



OMI Information No. 551 (English)

January 2015

Convocation of the XXXVI General Chapter

Rome, 21 December 2014

Dear Brother Oblates,

On this 203rd anniversary of the ordination of our Founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, I hereby convoke the XXXVI General Chapter. It will begin on September 14, 2016, the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, in Rome at the General House of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, located at 476 via Aurelia.

As you know, the Chapter Commissioner, Father Claudio Bertuccio and two Commission members, Fathers Martin Wolf and Emmanuel Youngten were appointed in September 2014. Fr. William O'Donnell is the Commission secretary. The Commission held its first meeting in Rome from December 2-5, 2014.

Work on a theme for the Chapter has been underway since the Interchapter gathering in Thailand in April 2013. I have also conducted a consultation in which all the Units of the Congregation were invited to participate during this past year. After having studied all the proposals coming from diverse sectors of the Congregation, the Precapitular Commission is now formulating a proposal regarding a Chapter theme for the General Council to consider in the January/February 2015 Plenary Session. Once a theme is established, the Commission will engage the Congregation in a dialogue to deepen its meaning among us and to gather other suggestions for the General Chapter.

We begin a time of prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for light to lead us in preparing the 2016 Chapter. I ask each Oblate and all our communities to increase your efforts in making the faith-sharing sessions an especially sacred time and a privileged way of being together as brother Oblates. These encounters of the Oblate Triennium possess a rich potential to prepare us for the Chapter and to renew us in our Oblate life and mission. We do not forget to seek concrete expressions of conversion in our lives, both personally and as communities. Other resources to help us prepare for the General Chapter will be coming from the Precapitular Commission in the months ahead.

It is in this same year as the Chapter, 2016, that we are celebrating our bicentennial of foundation as the Missionaries of Provence. We believe that our gracious God is leading us to new life as a Congregation and will pour out the Spirit upon us to strengthen our bonds of unity as brother Oblates and to ignite anew the passion of Saint Eugene for Jesus Christ, for the Church and for the poor and most abandoned.

I invite you to hold in your hearts the icon of Mary in the midst of the disciples praying in the Upper Room as we make this pilgrimage of grace toward the General Chapter of 2016. We ask her, our Mother for whom we have a tender love, to continue to smile upon our Congregation. May she

help us be open to the coming of the Spirit in new and surprising ways, far beyond what we can ask for or even imagine!

Please note that attached to this announcement of the convocation of the General Chapter you will find other very important information regarding the procedures for electing delegates to the Chapter.

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Father Louis Lougen, OMI
Superior General

General Administration

GENERAL POSTULATION

A happy progress report

On November 27, the theological congress of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints met to give their judgment on the cause of Fr. Mario BORZAGA (1932-1960) and his catechist Thoj Xyooj Paul (1941-1960). Both lost their lives in Laos. The commission affirmed the martyrdom of both Servants of God, a major step toward their beatification, which could possibly take place at the end of next year, 2015.

At the next theological congress of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in the spring of 2015, the General Postulation might be able to present the cause of the other "Laotian martyrs". Among them are five Oblates: Fr. Louis LEROY (1923-1961), Fr. Michel COQUELET (1931-1961), Fr. Vincent L'HÉNORET (1921-1961), Fr. Jean WAUTHIER, (1926-1967) and Fr. Joseph BOISSEL (1909-1969).

Also, this November, the diocesan inquiry into the cause of Fr. Bastiampillai Anthonipillai THOMAS (1886-1964) from Jaffna / Sri Lanka, founder of the first Asian contemplative male and female Congregations, the Rosarians, came to an end. All the material has already arrived in Rome. The cause will be introduced to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in December.

At present, the Oblate General Postulation administers the causes of St. Eugene DE MAZENOD, Bl. Joseph GERARD, Bl. Joseph CEBULA, Bl. Francesco Esteban

LACAL and companions (Spanish Oblate Martyrs); the Venerables, Vital GRANDIN, Charles Dominique ALBINI and Anthony KOWALCZYK; the Servants of God, Ovide CHARLEBOIS, Victor LELIÈVRE, Mario BORZAGA and Thoj Xyooj Paul, Joseph Thao Tien and Companions (Laotian Martyrs) and Bastiampillai Anthonipillai THOMAS.

At the same time the Roman Postulation is working on five non-Oblate causes: Bl. Joseph Vaz, Sri Lanka (Canonization on January 14, 2015); Bl. Maria Anna Blondin, Canada; Bl. Maria Rosa Durocher, Canada; Bl. Nicolas Bunkerd Kitbamrung, Thailand, and the S.G. Johannes Maria Haw, Germany.

Presently these other Oblate causes, which have already obtained the *nihil obstat* from the Holy See, are in the phase of the diocesan inquiry: Fr. Michael Jean Alexandre GUILLAME (1871-1951), Sri Lanka; Cardinal Thomas Benjamin COORAY (1901-1988), Sri Lanka; and Fr. Ludwik WRODARCZYK (1907-1943), Ukraine. The diocese of Bayeux-Lisieux in France has shown interest in the opening of the cause of Bishop Pierre FALLAIZE (1887-1964). Oblates from Paraguay speak of the possibility of opening the cause of Bishop Piet Jacobus SHAW (1925-1984). (Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP, Postulator General)

PRECAPITULAR COMMISSION

Beginning to plan for the 36th General Chapter

The first meeting of the 2016 Precapitular Commission took place at the General house

in Rome on December 2-4, 2014. The Chapter Commissioner, Fr. Claudio BERTUCCIO and two Commission members, Frs. Martin WOLF and Emmanuel YOUNGTEN were appointed by the Superior General in Council in September 2014. Fr. William O'DONNELL is the Commission secretary.

We spent some time getting to know each other better before starting the work that will bring us together for about two years. Then we started listening to the Central Government expectations for the coming Chapter. Finally the real work began.

We examined the Chapter Directory and the documentation left by the former Precapitular Commissions, taking notes of the changes and follow-up needed. Little by little a long list of things to be done was written, together with a timetable for their accomplishment.

Lastly we studied the responses received from the consultation started by Father General for the theme of the Chapter. Luckily there were many commonalities on the proposals focusing on our Oblate identity and mission, also taking into account the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Congregation in the same year as the Chapter. Keeping all this material in mind, we formulated some proposals for a possible Chapter theme to be considered in the January/February Plenary Session of the Central Government.

We are thankful to those who have worked on this same task for previous Chapters. They have left us plenty of material, very helpful for us as we start our work. In spite of the huge amount of work that we can foresee, we still feel blessed for this opportunity to know more closely the entire Congregation.

Our next meeting will be on March 24-26, 2015. Soon you will hear from us again. We hope that the process of preparation for the Chapter will be enriching for all and will draw the interest and the collaboration of all Oblates. We entrust ourselves and this coming Chapter to your prayers, so that the Chapter may become a special Spirit-filled time for the Congregation on this 200th anniversary. (Claudio Bertuccio)

GENERAL HOUSE

Orientation session for new Major Superiors

From November 17 to 29, the new provincials and a vicar provincial appointed in 2014 met at the General House in Rome for an orientation session so that their mission would be positive and rewarding for them and useful for the service of their Unit. In getting to know each other and members of the General Council, each one spoke about his province and its various communal realities as well as his own questions, concerns, hopes and joys.

Sharing about situations of persecution, about growing older or the reduction of the charism to parish ministry, but also about joys, allowed the group to gradually form an attentive, enthusiastic and very fraternal Oblate community. Taking turns in preparing prayer and Eucharist, taking meals and recreation together, having useful interpersonal meetings all strengthened the bonds among the participants.

The witness of the unity and solidarity of the General Council community, as well as the the wonderful welcome by members of the local community and the kind attention of the heads of General Services helped the provincials to experience the Oblate family and find ways to ensure their mission. They gratefully thank the student priests and the students at the International and the Italian scholasticates for leading some of the evening prayers.

Part of the first week was devoted to formation for leadership and self-esteem, led by Brother Loughlan Sofield of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. Unanimously appreciated, this interactive input brought out elements to help superiors and communities grow in kindness. A time of recollection, led by Father Luis Ignacio ROIS (Chicho) closed the week, inviting the participants to consider leadership as a revolution in tenderness, beginning with the sacrament of the Samaritan love of the Trinity.

The second week was devoted to the discovery of administrative, canonical, missionary and financial aspects, as well as an introduction

to the General Services as resources for the provinces: JPIC, first and continuing formation, postulation, various realities of the General House and the community of Aix-en-Provence. It is difficult to name here all those who took the time to respond to specific situations and the very specific questions of the provincials. We heartily thank them.

Each one left this experience with a suitcase full of new ideas, new acquaintances and supports, and finally, with the brotherly smile of Louis LOUGEN who took the time to meet with each one. The mission continues!

The following Major Superiors took part in the session: Anthony MATSOSO (Lesotho); Vincent GRUBER (France); Edwin S. VASANTHARAJAH (Jaffna); Ronald CAIRNS (Northern Province, South Africa); Daniel CORIJN (Belgium/Holland); Antoni BOCHM (Poland); Edouard DAGAVOUNANSOU (Cameroon); Alberto HUAMAN (Delegation of Peru); V. Derrick WARNAKULASURIYA (Delegation of Pakistan); Raymond LEUTA (Vicar Provincial of Lesotho); Mokone RATHOKOA (Central Province, South Africa.).

Translator for the session was Fr. Daniel LEBLANC. (Vincent GRUBER, Provincial of France, the Mother Province)

JPIC GENERAL SERVICE A committee meeting in Rome

From the 3-7 November 2014, the OMI JPIC General Service Committee met in Rome for their annual session. Present at this session were Fathers Camille PICHE, the former director; Kennedy KATONGO, the new director; Gilberto PINON, Assistant General and holder of the Mission portfolio; Miguel FRITZ General Councillor for Latin America. Representing the Regions were Frs. Kevin MCLAUGHLIN (Europe); Bradly ROZAIRO (Asia-Oceania); Didier ZANADRAFARA (Africa-Madagascar); Antonio PONCE (Canada-United States); and Miguel PIPOLO (Latin America). Also present was Fr. Daniel LEBLANC, representative of the Oblates at the United Nations (UNO) in

New York and Fr. Felix Mushobozi, CPPS, the co-executive secretary USG/UISG/ JPIC Commission in Rome who was invited as an observer and special contributor to the session.

During the five days together, the committee looked at various issues pertaining to JPIC in the places where Oblates are present and beyond. On the first day, participants were all welcomed and the new director of the General Service read a letter from the Superior General. In his letter to the committee, Fr. General said, "Study thoroughly how you can animate our Local Oblate Units in this essential ministry of our Oblate mission with the poor. How can this important ministry be coordinated in the different Oblate Regions?"

The letter by the Superior General set a tone for the deliberations of the session. Reports from the various regions and also from the UN were shared and Fr. Felix gave feedback as an observer and special listener to the presentations. Fr. Camille also shared and reflected with the group his past 6 years as director.

The second day was spent discussing the question of "How Oblate Units and Regions link with the UNO and the Washington, DC office; how they interact with NGOs, governments and other Congregations in their Regions." Fr. Daniel CORIJN, then gave the background to the *JPIC Vade Mecum*, a document which the committee is reviewing and adapting.

The third day began with a talk by the Vicar General, Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, who thanked the committee for their dedication and commitment. He challenged the committee to do more in the area of animation of Units and local communities regarding JPIC. Later in the day, the committee looked at the preparation for the Third Year of the Oblate Triennium.

The next day, the committee focused on the Superior General's letter and his recommendations to the committee and later the group looked at the OMI JPIC priorities and statutes. The committee also outlined their strategy for the coming year and beyond, by considering capacity building

workshops; improvement of the communication system and dissemination of information; integration of JPIC in formation of Oblates and the laity; more involvement of Oblate Brothers in JPIC; and developing tools for animation. The last day was spent on reviewing and looking at the way forward to better animate the Regions, Units and local communities. (Kennedy Katongo)

GENERAL COMMITTEE OF OBLATE BROTHERS

One body in one spirit in hope

A sandal, a candle, a petal, a chrysalis, an Oblate cross, a sign saying God is faithful, an autumn leaf and branch, and a clock. These symbols captured the experience of the participants of the General Committee of Oblate Brothers. The meeting held at the General House on 1-5 December 2014 was attended by the Brothers representing the various Regions of the Congregation as well as the members of the Mission Committee of the Central Government. The participants were: Brothers Jean-Marie DIAKANOU (Cameroun, Region of Africa-Madagascar); Noel GARCIA (Philippines, Region of Asia-Oceania); Rafal DABKOWSKI (Poland, Region of Europe); and Thomas NOVAK (OMI Lacombe, Region of Canada-United States). Bro. Ivar RUÍZ (Bolivia, Region of Latin America) was unable to attend due to a visa problem. From the Central Government, there were: Fathers Gilberto PIÑÓN Gaytán, Assistant General, and head of the Internal Mission Committee and General Councillors Luis Ignacio ROIS (Region of Europe) and Miguel FRITZ (Region of Latin America).

The first day opened with prayer led by Fr. Miguel Fritz at the Founder's chapel. This was followed by a welcome from the Superior General, Fr. Louis LOUGEN. Fr. Gilberto walked us through the agenda of the meeting. With Fr. Miguel, we shared our hopes and fears and expectations from this meeting. This was followed by an introduction and sharing of experiences by the Brothers and the sharing of their experiences with the Brothers by Frs. Gilberto, Luis Ignacio and Miguel.

The Committee worked on various documents to ensure a greater participation of the

Brothers in the different services and activities of the Congregation. They also discussed the promotion of the Brother's vocation as well as the formation of Brothers in the different Regions of the Congregation. The committee reviewed and discussed the Statutes of the Permanent Committee for Oblate Brothers. They studied how the Brothers could participate in the General Services, like JPIC ministry and "Oblatio"; they also spoke of greater participation in the Oblate Triennium and the organization of workshops to promote Oblate fraternity.

We have made recommendations to the Superior General for decisions so that what we had envisioned for the Brothers would not just be a dream but a reality.

The meeting was not just about recommendations. We experienced Oblate fraternity; we shared our thoughts; we had discussions and clarifications and even moments of confusion. There was time for laughter, for prayer and Eucharist, and there were fraternal gatherings with the Oblate communities at the General House and the International Scholasticate. (Noel Garcia)

OBLATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

A truly original Congress!

The Congress on the Oblate Charism in Context will be held ... in context! It will take place on 30 June until 3 July 2015 at the same time in all the Regions of the Congregation, via internet connections in eight places: San Antonio (USA); Mexico City (Mexico); Rome (Italy); Obra (Poland); Kinshasa (Congo); Johannesburg (South Africa); Colombo (Sri Lanka); and Manila (Philippines).

Every day, the Congress will have two time frames: 3 hours of connection among all the places where it is being held; 3 hours at the local level, with presentations prepared at the regional level and dialogue among the participants.

1. Objectives of the Congress

The Congress has as its primary objective to listen to the opportunities for and the challenges to the

Oblate charism as it is being lived in different contexts, with a view to give a new impetus for the entire Congregation, 200 years after its birth. The Congress should, in a particular way, touch upon the internal life of the Congregation – community, formation, vows, prayer – and on its mission.

A second objective is to become more aware – especially among the young Oblates – of the richness of Oblate life today, and to increase the awareness and sense of belonging to one apostolic body.

A third objective is to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Oblate founding.

2. Content

The Congress will be divided into four sections: 1. Reading the signs of the times. 2. Understanding our present experiences. 3. Learning from the great Oblate story. 4. Dreaming of future prospects.

3. Participants

It is envisaged that a group of about 60 Oblates and lay people from the Oblate Family will

attend the Congress, ready to present a paper in experiential, historical and doctrinal areas.

In addition to the official members, other participants may be invited for the duration of the Congress or for specific moments. It would be appropriate, wherever possible, that Oblates in first formation, living in the designated places, participate, even if partially.

4. Leaders on the local level

In each of the locations, a person responsible for the event has been designated. His duties are: 1. During the preparatory phase: to make and maintain contact with the participants of his area, so as to coordinate the various written contributions. 2. During the Congress: to chair and guide the work of the local Congress and internet connections with the other points of the Congress.

Five persons will be called to assist at the Congress to offer their general evaluation of the Congress and a synthesis of the most significant elements that will have emerged, together with prospects for the future.

Asia-Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Episcopal ordination of Bishop Mark Edwards, OMI

The Episcopal Ordination of Bishops Terence Curtin and Mark EDWARDS, as Auxiliary Bishops of Melbourne, took place at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on 17 December 2014. President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Archbishop of Melbourne, the Archbishop Denis Hart was the Principal Consecrator. The Co-Consecrators were the Apostolic Nuncio in Australia, Archbishop Paul Gallagher and Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane. Many Australian Catholic Bishops, diocesan and religious priests concelebrated.

On behalf of the bishops, Bishop Curtin expressed thanks and appreciation for all the prayerful support and encouragement received. "It has been very humbling because in moments like this, as I think all the bishops would know, you become acutely aware of your own failings

and limitations. But that's not a bad thing. It means that we come to know all the more how much we depend on the grace of God and the gift of faith. The extent of that grace has been shown to us in what you, our friends, parishioners, students, have told us of our presence and ministry among you. It surprises, exceeds our expectations, and reminds us that it's God's work in us and not our own.

"You have before you a bishop out of the diocesan clergy of Melbourne and a bishop out of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate," Bishop Curtin explained. "With such firm foundations I can assure you we are both from good stock, but good stock is not much use unless it's well planted. There lies your task, dear bishops, priests and people of God, to plant us well in the joys, the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men and women of our age."

Archbishop Hart said, "All of us gathered here, pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

May they give love and compassion to the life of the Church for many years.” (Archdiocese of Melbourne)

KOREA

Translating during the Pope’s visit...

An important recent moment for us in Korea was the visit of the Pope. It was a grace for the whole nation and not only for the Catholic Church. We Oblates participated in the Mass of Beatification, the meeting with youth, and the meeting with religious.

The words of the Pope were a strong call to conversion. It was a special grace for me to be invited to participate to the meeting the Pope had with the Episcopal Conference of Korea on August 14. I was called to be the translator into Italian for the cardinals and the people who accompanied the Pope during the meeting. I was surprised to be called because I do not have that much skill in the language. Maybe God wanted to give me that gift.

Nevertheless, I was more surprised when, at the end of the meeting, the Pope left the bishops and called me into one corner of the room. In that room, I really was physically the last (I was in the last place sitting inside the booth for the translator) and the last in order of importance. The Pope had eyes for the last one in that room and that touched me. He looked at me and called me. His words are still in my heart, but most of all I had the feeling of being with my Father who knows me well. I was holding his hands, listening to what he said to me and saying “thanks”. He encouraged me to continue the good work for the Church in Korea. Most of all through his attitude, his love for me, I learnt about the love for the least ones and that it is more important to be humble than to be perfect.

This coming 2015, the mission will celebrate its 25th anniversary and it is a time for thanksgiving, but also a time to be humble, recognizing that what we have achieved in the mission are GIFTS, fruits of the grace and the mercy of God for us. Let us pray with the words of Mary: “My soul proclaims the

greatness of the Lord...for he has looked with favour to his lowly servant...He has done great things" for us. (Fr. Maurizio GIORGIANNI in *The Far East Star*, Autumn 2014)

PAKISTAN

Making history in Balochistan

On 22 November 2014, history was made in the province of Balochistan when Fr. Waqas RAZA was ordained a priest. This was the first ever priestly ordination of a native son since the arrival of the Catholic Church towards the end of the 19th century. The ordination ceremony took place at St. Pius X Parish Church, Quetta. His Excellency Victor GNANAPRAGASAM ordained the new priest. A large number of priests, religious and faithful gathered for the occasion.

Balochistan is the biggest province constituting approximately over 40% of the total land mass with a minimum population of around 5% out of around 200 million inhabitants of the whole country. The Catholic population is of about 40,000 souls. This volatile province has witnessed in recent past suicide bombings, sectarian violence and at times religious-based discrimination as well. The first ever priestly ordination a native son has helped melt the ice. There is hope that many more young boys will come forward to dedicate their lives for God and His people, especially in Balochistan. (Fr. Gulshan BARKAT)

TURKMENISTAN

“We have built a Church of living stones”

“Sharing the joy of faith in Christ, we are happy to share with all the grace and joy that comes from faith. This joy arrived in Turkmenistan 18 years ago as a great gift. We still do not have a church made of brick or wood. But we built our Church of living stones”. This was stated in a note sent to Agenzia Fides by Oblate Fr. Andrzej MADEJ, Superior of the *Missio sui iuris* in Turkmenistan, established in 1997 by Pope St. John Paul II. Fr. Madej lives and works there, with a community of confreres, as a representative of the Holy See to Ashgabat. “We live in a country that only twenty years

ago was still part of the Soviet empire. In this country,” explains the missionary, “they tried to build a society without God, or even a society opposed to God. Today the local Church is run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and takes care of a Catholic community of about 150 people. They attend Mass in Russian and in English. It takes about three years to prepare our catechumens for Baptism.” Our community prays in a rented building, but enthusiasm is not lacking, while the number of people who come to Church continues to grow. Our Church is always trying to be a source of joy and light overlooking the Kara-Kum desert, spreading the message of love, solidarity and hope of Jesus, always trying to respect the culture and traditions of this beautiful country,” continues the Superior.

“We have witnessed how these years of life without God have left many wounds: broken families, domestic violence, wounded humanity, loss of sense of life. Many mass graves have been found. The nation lives on the ruins of ideologies without God. Now is the time of reconciliation, the beginning of renewal, of a new life, of new links and new hopes. About 18 years ago a Catholic community was reborn in the land of Turkmenistan. The Good News fascinates and attracts people to Jesus. The Word of God has the power to bring together those who have been scattered ‘like sheep without a shepherd’. Today the Church is a community of reconciliation, which heals the wounds of separation, heal hearts, gives new peace and revives confidence”, concludes Fr. Madej. (*Fides Agency*, 26 November 2014)

JAPAN

Opportunities for growth...

Ten years have gone by since my coming to the Japan Mission from Sri Lanka. Life is what we make of it and what we are. Kochi is one of the real mission territories where we are learning to live the mission.

In daily life I meet various people from 3 years old to 103 years old, from the kindergarten to the Home for the Aged, from those in prison to those on the outside. In each person there is

always something to learn. I learn because there are many opportunities to learn. Where there is a will there is a way.

Besides working in the parish in Kochi, I also am involved in committees of the diocese. The Human Rights Committee is one of the important committees in the Diocese of Takamatsu. This committee encompasses several areas: Justice and Peace, Migrants, Refugees and People on the move, Discrimination, and Caritas Japan. We are altogether 10 members, three priests and seven lay people.

First, I joined this group as a member. Within 6 months, the Bishop asked me to be in charge of the committee. I told the bishop that I did not know the job. He told me only one thing, “To be with the people”. This is my 5th year on the committee, not doing but being. The committee members are really wonderful; we work as a team.

Caritas, which means God’s love, is one of the charitable committees in Japan. While working in the diocese, I am involved in the Osaka jurisdiction as well as on the national level. I did not know how Caritas Japan had been functioning, but after becoming a member of the National Committee, I have learned a lot. I myself do not know how much I contribute to the committees, but of one thing I am sure: “I learn a lot”.

Today I am involved in many committees not because of my talents or abilities, but because others trust me. I do my best because that is my mission. If we give opportunities to people, they will grow: trust and entrust to the person because that is mission. We become what we are because of the mission, wherever and whatever we do.

With grateful heart I would like to thank all the people who gave me opportunities to grow and for being part of my life. God Bless you all. (Fr. Anthony samy IRUDAYARAJ in *The Far East Star*, autumn 2014)

COLOMBO

Mazenod Youth: inaugural meeting

Mazenod Youth is the newly initiated youth ministry in the Oblate Province of Colombo. It

had its inaugural ceremony at the De Mazenod House Chapel on 7 December, 2014, with the participation of 50 youth from all over the country. It began with a concelebrated Holy Eucharist presided by Fr. Rohan SILVA, the Provincial Superior.

After the homily delivered by Fr. Provincial, the youth were called forward for their annual promise which they pronounced before the Provincial. They pledged that they would voluntarily serve in the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as co-workers in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod. After the promise the youth were blessed and given a specially made cross to wear.

After the Mass, there was a short gathering in which they shared a special cake to mark this memorable day. Then the Mazenod Youth theme song was played and the website for Mazenod Youth was officially launched by the Provincial. (www.mazenodyouth.com)

Fr. Provincial addressed the youth and expressed his happiness, expectations and aspirations. He was well pleased with the youth and their true commitment and willingness to work with the Oblates. He further invited the youth to be messengers and witnesses for Christ wherever they are.

After his keynote address, everyone received a Christmas Gift and some announcements were made regarding the forthcoming events and missions.

Mazenod Youth have already begun visiting the Base Hospital (Marawila in Chilaw Diocese) and praying over the patients; they are also visiting an Elders' Home (Wennappuwa). They are collecting reading books, exercise books and dry rations for youth and children who live in remote villages in the country. They participated in a singing Christmas carols at the Mental Hospital (Angoda, Colombo).

The theme for 2014 is: "Mazenod youth for a Better World". (*Fr. S. Randil FERNANDO*)

Latin America

PARAGUAY

Episcopal ordination of Bishop Guillermo Steckling, OMI

On 21 December, the San Blas Cathedral of Ciudad del Este was too small for the large crowd of faithful who had come to witness the episcopal ordination of their new Shepherd, Bishop Guillermo STECKLING, former Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Presiding at the ordination was the President of the Episcopal Conference of Paraguay, Mons. Claudio Giménez, Bishop of Caacupé.

Most members of the Paraguayan Episcopal Conference were present, including another Oblate, Bishop Lucio ALFERT, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo.

To replace a bishop removed from office for various reasons, the Holy Father turned to a veteran missionary who had spent 18 years in Paraguay before being called to the

General Administration of the Oblates, first as Assistant General (1992-1998) and then as Superior General (1998-2010). It will be Bishop Guillermo's task to seek to unite the faithful and the clergy again, after the contentious exit his predecessor.

Prior to his ordination, Bishop Guillermo called a press conference to speak about the ordination ceremony. He indicated that he had only recently arrived in that part of Paraguay and that he needed to take a tour of all of the parishes. He said that he was consulting other bishops about some of the sensitive issues facing the diocese, such as improving the seminary that has 80 candidates.

The new bishop said he is used to traveling. "My custom is to travel as a missionary. I want to go to all the parishes and chapels. From my youth, I have been used to going on foot, on motorcycle and on horseback, sleeping wherever I go as part of a missionary congregation."

PARAGUAY

Oblate bishop speaks up for the Indigenous Peoples

On 30 November 2014, Msgr. Lucio ALFERT, Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo, celebrated Mass in the Basilica of Caacupé, for the third day of a novena in preparation for the feast of the Virgin, patron saint of Paraguay. During his homily, the Bishop spoke forcefully of the situation of indigenous peoples, who are discriminated against and excluded from their land, while in the past even the capital and the metropolitan area belonged to them. He then expressed his deep regret because the natives who arrive in the capital often fall into addiction and are sexually exploited.

Referring to the role of the governors, Bishop Alfert said: “Sometimes I have the impression that few politicians and officials love their motherland and the people”. He recalled that the authorities were chosen to serve the people: “The charism of a true politician is to be a servant of the people”. God distributed gifts and capabilities to all, even to politicians, but “they do not use them to serve the people, but to take advantage and use them”. In the end, referring to the rampant corruption, he asked: “When will we see a politician saint?”

The devotion to Our Lady of Caacupé dates back to 1600, when an indigenous Guarani engraved an image of the Madonna in wood. Popular devotion over the years has increased the fame of the shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Caacupé, which has become the busiest in the nation. The main feast, on 8 December, is preceded by a novena during which groups of pilgrims from all over the country flock to the Shrine with their Bishops. (Fides Agency)

PERU

Living the OMI charism with youth

Last 9 November, we young people from different youth groups in the Parish of Nuestra Señora de la Paz in Lima, Peru, combined our talents to share with other youth how we live the Oblate charism that makes us happy and brothers

and sisters in Christ. That charism, which St. Eugene immortalized with his personality and his dedication to the poor, today is reflected in every Oblate who accompanies us in the various communities in our country.

We called this first event “JOR JOMI 2014” which stands for “Jornada de los Jóvenes Oblatos de María Inmaculada 2014” (*Day of the Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate 2014*). We prepared it in spirit of camaraderie, knowing that every effort we made would be rewarded with the satisfaction of having done something very, very good for society. We know that our mission has just begun; we know that we have each other for mutual support and for giving support to others.

We felt ourselves united in ONE HEART, ONE SOUL, at the service of the poor in spirit, of the most abandoned, as St. Eugene called them, because we all worked hard to give the best of ourselves to those young people who are beginning to know the JOMI charism. This experience motivates us to continue, to fight harder to reach our great goal... to make our JOMI family grow.

We have high hopes as JOMI; we want to overflow with Oblate spirituality. We want to break down the barriers of the indifference of some; we want to reestablish in young people the motivation to follow Christ, under the Oblate missionary charism.

I am very grateful to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for the opportunity and the support, because each passing day I feel more committed to our missionary charism. (Denisse Salinas)



Africa-Madagascar

GUINEA-BISSAU

A new Oblate mission

November 24 was chosen for the official opening of the new Oblate mission in Guinea-Bissau: the Mission of Cacine. Together with the Bishop of Bafata, Msgr. Pedro Zilli (a Brazilian PIME), Fathers Daniel Aliou MANE (in charge of the new mission) and Robert GALLINA began a new Oblate presence in the southern part of the country, near the other Guinea which is in the headlines because of Ebola.

The missionaries were commissioned by the bishop at a simple and meaningful Mass on the feast of the Martyrs of Vietnam. Present were the Provincial, Fr. Alberto GNEMMI who was visiting the Delegation; Fr. Alberto RUIZ, Councillor of the Mediterranean Province; and Fr. Bruno FAVERO, Superior of the Delegation.

In recalling the word “Oblation” as a total gift of one’s entire being, Bishop Zilli said he was happy to be able to begin the Catholic Mission of Cacine, a place where evangelization has never had the permanent presence of missionaries on site.

After the Mass, we left for the new mission, about 300 kilometres from the seat of the diocese, 80 of which are through thick forest on a very

hazardous road. We arrived at about noon to share a meal with a Christian family from the area. The Oblate missionaries are hosted, for the moment, by a Brazilian evangelical pastor working in the area, a very ecumenical gesture of welcoming and sharing. The mission has no buildings yet; everything is yet to be built.

There are now ten Oblates working in Guinea-Bissau, in Farim (in the north), where we have welcomed a deacon from the Province of Brazil (Manoel Valadao); at Antula, a suburb of the city of Bissau; and since November 24, we are also at Cacine. It is a growing mission, a mission of first evangelization in a country that seems to have regained political stability after years of disorder and fratricidal war.

Since last year, the first vocation from Guinea-Bissau is in formation in Cameroon, Brother Aful SAHNA; there are other young people at the Foyer and the pre-novitiate in Dakar. Good luck to those confreres who are pioneers of the new Mission of Cacine. “*The Oblates were once defined as ‘Men of difficult missions’ by Pope Pius XI and Cacine is certainly not an easy mission,*” said the Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, visiting the place for the first time. A new page in the history of our Congregation is being written at the outskirts of the world.

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Cap-Jeunesse at the NDC Shrine

“Mission Vocation” welcomes young adults who feel called and want to join the Oblate community in living the charism of Eugene de Mazenod. It is also a presence among different groups working closely with the Oblates in works in which they are involved.

I would like to briefly introduce you to Cap-Jeunesse (CJ) (*Cape Youth*), a group of young people at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape, Trois-Rivières, this year celebrating its thirtieth anniversary of involvement in the community.

The Shrine’s youth sector originated following the visit of John Paul II in 1984. At the gatherings, there is animation, formation with groups of youth and families, theatrical plays, catechesis for young people who are preparing to live a sacrament and participation in communal activities. We find CJ involved by helping with dance and theatrical programs during the Festival of the Assumption, in animating groups on the grounds during the summer season and at the Gardens of Light during the holiday season. Cap-Jeunesse is a team of young adults, who serve as contractual workers and as volunteers.

In line with the mission of the Shrine and the

Youth Mission of the Diocese of Trois-Rivières, Cap-Jeunesse is, among other things, a gathering of young leaders who have at heart the bringing of the Good News to our world that so desperately needs it. Thus, at the heart of the life of Cap-Jeunesse, we feel the need to nourish ourselves on the Word, on prayer and fraternal sharing, so as to be a source of life for those to whom we are sent and for

pilgrims who come to the Sanctuary. This is the evangelization of young people by young people and that is why I believe deeply in the importance of being there, present, attentive to sustain the life that flows through these young witnesses who are the Church today. Thank you, Cap-Jeunesse! (Réjean VIGNEAULT, coordinator of Mission Vocation in INFO OMI 1 December 2014)

Europe

ITALY

World Priest-Champion of Chess

An Italian Oblate, Father Gennaro CICCHESE, has won the championship prize in a special tournament for priests and religious who play chess, the “Clericus Chess World Championship.” The tournament took place in Rome at the Marianist Institute on 12 December 2014.

In the 12th century, a French bishop excommunicated some priests who were caught playing chess! Over the centuries, not only the Church, but kings and emperors and governments, in both the West and the East, banned the game.

When interviewed on Vatican Radio, Fr. Gennaro spoke about the pedagogical value of the game of chess. When asked about the relationship of the Church with chess, Fr. Gennaro stated: “It’s a very complex relationship. At the beginning, there were opposition and difficulties because many players were spending too much time at the game, including priests and cardinals, and this took them from their duties. At the same time, it was also these players who were the first theoreticians; they wrote the first books on the game of chess and in some ways, they helped it spread. Of late, the ‘excommunication’ for chess has stopped: things are more balanced now and there are many priests and religious who are dedicated to the pastime. I think there are great personal benefits and that it gives the wonderful possibility of relating with other people.”

The organizers of the championship sent a letter to Pope Francis asking his blessing on the

initiative and to “make the first move.” The Pope entered the game immediately by inviting them to a general audience.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN PROVINCE

Death of the Oblate dean: Fr. Engelbert Machinia (1913-2014)

On 17 December 2014, the oldest living Oblate, Fr. Engelbert MACHINIA, died in Hünfeld, Germany. Born in Silesia, he lived through the vicissitudes of World War II, even spending part of it in a detention camp after Silesia became part of Russia. For 35 years, Fr Engelbert set himself to form, not only one parish, but a pastoral consortium of 3 parishes -- something new from the fresh winds of the 2nd Vatican Council. And he also formed a whole generation of young Oblates, whom he introduced to pastoral ministry, with a broad, open, critical vision, and with fatherly wisdom and much humor.

The new “dean” of the Congregation is Father Leo-Paul PIGEON from the Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province in Canada. Fr. Pigeon celebrated his 100th birthday in March 2014. The only other member of the OMI “Centenarian Club” is Fr. Boniface WITTENBRINK in the United States Province.



Anniversaries for February 2015

65 Years of religious life

1950.02.17	09418	Bro. Augustin Coté	United States
1950.02.17	09417	Bro. Arthur Van Hecke	Lacombe

65 Years of priesthood

1950.02.12	07827	Fr. Angelo Bonadio	Mediterranean
1950.02.12	08095	Fr. Fiore Paglione	Mediterranean
1950.02.12	07829	Fr. Domenico Vitantonio	Mediterranean
1950.02.19	07825	Fr. Joseph Boisseau	France
1950.02.19	07905	Fr. René Charrier	France
1950.02.19	08118	Fr. Michel Lynde	France
1950.02.19	07873	Bishop Daniel Verstraete	Central,S.Africa
1950.02.26	07894	Fr. Daniel Cavagne	France
1950.02.26	07895	Fr. Marcel Dalverny	France
1950.02.26	07988	Fr. Noël Leca	France

60 Years of religious life

1955.02.27	09865	Fr. John Poole	Anglo-Irish
------------	-------	----------------	-------------

60 Years of priesthood

1955.02.20	08764	Fr. Jean-Marie Toussaint	France
------------	-------	--------------------------	--------

50 Years of religious life

1965.02.17	12023	Bro. Hugo Vandenbranden	Bolivia
------------	-------	-------------------------	---------

25 Years of priesthood

1990.02.22	12950	Fr. Fransiskus Xaverius Sudirman	Indonesia
------------	-------	----------------------------------	-----------

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 94-104

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Valentine Fix	OMI Lacombe	18/05/1914	Saskatoon	27/11/2014
Fr. José Arong	United States	14/04/1937	Castro Valley	06/12/2014
Bro. Marcel Côté	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	15/07/1933	Richelieu	09/12/2014
Fr. Martin Walsh	United States	11/01/1928	Tewksbury	09/12/2014
Fr. Gérald Labossière	OMI Lacombe	04/10/1927	Saint Boniface	14/12/2014
Fr. Engelbert Machinia	Central European	21/10/1913	Hünfeld	17/12/2014
Fr. Lucien Lajeunesse	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	19/09/1917	Richelieu	19/12/2014
Fr. François Sailler	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	09/11/1925	Richelieu	20/12/2014
Fr. Jacques Joly	OMI Lacombe	23/09/1935	Edmonton	23/12/2014
Bro. Juan Ramón	Mediterranean	07/10/1919	Palma de Mallorca	28/12/2014
Fr. Jean-Marie Lacasse	OMI Lacombe	01/04/1926	Kelvington	28/12/2014

“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)

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
via Aurelia 290, I 00165 Roma, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
<http://www.omiworld.org>
Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Shanil Jayawardena
Printing & circulation: Shanil Jayawardena