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Some wonderful news from Laos!

On Sunday, May 21, 2017 – Feast of Saint Eugene de Mazenod – Pope Francis surprised us by announcing the creation of five new “untypical” Cardinals. Among them is Bishop Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun, one of the three bishops of Laos. This news touches the Oblates and makes us profoundly happy.

The Mission of Laos where five Oblates work is part of the Thailand-Laos Delegation; therefore, it depends on the Province of the Philippines. Its 80 years of existence have been marked by events of every kind, especially unhappy ones. Its being accepted by Father Theodore LABOURE merited for the Oblates the name, attributed to Pius XI, “specialists in difficult missions.” This mission is still dear to the hearts of all Oblates, especially those of France and Italy, since six of our own shed they blood for the Faith there and are numbered among the Martyrs of Laos.

Until last February 5, Jean KHAMSE, o.m.i., who did his studies in France and the Philippines, was the Vicar Apostolic of Vientiane. His age and his health led to his retirement. He was replaced by Bishop Louis-Marie Ling, who continues as Vicar Apostolic of Paksé and who is now entirely in charge of the Vicariate of Vientiane as the Apostolic Administrator.

Louis-Marie Ling is well-known to the Oblates. Born in Ban Na Louang, the village of the Kmhmu’ minority – a people whom the Oblates had just begun to evangelize – he was baptized and educated by the Oblate team of Xieng Khouang. The priests whom he knew as a child were Oblate missionaries from France. Later, he studied at Paksane, in the seminary-college founded by a Canadian Oblate, Jean-Paul

BROUILLETTE, and directed by the Oblates. Bishop Ling fondly remembers, among others, Blessed Michel COQUELET, who taught him French, and Joseph BOISSEL, who often traveled with the students in their trip toward Xieng Khouang – a four days walk in the brush – for their going and returning at vacation time.

To follow his priestly vocation, Louis-Marie was directed toward the Secular Institute, *Voluntas Dei*, founded shortly before that by Father Louis-Marie PARENT, o.m.i. According to agreements made between Bishop Etienne LOOSDREGT and this Institute, the young Ling would be called upon to supervise the catechists officially assigned to the missionary apostolate where priests could no longer go.

Louis-Marie Ling studied in Canada, at Red Rapids near Edmundston, New Brunswick, and Trois-Rivières, Quebec. During a two-year diaconal practicum in the Vicariate of Vientiane, he was the only survivor of the bombing which cost the life of Blessed Catechist Luc Sy, his cousin, and their companion, also a Blessed. In 1984 Father Ling was arrested and sent to a “re-education camp”. There, under a system of forced labor, he spent three years, three months and seven days. As he likes to tell it, in this environment of persecution, his accusation consisted of few words: “Your presence here is propaganda for Jesus! “

Louis-Marie Ling is well acquainted with the Vicariate of Vientiane, where he is now in charge, for he worked there for many years as a priest, before and after his detention. He did so under extremely difficult conditions until his appointment to the Vicariate of Paksé in 2001.

In recent years, during his many trips to the capital, Bishop Ling willingly accepted the hospitality of the small Oblate community of Vientiane. He felt at home there. Today he is the shepherd called to direct the pastoral and apostolic activities of the Oblates of Laos. He has already entrusted the small Oblate team present in the country with the Paksane sector, i.e., a dozen stable parish or missionary stations, and the prospects for an openness that will gradually become reality as tensions with the established authorities subside.

As the cardinal-elect said, it is of course in his person that the pope thanks and honors the whole Church of Laos -- "such a fragile little plant," according to the expression dear to Bishop Khamsé. In particular, he thanks them for the very precious gift of their 17 blessed martyrs, Laotian priests and laity and missionaries from elsewhere.

He honors them by giving them to all their sister Churches throughout the world, as an example: in order to faithfully follow Jesus Christ to the end and to participate faithfully in his mission of salvation for all peoples, there is no need for great techniques. We need only men like Father Joseph Tiên, like the catechist martyrs, like Blessed Mario, Louis, Michel, Vincent, Jean and Joseph, O.M.I., and the other missionaries, big and little, who worked with them.

Everywhere, the Oblates will be eager to share the joy and a prayer of thanksgiving with their colleagues in Laos for the magnificent gift that Pope Francis made to this little Church by calling Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanékhoun to join the College of Cardinals. We wish him great courage for the even more important responsibilities that will now be his, in Laos and Rome. (Roland JACQUES)

General Administration

GENERAL HOUSE

Brother Giuseppe D’Orazio, OMI: 1920-2017

In 2010, Brother Giuseppe D’ORAZIO announced that he hoped to die during the General Chapter "so that there will be lots of Oblates at my funeral!" He had already celebrated his 90th birthday that year on February 24 and he was becoming ever more frail. But he did not get his wish that year... nor even during the next Chapter in 2016. But on May 17, 2017, during the month dedicated to his Madonna, the Mother of Jesus, and a few days before the feast of the Oblate Founder to whom he was greatly devoted, he finally made the journey to the Father’s House. What an encounter in heaven that must have been!

Having professed his first vows in the atmosphere of war in Italy in 1941, he became part of the General House community in 1947 when the Superior General, Fr. Leo DESCHÂTELETS, called him to Rome. He lived 70 years of service to the whole Congregation at its center.

There is probably no Oblate in the world that has left such widespread traces of himself...in the form of finger prints. For many decades, he left his prints on

most of the mail that was posted from the General House. Each day, twice a day, he would gather outgoing mail, weigh it, affix beautiful Vatican stamps and carry it down to the Vatican Post Office. Thus, the traces of himself that have gone all over the world, along with first obediences, appointments of major superiors, and friendly post cards. Often, he would write his own brief message to the recipient on the envelope.

Never shy around the many visitors to the General House, and whether they understood a word of Italian or not, he would greet them and make them feel at home.

He loved the city of Rome and as long as his health allowed it, during his excursions to the post office, he would stop at his favorite churches and shrines to light a candle or pray for a special intention. He would assist at different parts of the Mass in different churches. His devotion to the Mother of God and St. Eugene de Mazenod were well known. There was always a candle or flowers for Mary and for the Founder in the community chapel, placed there by Giuseppe D’Orazio. He always had a coin for those who were begging, and sometimes, after throwing his

coin in the beggar's pot or hat, he was known to take change from the same!

On May 18, Bro. Giuseppe's funeral Mass was celebrated in the General House Chapel, presided by the Superior General, Father Louis LOUGEN, who also preached the homily. While he did not have an entire General Chapter there to concelebrate, nevertheless, there was a chapel full of Oblate priests, Brothers and scholastics to give him a prayerful send-off. On May 19, his remains were laid to rest at the Oblate crypt in the Campo Verano cemetery of Rome.

GENERAL HOUSE School of Child Protection

Fr. Thomas BANG, an Oblate from the Province of Cameroon currently studying in Rome writes about an important course he recently completed about the protection of children. It was an online course and his "virtual classmate" was none other than the Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province, Father Raymond WARREN..

The well-being of children has always been of great interest for the Church. (Canons 226 §2 and 1136 CIC and *De gravioribus delictis* art. 6 §2). The issues of child abuse may not leave any church structure indifferent.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, advocates of the poor, the marginalized, the exploited and the abused feel most concerned by this sad reality that disfigures the Church. Each Oblate should

go to war against this evil. To win this battle against evil, we need to be trained, equipped, organized to be engaged in this battle.

Father Ray Warren and I just successfully participated in courses on the protection of minors organized by the Kimmage Development Studies Centre (DSC Kimmage). It was an online course from March to May. This course brought together participants from all the continents; since we came from different cultures, the exchanges were enlightening.

The course content was really enriching. I share with you some examples: What is Safeguarding?; Development Organisations and the Importance of Child Safeguarding; Development Organisations and Child Abuse Case Study; Cultural and Generational Perceptions of Children; The Evolving Capacities of Childhood; What to do when there is a reported case; Types of child abuse; The Effects of Abuse on Children; Children's Rights; The Importance of Having Child Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Practices; Writing a Child Safeguarding Policy. There was also a case study.

I say a big thank you to my "virtual classmate" Father Raymond Warren for his support. He practically held my hand and led me to that school. Thanks to Father General and to my provincial superior for their encouragement. Abuse of children is like a sea monster. We do not see it on the surface. No Oblate unit is safe from this monster. Let us not be surprised by him !

Asia-Oceania

SRI LANKA Oblate presence in people's struggle for justice

Families of the Disappeared is an association formed by those from the North and East of Sri Lanka whose family members went missing during the war in Sri Lanka (especially, during its last phase), which ended in May 2009. Since then, on numerous occasions, these families have appealed to the government to help them get correct information about their loved ones. In spite of that, there are thousands

of disappeared whose whereabouts are yet unknown.

On May 30, in Kilinochchi, a northern district in Sri Lanka, these families of the disappeared ended a 100-day long protest calling for justice for those who went missing. In solidarity with the campaign, Oblates from both the Provinces – Colombo and Jaffna -- came together and supported the large groups that blocked the A9 Road in sit-ins and silent protests to make the cause known.

There were other Hindu and Christian religious leaders present but the 11 Oblates formed the biggest group among them. They were at the forefront during the whole event. It was Fr. Ashok STEPHEN, the JPIC Director of the Colombo Province, and Fr. Anpurasa SEBAMALAI of the Jaffna Province who led the group in prayer, in Sinhala and Tamil respectively.

Over the past years, the key calls have been for an efficient state mechanism to provide details about those disappeared. Now, affected populations have lost faith in the mechanisms, commissions and resolutions and they wanted to make their appeal heard by a wider audience. That is why, after 100 days of day and night peaceful protests, thousands of supporters from many regions of the country rallied around them on the last day.

“The campaign is successful in many aspects, including participation, clear articulation of demands and specially the people’s determination to continue the fight for justice”, Fr. Ashok Stephen said after the protest. The presence of the Oblates from both the Provinces, which means both Sinhalese and Tamil Oblates, carried a significant symbolic message of unity and brotherhood. It was very much appreciated by those present at the occasion. (*Fr. Shanil JAYAWARDENA*)

VIETNAM

New emphasis on ongoing formation

On April 25-27, the Vietnam mission organized ongoing formation for the Vietnamese Oblate priests. This is the first time the Vietnam mission has held such ongoing formation. In previous gatherings which were combined with the annual retreat, the priests had little time for sharing pastoral experiences together. Seventeen Oblate priests in the Vietnam mission

attended the session. Some were absent because of studies abroad.

With the theme “Living in communion for Mission”, Fr. Emmanuel TRẦN QUANG KHUÔNG, the superior of the Vietnam mission, inspired all of us with the spirit of solidarity and the desire to implement our evangelical mission.

After the opening speech, Fr. Roland JACQUES, vice-provincial for the Vietnam Mission, shared with us the Oblate Charism which Our Founder received from the Holy Spirit. He helped us to deepen the Oblate spirit and provided more information on the calls to transformation from the recent 36th General Chapter (October 2016).

Fr. Roland’s presentation was made even more concrete by the mission superior’s sharing on pastoral ministry and his new vision for the future of the mission. With 70 Oblates, including 19 priests and 1 deacon, there is a promising and bright future for evangelization in Vietnam.

Fr. Dominic NGUYỄN VĂN LỘC shared with us the document, “The Service of Authority and Obedience,” by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, which is meant to be practiced by every religious. He expressed that we should identify who we are, and how we can meet God.

This gathering was an opportunity for us to share what happened in the past so that we can sympathize and support each other. Our fervent desire is to establish missionary communities so as to bring fruitful results in the evangelization of Vietnam where our Oblates are present in 6 dioceses. (by Fr. Đình THÁI, Vietnamese Oblate priest serving in the Hung Hóa diocese, a remote mountainous region in Vietnam. Translated into English by Scholastic Dao DUC MINH)

Africa-Madagascar

NATAL

Last moments with Bishop Barry

We announced recently that Bishop Barry WOOD, the Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Durban, died on

May 2, 2017, at a hospital in Durban. Scholastic Brother Ian CHITAMBO, from Zimbabwe and currently studying at the scholasticate in Cedara, has written a touching account of his own final moments with the bishop shortly before his death.

I knew I had arrived early to pick him up for the Diaconate Ordination at St Joseph's Scholasticate. So I waited at his gate in Durban. I could not ring the bell before the stipulated time that I was to pick him up. At exactly 7:45am I rang the bell, and after a while he answered and opened the gate for me. I sat in the car until he opened the garage for me to enter. My first sight of him gave me mixed feelings; this was not the Barry that I knew. Anyway I didn't want to think a lot about it; after all he wasn't well, that is why I was there in the first place: to pick him up. So I followed him into the house -- he was struggling to walk.

I waited in the kitchen whilst he put his things together; now and then I could hear heavy sighs from his bedroom. The worrying mode came back to me; the Bishop was not ok. By that time I was chatting with Tawanda MWANDO (a fellow scholastic) on *Whatsapp*. I then hinted to him, "Bro, Barry is not ok!" Tawanda mentioned that from the last time he had met him with Fr. Mike FOLEY, he wasn't looking so well. Immediately I thought of texting Fr. Joe PHIRI (scholasticate superior) of the situation, but I remained calm. Also I didn't want to cause much panic back home. "The Bishop will be ok," I thought to myself.

Perhaps I can say what made me to relax was when I heard him once more sighing heavily, this time crying out, "O my Lord!" From this moment, I knew that what Barry was going to make it; God was with him. ...

He came and handed me his vestments and all his needs for the day, and I in turn carried them to the car. I did not ask him at that time of his health, but I think he saw the constant mood swings I was having: from worry to a hopeful smile. He did not really tell me then what was wrong; he called me into his bedroom gave me his cincture and said, "Give me a few moments, I just need to catch my breath." "Take your time Bishop," I responded. I went out and sat in the car to wait for him. He came after a few minutes and we started off, heading towards Cedara. ...

Although he was weak, Barry's mind was still sharp. I saw this when he cautioned me of a

camera, an 80 km zone, where he had been given a number tickets., "Be careful here," he said, "There is a camera and I only realised it after getting a number of tickets." We both laughed. ...

So Barry was sick, but Barry was coming to the ordination; he was determined he could do it. We arrived at the scholasticate and as soon as we arrived, Barry fell down. People quickly surrounded him, trying to help, as I went to call the Superior to attend to the situation. The most striking part that I want to share with you was when those who were around Barry had a suggestion: "Let's cancel the ordination!" Others said 'Let's call bishops from Marianhill.' And some said "Let him lie down and ordain in the bedroom."

To all this fuss, he did not respond. He was busy smiling at everyone who came near him whilst drinking juice. Looking at him, it was as if everything was ok and I am sure in his own mind, it had been all worked out that he would fulfil his promise and duty. After all the debates and confusion, Barry was given a suggestion that he should go and lie down and that he would ordain the brothers from the bedroom. This he simply refused. He said, "I will do it. Someone can celebrate the mass and I will just be sitting and when the time comes for the ordination rite, I will do my part." We all know what this meant. As the provincial of the CMM said in his remarks thanking the bishop: "The bishop showed us an example: a soldier willing to die in the battlefield."

Afterwards, I had to drive him back and we talked all the way to his house, but the last moment I laid my eyes on Barry was when he was in his bed looking very tired. I asked him, "Bishop, are you going to be ok?" To this he responded, "I will be ok, I just need to rest." Now Barry rests and all we are left with are memories and his countless words of wisdom which we experienced in different ways. Rest in peace Barry and watch over us! I say watch over us, because upon hearing of his death, I sprang out of class in tears towards the chapel. In mind I was going to pray for Barry to rest in peace. I think I only said a few words praying for him and

the rest of the time in prayer was spent asking for Barry to pray for us.

NIGERIA

“At the table of justice and peace”

Fr. John OYEGOKE, an Oblate from the Province of Cameroon working in the Mission in Nigeria, recently attended a workshop by VIVAT International of which the Oblates are members. He tells of his experience there.

It was a dream long anticipated by all Oblate participants. As months went into weeks and weeks become days, the final day was at the door step. It was a time to wake from our dreams and concretize our strong aspiration for advocacy as we were finally called to dine at the table of Justice and Peace.

The aforementioned introductory paragraph best describes the spirit of the Oblate participants at the VIVAT International Workshop held in Lagos, Nigeria, on the theme: **Working for Justice, Promoting Peace, Preserving Lives**. It ran from the 1st to the 5th of May 2017 and left a strong print in the memory of the Oblate participants. In total, 9 Oblates were in attendance of which 5 priests and 4 Lay Associates. VIVAT International, of which the Oblates are a member Congregation, is a non-governmental organization (NGO)

with special consultative status with the United Nations for the cause of Social Justice and Peace.

Like in the days of the Tower of Babel, all through the VIVAT International Workshop, only one language was spoken and understood by all: the language of Justice and Peace. All concepts and presentations developed during the Workshop were expressed in that language. Among the concepts that emerged were: food sovereignty, social insecurity, violence against women, ecological degradation and climatic change.

Furthermore, it was generally affirmed at the workshop that though humanity is hungry, the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) and the proliferation of genetically modified (GM) seeds and foods are not a response to hunger in Africa and in Nigeria particularly. It was also made clear that religious Congregations have been making efforts to resolve the above crises. However, more resolved strategies and team work between Religious Congregations and social advocacy groups need to be initiated so as to best tackle the underlined problem.

In conclusion, standing on the firm conviction that VIVAT International constitutes an effective tool for advocacy, a strong “vuvuzela” call was echoed to all Major Superiors to support the formation of a National VIVAT branch in Nigeria.

Latin America

PARAGUAY

Fr. Leo Guilmette, OMI: 1936-2017

The former General Councilor for Latin America, Fr. Leo GUILMETTE, died on June 5 in Asuncion, Paraguay. Born in Dover, Delaware, USA, in 1936, he entered the OMI novitiate in 1956 and made his first vows in 1957. He did his philosophy and theology studies in the USA and was ordained a priest in January of 1963 in Natick, Massachusetts.

After working for two years in Hispanic ministry in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1965 he received his obedience for the former Southern Province of the United States and, in particular, its then Mission of Mexico.

From 1966 until 1976, he worked in a parish, in the formation of indigenous catechists and as vocation director. In 1976, after the resignation of the General Councilor for Latin America, the Superior General, Fr. Fernand JETTE, in Council, named Fr. Guilmette to that office. In the General Chapter of 1980, he was elected for a second term.

After his time in the Central Government, he went to Paraguay in 1986. Upon his arrival in Paraguay, he worked as Novice Master and in other houses of formation: Vocation House, prenovitiate and scholasticate. He was also parish pastor at Loma Grande and for a long time, Vocation Director. He served as professor

at the Institute of Religious Life and was greatly appreciated in his service as spiritual director of many religious men and women.

He earned the affection of all those who knew him all over Paraguay. Finally, weakened by health problems, he was helping at the prenovitiate and the Parish of St. Blaise.

VENEZUELA

A call for prayer

The Oblate Mission in Venezuela depends upon the Mediterranean Province. The Provincial, Father Alberto GNEMMI, has asked for prayers for the peaceful resolution of the grave political and humanitarian situation that exists in that country.

Dear Brother Oblates and Lay Associates:

For almost two months now, Venezuela has been in the news because of the ongoing confrontation between the population, which has taken to the streets to protest against the serious socio-economic crisis that has been impoverishing the country for years, and the military forces that clearly support the government of the president. The conflict between the sides, which has become dramatic in recent weeks because of the lack of food, has already caused about fifty deaths.

The grave situation touches us closely, since in Venezuela, the Oblates live in three areas of the country: Bishop Ramiro DÍAZ, Fr. José Manuel CICUÉNDEZ and Fr. Nené TASAR in Catia la Mar, about thirty kilometers from the capital, Caracas; Fr. Javier ÁLVAREZ and Fr. Vidal FUENTE VEGA in Santa Bárbara, in the state of Barinas, where the protest is currently very strong and where in recent days there have been deaths; Fr. Sante RONCHI, Fr. Rafael WLEKLAK, Fr. Giovanni NOVA DELGADO and two young people in formation in San Cristobal, capital of the State of Táchira, located in the Venezuelan Andes in the western part of the country.

Today I spoke via Skype with Father Javier Álvarez, superior of the mission, who has reassured me about the conditions of life of the Oblates, although he did not conceal the gravity of the situation that could later degenerate into violence.

I invite all Oblates and Lay Associates to pray for the Venezuelan nation, for the Church in that country, which is trying to accomplish an act of mediation in favor of peace and reconciliation between the political forces, and for the Oblates who are sharing the difficult conditions of the population. (Frascati, Provincial House, 27 May 2017)

Canada-United States

OMI LACOMBE, CANADA

A JPIC honour bestowed

On Friday, April 28th, 2017, JPIC-OMI Lacombe was very pleased to participate on the Eugène de Mazenod Medal award at the Saint Paul University, as their nominee Mr. John Joe Gunn was the honoree of the day.

As Br. Leonardo REGO, director of JPIC OMI Lacombe, mentioned in his speech: “When the opportunity to nominate someone for the Eugene de Mazenod Medal award reached me, I was very inspired by the Oblates’ two hundredth anniversary, which brings innovative changes and movements towards a new future and a new

mission that are very much in sync not only with this award, but Joe’s work and Saint Paul University’s vision and mission. The Oblate’s new heart in connection with the conversion, the new spirit in connection with the prophetic voices and the new mission relating it to our future can be easily related to Joe’s work, his commitment to social justice within and outside the Catholic institution, always with great faith and firm conviction that a better world is possible.”

The medal bears the name of the founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and recognizes the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod in addressing the social issues of his time. The Eugene de Mazenod Medal honours individuals who have made a

significant contribution to the development of their community, in their environment, in the church and in society as a whole.

The event and the speeches brought about friendly discussions on engagement, the next steps towards change, as well as a reflection on our own role in the fight for justice. It brought us to re-think our engagement with progress and our commitment to change and development, postulates for the mission carried by JPIC and its areas of work.

Joe's work is extraordinary, yet his humility makes him human and drives us all to achieve greatness through his example on fighting for justice, peace, integrity of creation and development. In his acceptance speech, Joe presented us with an inspiring call to justice in difficult times, giving examples and calling us all to join a coalition for the greater good, seizing the opportunity to build a future towards change and fighting poverty: "None of us is anyone without everyone else, so let's take this opportunity to form a coalition for the greater good in the collaboration and union of all here present today, expressing a preferential option for the poor." Fernanda de Castro - JPIC Assistant)

UNITED STATES

The Hmong say "thank you"

(Editor's note: For many years, the Oblates have ministered with the Hmong community in St. Paul, Minnesota. Fr. Daniel TAILLEZ, a French Oblate who had worked in Laos served them tirelessly, both in St. Paul and in Thailand. On the occasion of the retirement of Fr. Harry WINTER, Dr. Sia Lo, a parishioner at St. Patrick's parish in St. Paul, wrote these words of appreciation. They are strikingly similar to countless other reflections made by individuals whose lives have been touched by Oblates who have dedicated their lives to be "Close to People." So, this expression of love and appreciation is presented as a reflection on all Oblates everywhere, and the people who love them.)

On behalf of the Catholic Hmong congregation here at St. Patrick, I want to thank you, Father, for bringing us to this church. Without you, we

might not be here today. So thank you so much for everything that you have done to find us a home.

About a century or so ago, it was other Oblate priests from France like you that found our people in the jungle of Laos. They risked their lives to find us in that jungle. Once they found us, they took the time to learn our culture and our ways -- in order to truly teach us about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When they found us, we did not have a written language and so they created one for us. Using the roman characters, they developed our written language for the first time. Today, all the Hmong around the world can communicate with each other through writing or through the use of the internet – thanks to our Oblate priests. In fact, every time I write in Hmong, I cannot help but think about them. *(Editor's note: Oblate Fr. Yves BERTRAIS [†2007] was the author of the first Hmong-French dictionary, published in Vientiane in 1964.)*

When we were refugees in Thailand, the Catholic Church was instrumental in bringing our people into the U.S. and Minnesota. It was the charity of the Catholic Church that clothed and fed many of our families until we were able to provide for ourselves. So, our community is truly indebted to you and the Catholic Church.

But of all the good things that the Catholic Church has done for us, we are most thankful for our Oblate priests -- and especially you today, Father, for being who you are. For you are a true representative of Christ here on earth. Through Christ, you clean our souls every Sunday with holy water and protect us from evil. Through Christ you taught us the blessing of heaven and the true purpose of life. Through the power of Christ, you have lead us to be closer to God and for that we cannot thank you enough. (from www.omiusa.org)

UNITED STATES

A celebration of the Martyrs of Laos

The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois, was the site of beautiful thanksgiving celebration of the Martyrs of Laos

on the weekend of June 17-18, 2017. Nearly 350 persons, most of them of Laotian origins, traveled to the Oblate shrine to honor the 17 priests and laity who gave their lives for the faith between 1954 and 1970. Six of the martyrs were Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from France and Italy.

Guests of honor were Archbishop-emeritus Roger SCHWIETZ, OMI, from Anchorage, Alaska, as well as Cardinal-designate, Bishop Louis-Marie Ling Mankhanekoun, Vicar Apostolic of Paksé, Laos, and Apostolic Administrator of Vientiane, Laos; and Monsignor Tito Banchong Thopanhong, Apostolic Administrator of Luang Prabang, Laos.

At the festive banquet on June 17, besides talks by the three prelates, the postulator for the 17 martyrs, Fr. Roland JACQUES, spoke about the process that led to the beatification of the martyrs. Fr. Warren BROWN, General Councillor for Canada-United States represented the Oblate Superior General. Kmhmu, Lao, Hmong and Burmese dancers and singers entertained the guests between the various talks.

At the Mass of Thanksgiving on June 18, there were about 20 concelebrating priests from the United States and from France, Thailand and Vietnam. Among the priests was 88 year old Fr. Lucien BOUCHARD who had served with some of the martyrs in Laos until he was forced to leave there and continue his mission in Borneo. There were priests, brothers and religious sisters who minister with the Hmong, Khmu, Lao, Karen and Karenni peoples in various dioceses of the USA.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP, CANADA A special legacy for St. Paul University

On Friday April 7, 2017, the Providence Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, Kingston, Ontario, made a legacy gift of \$2.5M to Saint Paul University to establish the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.

Saint Paul University, founded by the Oblates, had identified the need for leaders to integrate into their professional practice the values of

social justice, enhanced human development, sustainability, diversity and inclusion.

Over the past 156 years this religious congregation of Sisters has been dedicated to serving with compassion and trusting in Providence. From the four sisters who arrived from Montreal in 1861 to care for the poor, the aged and the orphans in Kingston, they have expanded their ministry to found orphanages, schools, hospitals, long-term care homes and hostels across Canada. In the 1967 they began ministry in Guatemala and Peru. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate had also arrived to minister in Peru in the 1960's. One of the Oblates they met and worked with there was Brother Leonardo REGO. What a fortuitous meeting that ended up being!

Brother Len is the director of JPIC for the OMI Lacombe Province and currently holds the position of Oblate in Residence at Saint Paul University. From his long acquaintance with them he is very familiar with the Providence Sisters' vision and how they want to prepare future leaders with the knowledge and skills they will need to meet the challenges of our ever changing world.

Brother Len saw the potential connection between what Saint Paul University wanted to achieve and what he heard from the Providence Sisters regarding a future-focused legacy that reflected their mission and values. After numerous discussions between the Sisters and the team at Saint Paul University, it was determined that that was a good fit.

The official ceremony on April 7 was a touching celebration of these remarkable, dedicated and most generous Sisters and a grateful academic institution that has now launched this new department: the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality. (Erin Ryan, Oblate Associate)

Europe

ITALY**St. Eugene and the artist “Bake”**

Recently in Rome, at the Galleria Sant'Antonio ai Portoghesi, there was an exhibit of drawings by Barbara Calcei who goes professionally by the name “Bake.” The exhibit featured art she had created for a book on St. Eugene de Mazenod, originally written in French by Fr. Yvon BEAUDOIN and translated into Italian by Fr. Nino BUCCA. The Italian title is “Sant’Eugenio de Mazenod: aneddoti, fioretti e curiosità.” This version was published in 2011 by the Province of Italy on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Oblate Founder’s death. What follows are excerpts from an article that appeared on the Internet on May 27 in “papale-papale” (<http://papale-papale.it/articolo/2324/eugenio-de-mazenod>).

The exhibit of Barbara Calcei (known in art circles as “Bake”) just concluded successfully in Rome; its charming title was *Saints and Knaves*.

It is not the first time that images of this versatile artist have been on display, arousing admiration everywhere... but this recent show reserved for her enthusiasts and those who follow her art a freshness that powerfully unites her artistic corpus through two series of finely crafted drawings and a solid companion narrative.

It includes the series dedicated to the Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate Saint Eugene de Mazenod and the *Capitan Bake* series, which -- as the title clearly states -- is in a certain sense a biography of the artist herself.

They are two stories that share the freshness of the artist’s talent, but which are evidently different from one another: the story of a saint and the story of an imaginary character...

This edition of the journal is dedicated to the saint; the next number will be about the other...

So here are the designs in the illustrated book

ordered from the artist by Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and published by O.M.I. From it there emerges a story dramatized with an attractive, new and amusing twist.

One recognizes in the drawings the utmost attention to detail which, for the artist, is more an expressive need than a technical choice. But in this specific case, it has the purpose of deepening the numerous metaphors and allegories chosen to make the reader aware of different aspects of the life of the saint and of our own.

Drawn with pen and ink, ... the ironic and sometimes irreverent graphic representations [are] a sign of deep devotion to the man who, with commitment, will and sacrifice, faced a life of responsibility, enduring the path of faith to holiness.

SPAIN**Praying the rosary for vocations**

In 2008, Fr. Ismael GARCÍA MORENO (currently the Vicar Provincial of the Mediterranean Province for the Spanish sector) initiated a continuous recitation of the rosary for 24 hours by a youth group in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The following year, the initiative grew to 36 hours. Fr. Ismael left the coordination of the project in the hands of the laity and in 2013, they began their prayer on the Feast of St. Eugene de Mazenod, May 21. So many people wanted to be part of this praying of the rosary that it was extended to May 29, Feast of Blessed Joseph Gerard. In other words, it now coincides with the annual Oblate Novena for Vocations.

Through the social media of *Facebook* (“Rosario OMI”), the project has taken on a more international character as people from such places as Germany, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, Italy, and Spain committed to pray the rosary at various times of the day this year.

The coordinator, Pablo Renedo, from the Oblate parish of San Leandro in Aluche de Madrid, states that putting the list on *Facebook* was not so much aimed at filling in all the times on the list as it was to simply foster prayer for vocations. Most of the people who sign on to the list come from communities where there are Oblates and laity who foster participation.

Pablo further states: “When we thought for the first time about inviting others to pray throughout the week, many thought it was crazy, but the response was extraordinary. At the same time, I think we should open this initiative to other important moments for the life of the Congregation: the feast of our Blessed Oblates, or crucial moments such as the celebration of the General Chapters.”

Anniversaries for July 2017

70 Years of religious life

16.07.1947	08306	Fr. Yvon Beaudoin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
16.07.1947	08326	Fr. Gilles LeBlanc	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

65 Years of religious life

16.07.1952	09291	Fr. Marcel Chénier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
16.07.1952	09293	Fr. Bernard Ménard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
16.07.1952	09289	Fr. Gaston Rioux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
25.07.1952	09251	Fr. Amador Lopez	United States
25.07.1952	09252	Fr. José María Riega	Argentina-Chile

65 Years of priesthood

06.07.1952	08397	Fr. Heinrich Döing	Central European
06.07.1952	08240	Fr. Michel Frémaux	France
13.07.1952	08372	Fr. Eugeen Van Helden	Belgium-Holland

60 Years of religious life

25.07.1957	10270	Fr. Argimiro Aláez	Argentina-Chile
25.07.1957	10269	Fr. Eutimio González Álvarez	Mediterranean
25.07.1957	10401	Fr. Saturnino Lajo	United States
26.07.1957	10315	Fr. Claudio Brisson	Argentina-Chile
26.07.1957	10307	Fr. Robert Châteauneuf	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26.07.1957	10313	Fr. René Gauthier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26.07.1957	10305	Fr. Jean-Guy Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26.07.1957	10304	Fr. Rodrigo Marcoux	Mexico

60 Years of priesthood

07.07.1957	09265	Fr. Bernhard Albers	Central S. A.
07.07.1957	09403	Fr. Johannes Effern	Central European
07.07.1957	09112	Msr. Adam Exner	Lacombe
07.07.1957	09056	Fr. Fernando Gargantini	Mediterranean

50 Years of priesthood

22.07.1967	11019	Fr. John O'Doherty	Australia
30.07.1967	11206	Fr. Otto Dichtler	Central European
30.07.1967	11208	Fr. Heinz Steegmann	Central European

25 Years of priesthood

28.07.1992	13136	Fr. Francis Loshington Antonipillai	Jaffna
28.07.1992	13138	Fr. Emmanuel Arulanandam	Jaffna
28.07.1992	13137	Fr. Atputharajah Gnanapragasam	Jaffna
28.07.1992	13139	Fr. Edwin Vasantharajah Selvaratnam	Jaffna

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 33-40

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Alexander G. Shahun	OMI Lacombe	19/10/1920	Edmonton	16/05/2017
Bro. Giuseppe D'Orzaio	General Administration	24/02/1920	Rome	17/05/2017
Fr. Paul Hurtubise	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	03/10/1925	Richelieu	23/05/2017
Fr. John Brioux	OMI Lacombe	12/07/1942	North Vancouver	24/05/2017
Fr. Leo Guilmette	Paraguay	13/02/1936	Asunción	05/06/2017
Fr. François M. J. Thomas	Haiti	14/04/1951	Les Cayes	10/06/2017
Fr. Boniface Wittenbrink	United States	30/06/1914	Belleville	13/06/2017
Fr. Daniel Lafrance	OMI Lacombe	18/12/1928	Edmonton	18/06/2017

“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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