Magis Ignatian Spirituality program forms directors in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The Forest Dwelling program for those in their “wisdom years” speaks to the need for a spirituality for the second phase of life. All are two-year certificate programs.

There are two specialized programs that include both degrees and certificates. The Sankofa Institute for African American Pastoral Leadership forms leaders through the experience of the Black Church in the United States. Students may complete the Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry, or a certificate in African American Pastoral Leadership. The Oblate Studies program is the first of its kind in the world. It is dedicated to the study and dissemination of the history, charism, spirituality and mission of the Missionary Oblates through teaching and research, academic and enrichment programs, an annual Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies Lecture, and cooperation with the other Institutes of higher learning – at the service of the Oblate General Administration and all connected with the charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod throughout the world. The certificate is offered only online. It may be combined with the MA (Spirituality) if someone is interested in pursuing a degree in Oblate Studies. This program offers preparation for many formation directors and Oblate Associates around the world. It also provides the scholarly resources needed for the study of the Oblate Charism and life.

The Ministry to Ministers sabbatical program is a 4-month structured, residential sabbatical for priests, women and men religious. It is based at the Pat Guidon Center on the OST campus with faculty from
Continuing Education has become a major part of OST public offerings. Annually, over 2500 people attend these programs with lectures in Scripture, Systematic Theology, Spirituality, Oblate Studies, and Black Theology among other topics. Many lectures are available on the OST YouTube channel, both live and recorded. Online retreats have become part of Continuing Education offerings. Typically, these retreats are available in Advent and Lent.

OST also hosts national and international gatherings such as the Hispanic Summer Program and the Society for the Study of Contemporary Spirituality. These ecumenical events offer our students the opportunity to experience extraordinary scholars from other institutions around the world. Students for other institutions also experience Oblate hospitality and service to the poor.

As can be seen from the list of academic programs and offerings, OST is a theological institute. The school has recently expanded from being a primarily pastoral and teaching institution to one shaped by research and teaching together. This shift was done to form a solid home for the research doctorate in Spirituality. It called for expanding the resources of the DEO Library as well as moving faculty toward a greater interest in research and publication.

The faculty stands at 26 members with additional affiliated faculty and adjunct faculty serving in specialized fields such as African American theology and history, and specific areas of Spirituality including Salesian Spirituality and Asian Spirituality.

The 26 full-time members of the faculty include 7 Oblates, some of whom also serve in administration. Nine laypersons serve on the faculty along with 5 women religious from 4 different communities. Three diocesan priests and two Dominican priests round out the numbers. Nine faculty members are women, the rest being men. Many are bilingual, English and Spanish, while almost all are functionally literate in both languages.

Faculty members are primarily from the United States with some coming from Canada and Latin America. Ireland, India, and Germany each contribute one faculty member. Those from the US come from a
wide selection of states within the country; California, Arizona, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Maine, and Texas.

OST has only one faculty since the institution is rather small by university standards. There are not separate faculties for theology, liturgy, scripture or other areas. Rather these are considered departments of the one faculty. There is no separate doctoral faculty although some choose to teach exclusively at the masters level.

Beyond these faculty members there are additional instructors that lead various certificate programs, administrators that serve the Pat Guidon Center, Oblate Renewal Center, and the Whitley Theological Center.

THE STUDENTS

Along with Oblate scholastics, OST has students from the Conventual Franciscans, Capuchin Franciscans, Redemptorists, Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, and the Society of Domus Dei. Diocesan seminarians come from 10 different dioceses including the Archdiocese of San Antonio. There are 85 seminarians total studying at OST this semester (Spring 2021). There are 16 in the MA (Theology) with 9 of those in a dual degree program combined with the Master of Divinity designed to prepare students for advanced study. The MA in Pastoral Ministry has 30 students, 18 of which are in the Spanish language version of the program. The MA (Spirituality) has 21 students. Almost all the students in the various MA programs are lay students or women religious. Occasionally, there is someone who is already ordained who is returning for additional study that enters the MA (Theology) or MA (Spirituality).

The Doctor of Ministry has 31 students. The PhD has 20.

Women constitute about 26% of the students at OST. OST is a Hispanic-majority institution with 41% of all students identifying as Hispanic/Latino. 21% identify as white, 6% African or African American, and 3% Asian. 28% are international students. 38% are lay students.

THE LIBRARY

The Donald E. O’Shaughnessy Library is a major resource for theological education and Oblate Studies. The circulating collection of over 85,000 volumes is used by students at OST and other theological
schools in Texas. OST has cataloged the roughly 30,000 volumes of
the library at Lebh Shomea in Sarita, Texas with plans to bring it to the
main campus in San Antonio. This will add approximately 15,000 new
titles to the collection.

The library also holds archives for Oblate provinces across the US
and will become the home to all US Province archives by October 2021.
A rare book collection includes the Oblate Lower Rio Grande collection
of biblical, theological, pastoral, and historical works in Spanish, Latin,
French, English, and German. The greater part of the Mission collection
is a very valuable set of works from Mexico probably brought for
safety across the border during the Mexican Revolution. The Kenedy
Collection is a valuable group of Texana collected by the Kenedy fam-
ily in South Texas. The Borderlands Collection consists of works on
the southwestern United States and Mexico, especially north east and
north central Mexico, collected by Fr. Robert Wright, OMI. The Johnson
Collection houses works on San Antonio and Texas collected by Mr.
Johnson. The Oblate Oregon Collection is the research collection of Fr.
Ron Young OMI, on the pioneer Oblate missionary work in the Oregon
Territory (1847-1860).

The remaining collections consist primarily of rare books dealing
with various ecclesiastical disciplines, such as theology and church his-
tory. The Assumption Seminary Collection and Oblate College (Wash-
ington, DC) Collection come from two longtime partner institutions of
Oblate School of Theology. The Oblate School of Theology Collection
consists of the other rare books accessioned by the School throughout
the decades, with works dating from as early as 1546 (The works of St.
John Chrysostom, signed by the Spanish inquisition and the Viceroy of
New Spain).

Digital resources are becoming increasingly important for the DEO
Library. Many of the data bases and other electronic assets held by the
library are shared with Oblate institutions around the world.

MISSION AND ETHOS

The mission of the school is taken from the Oblate Charism – “In-
spired by the charism of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Oblate School of Theology educates, forms, and renews men and wom-
en to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned.” This simple statement
defines who we are and guides our work. The Mission Statement is further developed in the Statement of Purpose that states the school prepares persons for pastoral ministry through academic study and pastoral practice. It forms candidates for priestly ministry and lay ministry. It does so by modeling collaboration in ministry, working together with the various formation communities in San Antonio as well as other ecclesial and societal institutions. It contributes to the academy through research and study.

OST is a collection of communities, that is, a common point that brings together diocesan seminarians, religious seminarians, women religious, men religious, lay women and men, and people from other Christian traditions, some of whom are preparing for ordination in their respective Churches. The ethos of the school is decidedly Catholic and Oblate. It is Catholic in that the foundation upon which our faith rests is that of the Catholic Church, its traditions and teachings. It is catholic in the sense that the Church itself is catholic, encompassing the entire of the People of God, the world at large, serving it in mission. OST is Oblate, a missionary institute, in service to the poor and the abandoned. It is for these reasons the school purposefully seeks to serve underserved communities such as the Spanish speaking in the US and the incarcerated. It is missionary since the school is prepared to take risks to spread the gospel. This is evident in the major undertaking to establish a research doctorate (PhD), shifting the school from its historic preeminence as an institution focused on pastoral formation. The school has to be nimble, shifting approaches as the needs of the Church and society change. OST looks outward, responding to the needs of the Church universal and particular, with an Oblate and Catholic perspective that guides its mission. The school is a microcosm of the Church, with a forming community that serves as a model for pastoral ministry and academic study.

THE CHALLENGES

The challenges OST faces are similar to those all theological institutes of higher education face today, particularly in the US. The number of people who attend any church, Catholic or otherwise, is dropping rapidly. Seminarian numbers have plateaued at a rather low level. Opportunities for lay ministers drop as church attendance and donation
drops. The pandemic has changed how people approach even the most basic elements of Church life, like sacraments and Liturgy. This calls for an examination of how candidates for priesthood are prepared, how they preach, how they relate to people, the skills they have for evangelization, for building relationships among people. Both the Church and society in the US are divided with pastors frequently caught in the tension that exists between factions. By being a place where all are welcome, where unity and community are modeled, OST hopes to prepare priests and lay ministers, scholars and pastors, who hold to the values of unity and hospitality.

The outlook for the future is strong. OST realizes the opportunity placed before it by the pandemic. The need for evangelization, a renewal of ministerial life, and a renewal of church life is great. It is just the type of opportunity St. Eugene would have relished. We have the chance to form ordained ministers, religious life, and lay ministers in ways that can affect Church and society for years into the future. We believe people long for a Church that can build relationships, that helps families come together, that offers hope and mercy. We want to be the place where that happens.

OST is shaped by the charism and life of the Oblates, responding to Church and society as needs change, where they are, whenever they happen. Like Oblates themselves, the school works to go where others will not and do what others will not to spread the gospel. That calls for a diligent faculty who are willing to adapt as things change. The school is fortunate to have just such a group that is attracted to the school because of its mission and remain here to see it carried out.

The school is also fortunate to have the support and enthusiastic backing of the US Province who sees the school as a major aspect of its mission. This link keep the school connected to the congregation and its needs. It also helps the congregation understand the needs of maintaining an institute of higher learning. The Church and society are better for this relationship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Website: www.ost.edu
Facebook: @oblateschooloftheology https://www.facebook.com/OblateSchoolofTheology
Facebook: Oblate School of Theology Community Group (private group – request admission)
Twitter: @OblateSchool
YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeM-lmWkrakcrOFHd3NwPcqg

DEO Library holdings:
- 85,000+ volumes
- 30,000 volumes at Lebh Shomea in catalog
Southwest Oblate Historical Archives
US Oblate Province Archives (June 2021)
Rare and Antique Book collection including:
- Oblate Lower Rio Grande Collection
- Mission Collection
- Kenedy Collection
- Borderlands Collection
- Oblate Oregon Collection

Digital Resources:
- EBSCOHOST database, e-books, dissertations
- JSTOR
- BAS Library
- Open Access Theological Library
- Research in Ministry (RIM)
- ProQuest Dissertation Express and Open Access
- Index Religious
- Project Muse
- Oxford Research Encyclopedias
- ATLA E-Book Lending Project
- Directory of Open Access Books
- Directory of Open Access Journals
- Digital Public Library of America
- Online Books page at UPenn
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OST Journal:

Other Journals produced on Campus:

Spiritus (Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality) Johns Hopkins Press: Baltimore, MD, USA

Historical Dictionary of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in English, French and Spanish. Articles published on the OMI-WORLD site as they become available. (https://www.omiworld.org/our-charism/history/historical-dictionary/)

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In 1926, Cardinal Edmund Dalbor handed over the Cistercian monastery and the parish in Obra to the Oblates. From the very beginning, this institution was planned as the Major Seminary. From the very beginning, it was necessary to create a good formation house as well as an academic institution. The first superior was Father Paweł Kulawy from Silesia. He had the experience of international formation in the Netherlands, Germany, and Canada and the experience of working on the prairies of Western Canada.

Internationality was part of the missionary seminary from the very beginning. At first, confreres from Germany, France, and Canada came to help with teaching. During this first period, they all (Polish and from other Provinces) had the experience of formation and/or work in a different cultural context.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the number of scholastics grew rapidly and there was no place for everyone in Obra. Philosophical studies had to move to Krobia. In the last years before World War II, many new priests were ordained, 27 (in 1938) and 25 (in 1939). These were two record years in the entire history of the seminary. Later on, the largest number will be 23 (in 1986).

During the 12 years (before the war) 19 Oblate priests were sent to Canada and 13 to Ceylon. Many were sent to work among the Polish community in Canada, the United States, and France. And it was only twelve years period! The others were actively involved in proclaiming popular missions in Poland.

This missionary and international character were strengthened by the frequent visits of missionary bishops and missionary priests from
all over the world. Thanks to the dynamic activity of the missionary circle, in this short period we began to be perceived not only as seminary preparing missionaries but as a place for missionary animation in the Archdiocese of Poznań and throughout western Poland. There were many celebrations and publications at that time.

At the beginning of the war, with the help of Oblates from Germany, Italy, France, and Ireland, forty-four scholastics managed to reach Italy, and later to France and Ireland, where they completed their studies. The Oblates remaining in the seminary were arrested (January 27, 1940) and deported to prisoner-of-war camps, where more than dozen of them were killed.

After the war, apart from the difficulties related to the reconstruction of the devastation, there were also difficulties related to the communist system. In 1950, the authorities confiscated our land and livestock. Later, they repeatedly attempted to surveillance the seminary. Some of the scholastics also had to complete military service. Authorities have repeatedly obstructed building supply and administration (for example, shutting down electricity during major liturgical celebrations on Christmas or Easter).

As the number of scholastics began to increase in the 1980s, it was necessary to expand the seminary. In December 1981, martial law was introduced, which made the work even more difficult. Gradually, however, new living quarters, a new library, and other rooms for formation were put into use. In the most numerous academic year (1986/87), 154 scholastics studied in Obra.

Oblates who finished Obra can be found on all continents. Among them are, among others five bishops: Eugeniusz Juretzko in Cameroon, Jacek Pyl and Radosław Zmitrowicz in Ukraine, Wiesław (Tony) Krotki in northern Canada and Jan Kot in Brazil. Oblates from Obra used to work and still work in South America (Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela) and North America (Canada, United States, Mexico), Africa (Cameroon, Madagascar, Western Sahara, Reunion), Asia (Turkmenistan, China-Hong Kong, Thailand), Australia and in various European countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Greenland, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain). In Poland, graduates of Obra work in parish minis-
try, preaching retreats in parishes, in hospital and prison chaplaincy, as well as engage in formation and academic work.

Altogether, by 2020, it has been 796 priests, who had finished the seminary in Obra.

**CURRENT CONFIGURATION OF TEACHING**

From the very beginning, the Major Seminary in Obra was an independent Church academic institution, preparing candidates for the priesthood and religious life. It implemented the guidelines of the Holy See, the Polish Episcopate, and the OMI General Administration.

In 1975, the seminary was affiliated with the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Poznań. Scholastics could complete their studies with a master’s degree in theology. In 1998, this faculty became the Faculty of Theology of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. Thus, now the seminary is subject to university regulations while maintaining the status of an independent Church institution.

Currently, the entire didactic process covers about 50 subjects with a theological and philosophical profile and foreign language courses. Compared to other Polish seminars, the curriculum is extended to include study of Oblate charism and history, with a reflection on the mission and problems of religious life, as well as an extended program of homiletics.

At present, the formation team consists of 8 Oblates. The rest of the professors commute with their lectures. Teaching is complemented by many external lecturers, by people of science and culture. Oblate professors from Obra give lectures both on-site and in other academic centers. Some of them are also officially employed at the university in Poznań.

At the end of their studies, seminarians write their Master theses. Most of the work is written under the direction of Oblates. Issues related to Oblate spirituality, missiology, homiletics, and mariology are particularly popular.

Below is a list of subjects and lecturers from the last five years (in alphabetical order of lecturers): J. Bielecki *OMI* (psychology), K. Czepirski *OMI* (phonetics), T. Gali *OMI* (Greek), M. Głowiński (pedagogy), B. Grzebień (church music), W. Kluj *OMI* (religious studies, missions of OMI), B. Kochaniewicz *OP* (fundamental theology), Ł. Krauze
Oblatio

Vita et Missio

Mission and ethos

The majority of this group are Oblates, but there are also diocesan priests and laypeople. Oblate lecturers graduated from universities in Poland (Poznań, Warsaw, Lublin, Kraków), in Rome (Gregorianum, Urbanianum, Teresianum, Biblicum), and Ottawa (Saint Paul).

The Scholasticate is first and foremost a formation house for young Oblates, and all other activities of the fathers and brothers who serve here, including those who do not belong directly to the formation team, are subject to this task. Formators deal with academic work (conferences, symposia, queries, publications), but they are also at the disposal of seminarians (sacramental service, individual spiritual direction, conducting MA theses). The rest of the community serves with their presence, witness and experience.

There is also a parish at the seminary, for which the Oblate parish priest is responsible, with the considerable help of the entire community. Deacons take an active part in the life of this parish and nearby parishes.

The formation is complemented by pastoral internships in Poland and abroad, most recently in Belgium, France, Ireland, Belarus, and Ukraine. As part of the internship, younger scholastics visit an orphanage, a nursing home for disabled children, and a prison.
There are various seminar groups in the seminary, such as a mission group, the apostolate of the sick, an ecumenical group, a prayer group in the spirit of Taizé, a theater group, and a music group. There is also an abstinence crusade. In the past, there was also a scout circle.

An important place in the scholasticate community is occupied by religious brothers who perform various functions (presently a porter, librarian, gardener, farmer, driver, bookbinder, beekeeper). For many years, the sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception have also been involved in the functioning of the community. Lay people also work in the seminary. They are employed full-time on the farm, in the kitchen, and the laundry. They are all extremely dedicated to the Oblate mission. They support the scholasticate not only with work but also with prayer.

The seminary also houses the Missionary Museum with ethnographic memorabilia from all over the world, especially from the countries where the graduates of the Obra seminary have worked and work (but not only).

Each seminary aims to prepare good priests ready for various ministries in the various local Churches. The specificity of a missionary seminary is that it not only prepares people for work in a particular diocese but also opens their eyes to the universal Church. This is the fundamental difference between our seminary and the neighboring diocesan seminaries. Perhaps we are better prepared to perceive particular problems as problems of the local Church and not of the Church in general. Looking at the work of the confreres in other local Churches, one can always see in many places the “spring” of the Church and its beautiful development, even if in other regions it is currently “winter” with many problems.

RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Apart from involvement in pastoral activities and extraordinary evangelization activities (eg. new evangelization in “Przystanek Jezus”), many graduates of Obra are involved in various works of the Church in Poland. Some of the graduates of the seminary today perform important functions in the structures of the Polish Bishops’ Conference or the Conference of Major Superiors of Male Orders.
Apart from the missionaries *ad gentes*, who respond to the needs of local Churches in various parts of the world, 30 fathers in Poland form a group of popular missionaries. They conduct traditional and new evangelization missions as well as retreats, recently especially those related to the peregrination of the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa throughout whole Poland. For this reason, the seminary program of formation is more extended in homiletics.

Several Oblates professors at the seminary are strongly involved in other academic domains of the local Church, e.g. as lecturers of missiology in Warsaw or other universities in Poland. Especially known is the contribution to theology in Poland of the late Father Waclaw Hryniewicz, who taught ecumenism for many years at the Catholic University of Lublin.

The practices of scholastics in prisons also contribute to their formation. Several Oblates in Poland are involved in this ministry.

Scholastics also have a chance to engage in editorial work, especially in the seminar quarterly “Mozaika Obrzańska”. Later, this experience comes in handy in other ministries, for example in running the nationwide missionary (Oblate) portal, misje.pl.

**Inspired by Oblate charism and responding to the mission of the Congregation**

How does the seminary fit in with contemporary trends in the congregation? The most noticeable is internationally. From the very beginning, Oblates from other provinces helped us, especially with teaching staff. Since the province started evangelization in Ukraine, Belarus, and Turkmenistan, the seminary became more and more international, forming scholastics also from these countries. Moreover, occasionally young Oblates from France or Canada were sent to Obra, especially those who were preparing to work among the Polish community. Young Oblates from Bohemia (Czech Republic) also underwent part of their first formation in Obra. A few years ago, the seminary opened, even more, this time to the scholastics from the Province of Cameroon, from Madagascar as well as from South Africa. The beginnings weren’t easy. Currently, two scholastics from Cameroon are completing their seminary formation.
The program of studies in Obra includes more missiology than in other Polish seminars. Also more homiletics and of course Oblate history and spirituality. For several years, the so-called “Probation” program (before perpetual vows) combined with a three weeks stay in Aix-en-Provence, help to increase relations between scholastics from other provinces. It helps also to get greater interest in the life of the congregation in other units and, in language learning.

It is worth mentioning that the community in Obra has also been a formation house for young brothers in the first formation for many years. So there are not only scholastics in formation in this house.

What is the future of the Obra seminar? It is impossible to predict the future of the Scholasticate. On the one hand, the seminary is becoming more and more international, welcoming young Oblates from other provinces, which serves to build a stronger Oblate identity. On the other hand, secularization in Poland is progressing. The number of vocations from Poland is decreasing year by year. Perhaps in the coming years, it will be necessary to make an up-to-date assessment of the situation and prepare a strategic plan, which will include proposals for various vocational scenarios. Perhaps in this area ideas will arise for new forms of cooperation between different jurisdictions in the congregation and with other Oblate institutions of higher education.

**Bibliography**

There are already some particular studies done on the history of the seminary, but there are also many other unused sources, not only archival ones.

The main source for pre-war history is “Gość z Obra” [Guest from Obra], published by scholastics in 1930-1939 & 1948-1951 (and in 1940 in Rome and 1945 in London). Unfortunately, due to the devastation of the war, we do not have a complete set of it.

The best source presenting the contemporary life of the seminary is the quarterly “Mozaika Obrańska” [Obra Mosaic], which has been published by scholastics since 1969.

We should also mention the missionary bulletin edited by scholastics “Mrówczy Ślad” [Ant’s Trail] (1968-1980), which, after the political transformation in Poland, gave rise to the respected periodical of the Polish Province “Misyjne Drogi” [Missionary Roads].
The seminar also featured other periodicals showing the activities of seminarians, such as “Ojczyste Słowo” [Native Word] (Polish language group, 1954-1958) and “Króluj nam Chryste” [Christ, reign over us] (bulletin for altar boys, 1979-1989).

The seminar also has a website where one can find a lot of current information https://obra.oblaci.pl/.

Some particular studies:

*Imię znakiem. Materiały z oblackiego sympozjum maryjnego zorganizowanego w WSD Misjonarzy Oblatów Maryi Niepokalanej w Obrze od 21 do 23 listopada 1979 roku dla uczczenia 125 rocznicy ogłoszenia dogmatu o Niepokalanym Poczęciu NMP, Obra 1979.*


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PAUL DECOCK, OMI

SHORT HISTORY

St. Joseph’s Scholasticate was born in 1943 as a product of the Second World War. Until then scholastics of European origin were sent to scholasticates overseas. Those of Irish origin to Ireland; those of a French background to France. Those of African origin were sent to the Scholasticate in Roma, Lesotho. Because of the war, overseas travel became very difficult. The option to send all to Lesotho was tried for a few years, but proved not satisfactory. The other option was to set up a formation house in South Africa, which most thought would be only for the duration of the war. The place selected was near the capital of the Natal Province, Pietermaritzburg. The first site was in the suburb of Prestbury. The programme started in 1943 with 4 scholastics. After the first year some scholastics moved from Lesotho to Prestbury, among them the first Zulu scholastic, to complete their studies there. After the war a number of former soldiers joined the novitiate and it looked as the temporary Scholasticate had to become permanent. To cope with the increase of scholastics the venue was moved to a larger venue, an old farm house, called Cleland and this remained the home of St. Joseph’s for the next five years. Water shortage forced the Provincials of Natal and Transvaal to look for another venue, and finally St. Joseph’s settled at the present site, Cedara, a donation of a 194 hectare farm about 16km from the center of Pietermaritzburg. The new main buildings were blessed by Fr. Deschatelets on the 6th of May, 1952, a hundred years after the arrival of the Oblates in Natal.

Besides Oblates from South Africa, St. Joseph’s also catered for 12 scholastics from Australia (from 1955 to 1965), some scholastics from Belgium and for some diocesan seminarians.
From 1976 onwards more and more religious communities started sending their scholastics to St. Joseph’s and they were part of the Oblate formation community. In the early 1980’s, when the number had reached 50 it was decided that each community should start their own formation house. By the end of the 1980’s the number had reached nearly a hundred. It was then decided to separate the Scholasticate community from the academic programme, and that was the birth of St. Joseph’s Institute in its present form. The Institute is run by a Board of Directors from various religious communities and responds to a Board of Members composed of 5 Oblate Major Superiors and 3 representatives of the other participating communities. The student body at present has reached 265.

In 1990 St. Joseph’s became one of the founding members of the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions, together with the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (supported by 5 different churches) and the Department of Theological Studies of the University of Natal.

In the course of the history of St. Joseph’s the Apartheid laws were a challenge. From 1948 a whole of laws was proclaimed preventing people of different races to live and study together. St. Joseph’s simply ignored these laws until some neighbors complained. As a result eventually St. Joseph’s was ordered to send the ‘non-white’ brothers away. An appeal against this was rejected by the Government (1957) and for a few years our ‘non-white’ brothers were sent to other scholasticates, to Lesotho and one to San Antonio. However, step by step St. Joseph’s started again taking in different races. Since no legal arrangement for a special permit was possible as the Apartheid laws were very complex and very comprehensive, by the early seventies the Oblates of South Africa decided to simply ignore the laws and see what would happen. Nothing happened! However, St. Joseph’s was now under very close observation by the Security Police; their particular concern was that St. Joseph’s would be involved in bringing arms into the country for the ANC.

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1 The one who was sent to San Antonio, Noel B Peters, later one wrote the articles on Apartheid and South Africa The Catholic Church in, in the latest supplement, vol. 19, of The New Catholic Encyclopedia [1996].
In 1986 there was some disturbance as two of our lecturers were arrested, together with thousands of others, during the night of the 12th of June to prevent them from preaching during the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising. As our students protested 20 of them were arrested; as the Superior of the Scholasticate and the Provincial of Mariannhill approached the police station where the students were held, they were also arrested. The last two were released after a few days, the students were released, tried and found guilty of disturbing the public order and one of our lecturers was deported.

With the release of Nelson Mandela on February 11, 1990, we knew that the end of Apartheid had come.

**Current configuration: Registered Programmes offered at St. Joseph’s**

For some years the St. Joseph’s was affiliated to the Urbaniana in Rome for the BPhil and the BTh, but this was no longer possible after new regulations were introduced by the South African Department of Education after the end of Apartheid in 1994. The Institute is now officially registered with the Department of Education as a Private Higher Education Institution. It is registered and accredited to offer three BA programmes, as well as a Post-Graduate Diploma in Theology. This means that these degrees and this diploma are recognized by the South African Government. These are the following:

*In the Philosophy Department: a three year BA in Philosophy*

This department has 12 academic staff members, of which 5 are full time and the others are part time. Five of them have doctorates and the others have Licentiate or Master’s degrees. There are 93 students spread over the three years.

*In the Theology Department: a three year BA in Theology*

This department has 16 staff members, of which 11 are full time, but with various additional administrative functions. Five of the staff members have doctorates and the others have Licentiate of Master’s degrees. Two of these are also lecturers in the other Departments. There are 114 students spread over the three years of the BA.
As from 2022 the Theology Department will also run the *Post-Graduate Diploma in Theology*. This is a one year diploma and will be followed by our fourth year students in theology who are preparing for the ordination. It will also be open to anyone with a first degree who wants to renew himself of some years of ministry, or wants to his or her pastoral skills, or just for personal Christian development. It will also be open for anyone without a first degree who wants to study for a non-degree purpose. This programme would be offered, for instance, as the final unit of the programme for permanent deacons in the various dioceses.

*The Department of Human and Social Development: a three year BA in Human and Social Development*

This department has 7 staff members, three of whom also lecture in the other departments. One of them has a doctorate and the others have Licentiate or Master’s degrees. There are 14 students spread over the 3 years. This is a new department and is still struggling to get a satisfactory number of students.

**Statistics (2020-2021)**

*According to Congregations*

*Men Religious Congregations: 13; Students: 230*

<table>
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*Women Religious Congregations: 6; Students: 7*

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According to Countries

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Programme for Formation of Formators

As the name indicates, it is a local programme for the formation of formators. This programme was taken over from Fr. Michael Morissey OMI, who had run it for several years. After he retired the programme was taken over by St. Joseph’s in 2018. The programme was reshaped
with the contribution of a larger number of staff of St. Joseph’s. It is run as a residential course spread over three years; the participants spend every year 8 weeks at St. Joseph’s, 4 weeks in January and another four weeks in June-July. It has been well attended, with 39 registrations for our last session. 12 will complete the three year programme this year.

Research Group

In order to stimulate research and publications by the members of the staff of St. Joseph’s. These are monthly meeting at which the members present their research and invite discussion around their topics. The aim is to encourage the younger staff to venture out into further research and into publishing. These research meetings lead every year to an academic conference, often in conjunction with other bodies.

Academic Conferences

For some years now this Research Group has organized conferences as the fruit of their work. The topics in recent years have been the Church and AIDS, the Church and Education, the Reformation now. Many of the papers of these conferences have appeared as articles in our journal Grace & Truth.

Our Journal: Grace and Truth

This journal was started by the Dominicans of South Africa in 1980 and when they were no longer able to continue they invited St. Joseph’s to take it over and published the first issue in April 1995. The original idea was to publish it in cooperation with the staff of the National Seminary, St. John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria. But after one or two years the journal became the sole responsibility of St. Joseph’s Theological Institute. The first three issues had as topics, Spiritual Direction, Religious Healing, and The African Synod.

The journal is exchanged with 54 theological journals throughout the world, and had 84 subscribers in South Africa and abroad. The latest back issues are available on ATLA.
Post-Graduate Programmes offered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

In 1996 St. Joseph’s signed an agreement with the local public university, the University of KwaZulu-Natal. According to this agreement staff of St. Joseph’s who hold a doctorate and show evidence of research by their publications in recognized journals can be appointed as honorary staff. This does not involve an honorarium but depending on publications and the achievement of their post-graduate students they receive non-taxable remuneration to be used exclusively for research, such as computer equipment, access to databases, travel and other expenses for participation in national and international conferences, page fees for publications in journals.

At present three staff members of St. Joseph’s are honorary professors of the University. Over the years they have run a programme on Catholic Theology and Spirituality; besides this they have supervised Master’s and PhD students in these fields, as well as in missiology and biblical studies.

This is a very fruitful way of running our post-graduate programmes in the wider context of an ecumenical and secular context. It is also financially very advantageous and academically stimulating.

The Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions

Since Vatican II there was a strong interest in ecumenism. This showed itself in informal contacts with the then Divinity Department of the then University of Natal, with the Lutheran Seminary in Maphumulo, with the Federal Seminary run jointly by the Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. St. Joseph’s began actively to participate in the annual meeting of all the theology students in South Africa. The Staffs of the different institutions were regularly involved in theological questions, usually of a contextual nature.

This prepared the minds for the idea of a closer cooperation between the institutions in the Pietermaritzburg area. The model of a Cluster was suggested by one of the Lutheran visitors who was involved in such a venture in Chicago. The vision was to encourage collaboration at various levels, cross-registration of courses, team teaching, rationalized library resources, publishing ventures and possibilities for com-
mon activities of various kinds for students and staff. The venture was officially launched in our chapel in 1990. It attracted the attention of all theological institutions throughout South Africa.

MISSION AND ETHOS

The vision statement

St. Joseph’s Theological Institute centred on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and situated in the African context, seeks to

– Empower people through philosophical, theological and social enquiry and learning based in the Catholic tradition, yet always in a living and creative dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions.

– Provide men and women with the philosophical, theological and social education necessary both for ordination and for a variety of other ministries in church and society.

– Advance the philosophical, theological and social endeavor through researching issues of faith and culture, experience and tradition, and other contemporary questions, so that the Word of God may be more effectively proclaimed.

– Foster cooperation within the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions as well as with other theological institutions both national and international.

This vision statement of St. Joseph’s Theological Institute has its roots in the relatively long history of St. Joseph’s Scholasticate. Archbishop Denis Hurley OMI, who had been the superior of St. Joseph’s from 1944 to 1946 and who kept a very close contact with the Scholasticate ever after, had a strong influence on the whole approach to training and to theology. The first influence was that of his resistance to the injustice of Apartheid. He was a leading figure in the opposition to Apartheid and his theology and practice of resistance against social injustice strongly marked the theological tradition of St. Joseph’s.

Archbishop Hurley’s involvement in, and enthusiasm for, Vatican II influenced the spirit of St. Joseph’s in a variety of ways. First of all, there was the ecumenical openness that created new interactions with the surrounding churches and seminaries. Furthermore, the
Archbishop stressed the apostolic nature of priestly training: preaching the Word, liturgy and guidance of God’s people. In other words, there was a stronger emphasis on training for service.

During Vatican II and afterwards in Africa there was also a growing attention to the challenge of inculturation. While it became an important aspect in our theological training, it was somewhat overshadowed by the issue of Apartheid, so that South Africa produced its own forms of liberation theology. Even after Apartheid, theology faced the socio-political questions of the reconstruction of the country, of truth and reconciliation, of uplifting the previously disadvantaged, developing the sense of *Ubuntu* among the people. Theology at St. Joseph’s shared in all these concerns.

In the mean time other issues appeared on the horizon and became part of our theological training: the position of women in society and the church, violence against women; furthermore, *Laudato Si’* highlighted a new area of concern, besides that of social justice, that of ecology. Our theological training aims at sensitizing our students to these issues.

As an illustration of the position of St. Joseph’s in our context, the way in which the *Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions* was established is very significant. When the issue of the establishment of a cooperation between the Black *Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa* (supported by 5 different churches) and the White *Department of Theological Studies of the University of Natal* was raised, the Black institution stated that they would enter into any agreement with the White institution unless St. Joseph’s, with its long history of multiracial training, was part of the deal. As a result, St. Joseph’s was approached and in 1990 the agreement was signed in the chapel of St. Joseph’s in the presence of Archbishop Hurley *omí*, who was seen by all as the great inspiration of this agreement. This agreement was, as it were, a sign of what would happen 4 years later in the official end of Apartheid and the beginning of a new era with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President.

The major challenge is to be able to maintain our trained staff. This is absolutely necessary to maintain that tradition and let it develop with the needs of the times and new developments like ecology and gender issues.
We experience regularly the loss of crucial young members of our staff. To give some examples, two of our new PhD were taken to become provincial superiors in their Congregations; one was called to be a bishop of one of the dioceses in South Africa; one was taken by his community to take up a position in one of their other projects. This is a great loss of 4 crucial members, particularly at a time when three of our senior doctors with the status of professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal are about to retire. Therefore, continuous planning for the training of our staff is absolutely necessary. This is where our connection with the University of KwaZulu-Natal is very important. Master’s by thesis only and PhD are free for South African citizens and permanent residents as well as for citizens of the SADEC countries.

It would be important to know whether any specialists in Scripture, Missiology and Spirituality would be available in other parts of the Congregation or in some of the participating Congregations.

However, the main challenge remains, obtaining, training and retaining staff.

To what extent does it respond to the needs of the local church and society

The main contribution to the local church is the training of priests for various dioceses and the theological training of a large number of religious, mainly men but also a number of women religious. Of the 27 bishops in South Africa, 5 were trained at St. Joseph’s; of the 3 dioceses in Namibia all three are served by former students at St. Joseph’s; two more are serving in Zambia.

The President of St. Joseph’s always serves on the commission for seminaries of the Southern African Bishops’ Conference (SACBC).

St. Joseph’s is also involved in the training of permanent deacons for the neighbouring dioceses; hopefully this will be extended via online courses to all dioceses.

Furthermore, our staff is available for theological input and canonical advice to the bishops. From 1976 the staff of St. Joseph’s made up a substantial number of the members of the Theological Advisory Committee to the SACBC.

Retreats for the clergy and religious communities remains an important ministry of the staff of St. Joseph’s.
Hopefully, the post-graduate theology course will be used as a renewal course for priests, religious and lay people. At present we only offer a renewal programme for Sisters; they reside at Enkanyisweni, the residence of Sisters studying at the Institute.

The programme of the formation of formators is reaching out to religious communities, female and male, in the whole of the Southern African region. The bishops have also become interested in this programme and will start sending some of their priests involved in vocation ministry and their seminaries.

Finally, it should also be remembered that the idea of a pre-novitiate, as it was being developed by the Oblates, and particularly St. Joseph’s, stimulated the Southern African Bishops’ Conference to develop a similar programme, now known as the pre-seminary programme.

HOW IT IS INFORMED BY THE OBLATE CHARISM AND Responds TO THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION

The core of the mission of St. Joseph’s is the formation of priests and religious. The care for diocesan priests was a major concern of the Founder, as Fr. Beaudoin has shown. The first Scholasticate in the region was established in Roma, Lesotho in 1924 and it was later transformed into the National Seminary. While until 1942 the South African provinces relied on the Province of Lesotho and some of the European provinces for the training of their scholastics, from that date onwards the Province of Natal was entrusted by the other South African provinces with the local project, St. Joseph’s. Almost from the beginning St. Joseph’s responded to bishops who were looking for appropriate places for the training of their priests. Even today we have twelve diocesan seminarians among our students.

With regard to Oblate Higher Education and the approach to theological training offered by St. Joseph’s, the spirit of the words of Jesus read in the Synagogue of Nazareth, to ‘evangelize the poor’ is underlying the variety of approaches and emphases in the different courses. A dominant approach is that of contextual theology, that is, to reflect on the Catholic tradition in the light of the concrete experiences of our students, and of the various challenges, particularly of the African social, political, cultural and religious context. Special attention is paid to ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue with African Traditional Religions,
Islam Contextualization embraces most of the dimensions highlighted in the last General Chapters: justice and poverty, inculturation and secularization, interculturality, spirituality and conversion.

The fact that our lecturing staff and our students comes from such a variety of countries and cultures is good foundation for interculturality and the appreciation and celebration of the different cultures.

Integrity in ministry is an aspect which receives special attention as part of the formation for ministry, while training for youth ministry and for the use of the media are not absent but could be given more attention; all these aspects can receive special attention in the newly established post-graduate diploma.

Openness to the context as described above, always remains something to be renewed and made real. The lack of stability of staff due to unexpected appointments to other tasks in the church is a challenge, but there has been at least a minimum of stability sufficient to carry on the tradition and inspiring the renewal of this positive tradition.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE INSTITUTE,**


website: https://sjti.ac.za/

*Grace & Truth: A Journal of Catholic Reflection* Published three times a year by St. Joseph’s since 1995.

Paul Decock, *omi*
Cedara, South Africa
decock@sjti.ac.za
I am indeed happy to share my reflections in the form of an article on ‘De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy’ (DIP), a center of Higher Learning for Oblate Philosophical Studies in India. This article titled “De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy (DIP): Opportunities and Challenges, exclusively makes a simple and a deeper analysis of Oblate studies in India with DIP as its first established institute. This work is more a personal reflection than a scientific presentation as it involves my own lived experiences of being part of this institute for many years both as a residential staff as well as a member of the teaching faculty. The main objective of sharing these experiences is to bring to light the specific features of the ministry of Oblate education in India actualized through DIP and to discuss its various opportunities and challenges that would vigor in building up its future growth and development.

**ORIGIN AND RATIONALE**

The De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy (DIP) or Gnanalayam (the Abode of Wisdom) as fondly called has a long history of twenty-five years, to reach its present concrete status as an institute of philosophical and religious studies. The Oblates, who arrived initially from Sri Lanka to India in 1968, immersed themselves more concretely catering to the parish missions and other ministries connected with the parish apostolate. However, while engaging themselves in the parish activities they were very much conscious of the future of the province as well as the congregation as a whole in this multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic land, India. As a result, they recruited students mostly from the southern part of India and began their initial formative studies in Madras-Mylapore minor seminary and later in Dharmaram College Bengaluru mostly with the non-oblates.
Meanwhile, the Oblates with the help of Most. Rev. Dr. Arulappa, the then Archbishop of Madras Mylapore got the St. Paul’s Institute to house our oblate students for the initial formation. Thus, in August 1976 the first full-pledged Oblate Study House came into existence at St Paul’s Institute, Poonamallee, Chennai. With this the Scholastics went for their philosophy and theology studies to the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai which was then run by the Salesians and later was taken over by the Arch Diocese of Madras. Since, the Sacred Heart Seminary passed a rule stating that all the students must have a secular degree before taking up their philosophical studies. The Oblate students were sent to the Loyola College (a Jesuit Institute) for their secular degree in Chennai. But the Oblates found this programme to be unsuccessful due to many drop outs and other un-formative atmospheres. The oblates finally made a decision to send our students to Dharmaram College, Bengaluru to do their philosophical studies, while a bachelor degree was simultaneously obtained through a Distance Education from the University of Madras. As a consequence, in June 1990 the Oblate students of philosophy were shifted from St. Paul’s Institute Poonamallee to Nivedanam, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

As the Indian Oblate Delegation started growing and the number of the Oblate students kept increasing, the dream of beginning an Indian Oblate Philosophate was envisioned and ways were explored for a strong future of the Oblate formation in India. The vision of an Indian Oblate Philosophate was born in the 1997 Congress, animated by Rev. Fr. Selvarathnam, omi. From the year 1998, the administration started to send Oblates to qualify themselves both in the Licentiate and the Doctoral Programme as a preparation for the Indian Oblate Philosophate. In the Delegation Congress that was held in the year 2007, the members unanimously suggested that we should begin our own Indian Oblate Philosophate and gave atime limit to decide and execute it by 2010.

Thus, when the Indian Delegation was elevated to a Province on 29 May 2010, the then Provincial Administration carefully examining the pros and cons of having our own Indian Oblate Philosophate decided to concretize the vision by commencing it at Perambakkam, in Thiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu. The Oblate Students initially resided in the De Mazenod Illam (The Oblate Farm House) and had their classes and other formative programme there while for meals and games they went
to Gnanalayam which was then the Juniorate. The following academic year i.e. in 2011, the Juniorate Programme that was already functioning in Gnanalayam was shifted to Nivedanam, Bengaluru and Gnanalayam was christened as ‘De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy.’

The De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy after its two years of con-ception, i.e. in 2012 was affiliated to a secular university named Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi. Later in the year 2014 it was recognized as a Special Study Center of Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). The De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy offered a three year Bachelor degree programme from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi in line with the recommendations of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). The institute along with a secular degree also conferred a diploma to our students. One of the important prospects of our affiliation to IGNOU was that it had given us as oblates in India, a platform not just to procure a secular degree in philosophy but also to extend our ministry of education to the secular world. We had more than 12 lay students who had enrolled themselves for M.A. programme in Philosophy through our study center till 2019. Such an interaction with the secular world had really added more strength to the growth of our institute. Apart from the courses that are offered by IGNOU we also inculcated subjects that are prescribed by the Charter for Priestly Formation in India. In this way, DIP caters to both the academic and the formative study programme for three years for students who are in the Oblate formation. Both the academic as well as the formative programme reflect the concerns of the Indian Oblates to promote the Missionary Oblate formation in the multi-religious and Multi-cultural context of India.

However, in the recent past with the BJP government coming to power in Indian there were lot of restrictions and other new policies created for institutes affiliated with the IGNOU. Being a religious congregation and a charitable institution, certain policies and their procedures became practically difficult for us to follow and to have a smooth functioning of the institute’s affiliation. As a result, in consultation with the leadership team, we terminated our affiliation with IGNOU and opened a new process of affiliating our institute with Dharmaram Vidya Kshe-tram–Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law, Bengaluru. We have almost completed all the documental procedures
and our documents are being sent to the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome for its final observations and approval.

**Motto Vision and Objectives of the Institute**

**Motto**

Afire With Zeal for Wisdom and Service

**Vision**

Holistic Formation in the Radical Discipleship of Jesus Christ for Christian Missionary Leadership.

**Objectives**

- To create a thirst for knowledge and wisdom in the students for loving service.
- To develop critical, creative and transformative thinking in socio-economic, political and religio-cultural changes of India as well as the world at large.
- To expose students to the realities like Green issues, Gender Inclusion, Globalization, Secularization, Casteism and to the rest of the human existential realities to be free from all impurities for a life of Kingdom Values.
- To help students in an evolving growth to become integral and intellectual person with the habit of reading, reflecting, reasoning for reforming oneself.
- To inspire students to become radical disciples of Jesus Christ and to make them see the world through the eyes of the Crucified Saviour in the vision of St. Eugene de Mazenod our founder and father.
- To inculcate in students a comprehensive and an inclusive vision of religions, cultures and languages to build a harmonious society for the well-being of all.
- To deepen the understanding of all the leading Philosophies of Western and Eastern and the Philosophies of the Subaltern groups for the clarity of thought to become visionaries and revolutionaries.
– To inculcate the Oblate values such as passionate love for God and the fullness of life of the poor for a close relationship with God and His people.
– To encourage a life of simplicity, a life of hard work and a life of faithfulness to God and His people for living convincingly the call to missionary religious vocation.

**Curriculum Staff and Students**

The De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy offers a BPh Programme for a period of three years for candidates who have passed a Higher Secondary/Intermediate or PUC and a Comprehensive Diploma Programme for a period of two years for those who have completed their secular bachelor’s degree. The three year programme comprises of 180 credits and the two year programme includes 120 credits. The credit system is categorized as per the norms and requirements of *Veritatis Gaudium*. The entire credit system is divided into three parts that includes Obligatory Basic Subjects, Supplementary Obligatory Subjects and Optional Additional Subjects.

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<td>General Ethics</td>
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<td>Feminist Approach to Philosophy</td>
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<td>Tutorial: Classics in Philosophy</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary Seminar II</td>
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<td>PO 502</td>
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<td>PO 504</td>
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<td>PO 505</td>
<td>Philosophy of Science and Cosmology</td>
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<td>PO 506</td>
<td>Philosophy of Nature and Eco-Sophy</td>
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<td>PO 507</td>
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<td>PO 601</td>
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<td>PO 602</td>
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<td>PO 603</td>
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<td>PO 604</td>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
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<td>03</td>
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<td>PO 605</td>
<td>Philosophy of God</td>
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<td>02</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>PO 611</td>
<td>Comprehensive Viva Voce Examination</td>
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*Total Credits* 114
## (02) Supplementary Obligatory Subjects

<table>
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<td>PS 101</td>
<td>Introduction to Philosophical Studies</td>
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<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>PS 102</td>
<td>Language: General English I</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>PS 103</td>
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<td>45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>PS 104</td>
<td>Research Informatics</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>PS 201</td>
<td>Philosophy of Buddhism, Jainism &amp; Materialism</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>PS 202</td>
<td><em>Fides et Ratio</em></td>
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<td>02</td>
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<td>PS 203</td>
<td>Language: General English II</td>
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<td>PS 204</td>
<td>Language: Latin</td>
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<td>PS 205</td>
<td>Foundation Course in English</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>PS 206</td>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>PS 207</td>
<td>Oblate Values and Spirituality</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>02</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>PS 301</td>
<td>The Structure of Modern English</td>
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<td>03</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>PS 302</td>
<td>Language: Hindi <em>Prathamic/Tamil</em></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>PS 303</td>
<td>Social Teachings of the Church</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>PS 401</td>
<td>Indian Hermeneutics</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>PS 402</td>
<td>Saivisim &amp; Vaishnavism</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Language: German</td>
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<td>From Language to Literature</td>
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*Total Credits: 44*
### (03) Optional Additional Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>PA 101</td>
<td>Introduction to Media &amp; Social communication</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>PA 102</td>
<td>Book Review: Philosophical Text</td>
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<td>02</td>
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<td>03</td>
<td>PA 301</td>
<td>General Psychology</td>
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<td>04</td>
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<td>04</td>
<td>PA 401</td>
<td>Developmental Psychology</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>05</td>
<td>PA 402</td>
<td>Psycho Sexual Integration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>PA 403</td>
<td>Introduction to Vatican II</td>
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<td>Aesthetics</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>PA 502</td>
<td>Theories of Personality</td>
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</tr>
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<td>09</td>
<td>PA 503</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Total Credits: 22*

Apart from the basic courses prescribed every student will also take up Book Reviews, Tutorials and Seminars. All candidates who seek admission for both BPh and Diploma will have to pass an Entrance English Test, which will be conducted by the institute in the mid of February. This is to confirm whether the applied candidate has sufficient knowledge of the English language to comprehend the subjects and fulfill other academic requirements. The candidate applying for a Bachelor/Diploma Degree in Philosophy will do a Thesis paper on a particular theme of interest at the end of their final semester and also appear for a three-hour of Comprehensive Written and 30 minutes of Comprehensive Viva Voce examination which will cover all the main philosophical subjects studied during the three years. We have a huge library named after late Swami Amalraj, OMI – the first Achariya Guru of our Aanmodaya Ashram in Kancheepuram. We have around 30,000 books categorized under Indian & Western Philosophy, Psychology & Ethics, Spirituality & Church History etc., and various other periodicals and journals. The institute has a journal published in the name “Gnanodayam: Journal for Socio-Philosophical Research” once in every year. The intake of students at the De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy from the Academic Year 2010–2019 is given below. For the year 2020-2021
we did not admit any students due to some structural changes made within our Indian Oblate Formation of doing Novitiate before Philosophy. However, in the coming year once the affiliation process is approved we will not only open admissions for oblate scholastics to DIP but also students from other congregations and dioceses.

### INTAKE OF STUDENTS 2010 - 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>1st Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>2013-2014</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>157</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
<td><strong>481</strong></td>
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</table>

Out of 170 students who have passed through our institute, 164 were oblate students and the other six were from the congregation of the Blessed Sacrament who did their philosophy with us from the year 2013-2016.

The oblate teaching staff members of the Institute are appointed by the Provincial in Council for a period of three years, which may, as required, be renewed. To be legitimately appointed as permanent teachers, they should fulfill the requirements, as per *Veritatis Gaudium* Art. 25. §1. Although the eligibility for appointing the staff/teachers requires that they should have finished their doctorate in their specialization, in case of need, members who have completed their Licentiate in Philosophy or M.A. are also appointed. We have two categories of teachers/staff - Residential and Visiting members. We have three (it varies some years we have four) Oblates who are Residential Professors and 27 others as visiting professors that include both Oblates (15) and non-oblates.
(12). Among the 12 non-oblates two are lay persons, 6 are religious priests and 4 are Diocesan priests.

**Categories of Staff Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Staff</th>
<th>Degree/University</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Andrew Anbarasu Arul Dhanasingh, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. University of Madras, Chennai, India</td>
<td>Indian Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Harry Immanuel Abishegam, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Pontifical University of Gregorian, Rome</td>
<td>Comparative Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Jerman Jesuraj Berchmans, OMI</td>
<td>MA. Indira Gandhi Open University, Delhi, India</td>
<td>Indian Philosophy</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visiting Staff</th>
<th>Degree/University</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Amirtharaj Joseph A, OMI</td>
<td>MA. IGNO University, Delhi, India; B1, B2: Kreuzberg Bonn, Germany</td>
<td>Philosophy; German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Antony Samy Jacob, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India.</td>
<td>Indian Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Arockiaraj Siddotam Divianathan, OMI</td>
<td>MA., M.Ed. University of Madras, Chennai, India</td>
<td>English Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Arokiasamy, OMI</td>
<td>MA. University of Madras, Chennai &amp; BL. Sri KH Law College K.G.F, Karnataka</td>
<td>English Literature &amp; Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Bruno John Baptist Siluvai, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune</td>
<td>Subaltern Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>06 David Kumar Anthony, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. St Paul University, Ottawa, Canada</td>
<td>Canon Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Francis Nallappan, OMI</td>
<td>L.Th. Gregorian University, Rome</td>
<td>Missiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 Gregory Arokiasamy, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Pontifical Lateran University, Alfonsiana, Rome</td>
<td>Moral Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>James Devasagayam, OMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, India</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>John Millar Fidelish, MMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. JDV, Pune, India</td>
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<td>John Paul Irudayaraj, OMI</td>
<td>BA. University of Madras, Chennai, India</td>
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<td>John Peter Vallabados, OFM. Cap</td>
<td>Ph.D. University of Madras, Chennai, India</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Jojo Parecattil, CMI</td>
<td>Ph.D. Pune University, Pune, India</td>
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<td>Joseph Dominic, MMI</td>
<td>L.Ph. DVK, Bangalore, India</td>
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<td>Joseph Maria Selvam Andrew, OMI</td>
<td>L.Th. Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule, Vallendar, Germany</td>
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<td>Joseph Thambi Penumala, OMI</td>
<td>L.Ph. DVK, Bangalore, India</td>
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<td>Joy Amal Francis, OMI</td>
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<td>Joy Ashok Irudhayanathan, HGN</td>
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<td>Lazar Gnanapragasam, SVD</td>
<td>Ph.D. University of Lancaster, England, United Kingdom</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Lilly Pereira</td>
<td>Ph.D. Leopold-Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Peter A. Susaimanikam</td>
<td>Ph.D. Pontifical University of Lateranesis, Rome</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Ranganathan Rajagopal</td>
<td>MA. Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi</td>
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<td>Rayappan Arokiasamy, OMI</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Rayappa A. Kasi</td>
<td>Ph.D. St. Paul’s Seminary, Trichy, India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oblatio

Vita et Missio

Sekar Sebastin Savari Muthu

Ph.D. Pontifical University of
St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome

Systematic Philosophy

Solomon Moses, OMI

MCL. St. Peter’s Institute,
Bangalore, India

Latin & Canon Law

Sylvia Thomas

MA. University Of Madras,
Chennai, India

English Literature

Tomy Thomas

L.Th. University of Toronto,
Canada

Pastoral Counselling

Oblates

Opportunities

Intercultural Formation

In line with the spirit of the last General Chapter that emphasized ‘interculturality’ we find that this is the greatest opportunity that we are able to experience and discover it in our academic and religious formation set up at DIP. Our academic and religious formation studies take place within a multi-cultural and multi-linguist context i.e. to say we have oblate students from different parts of India. At present, we have 22 students from 8 different states (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) speaking nine major languages (Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Assami, Marathi, Chhattisgadi, Jharkhandi, Telugu and Tamil) and nine dialects (Oraon, Sadiri, Khadia, Munda, Kasi, Santali, Bhojpuri etc). Such an ambience of growing together in an intercultural context not only creates in our Oblate students a thirst to know and learn different languages and cultures but invariably to prepare and adapt themselves mentally to the interculturality and internationality of our congregation. Such a diversity naturally and eventually enriches our everyday living, learning and forming experience of Oblate staff and students.

Contextual Learning and Missionary Adoption

Though we live 65 kilometers away from the city the location of our institute is indeed contextual. The De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy is surrounded by good number of villages especially people who do agriculture as their main occupation. They are economically poor,
affected and challenged by many types of poverty. Therefore, living amidst such a broken community, interacting and sharing our life with them through various ministries such as teaching Catechism, serving at the Elderly Home, animating Youth, Choir, Basic Christian Communities and taking tuition for the children in the neighbouring villages, poor parishes and missions of the Diocese expose them to the context of our missionary vocation as Oblates and give them ample opportunities to grow in the missionary adoption and love for the poor.

**Integral and Holistic Programme**

The integral and holistic nature of our programme is another opportunity that enhances the curriculum and the study programme at De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy. Apart from teaching purely the philosophical subjects we do integrate into our curriculum various other special courses like Oblate Spirituality, Documents of the Catholic Church, Catechism, Introduction to Scripture, World Religions, Psychosexual Human Formation, Indian Spirituality, Subaltern Philosophies, Behaviour or Character Management etc. The institute in view of providing the students with opportunities for acquainting themselves with contemporary developments and trends in different disciplines, scholars and eminent personalities in various fields are invited to give special Philosophical Lecture in the first semester of every academic year. During the second semester of every academic year a Philosophical Symposium is organized by the students themselves in consultation with the Dean of Studies on a special theme for critical reflection and evaluation. The papers on the special theme are presented by the students themselves in collaboration with the philosophy students of other Ecclesiastical Institutes namely the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai and the MMI Institute of Philosophy, Pazhanjur, Chennai. Besides this, a special guest professor is also invited to enlighten the students on the theme. The Institute offers ample opportunities to develop the latent talents of the students through St. Eugene Literary and Cultural Academy (ELCA). The students take either a common theme or a burning issue and philosophize it according to the signs of the times. The cultural and literary academy is conducted on every alternative Fridays with the purpose of preparing the students for their future ministry. It deepens their
understanding of the society and their Oblate way of life by reflecting on these special themes and issues. During their three or two years of philosophy, especially in their first semester holidays (end of November) our Oblate students go for a Special Exposure Programme (SEP). The first year students go to our ‘Aanmodaya Ashram’ for having the taste of Ashram Experience. The second year philosophers go for the Folklore and the third year students go for their Village Exposure or Social Work. These exposures help the students not only to have a thirst for different creative ministries but also avails opportunities to train themselves holistically and integrally.

*Sharing Oblate Identity and Charism*

Having an institute is not just a question of pride; it is a question of creating more opportunities to share our oblate identity and charism with others. Our institute with its vision and mission and with its entire academic and socio-pastoral programme becomes a living evangelization of God’s message to the people. We create space to be more innovative and interactive. Our students are given ample opportunities to interact with our lay associates (MAMI), in particular a small group of well-wishers called ‘Friends of DIP’ (FOD) who support us spiritually and economically. On the 21st of every month we celebrate the ‘Eugene Mass’ with our lay associates and Friends of DIP. They do join us in some of our common celebrations and other events of our community and institute. This mutual sharing of our life and faith has enabled us to incarnate tangibly the charism and the mission of the congregation as well as the institute among the people.

**Challenges**

*Oblate Vocations and Academic/Formative challenges*

Compared to other religious congregations, Oblates in general have a fair number of vocations every year. However, there is a drastic decrease in the vocation coming from the southern part of India. The students who come to join us are mostly from the tribal belts of Jarkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa. Comparatively the education systems in these states are rarely good. The students come with minimum exposure and training when compared to students coming from the southern
states. So naturally there is a kind of academic difficulties at the level of language, competence and understanding. For the past 15 to 20 years Oblates have received them with joy because we have moved to the poor and the poor have joined us. This is a wonderful form of dialogue. No doubt at all. But how do you train these young men is a serious question to ask?

Since these students come from a poor educational background, just giving them an extra year or two for English language alone would not suffice. This is not the right way of approach. The right way to approach this challenge is to ask and understand: From where do they come? What is their cultural background? What kind of awareness of reality do they bring to us? How do they understand human relationships? We must accompany them in a different way both in our academic and formative endeavours. We need Oblate personnel who have tremendous openness to the other ways of being, feeling and relating. Human person is such a mystery that we can never grasp the person fully. We have to move with agility, with openness, with different models and approaches both at the level of academics and formation so that we can help these students tangibly and concretely as they build the future of the province and congregation in India.

Infrastructure and Administrative Governance and Policies

All of us as educators know that the atmosphere within an institute contributes as much to the success of the student as the curriculum. Today the challenge of creating a positive atmosphere transcends all our debates of whether our institute needs to become more goals oriented, and more accountable for their results. Because, the aim of any healthy educative system is all about making an institute a place where students feel challenged but (at the same time) competent, where they work hard but enjoy it, where achievement is the product but not the sole objective. Thus, an adequate, well-equipped and well-resourced infrastructural atmosphere with a well-refined administrative policies, statutes and governance have a great more bearing on the development of a student’s love for learning as well as in the excellence of the institution as a whole. Such an ambience of an adequate infrastructure, well-evaluated and well-refined policies and statutes are what we find missing in the growth of our institute. We have too many compromises and
compromizations that do not at all times lead to a healthy institutional growth and progress. It blocks or barricades the institute’s flourishing towards a full-pledged institute.

The present structure of the institute that we have today was not designed for philosophical studies and research. The present DIP or Gnanalayam was built for the Juniorate. Since we have converted the Juniorate into a philosophical institute we have many practical difficulties and challenges. For instance we have our Lecture Halls, Library, Dormitory, Chapel, and Refectory all under one roof. If we could have a separate academic block with all infrastructural facilities like seminar halls, audio-visual rooms, digitalized library, administrative office, well-equipped lecture halls and conference rooms and a separate place of residence for the students then I believe we can give a real face lift to the nature of the institute as well as to the formation programme. The students will also be able to appreciate the nature of the institute and cultivate serious thirst for learning and research. When everything happens within one roof we are not able to provide adequate atmosphere either for academic or for formation. At times we are not able to distinguish these two natures sufficiently. Finally, the creation of such an environment I believe is possible only with a joint responsibility of the administration and the local community of the institute. When the team is on the same page philosophically, when the institute’s objectives and how to get there, are clearly understood and bought-into by everyone; when everyone feels that his contribution is essential that’s the success of any academic growth and excellence.

New Face Lifts to Educational Models

Our institute is now teaching a generation that is not only diverse in itself; it’s totally unlike the former generation. With the generational and cultural changes, the mentality, questions, and concerns of our students are so different. So we cannot just today offer one model of education. The starting point will always be the real. Within that reality, we are to look for change and transformation. For this is what our Founder wanted from us through our education and ministry. I quote: “Let the Oblates assimilate well what the Church’s expectations of them are. It is not mediocrity in virtue which is required to respond to the exigencies of our holy vocation.” (Letter to Father Mouchette, Oblate Writings I, vol. 11,
All this effort is at the service of the apostolate. The young Oblates do not study to become brilliant, but to answer the call of the Church and thus to expend themselves for the glory of God. “Keep always before your eyes the very peak of the mountain where the burning bush awaits you. By your holy desires and by a sustained fervor hasten your transformation.” (Letter to Brothers Grenier and Chauviré, deacons, Oblate Writings I, vol. 10, no. 1011, p. 257).

Likewise, oblate education should change not only our students but also us. We as educators are to be in a process of change and transformation by being committed to the responsibility entrusted to us. No one can give what he does not have. The true educator is therefore the one who has grasped the spirit of the Congregation and who is capable of communicating it to the students within the changing facets of time. He is a model for those confided to his care. What kind of encounter will we have with our students if we are not changed? And the meaning of change for our institutions is ‘who our students become,’ ‘what they value’ and ‘what they do later in their oblate life and ministry’. To put it another way, in oblate education, the depth of our students learning must encompass and integrate an intellectual rigor, with reflection on the experience of reality, to work toward constructing a more humane and faith-filled society. The experience of reality includes the broken world, especially the world of the poor, the questions of pluralism and secularization that are waiting for healing. It is in this depth, that we will be able to recognize that God is already at work in our world. I am only picturing in my mind the number of students who pass through our institute every year to next stages of formation. How many of them who pass through our institute or even leave us feel competent with the experience of having, in some way during their time with us, a depth of engagement with reality that transformed them to their deepest core to oblate life and value? I am really challenged with this question. Mostly a stereotyped, traditional, one way model of education that we are using deprives students today of all their creativity, change and transformation. Therefore DIP as an institute needs more to do to ensure that we are not simply educating the world with bright and skilled superficialities but rather we need to provide opportunities for a deeper understanding of the realities of life and reality.
Openness to Others

The richness of any institute depends on its openness to the other. The more it opens itself to people of various groups, cultures and languages the better it becomes. In this regard, though we have at DIP students from different languages and culture still it’s a uniform group. Our institute as a center of academic excellence has not opened itself to other religious congregations, dioceses and to the lay members. As a result, there is lack of creative and competitive spirit among the students. Since they all belong to the same congregation there is a kind of laxity in their intellectual pursuit. Life at the institute at times becomes monotonous, leaving no much space for a healthy interaction and dialogue of life and experiences. Opening ourselves to different groups is a serious concern that we need to consider in the immediate future.

Conclusion

Thus, the above mentioned reflections on ‘De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy: Opportunities and Challenges are my personal reflections based on my lived experiences. I consider them as the pointers of our already and not yet growth. While appreciating and acknowledging its present growth and various Oblates who have laboured hard to actualize this vision, may we be reminded of the greater responsibilities that are entrusted to us to carry this vision ahead and bring it to fuller accomplishment. May this institute continue to transmit to all the fragrance of oblate charism and mission. Let it continue to give itself altruistically in preparing young men who will have an ardent commitment to the poor and to the mission of the universal church.

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SHORT HISTORY

The post-independent Sri Lanka had to go through various upheavals due to the unstable political and economic situation of the country. The Sinhala majority and the other minorities which fought the battle of independence, developed mistrust due to the post-independent political agendas and orientations. Sinhala Buddhist nationalism led to collapse of Sinhalese-Tamil relations which finally culminated to a 30-year civil war. Though the military operations virtually ended in 2009, war continued in different forms. In 2015, with the new political space created, the path to reconciliation and peacebuilding was re-opened.

To respond to this urgent need of peacebuilding and national reconciliation, the Oblate Institute of Higher Learning (OIHL) was established on 21st May 2016 during the Bi-centenary Jubilee Celebration of our congregation. OIHL is the result of immense courage, vision and collective response of the Oblates of the Province of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and others who put together their hearts and soul to find a way to comprehensively address conflict transformation which was the crying need in post-war Sri Lanka.

CURRENT CONFIGURATION

OIHL was started as an umbrella institute having the possibility of conducting many study programmes. However, during the first four years (2016-2020), OIHL conducted only one study programme, namely Diploma in National Reconciliation and Peace building which later developed in to Diploma in Conflict and Peace Studies.
This one year Diploma consists of four certificate courses: Certificate Course in Conflict Transformation, addresses the issues of conflict transformation from the transcend perspective, transformative mediation and non-violent communication; Certificate Course in Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cultural Integration, draws attention to the value systems of various religious traditions and cultural principles lived and upheld in Sri Lanka; Certificate Course in Psychological Counselling as a Path to Peace, focuses on developing various counselling skills, crisis management, grief process models and psychological support for grieving families and Certificate Course in Social Engagement for Peace and Reconciliation aims at recognizing the causes and consequences of war and conflict in Sri Lanka.

In 2021, two new study programmes were added to the curriculum, namely *Formation for Renewal: Foundation for Challenges and Opportunities* (for Religious) and *Short Course in Basic English* (for the youth).

**Academic Year 2016-17**

The Academic Year 2016-17 was inaugurated on the 1st of October 2016 and Her Excellency Ms. Robina P. Marks, High Commissioner of South Africa in Sri Lanka was the Chief Guest. Mr. Cesar Villaneva, Resource Person of conflict transformation and Negotiation, delivered the Key-note address.

The academic structure was, Very Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Provincial Superior) was the Chairperson, Rev. Dr. Oswald B. Firth OMI (Director), Rev. Fr. Eric Lakman OMI (Academic Secretary), Rev. Fr. Jagath Anthony OMI (Bursar), 9-member Academic Council, 12-member teaching staff and 27-member academic resource-staff.

During the academic year forty-eight (48) students were enrolled for four certificate courses (12 Religious Sisters, 2 Religious Priest, 7 Oblates, 1 Buddhist Monk, 15 university students from the University of Kelaniya and 9 lay people). Among the students there was a student each from South Africa and USA.

Those who completed the Diploma and Certificate courses were awarded with certificates on 14th October, 2017. Hon. Minister Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Co-existence, Dialogue and Official Languages and Ms. Daniella Reiff, Director USAID, were the Chief
Guests at the Certificate Awarding Ceremony. Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda, University of Colombo delivered the Key-note address.

*Academic Year 2017-18*

The Academic Year 2017-18 was inaugurated on the 14th October 2017 and Hon. Minister Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Co-existence, Dialogue and Official Languages and Ms. Daniella Reiff, Director USAID were the Chief Guests at the inauguration. Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda, University of Colombo delivered the Key-note address.

The academic structure consisted of the following members, Very Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Provincial Superior) was the Chairperson, Rev. Dr. Oswald B. Firth OMI (Director), Rev. Fr. Eric Lakman OMI (Academic Secretary), Rev. Fr. Jagath Anthony OMI (Bursar), 9-member Academic Council, 12-member teaching staff and 27-member academic resource-staff. During the academic year twenty-two (22) students were enrolled for four certificate courses (10 Religious Sisters, 2 Pastors, 1 Oblates, 1 Buddhist Monk, 2 university students from the University of Kelaniya and 5 lay people). Among the students there were two students from Indonesia and a student each from USA and Philippine.

Those who completed the Diploma and Certificate courses were awarded with certificates on 5th January 2019. His Excellency Archbishop Pierre Nguyen Tot, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Sri Lanka was the Chief Guests at the Certificate Awarding Ceremony. Hon. Javid Yusuf, member of the Constitution Council of Sr Lanka delivered the Key-note address.

*Academic Year 2019*

The Academic Year 2019 was inaugurated on 5th January 2019. His Excellency Archbishop Pierre Nguyen Tot, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Sri Lanka was the Chief Guests at the inauguration. Hon. Javid Yusuf, member of the Constitution Council of Sr Lanka delivered the Key-note address.

A new position, Associate Director, was added to the academic structure. Very Rev. Fr. Irwin Morais OMI (Provincial Superior) was the Chairperson, Rev. Dr. Oswald B. Firth OMI (Director), Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Associate Director), Rev. Fr. Eric Lakman OMI (Academic...
Secretary), Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Bursar), 10-member Academic Council, 12-member teaching staff and 27-member academic resource-staff.

During the academic year thirty-two (32) students were enrolled for four certificate courses (4 Religious Sisters, 1 diocesan priest from the Archdiocese of Colombo, 4 Oblates (3), 1 university students from the University of Kelaniya, 17 lay people). Among the students there were 3 Oblates from Lesotho and one Religious from Indonesia.

Those who completed the Diploma and Certificate courses were awarded with certificates on 11th January 2020. Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, former United Nation’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was the Chief Guests at the Certificate Awarding Ceremony. She delivered the Key-note address.

**Academic Year 2020**

The Academic Year 2020 was inaugurated on 11th January 2020. Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, former United Nation’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was the Chief Guests at the inauguration. She delivered the Key-note address.

Academic structure continues as it was. Very Rev. Fr. Irwin Morris OMI (Provincial Superior) was the Chairperson, Rev. Dr. Oswald B. Firth OMI (Director), Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Associate Director), Rev. Fr. Eric Lakman OMI (Academic Secretary), Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI (Bursar), 6-member Academic Council, 12-member teaching staff and 27-member academic resource-staff. During the academic year thirty-two (32) students were enrolled for four certificate courses (2 Religious Sisters, 1 Religious Brother, 4 Oblates, 11 Oblate Juniorists and 14 lay people). Among the students there were 3 American students and one Religious from Indonesia.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, OIHL experienced numerous uncertainties, frustrations, challenges and limitations over which she had no control. Certificate Courses on Inter-religious Dialogue and Social Engagement had to be restricted to a limited number of contact hours and the exposure programme had to be cancelled. Those who completed the Diploma and Certificate courses were awarded with certificates on 19th December 2020. Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva OMI, Provincial Superior, Oblate Province of Colombo and Rev. Fr. Oswald
B. Firth omi, Director OIHL were the Chief Guests at the Certificate Awarding Ceremony. Rev. Fr. Oswald B. Firth omi delivered the Keynote address.

Academic Year 2021

OIHL which was operated from the Center of Society and Religion (CSR) was moved to Dev Arana Oblate Centre, Minuwangoda to be established itself as a Higher Learning Institute having a permanent establishment.

A new component, Board of Advisers, was added to the academic structure. Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva omi (Provincial Superior) was the Chairperson, Rev. Fr. Eric Lakman omi (Academic Secretary), Rev. Fr. Asanga Viraj omi (Bursar), 10-member Academic Council, 3-member Advisory Board and 13-member academic staff.

During the academic year thirty-two (20) students were enrolled for the One-year course on Formation for Renewal (14 Religious Sisters, 2 Religious Brothers and 4 Oblates) and 10 young lay people were enrolled for the Short Course in Basic English.

Mission and Ethos

National reconciliation and building peace are vital needs given the pain and suffering experienced by all communities during the 30-year war. There are families of civilian, combatants and military who need to come to terms with their dead, their lost ones and the disappeared. There is a deep-seated hatred and vengeance, as well as unresolved pain that need to be addressed. Many women and children suffer from trauma and other related problems. Peace promoters are in need of guidance and training in strategizing for peace, transitional justice, psychotherapy in promoting both inner and outer peace.

Taking this ethos in to serious consideration, the mission of OIHL is formed to provide windows of opportunities to those who wish to serve the community either as volunteers or at a professional level in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Hence, the vision of OIHL is “To be the heart of innovative learning to serve humanity” and the mission is
We are an institute of higher learning promoting humanitarian values and knowledge to serve a post-war community in creative ways thereby responding to contemporary needs in a secular society. We will offer practical and professional training adhering to globally recognized standards by partnering with local and international organizations and create opportunities for personal and social advancement.

**OIHL has four objectives**

– To train men and women engaged in humanitarian services to improve and increase their potential skills to provide a qualitative service of higher standard in areas related to conflict transformation at all levels.

– To offer both contemporary theoretical and practical know-how to those involved or interested in the technicalities and strategies of peacebuilding at a professional level through highly qualified experts in conflict transformation.

– To open avenues to those engaged in sustainable peacebuilding through knowledge of a variety of religious traditions prevailing in the country, and psychological counselling, human rights and transitional justice combined with an exposure to the major religions and their value systems that promote peace through reconciliation.

– To lay a solid foundation for peace and reconciliation through a critical approach to concepts, systems and methodologies for those intending to pursue further studies in this particular area of social and cultural engagement.

The ethos of the diploma is not a text-book case of peacebuilding, rather an exercise in ‘praxis’, where theories on peace and reconciliation studies in the class room are tested in the field. Engagement in an Experiential Assessment related to the field chosen that would last for a period of six weeks is an integral part of the diploma course.

**Respond to the needs of the local church and society**

The absence of physical violence of the 30-year civil war does not necessarily infer the presence of peace and the dawn of reconciliation. In fact, it is peace in negative sense. A number of organizations in Sri Lanka have made genuine attempts to address various aspects of peace-
building both during the ethnic conflict and after. The civil society in general and the Church in particular were taking strategic mashers to build peace and promote reconciliation in a concrete way. They were convinced that peace and reconciliation understood in a comprehensive sense must address religious extremism, people’s grievances, fear, mistrust, transitional justice, reparation and non-recurrence of hostilities. Many church organizations, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government ministries proposed peace and reconciliation workshops and seminars. However, there is a lacuna in comprehensively approaching and addressing conflict transformation. It was realized that the short courses and seminars would not suffice to train men and women for the task.

It is a fact that peace and reconciliation are not values that flow freely into our lives, rather, they are a result of painful sacrifices, passionate struggles against racial and religious supremacy and years of intensive training in the techniques of conflict transformation. Realizing this fact and the demand of the society and the church, the Oblates Province of Colombo responded with the establishment Oblate Institute of Higher Learning which presented a comprehensive Diploma programme on National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding (Diploma in Conflict and Peace Studies).

Christians are a minority in Sri Lanka (7%). Though, not in a dialogue of dogma, Christians are constantly engaged in a dialogue of life with their non-Christian neighbours. Creating OIHL has paved the way for a greater spirit of dialogue.


A good knowledge in English is always essential to reach the heights of success in life. Having understood the great demand of the youth, in 2021, OIHL came forward with a suitable English programme to respond to the need.
RESPOND TO THE OBLATE CHARISM AND THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION

Oblates draw inspiration for their mission and ministry from the life, work and writings of their Founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod. He was a man with a vision and a mission to evangelize the most abandoned. In Sri Lanka, mission to the poor does not necessarily connote those who are only in the economic doldrums. ‘The poor with many faces’ takes in its sway those who are also socially poor. Most of the survivors of the war definitely fall into this category. They need the ‘good news’ of reconciliation.

St. Eugene, after the French Revolution, undertook the task of rebuilding humanity and wrote in the Preface to the Constitution and Rules, “We must lead men (people) to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and finally we must help them to become saints”. Today the Oblates of Sri Lanka are facing the similar challenges. OIHL is established as an institute that could realize the vision of the Founder.

St. Eugene read and interpreted the signs of the time with unbiased accuracy. The Oblates of the Province of Colombo, Sri Lanka, taking the foot steps of the Founder engaged in a process of reading and interpreting the signs of the post-war times. As a result of this reading of the signs of the time, Oblates realized the need of an institute of Higher Learning to facilitate the process. Responding to this need clearly resonates with what has been stated in the General Chapter of 1986, Missionaries in Today’s World, No. 5: “Oblates should be involved in a mission in a world which is largely secure … a mission adapted to a variety of cultures” (a wide range of needs).¹

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¹ www.oihlomi.org
AKADEMI MARITIM NUSANTARA (AMN)-CILACAP, INDONESIA

AMN Team (including Damianus Yohannes, OMI and Charlie Burrows, OMI)

SHORT STORY AND CONTEXT OF MINISTRY

To begin our journey in describing how the Akademi Maritim Nusantara (AMN) or Nusantara Maritime Academy came into being and exists so far, Fr. Charlie Burrows, OMI, shares some of his stories in an overview contribution for additional information in this article.

“Yayasan Sosial Bina Sejahtera” (YSBS) is a Foundation that aims to bring about prosperity and goodwill. The Australian OMI Delegation set up this Foundation in Java, Indonesia, in 1976. After reviewing the places offered by the Bishop of Purwokerto Diocese, Central Java, Indonesia, the first Oblate Missionaries decided to choose Cilacap, the Southern part of Central Java Province, as their principal place for their future ministry. The place was chosen considering its backwardness and the lack of many facilities either for education or for the economic growth of the majority of its poor people. The Oblates considered that this social - economy context of the society was matching with the Oblates charism.

To help the government make education more available to the people in the remote area, the Oblates also began building and staffing education in 1978/1979 by setting up three schools. Thus, by 1990, the Delegation had set up twenty-five schools from Kindergarten to Senior High and Vocational Schools. Those schools have been educating more or less 10,000 students every year.

Then a tertiary educational institution was planned. A group of men representing AKS (Akademi Kemaritiman Swasta/Private Maritime Academy) and The Foundation board of YPPK (Yayasan Pembina
Pendidikan Kemaritiman/ The Foundation for Maritime Education) Surakarta met with Fr. Charlie Burrows, omi. They asked Fr. Charlie, omi, to help them move the Institution to Cilacap since AKS, which began in Surakarta (250 Km from Cilacap), was located far from the sea. The Department for Marine and Seafarers pressured them to move the Institution to a place close to any port. Cilacap, the only seaport town on the south coast of Java, with a deep-water port was their first preference. This moved occurred in the early 1980s.

Fr. Charlie finally received the offer to take over the ownership of YPPK and changed the first name of AKS to AMN, Akademi Maritim Nusantara, which was agreed upon by the group. Soon after the decision, the operation of the AMN begun. In the meantime, to continue their studies in the evening hours, the lecturers and cadets used the Junior High School of Mary Immaculate, one of the OMI schools in Cilacap. Seeing the bright future of this new Academy, Oblates under the YSBS began to build a new building for AMN.

The use of the Junior High buildings continued for more or less twelve years until the construction of a new academy building was completed. A working ship’s bridge was built in the center of the building. The cadets could practice watchkeeping there and follow shipping activity by providing all radio communications of the ships entering and leaving Cilacap Harbor. Some funds came from the Australian Oblate Province. Most of the financial support was from the trucking businesses owned by the Oblates. The academy building has endured many earthquakes and survived intact.

Recently the Oblates built a new School building for Mary Immaculate Junior High School to replace their old buildings. Last March 4th, 2021, the teachers and staff of the said School moved out to their new buildings. This move has had positive benefits both for the Junior High School of Mary Immaculate and the AMN. Each Institution could plan now for their better future since the place and the facilities to support both institutions are sufficient.

In a brief flashback to a meaningful story behind the running of the YPPK Foundation, the author will now explain how we (Oblates and collaborators) took it over and handled it up to the present day. As the new group took over the YPPK Foundation from its previous boards, we still kept all employees and some board members who wished to stay
on in the new AMN. Nevertheless, the goodwill was not going hand in hand with reality on the ground. We had found out that there were “power plays” by some who wanted to control the whole Institution. We considered it would be better not to depend on the old board members but rather to start something new, guided by the Oblate charism and our future planning. We started with new board members, where the Local Bishop and some lay Catholics were elected. Time passed along, and with more concern from the Province toward this ministry, eventually, the Board is now totally Catholic with 7 OMI’s and two laypeople, with the OMI Provincial of Indonesia an Ex Officio member and as head of the Board.

AMN was the first tertiary education institution in Cilacap before any other tertiary institutions came along. Even though it is a maritime institution and located in the port and surrounded by so many districts and villages close to the sea, we have been struggling very much to make it a thriving institution. We are fully aware that it takes time and substantial effort to gain the trust of the people. We have seen that religion is often a problem in getting students for institutions run by non-Muslims like AMN.

**Configuration: AMN in progress**

Akademi Maritim Nusantara (AMN) is a higher education academy, qualified for some related maritime qualifications. Since February 14th, 1985, on the southern coast of Java Island, the campus itself has been founded in the central Java Province. Geographically, the AMN campus is located in Cilacap, where long beaches and a big port are packed with various maritime businesses. Since the beginning of its founding, AMN has been relatively funded by a foundation under the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) Congregation, the Foundation for Maritime Education Development (YPPK).

Akademi Maritim Nusantara has 3 (three) Associate Degree-level study programs, namely:

1. Marine Engineering
2. Port Management
3. Nautical Science

In short, the curriculum of Marine Engineering focuses on the developing skills needed for seafarers in the area of ship engineering. In
In line with that, the Nautical Science is focusing on developing nautical, technical expertise for seafarers by preparing the cadets to be the ship’s navigators in the future, as per their grade requirements. At the same time, the Port Management curriculum concentrates on the marine world of businesses and all its administrative parts. Many of our alumni and alumnae are now holding some good positions in shipping companies and some are government officials at a higher level.

Our vision is that AMN be a center for training and developing maritime education where caring for the poor is a preferential option. In this way, the academy and its graduates can contribute excellent expertise in the national and international maritime sectors.

Meanwhile, our missions are:

1. To organize a maritime education and training academically which responds to a social problem
2. To conduct critical research to develop the maritime field scientifically.
3. To perform community service for empowerment of the maritime community

In line with AMN’s vision and mission, we also have the goals to fulfill the vision and mission above into reality, namely:

1. We prepare the students to become mentally, spiritually, and scientifically professional in maritime science and technology, both in theory and practice.
2. Developing maritime science and technology to improve people’s lives.
3. To protect and preserve the maritime environment and its biota.
4. To present a qualified and skillful graduate as per the needs of the stakeholders.

In line with our dreams and commitments, the Institution already has set a plan in the near future to change the AMN from the Academy level to the Institute level. There is also a strong push and encouragement from the government, both on the Local and even from the Central Government level, that AMN, with its many faculties, should be a Maritime Institute in the future. We had been in good collaboration with the government to prepare the proposal, but Covid-19 forces us to adjourn for a moment. Once the pandemic is well managed, we will undoubtedly pursue our dream systematically.
We have collaborated with many shipping companies and ports related to the maritime field to facilitate our students for their internship practical places and job-hunting vacancy information. Side by side with that, AMN has also signed some agreements with many educational institutions. Just to name a few, AMN had been in good collaboration with Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak Campus (Malaysia), Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (Philippines), Academic International Consortium of Indonesia, and Asia-Pacific Consortium of Researchers and Educators. This collaboration helps us to improve the quality of research of the AMN lecturers. Those collaborations and agreements have been helping us maintain good quality for our more or less 800 students and 45 lecturers, and five professional instructors.

AMN has a very strategic location, easy access to education that reaches all elements of society, good cooperation, and relations with many institutions. AMN is considered to have the lowest cost of education compared to other similar Maritime Education Institutions. Another benefit we still can get is that AMN is the only Church Institution here in Indonesia. Thus, access to many parishes, Catholic institutions, and related areas will be easier. Even though many other maritime institutions surround us, as an institution that is putting its whole effort to educate the poor in the Oblate spirit, we still have a huge access to the whole country to educate many young people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

**Oblates and Many Helping Hands for AMN**

Everyone knows that a significant ministry demands considerable financial support too. So, it is with the AMN. At the beginning of its founding, many local donors and works shared many financial supports, but a big portion came from abroad.

The post-Christmas 2004 earthquake and tsunami that came crashing into some parts of Sumatra Island and many other small islands close by were a “blessing in disguise” for AMN. Those big catastrophes were followed by a stronger quake in May 2005, which significantly affected the island of Nias, one of the islands in Sumatra, and which left many people in deep sorrow. They had lost their loved ones, and houses were washed away, their plants and other livestock were gone.
Fr. Charlie made a quick effort to help the affected families by offering help for their children ready to move to tertiary education level with scholarships. After having some communication with a funding agency and the OMI world, the result was tremendous.

After all those efforts on the financial level to support AMN’s development for its operational and administration sectors, there was a difficult time between 2011-2015. We could consider it a long-struggling battle for us. The reminder letters from the Department of Sea Transportation, Seafarers, and Shipping were coming several times, asking the AMN to be approved by their related certification departments. This Approval Letter should be provided to them whenever they come for external auditing or surveillance to ensure that the cadets will fulfill as requested by qualification the degree for their future jobs as seafarers. Such regulations and rules were being stipulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and rectified by the Indonesian authority for seafarers at the national level. This Approval Letter demands that we should have Ship Engine and Ship Navigation Simulators as the main equipment requirements.

The government gave a time limit for AMN but for two years only, 2013-2014, to address such a requirement. AMN had been threatened to be downgraded into the senior high school level with the failure to fulfill these main requirements. It meant that our AMN Diploma Certificate would not be considered a degree from the Higher Education Level anymore.

Being challenged by such a demand, we turned to the OMI Congregation, asking for help. Fortunately, after a series of meetings and discussions with the Provincial and Council, the approval for such a project was received. We were happy for the students who are mainly poor and wanting to secure a brighter tomorrow; their future would remain open. After specific discussions with the OMI General Administration, our request for a loan for buying the simulators was approved.

We finally obtained our Engine and Navigation Simulators for AMN in 2014. These two Simulators are available for the cadets and the tutors for their Maritime Training. Since the model of the Simulators was an advanced one, the tutors could also do their training and certification for the advanced level while giving instruction and making some new syllabi for their teaching materials and their coaching.
With these programs of Simulators and more equipment in the labs and workshop, our biggest intake of new students was 368 in September 2016. Slowly but surely, we gained trust and confidence from society. We finally received the Approval Letters from the Directorate General of Sea Transportation, both for the Officer Engineer Class III Training program and the Deck Officer Class III Training Program on October 19th, 2017. This was something we had dreamed of for a long time. The threat of downgrade has finally paled and faded. We give thanks to many elements in the Oblate Congregation who worked with us to support our mission and projects. Our future task is to keep moving forward to help AMN make better progress and adjust to the new demands.

AMN, as a maritime higher learning institution, is in a unique position. As a vocational training center for the Seafarer Officer and Port Officer, it must seek the Approval Letter from the Ministry of Transportation, under the Directorate General of Sea Transportation. However, it has to get its formal accreditation process from the National Accreditation Institution as a higher learning institution. So, besides getting the Approval Letter to have a professional level and standard for the cadets, we also have to fulfill the Ministry of Education and Culture standards.

Nevertheless, being pushed by the spirit of making the AMN in good progress and well developed, in the same year, 2017, we had another success story. We were able to get three accreditation certificates, with all on the B (good) level. The two B Certifications levels were given to the Nautical Science Study Program and Ship Engineering Study Program. In contrast, the other Certification of B Level was given to the AMN as an Institution.

The three Accreditation Certificates and the two Approval Letters were making perfect progress towards our initial efforts in 2014-2015 to have a re-accreditation process for our Port Management Study Program. On May 31st of 2015, we were finally granted a B Level of Accreditation from the Ministry of Education and Culture. It had given an excellent foundation to the sense of confidence to pursue the three Accreditations and Two Approval Letters later. Lastly, the AMN maintained its accreditation Level for this Study Program, where again, they received the B Level on May 31st, 2020. It is a good sign for us indeed.
Reviewing all the progress that AMN has been going through so far, we see that the crucial part of the journey has been to manage the personnel involved directly and indirectly in this Institution. Since the beginning, those who had been involved directly either in AMN or in the Foundation (YPPK) are the persons who either become the lecturers or the staff in the two institutions.

Before we reached our development of the lay personnel outside of the Oblates, we had to consolidate all the Oblate personnel. Until 2012, since the mission of the OMIs began in Indonesia in 1971, the efforts of the mission had been focused more on the ministries in parishes. The majority of the Oblate personnel were working in different parishes scattered in six dioceses. We had been establishing many parishes, schools, clinics, and many other pastoral ministries in social fields, foundations for different levels of schools, credit unions, a Marian Shrine and retreat houses. We also had to some extent worked in establishing new dioceses and expanding others. Our personnel, especially local Oblates from Indonesia, were better prepared and finely trained for the parish mission.

Oblates who are in charge of and involved directly in these two Foundations YSBS and YPPK in Cilacap, continue their efforts to develop them as much as they could following the Oblate Charism. Slowly, the Province’s administration too brought some issues to be discussed and even took many strategic decisions for the betterment of Oblate services through these two Foundations. From 2014 to now, nine Oblates have become board members of the YPPK, while another two Oblates have become lecturers in the AMN. From the Oblates’ perspective, the sense of belonging toward the Foundations is growing and reverberates in our Oblate meetings and daily conversations.

The spirit of Oblateness for taking care of the poor through maritime education has become the spirit of AMN. The AMN Statute states very clearly this preferential option for the poor in its vision, as was mentioned above. This spirit is being mentioned as a directive and orientation whenever AMN and YPPK discuss and make some strategic
decisions regarding the poor, and, moreover, it has become routine in our daily practice and conversation. We bring the Oblate spirit to the staff and form them to understand that what we have, either in the form of hard assets or soft ones, should be managed well for the sake of the service toward the poor. Since what we have is an asset, it all belongs to the poor as well.

Oblates help AMN to create a spirit of transparency, accountability, and internationality

It is an open secret that transparency and accountability in each Institution like AMN are a challenge to achieve in Indonesia. When more Oblates were getting involved in the YPPK and AMN, one of the main goals was that the transparency and accountability in these two institutions should be well observed. Precise measurement and standards for such an environment should include a sound system in which the elements involved must have a transparent monitoring and evaluation system.

Since 2012, we started our first effort on these two objectives in financial matters. An external audit for the finances was conducted to make everybody in the AMN more open in decision-making, budgeting, purchasing and spending, monitoring and advising decisions related to the financial aspect. In the beginning, this effort faced many difficulties since the financial record was still a very simple one, and so the clarity of each item was not really evident or attainable. However, we considered that the first attempt was a good effort. Besides encouraging that things slowly shift from what was a blurred vision to a clearer one, from the gray view to a more unambiguous line, we continued to work towards mapping out the financial needs and all the resources that are capable of being managed in a new and better way. As a conclusion to this effort, from 2012 up to the present time, the external audit for the financial sector is now reaching a fair and accurate assessment from the auditors.

With good habits in transparency and accountability growing in the AMN, we have been able to conduct some training and benchmarking to many other higher learning institutions in Indonesia and neighboring foreign countries like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. We are conducting training to advance our lecturers’ ability to research. We re-
ceive social services for our lecturers by inviting Swinburne University from Malaysia to accompany us in eight-day workshops. We also sent our three English lecturers for two-week training in English teaching methods to the same university after signing the Memorandum Of Understanding.

AMN is one out of thirty-four members of PAPKI, the Association of Catholic Academies and Polytechnics of Indonesia. This association is under the direction and surveillance of the KWI, the Indonesian Bishops Conference.

AMN under PAPKI, where the Oblates are deeply involved, provides more possibility to work together with other institutions. This collaboration allows AMN to have a positive opportunity for its service and widen its vision, and also, AMN can reach out to the reality of the larger world. Membership will certainly broaden AMN’s knowledge and enlarge the venues for continually renewing the learning process it has developed. As a Congregation where internationality becomes part of the identity of the Oblates, we from the beginning have been bringing AMN not only input from the international world, but AMN should also be an active partner, working for the international services as well.

Within this internationality context, we come to knock on the door of the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning (AOIHL). We are, in many ways, still a very small Institution, very limited in resources and access, and have just started in very simple ways as a beginner in the international world. We need space to learn more from the Oblates’ Higher Learning institutions around the world. We need to hear more sharing and create a space where we could learn from many Oblate Institutions worldwide on their struggles and hopes, innovations, and breakthrough methods on facing many demands and maneuvers from many societal elements. In short, we may say that joining such a forum and association will make AMN aware of its international identity element as it is for the Oblates and its mission to bring good news to the poor.

This year, AMN just celebrated its thirty-sixth anniversary. We consider it is an age that is mature enough as an institution. Taking this opportunity to bring AMN to participate more in the local development of human resources and start to expose or engage intensively in the
international world, it seems urgent to use many opportunities to cooperate and participate in international events. It is something that should be seriously endorsed. AMN needs to be more trained and accompanied in its journey at both the national and the international level. Indeed, it is a real chance to open up to a new horizon, where some variety of perspectives will be explored more. Out of experience, many prominent programs can boost our international involvement, which surely can bring a good impact toward AMN. Hence, social interaction is available more broadly, either online or on a direct engagement. It will be a good momentum for AMN to practice benchmarking with prestigious and experienced institutions and academic communities. By doing so, we think it will be one way to help AMN move forward in a good dynamic and to progress, which will help AMN gain confidence and grow in an optimistic sense.

Oblates Charism: AMN on service for the poor and following the professional standard

Above, we have mentioned briefly the effort at managing and balancing good service to the poor while supporting a professional environment for the staff and lecturers of the AMN. We want to create a good atmosphere in AMN, where the standards of professionalism of the staff, either through their proficient level of service and their academic excellence is growing. Also, at the same time, we want to ensure that their earnings standard is fulfilled as per government standards and their merit performance. We suppose that the concern toward the poor should also be complemented with the benefit for those working with us to receive their fair income. Support toward employees’ well-being and prosperous life for their family’s future is something with which we are wholly concerned.

A few years ago, while drafting the renewal of AMN’s Statutes with staff and lecturers, we were surprised by their deep consideration of how the Oblates work for the poor. The people who proposed the Statute’s draft noted that we express concern toward the needy and the poor, which should be written clearly into the AMN Vision. Their argument was based on their experience working with the Oblates, recalling how helpless they were before they finally got their dignity as a clear outcome from the Oblates’ works and services. What had been pro-
posed before in the Statute Draft was finally agreed upon by the Board in one of its meetings. Thus, the Statute to govern AMN ensures that through AMN’s presence and the Institution’s operation, they should place taking care of the poor and the needy as their first preference. Such a formula is still a compass for our new Statute right now as our spiritual practice.

At the beginning of this article, we have given some information regarding student loans. This program so far has given much credit to society. Since the beginning, when it was structured and designed, this student loan program was mainly to help prospective students from needy families. Oblates have been managing such an intentional fund up to the present time and are still intent on continuing the program as per the purpose for which the fund was created. We have been working together with many laypeople and Churches to get the exact information for the prospective students to be helped by such funds. We hope to be fair in our treatment of them, and the fund will be used only for the right persons and the actual target group.

Besides managing such funds for studies, occasionally, we have been helping some students with their medication and hospital bills. Some students’ families stayed out of reach, living in remote areas or islands where modern communication systems like phones or the internet are not available. We have been facing many cases where some students were being hospitalized, caused by some serious illnesses like appendicitis, typhoid, liver problems, tuberculosis, chest infections, and other health problems. In many ways, Oblates and some donors try their best to help such students where the government social insurance system is not reaching all the poor. It has become our serious topic in many discussions. We hope we will get some breakthrough in the future, including integrating this sort of need with the help of some Companies’ CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) fund and, when possible, working hand in hand with local government for health insurance access.

**THROUGH AMN, OBLATE MISSION TO THE YOUTH, UPLIFT CULTURES AND PROMOTE RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

The concern to serve the Youth was one of the motivations to prompt the Oblates to initiate a higher studies learning institute like AMN. To
work with Youth, one needs a medium to touch their heart in a more extended period and to do so systematically. There are many other ways of working with Youth more informally. The Oblates have conducted such activities at their respective places of ministries such as: the coordination of youth ministry in the parishes, organizing youth camps, using the Antioch and Choice groups, holding Eucharistic preparation for students, making retreats and recollection programs for Youth. Nevertheless, having a higher learning institution is another dimension of youth work where the consistency and standard of the Christian life and an ethical discipline can be taught and observed. The direction and guidance toward the Youth in a specific group on campus are now being accomplished at AMN, both through the curriculum and syllabus and in many other ways.

The youth presence on the campus brings all the potentialities for growing both humanly and religiously. It is an excellent opportunity for us to treat them as whole human beings, considering all their capacities for growth both in the disciplines as per what study program they have chosen or in their religious traditions. They have been carrying on where they have chosen. From an academic side, we have been developing many programs for this by upgrading our curriculum and syllabus year by year to match the present-day needs according to the national and international maritime requirements the world demands. So, to say, we keep upgrading campus facilities, especially those related directly to the teaching process of the students, to help them be well-prepared professionals once they are in service after their graduation.

The student activities, which are not directly related to their academic development but mainly formed to accommodate the needs of the human resource development of the cadets, are being developed thoughtfully. The students are grouped into student activity units. Some student activity units are formed as per their talents and interests. These sorts of units capture the hobby interests and particular purpose of the cadets so that their activities will be monitored well by the campus authority. Some financial support provides commendable spending and as well renders an accountability report.

So far, we never allow any activity or seminar related to the political stream or a particular political party. All the cadets and student activities have to stay on developing their academic and human resources.
We never give any permissions toward associations or organizations where their main concepts are very clearly rooted and based on any religion that we consider could negatively impact the cadets. For example, we do not permit those that could arouse their tendencies to the problems of racism, fanaticism, and radicalism. Often, we have been struggling to escape from many student activities sponsored by some associations and organizations that are very clearly motivated by specific political mainstreams and even promotes radicalism. We select our lecturers and staff carefully while maintaining good communication on the campus to follow our system and values, and so the cadets are not exposed to such risky ideas.

To balance the cadets’ religious activity, even though the Oblates established AMN, we have to be discreet and careful once we come to the campus ministry. So far, we have not yet formally established a campus ministry department. We have learned from the past that other non-Catholic groups tend to see that this campus ministry department is a formal way for the Catholic Church to organize a massive Christianization on the campus. The main problem is not about the importation of Christianity itself. However, in turn, other militant groups will force the campus to accommodate their activity on the campus also.

Besides forming some student activity units, AMN is also very much concerned about appreciating the cadets’ cultures. Our students are from all over Indonesia, where we have over seven hundred languages and more than one thousand two hundred tribes. The cadets are bringing along with them the richness of their treasured native and original cultures. AMN, just like many other higher learning institutions, is often called a small Indonesia or Small Nusantara (archipelago). AMN is a place where people come from Batak, Nias, Aceh, and students of Javanese, Sundanese, or Balinese backgrounds. This mingling of cultures and languages means that the cadets are coming from Dayaks, Banjar, Flores, Maluku, Papua, Sumba, and some other sub-tribes, which are also gathering together and making one united AMN community.

There was a period where clashes among those groups often happened but not because of such serious reasons. However, AMN takes this opportunity to help them grow in acceptance toward others from different origins and cultures and take the opportunity to grow to-
together as human beings. On many occasions, AMN has invited prominent persons from different academic backgrounds to give seminars, workshops and hold open discussions in official or informal ways. These opportunities aid the cadets and give them a vast horizon to the values of humanity. Slowly but surely, we bring them to feelings of social cohesiveness, where one another lives as friends to form the spirit of solidarity.

This growth seems to be successful, and as a product of such sharing diversity, we feel that the campus environment is more conducive to studying and growing in a deep sense of humanity. We continue to strengthen this bond among the staff, especially the students, by motivating the groups from different tribes and student activity units to participate actively in art performances or cultural shows. These sharings of culture are valuable when we organize some special events like the inauguration for the new cadets, the commencement of cadets, the opening of national and international seminars or workshops, or simply on the occasion of welcoming a special guest. By doing so, the cadets feel that their cultures are being respected and appreciated. Their unique tribal heritage is lifted to a higher level, and their identity is highlighted and becomes better-known by others. In turn, the cadets learn to respect their fellows who are coming from different tribes and cultures.

In such assimilation processes, the differences coming from religious backgrounds and faith traditions can also fertilize the soil to grow in the spirits of tolerance and acceptance.

From all appearances, we may say that using the diversity of cultures as a platform to develop a sense of tolerance and acceptance among the religious adherents in our AMN Campus is more sensible for us. People can easily respect others who are tribally and culturally different from them rather than simply a difference based on religion. We continue our effort in this field of religious dialogue by accepting staff, lecturers, and students without making a preference for their religion and faith background. We arrange in such a way that in every formal ceremony, function, and program, all religions will, in turn, be given a chance for the opening and concluding prayer. In this way, the spirit of tolerance and acceptance will go deeply into the heart of every religious adherent. The sense of humanness and
the feeling of being sons and daughters of the same Almighty God has its place to grow, both in the private place and in the common one. We will undoubtedly continue our efforts to develop the spirit of dialogue among students, staff, lecturers, and, even to some extent, the AMN stakeholders.

OBLATES: SERVE THE NATION SO TO THE MARITIME WORLD

Indonesia is a maritime country, where over one-third of its territory is water, composed of rivers and seas. Since this government came into power, the way of seeing the sea and rivers has changed. Before, we always saw the islands far away from the Capital City of Jakarta as remote areas. Because at that time, we believed that all their basic facilities, including their main transportation facilities, were inferior. However, the current government has changed the perspectives: those islands far from the Capital City are now the front line and the gateways of people coming and going to Indonesia. Therefore, the government has uplifted people’s lives in those areas by building many transportation facilities like ports, airports, new roads, bridges, and sea tolls using many ferries and ships. This move has helped people in such places experience the speed of development and access to their basic needs easier than some years back.

Alumni and alumnae of the AMN have been actively involved in such moves, and many of them are working in many seaports and river ports.

As Oblates involved in the training and education of so many young people in our Maritime Academy, besides the concern toward the poor and needy, we also directly support the government in their massive programs to make Indonesia a maritime hub in the South East Asian Countries, even to extend it to the world. Even though just a small contribution coming from us to the nation, this sort of endowment, in the long run, will somehow give a different color toward the maritime world. Our graduates will have access to jobs related to the port, ships, shipping companies, and maritime business sectors.

Even though the main target is young people with a preference for students coming from low-income families, this way of services will significantly impact society as a whole. This practice confirms our earnestness to implement our Province vision through all our lives and
services. As a Province, it is stated in our mission statement that as Indonesian Oblates, we commit ourselves to bring the good news of salvation to those who are poor in their many faces. We do this together with those who have goodwill to spread out the Pancasila values (the five foundation values for our nation).

This year, under the new Minister of Education, Indonesia started with what we call the “Kampus Merdeka-Merdeka Belajar” program. Every higher learning institution is free to manage its own curriculum and syllabi without much intervention from the government as it is being practiced so far. It is freedom and autonomy for institutions, freedom from bureaucracy. In this new concept, lecturers are given freedom from state intervention and all bureaucratic demands and requirements. Students are given a vast choice to choose their own preferential fields of study and lecturers they like from different universities or institutions. It is up to the certain higher learning institution to make a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with as many as higher learning institutions both at the national and worldwide levels.

AMN as an educational institution will undoubtedly follow this move to concretize the adapted spirit as stated in the Indonesia State Constitution to enrich the nation’s life intellectually and morally. Together with many other higher learning institutions, especially those who are gathered in PAPKI, AMN has started the initiation of such a program. Since last year, discussions and meetings have been conducted several times to have the same model and method to enter such a new way of managing our education system. We have to move quickly and respond faster to all the offers and chances offered by many stakeholders, people, and concerned institutions. It is an excellent opportunity to bring AMN to be more on an international platform and upgrade its staff and lecturers not to be left behind by such a system.

Even though we are in the process of going more international, we should not forget our identity as Indonesian. As stated above, AMN is like a small Indonesia, where our students are coming from different cultures and religions, enriched by a variety of native traditions, and are still very attached to their local religious values and customs. In this way, we uphold very closely in our hearts the motto of our nation,
Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Unity in Diversity. We are fully aware that we should bring this student to the sound professional level of a national and international context. However, on the other side, we also have to guide them to deepen their beliefs and good practices. To be a professional as a cadet as required for such a profession is a must, but they also should grow in their Indonesian dignity and pride, in their own cultures, and good comportments. This should be our compass to bring AMN to its maturity as an educational institution.

AMN Team

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THE OBLATE CHARISM HAS BECOME PART OF MY LIFE

SCOTT WOODWARD

Having been part of the Oblate ministry at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX for 30 years, and being male, I am frequently mistaken for an Oblate. I’ve been called far worse. I am quite happy as a married layman, having always thought of myself as a teacher not a preacher. Oblates have been good enough to allow me the opportunity to be that teacher.

Over those 30 years, the Oblate Charism has become part of my life. I didn’t know the Oblate before coming to San Antonio although I discovered they served in a parish not far from my childhood home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Since arriving at OST I have been impressed by several points in Oblate life that, to me, exemplify the gospel. I have sought to make these things part of my faith, lived as a married layman. Chapter 5 of *Lumen Gentium* presents the understanding of the universal call to holiness and includes a section in #41 on States of Life. The various theological implications of this presentation on holiness and states of life remains to be thoroughly explored; however, the statement is clear – all are called to holiness within their particular state of life. It is the state of life that makes it distinctive. Living a life of holiness as a married layman has particularities, but the requirements of holiness remain the same. It is the characteristic elements of holiness that I see in Oblate life and have worked to make part of my own life.

If I were asked to describe the Oblate charism I would say it is lived through a life of hospitality, mission, value for life, and simplicity
of life. These are certainly important pieces for any life of holiness but are, I think, particular to Oblate Life and seen in the people they serve. I have found hospitality to be a central part of Oblate life. Where ever I have gone to visit Oblate houses and ministries around the world, I am welcomed. It has been my pleasure to visit Oblate ministries from the General House in Rome to St. Eugene Institute in Kinshasa. No matter where we went, we were welcomed not only to the house, but to the parishes and centers where Oblates serve. The people reflect this hospitality, welcoming the stranger into their homes, sharing what they have with us, praying with us, celebrating with us. While visiting the Oblates in Chennai, India, several of us attended Mass at a parish where Oblates assisted. After Mass we were greeted by what seemed to be every person there. The pastor invited us for tea before we drove back to the Provincial House. The same experience has been duplicated in places around the world. In Kinshasa we had a meal at the house of a parishioner. They had a lovely, simple home that was filled to the brim with our group and the various family members that came. We enjoyed a typical Congolese meal with them. It reminds me to keep this hospitality as part of how I live.

Mission seems redundant to mention since we are talking about the Missionary Oblates. However, the important piece I see is a willingness to take risks that comes with being a missionary. At OST, the risks have included starting a PhD program in Spirituality that moved the school from a primarily teaching center to one characterized by both research and teaching. We started a program inside the Texas Prison System. The Sankofa Institute focuses on African American pastoral leadership with most students being from traditions other than Catholic. These are the same type of risks I found at Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, a Catholic University that is majority Muslim. The effect this university has on the island is monumental since almost every leader within both Christian and Muslim communities attended Notre Dame. They know each other and sat next to each other in class. The risky work of peace-making is tremendously enhanced through this university. I am hoping some ecumenical work in San Antonio can produce similar results. The message is take the risk to try things that can spread the gospel.

There is also a value for life within Oblate communities. This includes the obvious life issues such as abortion and euthanasia, but ex-
tends into seeing value in the life of the incarcerated, the poor, the suffering, and young people. These are the poor “with their many faces.” If the beginning and end of life becomes disposable, as it does in abortion and euthanasia, then disposing of those who make us uncomfortable such as prisoners, the homeless, immigrants, the elderly, people of differing races, is the next logical step. Even if they simply become invisible, faceless, they are likely to be disposable. Granting value or dignity to their lives is crucial. I don’t know of any other element of the gospel that is more important today than this one – allow for the dignity of all people. This is what so many, both inside and outside the Church, seek to deny. Oblates go to places others do not and serve people others will not. This is the gospel for today. It’s what will help others see what the gospel is about.

There is a simplicity of life I find among Oblates. A brief story exemplifies this point. After attending an event that seemed to emphasize an image of Church that accentuated clericalism and divisiveness, I opened a video in my email of Fr. Louis Lougan being elected as General Superior. The video showed the room where the electors met, how they responded as the name on each ballot was called out. As it became clear Fr. Lougan would be elected, someone stood and placed a hand on his shoulder. Others followed. The most of the men were wearing polo shirts, a few had collars on with short sleeve shirts. The room itself was simple, tables and chairs with a podium and chalkboard, if I remember correctly. It seemed like a gathering of friends, and response was similar. Simple gestures that recognize God’s action in our life. It’s this simplicity that I find refreshing. It points to the real value in life – relationships and experiences. I try to remember this.

These are the things I find distinctive and inviting in Oblate life. How they are lived in lay life is somewhat different from how they are lived in religious life, but they are all part of that life of holiness. I’m grateful for the experiences I have shared with Oblates around the world.

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ENounter with St Eugene De Mazenod at SJTI

Ikenna D. Ekwerike, MDP

I met St Eugene De Mazenod the day that I first encountered the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) on arrival from Nigeria to study in South Africa. Yeah! I did my theological studies at the OMI-owned St Joseph’s Theological Institute (SJTI), Cedara, South Africa. That encounter turned out to be not just one of those usual encounters that are often random and short-lived but a real moment of new awakening for concerted social and Gospel activism.

St Joseph’s Theological Institute challenges thought pattern which, in turn, redefines actions. A multicultural institution, SJTI colourfully parades a fine array of seasoned staff members and dedicated students from over 20 different countries across the world. At SJTI, race, colour, nationality or gender is private baggage. What is real is that common humanity under the One God who is love.

Hospitality and deference

One of the things any visitors to Cedara (as we fondly call it) would not fail to notice as they step into the compound is the welcoming atmosphere that gently embraces everyone. The calm, eco-sympathy and friendliness which is being built and encouraged at SJTI is a promise of greater commitment to the aspirations and general wellbeing of students and staff.

Although seated gracefully right in the belly of a serene Kwa-Zulu Natal farm like a desert mother/father, SJTI still draws thirsty souls from across Africa and other continents to drink from its overflowing fountain that is fed from the incredible Mazenodian missionary zest. The reassuring affective support in the midst of uncompromising academic demands makes SJTI the toast of many male and female religious congregations and lay faithful alike.
Hospitality entails acceptance, respect and patience. Students, especially those from countries where English is not the first or second language come with a lot of anxieties. The struggle to listen to lectures in English, take part in class discussions, answer questions in class but most importantly, write assignments and exams places extra burdens on such students. Inevitable religious community tensions and peculiar formation dynamics make reality even more daunting.

However, the system at SJTI seems quite in touch with all these factors and, somehow, manages to transform them into positive growth processes. The, largely, horizontal communication flow expresses respect for individuality and privacy. It goes a long way to promptly dowsing any tensions and strengthens students’ confidence in the system.

**Promotion of Human Dignity**

One ominous sign that a congregation and its mission is about to hit the buffers is the moment it starts to drift away from the founder’s spirit and original intent that are encapsulated in a charism. Charism is the unique gift a founder received from the Holy Spirit; and it is given for service in the Church. It is the Pentecost spark that had caught the founder and, bursting into a full flame, spreads very fast to others who come in contact with him or her. These, in turn, are not able to hold the fire in but continue to light up others.

Dignity of the human person summarises all that St Eugene De Mazenod and his Oblates stand for. Taking the liberating Message to the poor and most abandoned occupied him. He understood how poverty, in its various shades, robs individuals of their dignity and inhibits wider human fulfilment. St Eugene was aware that human fulfilment is top in life’s basics that was why he urged his sons to strive first to be and help people to become truly humans, and then Christians, and ultimately, saints. Becoming and helping others to be truly and fully human has proven to be a most difficult task by all standards.

Oblates, over the years have been seen to be pursuing these goals, and in perseverance too. That earned them the nickname, specialists in difficult missions, by Pope Pius XI. In our day, what other mission could be more difficult than radical Gospel advocacy against racism, unrelenting secularists’ assaults on marriage and family life; the escalating culture of death; gender-based violence; the cancel culture; dis-
eases and pandemics, global warming, social inequalities and systemic oppressions; corruption and economic sabotage of Africa by African rulers; Islamic extremism and terrorism in Africa and the Middle-East; suppression of rights to self-determination and disrespect for human dignity and rights in Africa; institutionalised social injustice and poverty in Africa; big-tech tyranny and growing media partisanship and mob culture in America and Europe? All these threaten human dignity and, unfortunately, point to the fact that the world is yet to be truly human and not anywhere near becoming people of God and saints yet.

Consequently, SJTI is specialised in forming people to be truly human and equally empower them to go far and wide to help others, too, become humans and then Christians and saints. Indeed, at SJTI, that compelling Mazenodian fire for difficult missions burns brightly. At SJTI, I encountered St Eugene De Mazenod in our time.

*Ikenna Denismary Ekwerike*
THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF WORKING AND COLLABORATING WITH OBLATES

MARIE-MICHELE LAFERRIERE

Saint Paul University. My University. My SPU.
This is what inspired me to choose Saint Paul University in 2011 for completing my Master’s degree in Conflict Studies. At that time, I was already familiar with the Oblates, having attended Sacred Heart Parish in Ottawa for some time. However, I was unaware of the history and role that this community played in the establishment of the University that would become, 3 years later, my Alma Mater.

Despite a profound change in Saint Paul’s landscape over the years, there is one thing that remains intact: The Oblate values and mission - the power of Christ, love of the Church and the poor, and the spirit of the community. Through its existence, its innovative programs that respond to the imminent needs of today’s society, its Oblate Peace Center, its response to social justice, its warm welcome to all, its respect for open and humane dialogues, all while continuing to ensure academic excellence; the University demonstrates boldness, humility and confidence.

During my three years of study, while juggling graduate school, work, and family, I did not participate in many campus activities. Nonetheless, I was very proud to be a student there. I talked about Saint Paul University everywhere I went, about how human it was, how welcoming and life changing my experience has been.

Upon my graduation, I looked for ways to give back to Saint Paul University. Today, many years later, I am finally fulfilling this wish by working with the Board of Governors. Alongside with this incredible team, we strive to promote and build the capacity of the institution while preserving its identity, mission and vision heritage.

As Chair of the Board of Governors, I have the great privilege of working and collaborating with Oblates who have dedicated their lives not only to the Oblate mission of Eugene de Mazenod, but also to the Saint Paul University’s mission. The lifelong dedication of many of
them have particularly struck me. Many have not counted the decades and thousands of hours, they have spent serving this original dream of excellence and education. Whether as professors, rectors, deans, members of the Board of Governors or various committees, the Oblates demonstrate to us the importance of their ministry, showing up day after day, and committee after committee, reflection after reflection. De Mazenod said that what is a dream alone remains a dream, but what is dreamed with others can become a reality. The hard work of hundreds of Oblates who have left their mark on Saint Paul University and the original oblate is what makes our institution what it is today. Growing and thriving. People come and go, programs change and evolve, but the Oblate mission and values remain strong.

*Marie-Michele Laferriere*
REFLECTIONS ON ENGAGEMENT WITH THE OBLATE INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING IN SRI LANKA

RUKI FERNANDO

The Oblates missions in Sri Lanka have been an important part of my formation as a lay Catholic. The Centre for Society and Religion (CSR) in the capital, Colombo, was a place I first began visiting as a school student. Its founder and then Director, the late Fr. Tissa Balasooriya, always warmly and lovingly welcomed us students and youth, patiently answered our questions, and generously shared CSR materials and resources with us. The mission of Fr. Michael Rodrigo, a people’s martyr, at Suba Seth Gedera in rural and remote Buttala has also been a place of inspiration and knowledge to me and many other Young Catholics. Both these are missions of the Colombo Province of Oblates. Later on, during the height of the last phase of the war and the immediately after the war, I was fortunate to closely interact with the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR), an initiative of the Jaffna Province of the Oblates based in war-ravaged Jaffna. Despite me being an ethnic Sinhalese (the majority community) from the capital in Colombo, the Directors, staff and all others connected with CPR who were ethnic Tamils from the North trusted me and made me feel very much part of their lives and work. All of these experiences were very important learning opportunities for me. The Oblate Missions also facilitated my work as an educator, including by helping me organize exposure visits to Suba Seth Gedera for school leavers, lecturing at the human rights course run by CPR in Jaffna for university students, and speaking and participating in seminars and other events at CSR.

DIPLOMA COURSE ON PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION & CERTIFICATE IN SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Around 2016, Oblates in the Colombo Province initiated a Diploma Course on Peace Building and Reconciliation through the Oblate
Institute of Higher Learning (OIHL). This was a time when a new government had made ambitious commitments towards peace, reconciliation and human rights. Actual progress was often seen to fall short of expectations. Even so, it was a time when there was relatively more political space and support for initiatives such as those facilitated by Oblates, more space for freedom of expression and assembly, and less intimidation and threats against those who question the government’s policies and practices. In short, it was a favorable and enabling environment for this type of course.

The one-year course that started in 2017 consisted of four modules – Conflict Transformation, Interreligious Dialogue and Cultural Integration, Psychological Counselling and Social Engagement. Each module was approximately 3 months each, with weekend classes. Those who completed a module received a certificate and those who completed all four modules and satisfied the academic requirements received a diploma. I was invited to lead the module on Social Engagement, while the other three modules were led by academics or those with academic backgrounds. I felt some hesitation as this was a more “academic” initiative than the other learning initiatives in which I had taken part. However, the Oblates were quick to reassure me that they invited my involvement despite my lack of academic credentials. And soon, my feeling of nervousness became one of excitement to work on a new learning initiative. I took on the responsibility for the module on Social Engagement, and tried to compliment the other three modules with a focus on stronger engagement with grassroots realities and diverse groups and persons. The use of the word “learning” in OIHL made me think of ways I could help students to learn instead of just teaching and educating them. Thus, I tried provide a space and facilitate a process to draw out their personal experiences, impressions, knowledge and reflect on them individually and collectively. Although some “lecturing” and imparting new information was part of the module, I tried methods that could help them self-learn, such as by using photos, films, case studies, group discussions and group activities.

The course I designed featured a variety of topics and I wanted the process to be one that that encouraged student interaction. I experimented by trying to help students help learn about Social Engagement using a film based on real-life student activism in the USA in the
1960s, where students had chances to share their impressions, learnings and critiques. A positive experience and feedback in the first year in 2017 led me to continue with this method through 2020. The curriculum also included a historical study of the conflict in Sri Lanka based on student’s perceptions, impressions and memories. The course also dealt with some of the more controversial consequences of the conflict and war which still remain unresolved, such as land, enforced disappearances and memorialization. The latest government initiatives and international dimensions were also discussed, even though these topics were being debated in the country and divided opinions led to political and ethnic polarization. Learning about conflict transformation in other countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, East Timor, South Korea and Peru was also incorporated. We discussed role of survivors, victim families and affected communities, gender, religious freedom, media, right to information etc. Dialogues with persons who led government initiatives, an opposition MP and a Minister were also arranged. The dialogue with the Minister led to him officially endorsing the overall Diploma course. Lecturers included Sri Lankan and foreign academics, lawyers, local and international rights activists, UN officials and families of victims. The students who participated included Christian clergy (Catholic and Anglican), Religious (men and women), seminarians, NGO workers, private sector employees, a school teacher, and university students. There were also few foreign nationals residing in Sri Lanka who joined the course. The assessment (marking) consisted of mixed methods – assignments on insights from the field visits, a reflective essay, a mini project design of what students would like to do after the course, a creative expression (article, poem etc.), using skills learned such as submitting an application through the Right to Information procedure, and active participation in class.

**Visiting victim families and affected communities**

I wanted a central part of the course to be an intensive field visit to meet and interact with survivors, victim families and affected communities across all major ethnic communities, including interactions with former combatants from both sides, observing / joining protests and memorial events etc. Although field visits were not part of the original design of OIHL, the Oblates involved in the course were very recep-
tive to my proposal and provided additional support such as transport, which greatly encouraged participation and ensured we could visit several places within a few days. In the first year, a part of the field visit was in very tense circumstances, with the police and armed forces trying to obstruct a civilian war memorial that was part of the field visit. The participants persisted and still joined the memorial service, which was greatly appreciated as an act of solidarity by some of survivors, victim families and the Jesuit priest who led the initiative. There were heated debates amongst students and with others during and after the field visits, but looking back, I feel these were also good learning experiences. Many participants have shared that the field visits left a lasting impression on them.

The nature of the program also provided for mixture of structure and flexibility. We invited interested persons to join individual classes and field visits, even if they were not able to join the whole module. These people were able to benefit and also contribute towards the module with their experiences and insights. After the terrible Easter Sunday bombings in 2019, the course was also able to accommodate learnings about this. In 2020, the Social Engagement module had to be postponed several times due to COVID-19, but in the end, we were able to present a condensed version.

One of the highlights of running this course for me has been that some of the students kept in touch with some communities / persons they met during the field visits and classes. One assisted a war affected community in address a long-felt need in their community. Some students are also still in touch with me and some have been joining in justice and peace initiatives and solidarity actions. Last year, a student from the 2017 class contacted me, motivated me and supported me to visit her home village Navaly in the Jaffna district, where a Catholic church and surrounding had been bombed and more than hundred and thirty civilians are reported to have been killed in 1995. After my visit, I wrote an article about this incident and later visited the place again, along with others to join in an 25th year commemorative event.

I must also mention that CSR turned out to be a very good place to host the course and there was logistical support in terms of equipment and materials, which made my work easier.
Oblates’ Vision, Mission, Charisma and Responding to needs of Church and Society

As a lay Catholic, I felt the vision of OIHL “to be the heart of innovative learning to serve humanity” was rooted in Oblate charisma of “love for the poor” and “to take the message of liberating joy to the most abandoned humans, those whose situation cries out for justice before God”. It is line with the congregation’s primary purpose to “bring the good news to those people whose condition cries out for salvation” and identifies with the Oblates ministry of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, particularly “as endeavors to promote harmony in the midst of diversity, and initiatives to build and promote peace”.

In the context of the Catholic church in Sri Lanka, this was also a unique and rare initiative. There have been many ad hoc exposure programs, training programs, seminars and I have also been involved in organizing, speaking and facilitating at some during my work with the national office of Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC and afterwards. But these are often not systematic and comprehensive. In Sri Lanka, there are many schools run by Dioceses and congregations, as well as informal learning institutions. However, within the Church, with a few exceptions, there seems to have been very little attention, investment and commitment towards developing learning institutions and initiatives focusing on justice, peace, reconciliation and human rights. This has been and still is a need in Sri Lanka, 12 years after the end of a three-decade war and amid unresolved ethnic conflict and extreme polarization. Hence, OIHL was an initiative that filled this gap.

Challenges and thoughts about the future

Writing this after leading 4 modules (2017-2020) provided me with an opportunity for reflection, especially about the future. Despite uncertainties such as COVID-19 and political situation, I hope OIHL can continue to invest in a learning initiative on justice, peace and reconciliation.

A major challenge in the past 4 years was the difficulty to attract students to participate, perhaps because the nature of the course and topics may not lead to lucrative employment opportunities. Finding a person who can assist with “marketing” the course might be a solution.
Another possibility could be to collaboratively organize this with other groups (institutions, movements, organizations, networks etc.) who might be interested in offering this course to their members, staff, students etc. Such as the Catholic University Students Movement, schools that may be interested in offering this course to school leavers or senior students, congregations etc. The duration of the course, day and time of classes may have to be adjusted depending on the group that the course is geared towards. Structuring the course as two or more residential sessions with “homework” or “assignments” in between could be one option rather than three months of weekend classes.

Stronger collaboration with existing Oblate initiatives, which have decades of experience in justice and peace work and are highly respected locally and internationally, could also add value to this course. In the Colombo Province, CSR and Suba Seth Gedera are two Oblate missions that immediately come to my mind and there may be others. Given the polarization amongst Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, including amongst Catholics, running the course as a collaborative initiative between the Colombo Province (largely Sinhalese) and the Jaffna Province (largely Catholic) could be a challenging but enriching experience. More visible collaboration or co-organizing with an inter-faith group or with a group from another religious background may also enhance the quality of the course, particularly the module on Interreligious Dialogue and Cultural Integration.

For the last four years, the medium of the course was English and lectures and discussions were primarily in English. However, some flexibility was offered to those who were more comfortable in Sinhalese or Tamil. This offered a unique opportunity for Sinhalese and Tamils to be in one class and join field visits together, and also led them to benefit from listening to and being challenged by personal experiences that also had political, legal, structural and policy implications. At the same time, running the course in English may have prevented or discouraged many interested persons who are more fluent in Sinhalese and / or Tamil from joining the course. Options of having two separate courses in Sinhalese and Tamil with occasional interactions with help of interpreters (external or from amongst students who may have multiple language capacity) could be considered. If the course is primarily in English, prior planning to enlist services of volunteers to interpret
and making this known during the application process may encourage more participants.

Lastly, some follow up could be also in-built to the course. This could include forming alumni groups. When I reflect on Oblate’s ministry and the courses we had the last four years, the course was insufficiently oriented towards Oblates’ mission of “solidarity with the poor” and “efforts to champion their rights in places where decisions affecting them are made” and this could be an area that follow up could be focused on.

I’m extremely grateful to Oblates who invited me to be part of OIHL and supported me through four years of this course. There has been frustrations and difficulties, but overall, organizing and leading the Social Engagement courses of OIHL has been one of the most meaningful and enriching learning initiatives I have been part of, and I look forward to becoming involved in such initiatives in the future.

Ruki Fernando
ASSOCIATION OF OBLATE INSTITUTES
OF HIGHER LEARNING

PURPOSE

According to the Preamble of its Statutes: “We recognize the importance of the ministry of education in the mission of the Church and in the charism of the Oblate Congregation. We see this ministry as a truly missionary endeavor. St. Eugene sought to promote the education of the church’s ministers for the growth and benefit of the entire church and its mission, and to ensure that the Oblate ministry of education continues to serve the Oblate Congregation and the needs of the local churches where we are called to serve. We foster excellence in academic education and promote the integration of intellectual formation in the total missionary formation process.”

MEMBERSHIP

The AOIHL is a grassroots organization of Oblates who are involved in the ministry of higher education, and who come together as a means of mutual support. This specific organization of OMI educators grew out of meetings held among capitulars at the 2004 General Chapter. The organization itself includes all Oblates who are involved in the teaching ministry in higher education.
FUNCTIONING

An executive of the organization consists of the presidents or rectors of the Institutes of Higher Learning in the Oblate Congregation. The member institutions at the present time include: Notre Dame University, Cotabato; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio; St. Eugene de Mazenod Institute, Kinshasa; St. Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara; Saint Paul University, Ottawa; and, the Oblate Scholasticate, (Obra) Poznan. The Director of Oblate Studies is an ex-officio member of the Executive. Guests may be invited to participate in the meetings as determined by consensus.

The Executive elects a Coordinator and a Treasurer for three-year terms. The Executive group usually meets annually during the last week of May.

The meetings consist of updating on events and organization in the different institutes and could involve joint actions on behalf of promotion of the ministry of education in the Oblate Congregation. The coordinator is invited to give an annual report on the meeting of the Executive to the Superior General and council.

The statutes of the AOIHL were originally approved in May 22, 2008 and revised June 1, 2011. The Superior General and Council are informed of the statutes and any subsequent amendments.¹

STATUTES

At the Meeting of the 34th General Chapter, September 2004, several capitulants themselves gathered to discuss the status of Oblate Institutes of Higher Education. After several separate ad hoc forum meetings at the Chapter, these capitulants proposed the following resolution which was approved by the body of the capitulants:


6.H. The General Chapter recommends to the new Central Government that it reflect upon the interrelated questions of:

1. The place of higher education (i.e. the component of academic education beyond the requirements of initial formation) within the charism of the Oblates;

2. The place of our institutions of higher education within the charism of Oblates, and more practically, within our life and ministry at this time;

3. How the Central Government might play more of a role in facilitating more cooperation between our various institutions of higher learning. (Approved by the Chapter on September 27, 2004.)

As part of its recommendations, the ad hoc forum at the Chapter agreed to set up an executive group to carry these recommendations forward. After the Chapter, the Oblate General Council agreed to an Executive Group of the Oblate Institutes of Higher Education which held its first gathering in Rome, 19-23 May 2008. This Oblate Ministry of Higher Education Executive Group has discussed and agreed upon the following statutes, which we have developed from recommendations made at an historic 1997 meeting of Heads of Oblate Universities and Centers of Theological Studies in Ottawa. At its meeting in San Antonio, Texas, May 25-29, 2009, the group approved a change in its name to “Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning”.

PREAMBLE

We recognize the importance of the ministry of education in the mission of the Church and in the charism of the Oblate Congregation. We see this ministry as a truly missionary endeavor. St. Eugene sought to promote the education of the church’s ministers for the growth and benefit of the entire church and its mission. We gather together so as to ensure that this ministry continues to serve the Oblate Congregation and the needs of the local churches where we are called to serve. We foster excellence in academic education and promote the integration of intellectual formation in the total missionary formation process.

1. NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF ASSOCIATION

The Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning is a grassroots constituency in the Oblate Congregation. The member institutions
at the present time include: Notre Dame University, Cotabato; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio; St. Eugene de Mazenod Institute, Kinshasa; St. Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara; Saint Paul University, Ottawa; Oblate Scholasticate, (Obra) Poznan.

2. **EXECUTIVE GROUP**

2.1 We hereby establish the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning whose purpose, among others, is to play a lead role in fostering communication and collaboration among these Oblate institutions and, ideally in the future among all Oblates involved in this education ministry.

2.2 The Association comprises the heads of the institutes mentioned above, or their selected delegates. Also, the Association Members could select a delegate or delegates who represent Oblates involved in education ministry at other institutions. Those other institutions will be selected by the Association Members. Members will promote communication between the Association and the institutes to which they belong as well as to all Oblates involved in education ministry. They will also promote communication between the Association and their respective major superior who oversees or is responsible for the institute.

2.3 The Members will elect a coordinator who will call meetings of the group, coordinate the agenda and oversee the recommendations from the Oblate General Administration and the Ongoing Formation Committee. He will also communicate the activities and recommendations of the Association to the respective major superiors. Members will also elect a secretary-treasurer who will keep minutes and oversee the finances of the group. The two officers will be elected for a 3-year mandate during a meeting of the executive members by a majority vote.

2.4 A liaison to this Association will be appointed from the members of the Oblate General Council. He will be invited to attend meetings of the Association. His role will be to share information mutually and communicate between the Association and the Oblate Superior General and his Council.

2.5 The Director of the General Service of Oblate Studies will be a liaison to the Association. He also will be invited to attend meetings of the Association. His role will be to share information mutually and communicate between his service and the Association.
2.6 The Oblate serving as the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies will be a liaison to the Association. He also will be invited to attend meetings of the Association. His role will be to coordinate the work of the Association with the Oblate Studies programs as well as the Kusenberger Chair lecture series.

2.7 The Association will meet at least annually to discuss areas of collaboration and plan projects to respond to the needs of the Congregation and the respective institutes.

2.8 The Association will collaborate in convening meetings of Oblates working in theology, philosophy and related fields of study. In the Oblate Congregation’s regions and units, initiatives and gatherings for the purpose of collaboration and development in the ministry of education will be encouraged.

3. Our Activities

3.1 We will promote communication among our institutions, including exchanging professional publications and newsletters.

3.2 We will exchange profiles among ourselves regularly so that we can better coordinate our efforts, as regards personnel, mission statements, programs, activities and challenges. We will give report to the General Administration of the profile of our institutions.

3.3 We will continue to reflect on what characterizes the work of Oblates in theological and philosophical studies and in university level administration and we will encourage our personnel to do the same.

3.4 We encourage exchanges of professors and students among our schools, technological interfacing and coordination in the development of human resources and of libraries.

3.5 We will work to increase collaboration among our schools, especially in the area of Mission Studies, and will focus on questions of spirituality, ethics, globalization, social justice and peace, respect for the integrity of creation, inculturation, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

3.6 We will collaborate with other religious orders and congregations who share in the same ministry of education.

3.7 We will communicate between ourselves primarily through electronic communication. We will share links in our respective institutes’ WebPages.
3.8 We will communicate principally in the official languages of the Congregation.

4. PERSONNEL

4.1 We encourage professors in our institutions to carry out research and to take advantage of publishing opportunities existing in our Oblate Universities and Centers of Theological Studies.

4.2 We recognize that Oblates working in our Universities and Centers are called more and more to work in partnership with others and that, in such situations a significant Oblate influence within these universities and Centers is to be maintained through individual and corporate Oblate commitment. We will share with each other how we promote our Oblate charism in our respective institutions.

4.3 We ask provincials and councils, regional conferences and the General Administration to continue, in consultation with the Oblate Universities and Centers of Theological Studies, to plan for staffing these Universities and Centers and to prepare an appropriate number of Oblates to work in theological and philosophical studies, administration, and in related fields of enquiry, including information technology.²

4.4 We will maintain a list of Oblate personnel competent in theological and philosophical studies and fields of enquiry related to our mission and will make this list available throughout the Congregation.

4.5 We recognize the important work of the General Service of Oblate Studies and ask the major superiors and our institutes to encourage Oblates to study and do research in this area.

4.6 We would urge that the necessary attention be given to conserving Oblate archival materials important for future research in Oblate and Mission Studies.

4.7 We recognize the need to collaborate with the General Formation Committee to promote solid intellectual formation in the Congregation.

² See the “Policy Guidelines on Higher Studies – the Academic and Professional Training of Oblates in our Units”, as developed by the Oblate General Council in 2007. This policy was revised in 2011.
5. Finances

5.1 We will share financial responsibility for meetings among ourselves, unless the General Administration hosts a meeting in Rome.

5.2 Grants for those in need are available through funds from the General Administration.\(^3\)

6. Congregation

6.1 We believe that it is important for the Congregation to maintain its institutional commitment to our Universities and Centers of Theological Studies.

6.2 We believe that Oblate regional conferences should become ever more involved in giving support to our Universities and Centers. By the same token, Oblate Universities and Centers should give more support and collaboration to the life and ministry of the Oblate regions.

6.3 We will work toward a greater visibility of our Universities and Centers both within and outside the Congregation.

6.4 We will help in coordination of efforts of the Congregation’s provinces to give financial support to our Universities and Centers of Theological Studies and those of us called to do fund-raising would be grateful for help and guidance from the General Administration in this area of activity.

7. Amendments

Amendments to these statutes will be made by the Members of the Association at an annual meeting by a simple majority vote. The Oblate Superior General and Council will be informed of these statutes and any amendments.

Approved: Rome, May 22, 2008
Amended: San Antonio, May 28, 2009
Amended: Cedara, June 1, 2011

\(^3\) From the January, 2006 meeting of the Ongoing Formation Committee of the Oblate General Council: “Units can apply to the Oblate Sharing Fund for assistance for participation in the work of the Group. This committee suggests that the Central Government offer some financial support not exceeding 5,000$ US per year.”
Amended: Chennai, June 7, 2019
Current Membership 2019

The members at the present time: Notre Dame University, Cotabato; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio; Université De Mazenod, Kinshasa; St. Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara; Saint Paul University, Ottawa; Oblate Scholasticate, (Obra) Poznan and Chair of Missiology, Warsaw; De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy, Perambakkam, and Oblate Institute of Higher Learning, Colombo.