



Reaffirming the path to revitalization

Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, Superior General

The Interchapter meeting in April is the halfway point between Chapters. We begin to look toward the Chapter of 2016 which will coincide with the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation. This anniversary of the Congregation is already a subject of conversation among Oblates and Associates. It cannot be a nostalgic reverie about the past, celebrated with ceremonies, dinner parties and “business as usual.” I believe that the years leading up to the anniversary are a graced opportunity to deepen the 2010 Chapter call to “a profound personal and communal conversion to Jesus Christ.”

In 1981, Fr. Ruben Elizondo, O.M.I. and Fr. Jaime Sullivan, O.M.I. published “*Oblate Animation Manual*.” An extremely useful resource book for Oblates around the world, it presented a theory about the lifespan of religious congregations. The cycle of a congregation’s beginnings, growth, solidification and decline, was shown typically to extend over a period of 150 to 200 years with one of three consequences: its extinction; its survival at a minimum level; or its revitalization. At a time when, in certain parts of the world, many religious were departing from consecrated life, vocations were quickly diminishing and there was great confusion about who we were, the authors of the “*Manual*” gave us this great resource to help us collaborate with the Holy Spirit in the work of revitalization.

I invite us to make the bicentennial of the Congregation a focal point of grace to reaffirm the path to **revitalization**. Ruben and Jaime named three characteristics of a congregation that is revitalized: 1) it has a transformative response to the signs of the times; 2) the members appropriate

the foundational charism; 3) they undergo a personal and communitarian conversion to Christ consisting in a profound renewal of faith and prayer life. We can see that the Call to Conversion of the 2010 Chapter contains all of these characteristics. We have been on the road to revitalization and I propose that we intensify this work as the best way to prepare for the jubilee of our 1816 foundation.

In many ways throughout the world Oblates are seeking to **respond to the signs of the times in a transformative way** in our Oblate life and mission. Some of the ways we are responding in the mission are in creative approaches to youth ministry, outreach to victims of war and violence, support and orientation for migrants, accompanying indigenous peoples in their struggles and many forms of dialogue with other religions. Since we are vowed religious, our response to the signs of the times must also shape our way of living. In this area we continue to struggle to form meaningful community with quality relationships, to seek God’s presence in prayer and to live the vows prophetically. Discernment of the signs of the times in community and the grace of conversion are needed to help us respond in a more fully transformative way.

The second characteristic of congregations that become revitalized is appropriating the **foundational charism**. We have witnessed tremendous growth in discovering our charism since Vatican II. There are many Oblates to be thanked for this awareness. A congress (1976) on the charism of the Founder, the many subsequent charism workshops around

the world, the organization of the De Mazenod Experience, retreats, seminars, books, articles, theses, popular writings, etc. by many Oblates have opened up the charism to us. This richness continues to be studied, reflected upon, and shared. Recently I spoke with a prenovice who told me his vocational story and related it to the Founder's life. I was amazed at his knowledge of the charism and his love for it! The challenge we face for revitalization is to live what we have learned about the charism. The calls to Conversion in the five areas given to us by the Chapter help us judge our life and mission in the light of the charism and call us to go deeper.

It is striking that the "*Manual*" in 1981 listed "**a personal and community conversion to Christ**" as the third quality for revitalizing a congregation. The beginning of the book includes Father Jetté's letter for February 17, 1981: "... *[I]t is precisely in our Oblate life that we are today being called to a second conversion. A second conversion is often more painful than the first because it penetrates to greater depths, it draws us out of attitudes and habits that are more firmly rooted and it reveals to us an attachment to our own self and will that we may never have suspected.*" Notice how the General Chapter of 2010 echoes and expands upon this theme of conversion! The Holy Spirit has been calling us to and preparing us for revitalization.

The "*Manual*" describes two other possible paths following the decline of a Congregation: stagnation and extinction. The reality for most of the congregations in the history of the Church has been death which usually comes from of a loss of identity; exchanging the original missionary thrust of the charism for maintenance ministry; and a loss of passion for God and for holiness.

I do not accept the theory that we have completed our mission, we have served the Church, and we will die peacefully. I believe this is a secularized vision and a self-fulfilling death wish. I don't believe lay people who love the Oblate charism and live it are going "to replace" vowed Oblates. This is a patronizing attitude and disrespectful to their commitment to live the charism. I realize the Congregation is not an eternal institution in the

Church but I am not willing to say we've done our job and R.I.P.

I believe in God, the Spirit of Life, who does not engender death. I call us to be intentional about the revitalization of the Congregation as we prepare for our 200th anniversary. I call us to make a conscious choice to live, thrive and be a vibrant missionary body inspired in Saint Eugene's charism. I have the privilege to visit the Congregation and to see so many signs of life everywhere. I will be sharing these with you in the future. I am convinced God is calling us to live fully. The choice is ours to respond to God's grace.

The 2010 Chapter call to "Conversion" is the only path to revitalization. Conversion is painful, but will lead us to life if we allow the Spirit to transform us: men who are not just called "oblates", but who live oblation; missionaries formed by the Word of God; ready to serve in the most difficult missions; very close to the Poor; serving the Church with love; and passionately cooperating with Jesus Christ the Savior. One of my hopes for our anniversary is that we would celebrate it by gathering as communities for holy hours before the Eucharist and holy hours of service with the poor.

On August 15, 1822 Saint Eugene received a special grace through Mary that confirmed the value of his dear Society and revitalized him at a particularly difficult time. We claim this blessing today for the Congregation. Under Mary's example we open ourselves to the Spirit's breath of life so that we will be prophets of revitalization as we prepare for our 200th anniversary.



HOLY SEE

VATICAN**A resignation and a new bishop in Canada**

On February 16, 2013, the Vatican announced that the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, had accepted the resignation of Bishop Reynald ROULEAU from the pastoral care of the diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay (Canada).

On that same day, the Holy Father named a Polish-born Oblate as the new bishop of that same diocese. He is Father Wieslaw “Tony” KRÓTKI, currently serving as a missionary in Igloolik, in the Great North of Canada.

Bishop Rouleau has been responsible for the Diocese over the past 25 years, and had offered his resignation in 2010 when he reached the age of 75, as required by the Code of Canon Law.

Bishop-elect Krótki was born on June 12, 1964, in Istebna, Poland. He completed his formation in philosophy and theology at the Oblate Scholasticate in Poland, 1985-1990. He joined the Oblates of

Mary Immaculate in 1984, made perpetual vows in 1988, and was ordained a priest on June 19, 1990. After ordination, he did parish ministry in Poznan, Poland, before coming to Canada on October 28, 1990, to assist the Oblates in Manitoba.

Father Tony first served in Winnipeg and Toronto, before going to the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay. He has served as pastor in Igloolik, 1991-1993; Gjoa Haven, 1993-2001, and then again in Igloolik since 2001. He became a Canadian citizen on May 14, 1996, and is now a member of the Taché local community of the Lacombe province of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He speaks English and Polish fluently, and is able to communicate in Inuktitut.

The Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay has 17 parishes and missions, with a Catholic population of 6,115, served by two diocesan priests, seven priests and two Sisters who are members of religious communities, one permanent deacon and three lay pastoral assistants. (<http://www.news.va> and <http://omilacombe.ca>)

Europe

FRANCE**How can you be young in a parish?**

Philippe THIERRY is a parish pastor in Pontmain. Some youth of his parish worked hard to get the group “Glorious” to come. What will follow from this effort? (Editor’s note: According to Wickipedia, “Glorious” is a French, Catholic “pop-praise” group whose music is inspired by evangelical churches and is based on biblical texts. It was founded in 2000, after World Youth Days, by three brothers from Valence.)

I am concerned about the role of young people who do not feel very comfortable at our “Mass for the elderly”: to say the least! I have therefore given them a church, just for them, that of the town of “La Tanière,” one of eight churches in the sector. It has become the church for the youth of the deanery.

When the “Glorious” group came, the Director of the Ernée School willingly agreed to loan them the school’s gymnasium! 900 seats! So things could move forward. Parents and friends got together with the youth to organize things: it was no small affair!

Following the arrival of this group, the young people founded the association “Get out of your burrow.” The purpose of the association: to gather youth of the community and surrounding towns, to hold evenings of song and praise, and, I hope, some Masses, some moments of sharing, some concerts, and workshops to develop among them a sense of responsibility. They launched a blog and an email address; in short, it’s something serious!

In the church, the town hall will take out the benches. They will put carpet in the middle, with benches on the sides and at the end. For the Word

of God, they can get into small groups and then return to the middle for sharing.

I said: "OK, on one condition: that it is not a flash in the pan. Going to WYD, bringing in 'Glorious', that's great. But if there is nothing behind it, it's a shame!" So I think they will go to "youth style" Mass at La Tanière, a "Mass that takes its time", with their own songs, with body movement, with different themes each time: the covenant, forgiveness, the Word ...

The first major gathering to be held at the church of La Tanière was to prepare for Christmas. It was the young people themselves who wanted this gathering, "to prepare their hearts to receive the Savior". They had, of course, their own songs, but they wanted a penitential celebration. I told them what there was at the parish and the basilica, with either general or individual absolution. They wanted to do it together with other youth at a time when they could easily come and with a personal encounter with a priest. I was astonished.

As they say: "It's got to budge". Well, OK! The association has other projects in mind, including going to Taizé, having a faith revival, a pilgrimage to Lourdes ... I think it is the young who will bring their parents along. (*Audacieux pour l'Évangile*, January 2013)

FRANCE

Marseille honors Saint Eugene

"Messo Soulenno Prouvençalo. Oumenage à Mounsegne de Mazenod" A solemn Mass in the Provençal language in the Saint Mary Major Cathedral of Marseille brought together 1500 faithful on Sunday, January 13. With a choir of 200, with traditional musicians and their instruments, and about 50 groups in local costumes coming from all over Provence... Of course, the songs were also in that language: *"O Diéu, benesisse toun pople. Donno-nous la pas!"* (*O God, bless your people. Give us peace!*) Archbishop Georges Pontier of Marseille presided at the Eucharist which he concluded with a brief talk in that language. The pastor of Salon-de-Provence, Father Desplanches, spoke alternatively in Provençal

and French in his homily, as he emphasized how Bishop de Mazenod kept to the language which the little people spoke, so as to tell them of the Gospel. In his welcoming speech, Fr. Michel COURVOISIER stated that St. Eugene wanted this cathedral to gather in worship, as at this moment, the people of his diocese. As for Mr. Jean-Claude Gaudin, Senator-Mayor, he took the floor to reiterate how much Bishop de Mazenod belonged to Marseille and Provence.

The two-day event, January 12 and 13, in fact opened the *Year of Marseille-Provence 2013, European Capital of Culture* (along with Kosice, Slovakia). Among other festivities, wishing to give a Provençal touch to the opening, the Provençal Cultural Union had organized this celebration in "honor of Bishop de Mazenod."

On the eve, the Symposium on *"Eugene de Mazenod, a great Provençal"*, among many other events, brought together over a hundred people in the auditorium of the Grande Bibliothèque de l'Alcazar in downtown Marseille. Michel COURVOISIER gave a presentation on "Bishop de Mazenod, visionary of Marseille". While Bishop de Mazenod concerned himself as bishop with the development of the city, even using the term "Queen of the Mediterranean", his vision was more that of a city he wished to see being attentive to situations of poverty and distress (cholera; troubled youth, along with the Fathers Fissiaux and Timon-David; blind children, along with Father DASSY).

An art historian, Mr. Rémy Kerténian, spoke of the "two lighthouses of Marseille", namely, the Cathedral and Notre Dame de la Garde, envisioned by St. Eugene and whose architecture borrows heavily from the East. Mrs. Chélini-Pont, from the University of Aix-Marseille, recalled several aspects of the Provençal roots of Bishop de Mazenod. The fourth speaker was Mr. Joseph Yacoub, Professor Emeritus at the Catholic University of Lyon, himself a Syro-Chaldean Christian and therefore particularly sensitive to the intercultural. He in turn stressed how the Oblates had followed the guidance provided by their founder, especially attention

to local languages. He could only enumerate all too briefly the work of Frs. Emile PETITOT and Adrien MORICE with the Aboriginals of Canada, Fr. René JAOUEN in Cameroon, Fr. GNANAPRAKASAR in Sri Lanka, Fr. Yves BERTRAIS with the Hmong in Laos, Fr. Bruno ARENS in Thailand...

These were some opening events about the city and the greater world, of which Notre-Dame de la Garde is the symbol. It is up to us to further expand our horizons as St. Eugene de Mazenod always invites us to do. (*Michel Courvoisier*)

ITALY

Oblate named director of Signis Roma

Fr. Giuseppe CELLUCCI has been named director of the Rome office of Signis. According to the organization's web site (www.signis.net), "SIGNIS is a non-governmental organization that includes members from 140 countries. As the 'World Catholic Association for Communication', it brings together radio, television, cinema, video, media education, Internet, and new technology professionals."

Fr. Cellucci professed his first vows as an Oblate in the former Italian province in 1966. He was ordained a priest in 1972. He has a vast experience in the field of media and communications. From 1985 until 2002, he worked in the audiovisual department of the national office of the Pontifical Mission Works for the Church in Italy. Since 1985, he has also been collaborating with Vatican Radio, especially in an Italian language program called "Christian Horizons." Since 1990, he has been part of a group of priests who celebrate the Sunday Mass on the radio. Since 2004, he has been working with the Oblate publication, "Missioni OMI."

UKRAINE

Two new bishops ordained

The two Oblates appointed last November by Pope Benedict XVI to serve as auxiliary bishops in Ukraine were ordained to the episcopate in early 2013. On January 5, Bishop Jacek PYL was ordained for service in the diocese

of Odessa-Simferopol. On February 9, Bishop Radosław ZMITROVYCH became the auxiliary of Kamenetz-Podolsk. Both of the new bishops, natives of Poland, had served as Delegation Superior in Ukraine.

The ordination of Bishop Pyl took place in Odessa's Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The principal consecrator was the local Ordinary, Bishop Bronislaw Bernatsky, who was assisted by the Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine, Archbishop Thomas E. Hallikson and the Metropolitan of Lviv, Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokshytsky.

In his homily, Bishop Stanislaw Shyrokoradiuk, auxiliary of Kiev, stated: "Dear Fr. Jacek, knowing your missionary spirit that you brought to our land, we believe that you will be a sensitive shepherd, will preach the true gospel, and not hesitate in your fidelity to the Holy Father. We hope that you will defend the Catholic faith and good morals in our land, watered with the blood of saints and martyred shepherds."

Bishop Zmitrovych received the fullness of Holy Orders at the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Kamenetz-Podolsk. Presiding was the Ordinary of same diocese, Bishop Leon Dubravskyy, OFM. The principal co-consecrators were Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Archbishop of Lviv; and Bishop Jan Niemiec, Auxiliary Bishop of Kamenetz-Podolsk.

In his homily Archbishop Peter Malchuk, OFM, the Ordinary of the Kyiv-Zhytomyr diocese, said: "My heart is full of joy when I realize the importance of this event. Father Radosław chose as motto of his ministry: 'Know the truth and the truth shall make you free'. John Paul II considered these words the center of the entire Gospel. Today, more than ever, we should contemplate on the question 'what is the truth?'"

Other Roman and Greek-Catholic bishops from Ukraine, as well as local priests and faithful and clergy from abroad, including many of the two new bishops' Oblate brothers, were present for the two celebrations.

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES

Novices celebrate January 25

January 25, 2013, was a busy day for the six novices at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. The international community (United States, Canada, Mexico, Zambia) were greeted at morning prayer with a large image of the “Church of the Mission,” as a reminder that 197 years before, a young Eugene and an even younger Henri Tempier, with four other priests, gathered in an upper room to walk into the darkness with the light of faith to guide them.

Later on, at Mass, after a reading from the Acts of the Apostles, they listened to the story of January 25, 1816. After the Gospel, they shared what these words meant to them in the light of their trust in God’s providential care. They asked themselves: “Would we have the courage to leave the security of parish work in a diocese to join others in preaching mission in Provencal...for life?”

Later in the day, they visited “The Center of Hope” where, over the next few months, they will have a hands-on experience of ministry. It is a full service Christian mission which neither receives nor wants any government funding,

but trusts totally on God’s generosity working through people. The novices were able to see that to be a son of de Mazenod, they must have hearts open to being with the poor and abandoned of the community.

In the evening, just like for Eugene and his first companions, supper was served on a simple table of planks cut from novitiate trees. The meal lasted for three hours! There were songs and the sharing of the Oblate story. After listening to a story from December 3, 1825, when Eugene witnessed the washing of pilgrims’ feet in Rome, the novitiate community washed each other’s feet. The meal consisted of fish, pasta and two eggs, along with salad, cheese and a lemon torte. Throughout the meal, they sang verses of a song composed by a former Novice Master, Fr. Mark DEAN: “He has sent us...”

As the Oblates move toward the 200th anniversary of that January 25, 2016, the novitiate staff hopes that there will be other rituals, signs and symbols to speak to the heart of each Oblate and member of the Mazenodian family. A copy of the January 25 “Supper ritual” can be obtained from Fr. Jack LAU (jean_mond@hotmail.com).

Africa-Madagascar

CONGO

The war in the East

Father Jean-Baptiste MALENGE, a professional journalist, has written to us about the situation of the Oblates in the Congo and the war that is being waged in the eastern part of the country.

The areas served by the Missionary Oblates of the Democratic Republic of Congo are hundreds of kilometers away from the province of North Kivu, the scene of the present war. On the map, Goma, the capital of the province of North Kivu, is almost exactly opposite the capital, Kinshasa, where most of the Oblates live. Along with Kinshasa, three other dioceses served by the Oblates share the same time zone: Lolo (Equator Province), Kikwit and Idiofa (Bandundu Province). Only the parish in Opala, in the

Diocese of Isangi in the Eastern Province, is in the time zone of the eastern part of the country. But Opala is hundreds of kilometers from Goma.

However, the current war does not fail to touch the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in their ministry and in their lives. Their prayer cannot be unmindful of their suffering compatriots in the eastern part of the country. Wars are recurrent in the country's history since independence, and if the war theater is far from them today, it has been near the Oblates in the past. In 1998, missionaries left the diocese of Isangi before the occupation by the Rwandan army. In 1964, three Belgian Oblates lost their lives in Kilembe, in the province of Bandundu.

Since April 2012, war rages “in the east” of the country. Journalists suggest that the war is “east”

of the country. Persistence in this grammatical error hides a corresponding state of mind. Since most media are based in Kinshasa and foreign media are fed news from Kinshasa, the capital, it sometimes seems as if the war is taking place outside the national territory. Sometimes long distances tend to reduce the sounds of the suffering of other fellow citizens.

Political quarrels too often cover up the noise of the war. The speeches of the politicians reflect mainly the difference of views as to the causes of this war. And the inability to end it. This is the problem of Africa: half a century after independence, it is not known when and to what point there is integration, the sharing of a sense of citizenship among the diversity of peoples united by force in a space designated by the colonizer. In the Congolese Kivu, one is reminded of the Rwandan origin of the Hutu and Tutsi peoples. The war in Kivu is mainly due to the Tutsi, "of dubious nationality", since members of this ethnic group have too many dealings with the regime in power in Rwanda. And one recalls without too much difficulty the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, which culminated in 1994 in a "genocide". That Rwanda has attacked the DRC more than once, with the intention of dismantling the "genocidal" Hutu forces of the Democratic Liberation Front of Rwanda (FDLR) is just an excuse in the eyes of the peoples of Kivu who instead accuse the hegemonic designs of the Nilotic group of Rwanda and Uganda, suspected of wanting to dominate the Bantu peoples of the region.

For the Congolese Catholic bishops, the never-ending wars in the east are aimed at fragmenting the country. The bishops greatly lean toward the opinion quite prevalent in the country. The Church has been organizing protest marches to denounce and discourage any attempt at balkanization. On December 20, 2012, President Joseph Kabila received the Standing Committee of Bishops to ask for the recognition and support of the Church. The bishops, in turn, reminded the President of their message of December 5, 2012, entitled "Congolese people, rise up and save your homeland. Loyalty to the national unity and territorial integrity of the DRC (see 1Ma 14, 35)". The message focuses on the security situation in the country: "In our various previous messages, we condemned the idea of the

balkanization of the Congo, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the proliferation of militias and armed groups."

Can the Catholic Church forge a new mobilizing force? In 1994, at the first Synod of Bishops for Africa, they decided to call themselves "the Family of God", a concept taken from the Bible and from African culture such as the philosopher Placide Tempels had discovered and revealed in the south of the DRC, where he lived before the country's independence. The challenge remains, to live together, equal and different, in a country with borders imposed by the whims of others.

On January 23, 1964, at Kilembe, in the diocese of Idiofa, three Belgian Oblate missionaries were killed by rebels. In considering the history of the mission in the Congo, one cannot fail to think of this martyrdom and that of other missionaries and lay victims of violence. On December 1, 1964, at Isiro in the Eastern Province, the same Lumumba rebels murdered Sister Marie-Clémentine Anuarite. In 1985, Pope John Paul II beatified the nun, giving her to the Church of the DRC as a model of resistance against sin.

The Oblates and all Catholics who welcome the Christmas Child know that He brings peace to a humanity wounded by violence, dominated by the desire for power. Oblates and those who share the Blood of Christ know that they share His intimacy and like him, they commit themselves, if necessary, to shed their blood and never shed the blood of another.

SENEGAL

Formation for a media culture

In Dakar, Senegal, thirty Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate ended on Friday, January 25, a four-day formation session on the media culture. They came from Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Three members of the international team of formators from the Center for Research and Education in Communication (CREC), based in Lyon, France, made presentations: Yvan Paradisi, communications director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Lyon; a

journalist, Charles Togo Ayetan, from the Catholic newspaper *Présence chrétienne*; and Father Jean-Baptiste MALENGE, Missionary Oblate, journalist and teacher from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In this Year of Faith proclaimed by the Holy Father, the Missionary Oblates of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau are reflecting on the best way to communicate the Word of God. They are also preparing to celebrate well our second centennial of existence in 2016.

During the practical exercises of the session, the Oblates primarily learned how to make a communications plan for fostering a big event or for organizing a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Peace in Temento. Communications in the mind of the Church and in the history and the Rule of the Missionary Oblates also had a place in the session's program. The formation in media culture helped to better indicate many aspects of the spread of the Oblate charism in the new evangelization of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau and all of Africa. The Oblates have thus emphasized their belonging to an international congregation in some twenty African countries.

In summing up the results of this formation session, Father Bruno FAVERO, superior of the Oblate Delegation in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, and also the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Senegal and Mauritania, noted the importance of the session which allowed for a better understanding of the system and language of the media. Oblate communities will be more than ever places for communication, because communication is the first step towards communion. He also recognized the importance of formation for a greater presence among the faithful and a better relationship with friends and benefactors, through more accessible communications and ongoing formation of the missionaries.

It is noteworthy that a group of nine Italian Oblates came to the Dioceses of Kaolack and Dakar in 1976. Some Senegalese have joined

them, and the delegation currently has fifty members. This relatively small number means that the Oblates of Senegal and Guinea form a delegation within the Mediterranean Province which is made up of Oblates of Italy and Spain. (Jean-Bapiste Malenge)

SENEGAL

Mechanic or nurse? Brother!

Benoît DIOUF, a Senegalese, entered the Oblates as a Brother. He followed a long period of formation which led him from being a mechanic to being a nurse. Perhaps it's a question of a motor in both disciplines, but now it's a "human" motor.

During his regency in Guinea Bissau, at the Mission of Farim, Brother Benoît's choice of taking care of the sick matured in a milieu where sanitary structures and access to care are particularly difficult. Upon his return from regency, he entered the nursing school. After four years, he received his State nursing diploma.

Meanwhile, Providence, always at work, worked hard also in Farim. The Association of Municipalities of the "Castelli Romani and Prenestini" (in the region of Rome, Italy) has funded and built thirteen health stations in the Mission of Farim, one for each town of the Association. These stations function as walk-in clinics and as village pharmacies. They cover a large part of the mission, with a population of about twenty thousand inhabitants.

So Brother Benoît returns to his place of regency, but with a new specialization in the service of public health. However, his mechanical training is useful in dealing with small every day breakdowns, whether his motorbike or the pumps. What is the difference between a mechanic and a nurse? Who knows? The key is knowing that this Oblate Brother has put all his skills to the service of his neighbor. Good work, Brother Benoît. Especially, do not forget that to give an injection, you need a syringe and not a screwdriver!

Latin America

BRAZIL**OMI and Word Youth Day Pilgrimages**

“The Church will be young when the youth become Church.” (John Paul II)

When you enter a Church and find creativity, newness, enthusiasm and even some “noise”, you can be sure that the Church has youth. Even better, **this Church is youth.**

The particular characteristics of youth are innovation and enthusiasm. Giving a strong signal that it desires such innovation, the Church began the World Youth Day Pilgrimages. The event of a single pilgrimage became a rehearsal for another pilgrimage, and what was started in 1985 in Rome has been kept alive even until today. The last World Youth Day Pilgrimage was held in Madrid in 2012, and the following one will be in Rio de Janeiro in 2013

These pilgrimages have been a gathering of the whole Catholic Church, a visible sign of the Risen Lord present in all parts of the world: a Young Christ, a Church that is young and renewed, a constant sign of Pentecost.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose founder is Eugene de Mazenod, has a particular charism and mission in the Church to the most abandoned and excluded in the world. This includes a special way of looking at youth.

This special way of looking at youth also inspired the Congregation to use the occasion of World Youth Day to organize encounters with the youth of the world. The youth, together with the Oblates, form part of the Oblate family. A few days before the World Youth Day with the Pope, the International Encounter of the OMI Youth takes place.

- 2005 – Hünfeld, Germany: “We came to worship Him.” (Mt 2.2)
- 2008 – Melbourne, Australia: “OMI, witnesses to the world.”

- 2011 – Málaga, Spain: “With the Oblate Martyrs, enlightened and edified in Christ, firm in faith.”
- **2013- Aparecida, Brazil: “OMI Youth, go and make disciples of all nations.” (Mt 28,19)**

In 2013, from 18th to the 22nd of July, in the city of Aparecida, in the State of São Paulo, Brazil, we will gather with two thousand youth to live something very special, a time grace, in preparation for the great encounter with the successor of Pope Benedict XVI. We will celebrate 200 years of the work of Saint Eugene de Mazenod with the youth since the founding of the Congregation of Youth in Aix-en-Provence in 1813.

Its General Objective: To celebrate 200 years of Saint Eugene’s Ministry with youth, reaffirming our commitment of the evangelization of youth as a vigorous Oblate ministry.

Specific Objectives:

1. **To Stimulate** within youth a sense of commitment (Missionary Youth)
2. **To Strengthen** the spirit of the Oblate Family between priests, religious sisters, laity and youth.
3. **To Widen** the experience of faith through an interpersonal and intercultural contact.

The Oblate Youth of Brazil are waiting for you!

GUATEMALA**25 years of missionary presence**

The mission in El Quiché, Guatemala, was considered as a possibility when we were denied entry to Suyapa, Honduras. In 1988, the Oblates of Mexico decided to open a mission in Central America and had unanimously decided to establish one in Suyapa to work at the Marian Shrine and urban parishes. A mission team was formed and for reasons unexplained to this day, it was denied entry. Bishop Julio Cabrera Ovalle, newly appointed Bishop of El Quiché, invited the

Oblates without delay to take over the parishes of the northern region, namely Sacapulas, Cunén, Uspantán and Chicamán.

This is therefore a mission founded by the Holy Spirit; the Oblates had decided to go to Honduras, because of the simplicity of the mission ... but the Holy Spirit reminded us of our mission: to go to the most difficult areas and meet the needs for salvation and liberation of the suffering and martyred people of El Quiché.

A little history will help us better understand the mission. El Quiché is an area classified as very difficult for various reasons: the indigenous peoples represent 85.40% of the population and the situation of the armed conflict that they had lived in recent years was still very tense, especially since the diocese was virtually without priests; three priests and hundreds of catechists were murdered. In 1980, Bishop Gerardi, priests and nuns decided to leave the diocese; only one priest remained there. The churches and parish houses were taken over by the army and became places of torture ...

In 1982 Bishop Paul Urizar was appointed Apostolic Administrator. In October 1986, Bishop Julio Cabrera Ovalle was appointed titular bishop of El Quiché; he began his ministry on January 17, 1987. The Oblates and the diocese assumed all sorts of challenges to accompany and walk with the poor and oppressed people, taking on their needs, becoming one physically and theologically with the catechists and the people. In 1993, by choice and in response to their charism, the Oblates left the parishes of Sacapulas and Cunén and accepted the mission of Playa Grande, Ixcán, at that time the most neglected and offered the most challenges. In 1996, they accepted the quasi-parish of Santa Cecilia, in Mixco. The presence of the Latin American novitiate and formation houses has strengthened our presence. Guatemala has given us many difficult moments, but a lot of hope, life, joy and vocations. (*Ser misionero hoy*, January 2013)

PARAGUAY

“To the Green Hell with God’s blessing”

Five years ago, when Professor Andreas

Zehnsdorf, in his research for a book, by chance came to the restaurant with the funny name “The Lame Frog”, he could not have known that his life would change. It was a traditional family locale in the eastern part of Germany, lost at the time of “real socialism” and later recovered. But what the owner told him caught his attention even more. Her brother was a missionary in the Paraguayan Chaco, then called the “Green Hell”. And she showed him his weekly letters, in which the young and enthusiastic missionary told of all that he lived in that distant and strange world. And there were lots of photos.

In fact, Fr. Manfred JÜNEMANN -- and this is about him - was a photographer and even gifted filmmaker, whose collection in Paraguay is most interesting. His stories and anecdotes reflect a missionary vision we would now call “paternalistic”. But, they are valuable documents and even funny testimonies, not unrelated to the social, political and ecclesial reality of the time.

They captivated the researcher so much that he decided to publish a book with this material, enhanced with writings from the Oblate archives in Paraguay and Germany. It is worth mentioning that Andreas declares himself to be “agnostic”, all the more reason for us to stress the sensitivity and respect with which he approached the subject. So, he made a trip to the Chaco and specifically to the Pedro P. Peña mission (formerly known by its Bolivian name “Guachalla”), where he could still find recollections and contemporary witnesses of the missionary who began there back in the 60’s.

Fr. Manfred was elected provincial of Paraguay. A heart attack ended his life, when he was only 48 years old. His successor was Lucio ALFERT, current bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo, where Manfred spent his missionary years. Bishop Lucio contributed the book’s foreword.

Two articles complement the book: one by Michael Krischer (known for his research on another illustrious Oblate, Bishop Peter SHAW, better known as “Pa’i Puku”, whose cause for beatification was begun, thanks to this work), “Paraguay, it’s worth a visit,” and one by Miguel FRITZ on “The Oblate missionaries in Paraguay today”.

It is worth mentioning that this book, with the subtitle “In the footsteps of Fr. Manfred Jünemann in the Paraguayan Chaco” was published not only at the initiative of Professor Zehnsdorf, but funded entirely by him. How nice it would be to have a translation in Castilian, since even in the original (German) it met with a strong interest in Paraguay! (Miguel Fritz)

CENTRAL BRAZIL 50 years in the mission

In late December 2012, the Anglo-Irish Province’s delegation in Brazil celebrated its 50th anniversary. Over 1000 people including 30 priests, 5 deacons and the Bishop of Jatai celebrated the Jubilee Mass in the Immaculate Conception Parish in Paranaiguara. Visitors from abroad were the Anglo-Irish Provincial, Fr. Ray WARREN, accompanied by Frs. Ted McSHERRY (RIP), Tom McCABE, and Mr. Ronan Lavery. What follows is an excerpt from the homily given by Fr. Tom MURPHY.

When Saint Eugene founded the Congregation, he took his inspiration from the Gospel we have just heard: “He has sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor.” We Oblates were founded to preach and to be Good News to the poor – to share our experience of a loving and liberating God with the little ones of this world. We Oblates are sent to evangelise.

The classical theology of Mission implied ecclesiastical colonialism. The mission “ad gentes” consisted in converting the pagans, introducing them to the truths of the faith, and baptizing them. It was a theology and a pastoral practice that did not respect the cultural and religious values of those recipients of evangelisation. There was little or no consideration for the fact that, even in so-called ‘pagan’ civilizations, there exist religious rites of passage, of initiation, an indigenous religious expression.

The Second Vatican Council changed the Church profoundly. The theology of mission was treated in a different manner. Mission was no longer “mission ad gentes” in the colonialist, triumphalist sense, but rather it was “receptio

apud populum”- that is, a reception, an insertion, a welcome into the life of the people.

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

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

We gather here this evening to give thanks. We are in fact celebrating three Golden Jubilees: 50 years of the foundation of our Mission, 50 years of the foundation of this parish, 50 years of missionary dedication of Fr. Jeremiah (DONOVAN).

We come together to give thanks for the 3 landmarks. We are also extremely happy to welcome the members of our other Communities where we have worked during these years: São Simão, Itaguaçu, Cachoeira Salta, Caçu, Cassilândia, Ituiutabe, Uberlândia, Rio de Janeiro, Duque de Caxias, Goiânia, Aragoiânia, Ceres, Itacoatiara.

We thank God for all He has given to us and through us, despite our failings, our weaknesses, and our accent! We are happy tonight because we have, during all these years, in all our Pastoral Communities maintained the friendship, the special bond that unites us, the mutual appreciation that assures us we are loved and love. Throughout the years a special bond, a special affinity was created – a bond and an affinity that have been a constant factor in our missionary life. (*Oblate Connections*, February 2013)

Asia-Oceania

PAKISTAN**Sharing the peoples' pain**

Dismay, grief, fear, prayer: These are the feelings lived by the small Christian community in the province of Quetta, after the wave of terrorist attacks which, on January 10, 2013, caused 92 deaths and 155 injured, only in the city of Quetta, in the troubled province of Balochistan. According to the claims of the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the community of Shiites and the Hazara ethnic group were targeted.

As reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Inayat GILL, pro-Vicar Apostolic of Quetta, among the victims in Quetta there are three Christians, who happened to be near the sites of the explosions, while some Christians are also among the injured. Two of the victims were Catholics and Fr. Maqsood NAZIR, of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, pastor of the Sacred Heart Church in the city center, celebrated their funerals on January 11. Immediately after the explosion, the pastor went to the scene of the attack to give his help and is taking care of six of the wounded. Fr. Inayat Gill explains to Fides: "The situation is tense; it is difficult to explain these tragic events. The reasons are many: sectarian and ethnic hatred, but not only. There is a mafia of land grabbing, there are political claims: the certainty is that many innocent civilians die." "As Christians," adds the pro-Vicar, "we are a small minority; we live in danger, like other Muslim citizens, sharing their fate and their pain. Throughout the province of Quetta, there are about 70 thousand Christians, including 35 thousand Catholics. We are a very vulnerable community and the poorest. We have to be very careful. We cannot expose ourselves or actively participate in the celebrations of the three days of mourning, announced today by the authorities; otherwise we risk becoming a target for extremists: they would accuse us of being aligned with a faction in the ethnic conflict. We will pray for all the innocent victims in our churches continuing to give witness to our peaceful, quiet presence and close to the poor." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/01/2013)

COLOMBO**Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI: 1924-2013**

When Fr. Stanislaus "Tissa" BALASURIYA died on January 17, 2013, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, it was inevitable that media accounts of his passing would focus primarily on his brief excommunication in 1997. But this Oblate priest and scholar's life was much more than that one year of notoriety that ended with the lifting of the ecclesial sanction.

At his January 19 funeral, Bishop Norbert ANDRADI, the Oblate bishop of Anuradhapura and secretary-general of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, stated: "Let us bury only the bones and the flesh of Father Balasuriya, but let us keep his words and deeds."

Among his many achievements, two pillars of Fr. Tissa's life were the Aquinas University College and the Centre for Society and Religion. As rector of Aquinas, he broadened the scope of the curriculum and introduced courses in technology, business, law and agriculture. Many future politicians and journalists studied at Aquinas during this period.

He had a long-standing concern for the interplay of society and religion. In the Centre for Society and Religion, he was part of a growing movement among the Catholic churches of the Third World to relate the teachings of Christ to the realities of life in the poorer parts of the world.

Fr. Rohan SILVA, Oblate provincial of the Colombo Province, said of Fr. Tissa: "He was able to highlight the dignity of the human person when the society branded people according to their ethnicity and faith. His influence on the church and the society was evident at the funeral."

PAKISTAN**Solar roofs in the Oblate Delegation**

A few houses in the Oblate delegation of Pakistan have been blessed with a solar energy system.

On their three roofs, solar electric panels which convert sunlight into electricity stand facing the sun. These houses are Mazenod House (the superior's residence), Lahore; the Oblate Philosophate, Lahore; and the Oblate Juniorate, Multan.

Besides reducing electricity bills, they will keep the supply of electricity unhindered as the energy crisis continues to engulf Pakistan. Presently the country is without electricity from 8 to 14 hours a day. Now students will be able carry on with their study without interruption at night.

The installation of solar panels is also in line with international efforts to protect the environment. It is clean, green and environment-friendly energy. It will greatly meet our domestic needs and help us to depend less and less on the Water and Power Development Authority. In this endeavor, the Oblate Delegation of Pakistan is thankful to donors who have helped this project come true. (*Pak Bulletin*, July-December 2012)

PHILIPPINES

Meeting of formators of Asia-Oceania

Formators from the different Oblate units in the Asia-Oceania region gathered together in Manila and Cotabato City for the biennial Asia-Oceania Formators Conference from January 13 to 19. Delegates came from Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong/China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand-Laos, and Vietnam with the Philippines as the host province. This year's theme was "The Context of the Youth Today" (Contextual Formation). The objectives were: 1. to provide a forum to listen, converse and exchange ideas based on the theme; 2. To discern and be aware of the spirituality, values, attitudes, and interests of today's youth; 3. To be able to revisit the present formation program and explore the possibilities vis-à-vis the context of youth; 4. To strengthen the fraternal bonds among the AO formators; 5. To have a glimpse of the context of the formation of the Philippine Province; 6. To clarify AOFC issues and concerns.

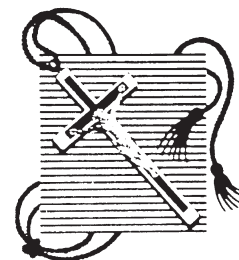
The delegates then flew to Cotabato City and had the chance to visit the different formation

houses in Tamontaka and the Juniorate at Notre Dame University.

Speakers at the Cotabato session were Archbishop Orlando QUEVEDO, who talked about "The Challenges of Formation in Today's Context." Archbishop Quevedo then celebrated the Holy Eucharist and ended the session with a sumptuous meal. The afternoon speaker was Fr. Jun MERCADO, who talked about formation within the concrete socio-political realities such as the recent Peace Agreement. Plenary sessions followed each talk.

A Business Meeting followed the next day. The agenda included: 1) the recent directives and concerns from the General Formation Committee regarding oblatology, formation of formators, common preparation for perpetual vows and internationality. The presenter was Fr. Francis ZABALA; 2) the Oblate International Scholasticate in Manila: a review and update reported by Fr. Mon BERNABE; 3) issues on formation of formators, challenges of being a formator, the formation of Brothers and concerns coming from the General Formation Committee, presented by Fr. Paul MARIAMPILLAI.

In the afternoon, the delegates visited Notre Dame of Midsayap College where they were welcomed by Fr. Rogelio TABUADA, the administrative staff, faculty and students. The delegates were entertained with songs and dances from the students followed by a light meal. The delegates then headed to Santo Niño Parish where they concelebrated the Novena Mass in honor of Santo Niño. They were warmly welcomed by Frs. Zalde OROLA, Jerry VILLAS, and the parishioners with a sumptuous dinner. (Noel GARCIA in <http://www.omiphil.org>)



Anniversaries for April 2013

65 years of priesthood

1948.04.12	07621	Fr. Denis Buliard	Lacombe
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60 years of religious life

1953.04.25	09432	Fr. Heinrich Niemann	Namibia
1953.04.25	09433	Fr. Josef Ostendorf	Central European
1953.04.25	09435	Fr. Gerhard Scheuermann	Central European
1953.04.25	09438	Fr. Heribert Stumpf	Central European

25 years of priesthood

1988.04.09	12779	Fr. Paolo Morlando	Mediterranean
1988.04.09	12776	Fr. Antonino Sangani	Mediterranean
1988.04.23	12705	Fr. Victor D. Santoyo	Peru

Prayers for our deceased

No. 12-18

NAME	PROV./Del.	BORN	DIED AT	DATE
Fr. Jerzy Sikorski	Poland	27/07/1937	Katowice	30/01/2013
Bro. Joseph Gagne	United States	30/04/1928	Tewksbury	02/02/2013
Fr. Allan Noonan	OMI Lacombe	16/04/1927	Vancouver	13/02/2013
Fr. Joseph Massé	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	26/09/1917	Richelieu	14/02/2013
Fr. Jean-Louis Richard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	14/10/1927	Richelieu	15/02/2013
Fr. Jacques Croteau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	19/04/1921	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu	17/02/2013
Fr. Edward Smalec	Poland	03/10/1920	Katowice	21/02/2013

“They are before God, bearing the sign, the kind of character proper to our Institute, the vows common to all its members, the firm habit of the same virtues. We are linked to them by the bonds of a special charity. They are still our brothers and we are theirs. They now live in our mother-house, our main residence. The prayers and the love they retain for us will one day draw us to them and we shall live in our place of rest together with them.” (Letter of Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)

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