



150 years in Roma, Texas – The Cavalry of Christ rides again!

The 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the founding of Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church in Roma, Texas was celebrated in religious and civic festivities on March 27, 2004. One highlight of the civic celebration was the parade led by Bishop Raymundo Peña of the Brownsville Diocese, riding in a horse drawn wagon, and seven Oblates on horseback. They were re-enacting the arrival of the pioneers who traveled the vast expanse of southern Texas on horseback and came to be known as the “Cavalry of Christ.”

The pioneers

At the urging of Bishop Jean-Marie Odin, Bishop De Mazenod had sent Fr. Pierre-Adrien TELMON, to Texas. He is considered the founder of the Oblate Missions in that state. Accompanied by Frs. Alexander SOULERIN and Augustine GAUDET and Bros. Joseph MENTHE and Paul GELOT, he landed in Galveston in 1849. Frs. Telmon, Soulerin and Bro. Menthe pushed on to Port Isabel, then to Brownsville. Here, using an abandoned cotton warehouse that was on loan from a local merchant, they celebrated their first Mass on Dec. 8, 1849. History recognizes that as the official date of the Oblate foundation in the Southwest.

In September 1850, the poor health of the missionaries and the limited financial support for the Order forced Bishop De Mazenod to withdraw his men from Texas. But one year later, Bishop Odin pleaded with him to send a second team. In agreeing to do so, he chose the best of his scholastics: Fathers Casimir VERDET, Pierre F. PARISOT, Etienne VIGNOLLE, Pierre KERALUM, Jean GAYE and Rigomer OLIVIER.

Their arrival on May 14, 1852 ensured that the Oblates’ stay in the state was to become permanent.

The Cavalry of Christ

It soon became apparent that their role was that of a dual apostolate: parochial in the city and missionary services to cover the vast territory that extended from Port Isabel to San Ygnacio and north of the Rio Grande River. This included hundreds of *ranchos*, scattered over a 20,000 square mile area, which could be reached only by foot or horseback. To Fr. Alexander Soulerin belongs the credit of starting the apostolate of the *ranchos* through the work of the Cavalry of Christ.

On September 18, 1854, Bishop Odin, assisted by Fr. James Benavides, pastor of the church in Mier, along with Frs. Gaye and Keralum, laid the cornerstone for the construction of a church in Roma, dedicated to the Virgin Mary under the title of the “Refuge of Sinners.” Here, Fr. Keralum’s architectural skills benefited the project. Although secular priests completed the construction by 1867, Oblate Frs. Joseph Clos and Jean-Marie Jaffrès came that year to take charge of the church.

The many *ranchitos* were served from Roma, a task that often demanded a 60-mile trip per day, traveling on horseback from sunup to sundown. The distances, weather, terrain and epidemics were serious and constant dangers to these devoted priests. The deaths of Frs. Verdet, Baudrand, and other young Oblates evidenced these dangers. The circumstances of Fr. Keralum’s death in 1872 further glorified the

devotion of the Oblates to the people of South Texas. (Keralum left for one of his missionary rounds and never returned. His remains were found years later.)

Unmoved by the circumstances of weather, politics and impiety, between 1886 and 1902 the Oblates extended their pastoral ministry by building churches and chapels in Santa Rita, San

Rafael, Campacuas, Arroyo Colorado, Caloco, Laguna Seca, Toluca, La Habana, La Grulla, Las Garcias, and San Isidro. Their work helped the many ranches in these areas evolve into towns and cities that make up the Rio Grande Valley.

Today, 150 years later, thirteen Oblates still minister at Our Lady of Refuge and six other churches in the Valley. (Adapted from *OMIUSA*)

Asia-Oceania

THAILAND

Youth Ministry for a Bright Future

Fr. Matthew BUNLUE loves a challenge, and his work in rural parishes near the Loei district of Bangkok offers him plenty. At first glance, these villages appear to be simple places, filled with many charms – open markets bursting with fresh vegetables, brightly colored Buddhist temples, and footpaths along rice fields.

Life here is not so simple, however, and the problems of these small, rural villages are typical of social problems all over Thailand. Few jobs are to be found and, in many families, one or both parents leave the village to work more than 300 miles away in Bangkok or even farther, in neighbouring countries. Teenagers of these families are left with the elderly and are responsible for taking care of the younger children and fending for themselves. In addition, AIDS, drug addiction, and gambling are major problems that can tear families apart.

While some social organizations are available to help fight these problems, Fr. Matthew also has taken on the challenge of working to create a better future for the people of these villages. He believes that future begins with the young people.

“The children of these villages need guidance and encouragement – to stay in school, to make good choices, and to not lose hope. I want to be a positive, reliable person in their lives – someone they can count on for help and conversation,” Fr. Matthew explains.

Although approximately 95 percent of the people in Thailand are Buddhists, the Oblates minister

in several parishes. Fr. Matthew organizes activities and gatherings for the village children. Some are Catholic, but many are Buddhist. He stresses to these children the importance of getting along with others, sharing common interests, and pursuing meaningful activities.

“Some young people are lured into prostitution, drug use, and spending their money on the lottery,” says Fr. Matthew. “And once they start that kind of behavior, it’s difficult to stop. That’s why it’s so important to let the young people know they deserve much more.”

Living in cramped quarters, Fr. Matthew shares a very small house with three other Oblates. Everything – even the kitchen sink – is in one room. Each night when the sun goes down, the clamor of little feet can be heard on the low roof as rats come out, looking for food and scavenging through any trash that can be found. And at times, during the rainy season, the villages become flooded – even though they’re located in a mountainous region. Families are forced to move from their homes, and desperately needed crops are lost.

Despite the hardships and challenges, Fr. Matthew is happy working among the poor of Loei. Ordained just two years ago, he has many years of ministry ahead of him – and he realizes his ministry may take him to many other places – also filled with challenges.

“I prefer this type of rural missionary work,” he says intently. “But, of course, I will go wherever I am needed most.” (USA – *The Oblate World*)

Europe

POLAND**Together at the table of the Word**

April 15 and 16, the scholasticate of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Odra, hosted an ecumenical meeting to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the publication of the Second Vatican Council's decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. It was an occasion to meet, reflect, dialogue, pray and seek ways leading to ecumenism. Participants came from all over Poland.

Many well-known persons attended the meeting, including the Bishop-professor Tadeusz Pikus (Vice-president of the Polish Bishops' Council for Ecumenism), Piotr Nikolski (a priest of the Orthodox Church) and the Most Rev. Zdzislaw Tranda (a bishop of the Evangelical Church). The Oblate scholasticate community hosted the meeting, which was an initiative of the scholasticate's ecumenical group.

Well aware that the unity of Christians depends on God, the organisers gave prominence to the celebration of the Eucharist and ecumenical services. This meeting was also an occasion for the Oblate scholastics to learn about the culture and traditions of other communities. Ecumenical involvement, in fact, requires a solid formation, as recommended by *Unitatis redintegratio* (No.10) and by a document of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

UKRAINE**Poltava gets a church again**

The small Roman Catholic community of Poltava in eastern Ukraine has again a fitting place of worship. On March 27, the bishop of the newly created diocese of Vharkiv-Zaporozje blessed the new church under the title Exaltation of the Holy

Cross. He gave the keys to the parish priest, Fr Romuald PIELKA who opened the doors and led the faithful and guests into the new church.

The first Catholic church in Poltava, now a city of 320,000, was built in 1852. It was destroyed by the communist regime in 1936 and here as elsewhere in the Soviet Union the faithful were repressed and condemned to death. For more than fifty years the surviving Catholics had no place of worship. On the important feast days some would travel long distances to attend Mass in the churches that remained open.

The present parish was officially re-established in 1994. At first Marianists travelled the 150 km from Charkiv to provide occasional pastoral care. Then a diocesan priest cared for the community until February 2002 when Fr Jacek PYL, superior of the Oblate delegation in Ukraine, arrived to replace him. In those few years the handful of Catholics came to number 150 so that the small chapel in the old priest's house no longer sufficed.

The faithful were fully involved in the construction of the new church. Under the guidance of Roman Radul, a retired military man and electrical engineer, a group of parishioners worked a whole year on the woodwork: the crucifix for the main altar, the Stations of the Cross, the doors, the stairs.... "One cannot work on the Stations of the Cross with a cold heart," commented Roman.

Fr. Antonio Rudoj, a Marianist priest who had served in Poltava at the rebirth of the parish, noted how similar in appearance and size this new building is to the one destroyed by the Soviet revolution. "It is symbolic," he said.

United States

WASHINGTON, D.C.**The voice of the voiceless**

An important voice in shareholders' meetings for many large corporations is the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). The Center is an association of 275 faith-based institutional

investors, including national denominations, religious communities, pension funds, hospital corporations, economic development funds and publishing companies. For over thirty years the ICCR and its members have been a leader in the movement to press companies to be socially and environmentally responsible. (See <http://www.iccr.org/>) Each year ICCR members, making use of their rights as stockholders, sponsor over 100 shareholder resolutions on major social and environmental issues.

In a recent effort, ICCR members have presented resolutions to four top drug makers, asking the companies to report how much charity work they are doing for HIV/AIDS in developing countries as well as to estimate how much the epidemic could affect their businesses. The ICCR is asking Pfizer Inc., Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., Merck & Co., and Abbott Laboratories to present a report of their conclusions six months after the annual meetings in April.

The United States Oblate Province is a member of ICCR, represented by Fr. Seamus FINN, director of the province's Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Office (JPIC). Speaking to reporters in his capacity as chairman of the ICCR's HIV/AIDS Caucus, he said: "Religious shareholders are working together as never before to get drug companies to do a better job responding to the HIV pandemic."

The concern about HIV/AIDS is part of ICCR's broader interest in assuring adequate health care for all persons. The group is also concerned about what these companies are doing about tuberculosis and malaria in developing nations. "In our experience over the last three years, while pharmaceutical companies...have been making some effort... the scale hasn't even made a dent into what that response needs to be," he added. ICCR officials cited Coca-Cola as the first company to support a similar shareholder proposal. There is a consensus among members that the big drug makers can do more to make medicines available to poorer countries at acceptable prices.

COLORADO

"We are members of the prophetic Church." (Const. 9)

The account below is adapted from a message by William Strabala of a protest action by Fr Carl KABAT on Good Friday this year. William Strabala is co-author of *Prophets Without Honor*, (See OMI Information # 416, Nov. 2002).

"Fr Carl Kabat is and has been a dedicated Oblate witness to the threat and danger that nuclear arms/missiles still pose for most of humanity.

At approximately 10:30 a.m. (MDT) April 9, 2004, Rev. Carl Kabat, OMI, entered nuclear missile silo N-8 nine miles west of New Raymer, Colorado, by means of ladders. He destroyed nothing in the process. He was wearing his trademark "clown's outfit," to prove he is still a "fool for God." Weld County law enforcement officers took him into custody at approximately 11:45 a.m. (MDT).

N-8 is the nuclear silo site where three Dominican nuns were arrested in 2002. They are now serving sentences for harming national security. N-8 is several miles from silo N-7, where Kabat also trespassed in 2000. He received 83 days in jail (time served) handed down by Judge Boyd Boland. However, because of a probation violation in Illinois, he subsequently served a year and a day there. In all, Kabat has spent nearly 16 years of his life in jail for various protests at nuclear WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) sites, which he calls "evil." Since Kabat's latest release from jail in 2002, he has been ministering to the Catholic Worker Community of St. Louis.

Kabat is calling this protest "Silo Pruning Hooks II." At the missile site he left a dysfunctional pneumatic jackhammer, symbolic of the action he and three others took in Missouri 20 years ago when they actually chipped at the concrete of a missile silo at Whiteman Air Force Base.* Also pinned to the chain link fence was a puppet bearing the slogan, "The manufacturing, deployment or use of nuclear bombs is a crime against humanity."

*(See <http://www.plowsharesactions.org/webpages/SILOPRUNINGHOOKS.htm>)

Another slogan next to the “no trespassing” sign was expressed in Latin: “Cessante ratione legis, cessat ipsa lex,” which loosely translated means “a law lacking rationality, ceases to be law.”

Kabat released a signed statement which reads: WE ARE FOOLS AND CLOWNS FOR GOD AND HUMANITY’S SAKE: “I Carl Kabat, come to this evil place today as a Roman Catholic priest to show what insanity is in this ground here at N-8 and 48 other silos in the beautiful state of Colorado. The nuclear bomb that is in the ground here is more than 20 times more powerful than the atomic bombs we dropped on the Japanese 59 years ago. Each of those bombs killed more than 100,000 people. Twenty times that number totals more than 2 million people. The World Council of Churches has proclaimed, “The manufacture, deployment or use of nuclear bombs is a ‘crime against humanity.’ The Roman Catholic Church of which I am a priest, at the close of its Vatican Council II in 1965 proclaimed that nuclear bombs are a ‘crime against humanity.’ The Bible says in the words of Isaiah, ‘They shall beat their spears into pruning hooks.’

May God have mercy on us for not doing so.”

Several of Kabat’s friends witnessed his action, including Rev. Larry Rosebaugh, OMI, who also has served time in jail for similar protests. Another item posted by Kabat was an “eviction notice” to the silo operators signed by numerous individuals. Still another was a watercolor work of art done by Sister Pauline Blandina, OP. It depicts a clown nailed to a cross.

Kabat’s use of the clown suit began at another silo protest when Good Friday happened to fall on April 1, “April Fool’s Day.”

Kabat took his action in the icy teeth of a rain/snow storm that roared into northern Colorado between noon and 3 p.m., the time when Jesus is supposed to have died. Kabat kept a sleeping bag for protection against the elements while he prayed alone in a corner of the silo enclosure, awaiting arrest. He had asked his friends to leave him there, the better to focus his prayerful message for peace and an end to war over, or by means of weapons of mass destruction.”

Latin America

URUGUAY

A way to open the doors for Christ

Antonio MESSERI has been a missionary in Uruguay for only a few months. He is originally from the diocese of Fiesole, near Florence (Italy). After concluding his theological studies at the International Scholasticate in Rome, he was sent to this mission, which is served by an Italian delegation. The eyes of this neophyte are therefore very capable of catching the originality in what he relates here.

“Returning to the house after some business in the city centre, there was a truck for moving outside of our gate. Our neighbour, with all his family, had come to greet us. Life here had become so difficult that he had decided to try his luck elsewhere. There is nothing unusual about

this. We are accustomed to departures for even more distant places: many go to Europe or North America seeking work, leaving behind their parents and often their families.

It is not strange therefore for someone to move, especially within the same city. What puzzled me was that they were moving everything, and I mean literally everything: doors, windows and even the roof, so that there was nothing left of the house but the outside walls. But why? You see, building a house is no problem: any available material will do (wood, bricks, cement blocks). The difficult thing is buying all the rest and that is why they brought everything with them. There was no question of leaving anything, because surely someone would take advantage of their absence.

Let us go now a few kilometres away to the chapel at Casabò. At the beginning of February, which is mid-summer here, I put up notices about the activities for the beginning of the new year, in the fall: catechism courses, preparation for baptism, various courses to grow in the faith, workshops to learn how to use a sewing machine, to knit, to manufacture knick-knacks with recycled material etc.

In a high risk neighbourhood like Casabò, where just yesterday a merchant was shot dead and a young person died with sixteen stab wounds, all these notices remained attached to the outside iron grille for approximately a month, without anyone tearing them down or throwing them in the trash. Then one day they began to disappear. This was the first sign that the activity around the chapel was beginning to annoy someone. Two days later, when we had just finished fixing a leaking water pipe – leaking into the ground or into the neighbour's water tank – in one fast move in broad daylight, at four in the afternoon, someone stole our water meter. Only that morning had I called the inspector to make an inspection!

One problem leads to another: getting a new meter, more time lost to the bureaucracy, another thought to help me sleep better at night! But what a night that was! First, a visit to the police to report the theft, then I was awakened out of a deep sleep by the telephone. Fortunately Fr Pippo MAMMANA, our superior, takes the phone at night.

The company that maintains the security alarms in our chapels informed us that the Casabò chapel alarm was ringing. Some rascals had broken the padlock and then, going through the garden, opened the window of the hall with an iron bar that until moments before was part of the railing. The glass was in a thousand pieces and, as if that was not enough, they had set fire to one of the two curtains and taken the other with them. The next day there was another visit to the police to give them the latest news, and to assure them that sooner or later I would come by for another visit....

But we somehow got to Holy Week, which of course was very intense. The Easter celebrations were filled with emotion, above all for the many families having their little ones christened. An outbreak of joy! The Sunday Mass was full, something unusual for Uruguay, and even more so for the Casabò chapel. We had to add more and more benches until every small space was filled. There were more baptisms here. Baptism seems to be the door to evangelisation. It is the sacrament by which one becomes a Christian, but also a good occasion for the families to get in touch again with a faith, often stored away and long forgotten.

In our homilies and exhortations, when we urge people to make progress, we must be sure that they understand, otherwise it can happen that as on Resurrection Sunday some women go to the sepulchre and do not find the body of Jesus. In Casabò we are not so privileged: last Sunday all was ready for first communions and I was still in the house doing the last preparations when the lady who cares for the chapel phoned me. She had had an experience like the women who went to the sepulchre early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus. They stumbled upon the stone that had been rolled away and found nobody within, while “my” Maria del Carmen (one of the other women) did not even see the door. Really! During the night when all was silent, when only those who sleep during the day have the strength to be awake, someone ripped off the gate with a big iron bar and ‘took it away.’ The people who one by one began arriving for the Mass felt warmly received: there were no obstacles or physical barriers to overcome, not even for the biggest of them. – Truly we must open the doors to Christ, even at the cost have having them stolen!”

FRENCH GUIANA

At the service of Brazilian immigrants

After having lived 32 years in Brazil, Fr Elie LAGRILLE was sent to care for Brazilian emigrants in French Guiana. Presently, he is not assigned to any one parish, which leaves him entirely available for the Brazilians. Excellent workers in the various construction trades, they

came to Guiana in the 60s to work on the building of the space launch complex at Kourou. There are currently 7,000 legal immigrants in French Guiana. But it is estimated that there are approximately 20,000 Brazilians in the country.

Most of them live on the fringes of Guiana's society. Their ignorance of French is the principal obstacle to their integration. For the same reason (among others), they do not feel at ease in the Catholic churches. Before Elie's arrival, there was no one among the local clergy who spoke Portuguese.

"I think, says Fr Elie, that we must help them to deepen their faith and to live it without cutting themselves off too quickly from their roots and their culture. They should keep their joyous and spontaneous manner of celebrating. They have perhaps something to offer the Christians of Guyana, who are too influenced by French liturgical rigidity."

The Brazilians are much sought after by the different Protestant sects: They speak Portuguese! Living as a Christian immigrant is not easy. Faith, like all the cultural structures, is shaken and even upset. There is a temptation to close themselves into ghettos, instead of being open to the new reality.

"I have been asked, he concludes, to help them be Christians who are strong enough to become true Christian immigrants: Full members of the Guiana Church, but Brazilians. That is not easy." (From *Audacieux pour l'Évangile*)

PERU

Youth Work in Aucayacu

The word "prenovice" once evoked the image of a young man, just out of high school and who had hardly begun to shave.... Such is no longer the case in many parts of the Oblate world. Candidates tend to be older and more mature. Such is the case of Leonardo Aguirre, or "Lalo", an Oblate novice in Peru. He is 34. Given his past experience working with young people both in and out of Church settings, delegation superior, Fr Pablo FEELEY, decided to send him to the Oblate mission in Aucayacu for a missionary

experience instead of living in the prenovitiate house.

"Aucayacu has been called the green hell," says Pablo, "green because it borders the jungle; and hell because, it has been hellish. This small town is a centre for cocaine and has been plagued by the Shining Path guerrillas. An entire generation of Peruvians has grown up amid this atmosphere of drugs, corruption and a death-dealing guerrilla movement." Lalo describes his experience for us.

Shaking like a leaf

My experience in Aucayacu began in February of 2003. And what an experience of God's presence it was! My first impression: I was shaking like a leaf in a windstorm. I knew no one but had heard a lot of negative things about Aucayacu. So I started the groundwork, observing how the parish was working and getting to know people with some religious and pastoral commitment. And there wasn't much! There was nothing happening with the youth and there was a general lack of confidence in them. Slowly an idea began forming.

Youth and Music

I started to look for some teenagers to form a team: Youth are always and everywhere brought together by music and sports. I chose music, teaching guitar, zampoffa, and charango. And, like the Pied Piper, those who once had some relation to the Church, started coming, and then started coming regularly. And their simple presence was a multiplying factor until a basic team was created.

Successes

I began teaching in a school since that's where the kids are. This became another way of evangelizing and getting the senior grade students into the act.

There is also a Normal School here so I entered that area to begin a type of pastoral work with the young adults.

The end result? There are now seven areas of youth work going on. Each area has two youth running the area; together, all of us run the seven

areas. We have taken over one of the big rooms of the parish as a youth center. All the coordinators, besides preparing their talks and activities, have two retreats a year to help them grow in their faith service.

Experience of God

This experience of God in my life through the youth has certainly strengthened my vocation to the Oblates in our service to the poor, abandoned and marginalized youth of today. In each teenager one sees the face of God waiting and asking for attention. Even with the tremendous psychological traumas from the extreme violence they have lived, they have

all the desire to move ahead. They are hindered by the resentment — almost hatred in some cases — for what has been their lot in life; their low personal esteem; and certainly the abuse of alcohol and sex that is normal here.

The Love of God

I have walked with them this year. I have tried to inspire them to create their own life project in spite of the difficulties, accepting their unfortunate history, but recognizing that, in the eyes of God, if not in those of people, they are valuable. In the end, what will save them is discovering that God loves them. (St. Paul's Province, *Oblate Missions*)

Africa-Madagascar

ZIMBABWE

Intimidation and violence continue

In late February, human rights activists called on the Commonwealth to investigate the abuses perpetrated by a growing number of state-sponsored youth gangs in Zimbabwe. Investigations by the British newspaper, *the Guardian*, reveal that President Robert Mugabe's youth militias are increasingly well trained in torture techniques, which they use on civilians. Police take virtually no action against the forces, widely known as "green bombers" for the colour of their military-style uniforms and for their reputation for violence.

Information reaching us indicates that violence continues to be used as a political weapon and free or fair elections have become impossible. Troops of Green Bombers have now moved into the Lupane area to prepare for the May by-election necessitated by the death of an opposition MP who many claim died as a result of an assault by ruling party thugs.

The *Zimbabwe Standard* reported on March 28, that "Green Bombers" from Matebeleland provinces were being bussed into Lupane to register as voters for the forth-coming by-election. A spokesman for the opposition party said: "Zanu PF has refined its rigging tactics for

the Lupane by-election. Youths from areas such as Jambesi, Kamativi and Wankie are reportedly being brought into Lupane where arrangements are made by Zanu PF officials for them to get recommendation letters from the local chiefs and headmen to enable the youths to get registered as voters so that they vote in the Lupane by-election. ... More than 300 youths were registered between Monday and Wednesday last week," said the spokesperson.

Police close an eye to such things and even resort to violence and intimidation themselves. A missionary – whom we will call "Eugene" – relates an incident in which he found himself an innocent victim of a system that is supposed to protect people. "An attempt to catch a taxi back to the parish for pastoral work turned out to be a nightmare. I could not keep my mouth shut as I saw the abuse that was being meted out on unsuspecting taxi passengers by the police. When asked to produce my national ID, I gave a wrong answer. Instead of telling the police that I did not have one on me, I asked, a little cheekily perhaps, if I was always supposed to carry one around. This just infuriated them and now they had two cases against me, not carrying my ID and questioning their authority as they senselessly beat people. I ended up with the rest of the taxi passengers in the charge office of the local police

station. However, my crime was different. I was being charged for misconduct, behaviour likely to disturb peace in Bulawayo. How ironic! To be branded an enemy of the State, a country that I dearly love. In fact I consider myself a very patriotic citizen of a nation that I love (not its leaders though). After two hours of listening to these men who would seem to have sold their souls, and not knowing where my help was going to come from, I was able to buy my freedom back at the sum of twenty thousand dollars.” (20,000 ZWD = •3,65)

Eugene continues: “How sad for Zimbabwe that we have a police force that is so partisan that it will not protect anyone who is not of a particular political affiliation. Even worse, they tend to allow a crude tribalism to influence their behaviour. This is a double tragedy for the people of Matebeleland because they have experienced this before and are now again being beaten and abused by the very system that is supposed to protect them. It is my impression that in Zimbabwe today, we are sitting on a time bomb. As someone once said: ‘people of Zimbabwe ... meek, humble and docile, but beware the day they change their mind.’ My brothers, let us pray that a peaceful and reasonable solution can be found before people turn to hating.”

CONGO – Kinshasa

An association to assist prisoners

FRACAP means Catholic Fraternity for Prisons. It is a non-profit association founded September 7, 1997 by Fr Edy Th. MABILA. He was chaplain of the civil and military prisons in the Archdiocese of Kinshasa (DRC) at the time. He is President of the Justice and Peace committee of the Province of Congo.

Its pastoral and humanitarian objectives distinguish FRACAP from the specifically political activities of other NGOs and activist groups. Its objectives are:

- To see to the dignity and the well-being of the prisoners by providing them food, clothing, medicines and free legal assistance.

- To actively encourage and involve the laity in the work of evangelisation in the prisons.

- To collaborate with the prison chaplains in promoting the human and spiritual development of the prisoners.

- To represent and defend the interests of the prisoners and to develop effective programmes for their social rehabilitation when they get out.

FRACAP pursues these goals by providing the parishes, groups and other movements, materials for reflection based on the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church, that are likely to guide their involvement and activities. It also gathers and publishes the most objective and complete information on situations or problems relating to the rights of the prisoners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This association proposes prophetic and non-violent actions in favour of the prisoners, whose rights, freedom or human dignity have been violated. FRACAP proposes to the proper authorities suggestions and projects for the reintegration and training of the prisoners. It also provides humanitarian support and legal service for them, especially those of modest means and who are more in need, like young people and women.

Currently FRACAP has a hundred active members, all volunteers, who work primarily in the prisons of Kinshasa, the capital of the D.R. of Congo, where the country’s largest prison is: the Kinshasa Penitentiary and Re-education Centre. It has more than 5000 prisoners, civil and military, men and women, and more than 200 young minors, including children born in prison or who came with their mothers. They are at the same site, but in different buildings.

“I do this, says Fr Mabila, as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, and because of a certain Jesus, who was arrested, imprisoned and condemned.”

Those who would like more information can send a message to this e-mail address:

fracap2001@yahoo.fr

CAMEROON**“Two lungs”**

There are beds, cupboards, chairs and tables. Did Joseph of Nazareth and his son Jesus make any more solid? When work affirms the dignity of the human person, that of the manufacturer as much as that of the recipient, none could be built better. Brothers Marc YONOU and Paul VRI, two young Oblates of the Cameroon Province, beamed with pride while showing their workshop at the OMI theologate in Maroua. “See how solid the bed is! How the doors of the cupboard close well! How the chair is straight and strong! This is where we calculate the material and the cost. These are our tools. Our stock of lumber: the white ayous (obeche) and the light padauk are easy to work with. The red sapele is better. But the blue bété is rare and too expensive for ordinary pieces of furniture. There are also photographs of work already delivered....” The enthusiasm of the young men is thrilling.

Both have been Oblate brothers for four or five years. They follow courses in religious education. They are learning to live in community. All that plus some professional training! Are they monks? Are they carpenters? Are they missionaries?

According to them, their vocation is to community. They organize their workshop schedule around the programme of prayer of the theologate. They close the workshop for the days of monthly retreat. (This is understood and respected by the Muslims in the neighbourhood.) The income from their work also helps to support the life of the theologate. In the community, they offer their advice, and their opinions are appreciated. Although their life does not follow the rhythm of the academic year, the work of Marc and Paul in the workshop, of Christophe in the garden and with the sheep, of Marius in the bursar’s office is an integral part of the life of this community of young Oblates in formation.

Father Thomas MBAYE, Oblate Provincial in Cameroon, likes to quote Fr Fernand Jetté, a former Superior General, who said that the Oblate community has two lungs, priests and brothers. The health of the mission depends on the vitality of both. Fr Thomas insists on the presence of Oblate brothers in all the houses of formation. To be complete, Oblate life needs the brothers. And this must be experienced from the very beginning of formation. (*Apostolat International*)

Anniversaries – June 2004

75TH Anniversary of Ordination**Our dean, who will be 102 years old in December**

1929.06.07	3974	Fr. Joseph Lyons	United States
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65 Years of Priesthood

1939.06.11	6041	Fr. Norman Racette	United States
1939.06.18	5846	Fr. Engelbert Machinia	Germany
1939.06.20	5857	Fr. Paul Ischler	United States
1939.06.24	5938	Fr. Marcel Bolduc	United States
1939.06.24	5917	Fr. Herménégilde Charbonneau	Saint-Joseph
1939.06.24	5904	Fr. Maxime Sarault	Saint-Joseph
1939.06.24	5622	Fr. Antoni Toupin	Saint-Joseph
1939.06.25	5563	Fr. Raffaele Salerno	Italy
1939.06.29	8304	Fr. Marius Nurit	France
1939.06.29	6257	Fr. François Pouliquen	France

60 Years of Priesthood

1944.06.03	6996	Fr. Frans Claerhout	Central S.A.
1944.06.03	6948	Fr. Gérard Gagnon	Saint-Joseph

1944.06.03	7111	Fr. Philippe Lemay	Saint-Joseph
1944.06.03	6767	Fr. Hermann Morin	Saint-Joseph
1944.06.03	6947	Fr. Arturo Smith	Argentina-Chile
1944.06.05	6793	Fr. George Croft	United States
1944.06.18	7036	Fr. Marcel Keller	France
1944.06.18	6933	Fr. Philippe Montgrain	Saint-Joseph
1944.06.18	6995	Fr. Fernand Moyse	Colombo
1944.06.18	6994	Fr. Roger Vivier	Belgium South
1944.06.18	7001	Fr. Edouard Wouters	Belgium South
1944.06.25	6873	Fr. Pablo Fernández	Spain
1944.06.25	6962	Fr. Francis Mitchell	Haiti
1944.06.29	7019	Fr. Myles Byrne	Anglo-Irish
1944.06.29	6733	Fr. James P. Carroll	Australia
1944.06.29	7015	Fr. Patrick McMahon	Natal
1944.06.29	6531	Fr. Remigio Salzillo	Italy

50 Years of Religious Profession

1954.06.16	9675	Fr. Donald Hughes	Australia
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50 Years of Priesthood

1954.06.05	8657	Fr. Justin Huelsing	United States
1954.06.05	8660	Fr. James Pillar	United States
1954.06.06	8588	Fr. John McDermott	Anglo-Irish
1954.06.06	8499	Fr. Frank Ryan	United States
1954.06.12	8522	Fr. Bernard Brault	Saint-Joseph
1954.06.12	8518	Fr. Jacques Drolet	Saint-Joseph
1954.06.17	8685	Fr. Real Bourque	United States
1954.06.17	8684	Fr. Myles Cyr	United States
1954.06.23	8514	Fr. Vital Bernier	Lesotho
1954.06.27	8605	Fr. Roland Tessier	Manitoba
1954.06.29	8790	Fr. Camillo Prosdocimo	Grandin

25 Years of Priesthood

1979.06.17	12264	Fr. Roman Krauz	Poland
1979.06.17	12260	Fr. Marian Lis	Poland
1979.06.17	12267	Fr. Ryszard Lis	Poland
1979.06.17	12266	Fr. Roman Majek	Assumption
1979.06.17	12263	Fr. Ryszard Sieranski	Poland
1979.06.17	12259	Fr. Jan Wadolowski	Assumption
1979.06.17	12261	Fr. Antoni Walisko	Poland
1979.06.17	12265	Fr. Wieslaw Zielonka	Poland
1979.06.22	12213	Fr. Scott Hill	United States
1979.06.28	12226	Fr. Thomas Devereux	Anglo-Irish
1979.06.30	12281	Fr. Dino Cadonà	Italy
1979.06.30	12250	Fr. Roberto Hickl	Mexico
1979.06.30	12282	Fr. Agostino Iaderosa	Italy
1979.06.30	12169	Fr. Aniello Rivetti	Italy

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Suffrages for our Deceased

(No. 45-48)

	Province	Date of Birth	Place of Death	Date of Death
Bro. Joseph Gagnon	St. Joseph	07/05/1912	Richelieu	17/04/2004
Fr. James Kohmetscher	Brazil	13/03/1926	Goiânia	23/04/2004
Fr. Pierre Lessard	St. Joseph	22/05/1919	Montreal	26/04/2004
Fr. Jozef Maksymiuk	Poland	30/04/1919	Gdansk	08/05/2004

*“We will keep alive the memory of our deceased and not fail to pray for them,
faithfully offering the suffrages prescribed on their behalf!” (Const. 43)*

Chapter News No. 7

(The Precapitular Commission – April 14, 2004)

COMPOSITION OF THE CHAPTER OF 2004: IN SEARCH OF A BALANCE

In his article “A Few Reflections on the Significance of the General Chapters”, Fr. Michel Courvoisier broaches the thorny question of representation at the Chapter: In what way does the General Chapter represent the Congregation? (1)

He ends this part of his article by saying that the problem of representation « becomes serious with the evolving age pyramid, since the community reality (all the Oblates) no longer coincides with the missionary reality (the active Oblates). The wager is that a balance needs to be found, for better or for worse, between these two aspects that are always in tension with one another in a religious missionary Congregation. »

(1) This article is available on our website www.omiworld.org (34 General Chapter, Articles) and it had been published in the Documentation n° 258, April 2004, pg. 10-15.

In this connection, what will be the composition of the coming Chapter? In search of a balance...

Regions	Number of capitulars per Region	Number of capitulars by age groups					Average Age
		00-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	
General Adm. & Gen. House	13	0	3	6	3	1	56,5
Africa-Madagascar	20	1	9	5	5	0	50,9
Latin America	12	3	1	1	7	0	54,5
Asia-Oceania	14	2	6	3	3	0	50,9
Canada	10	0	0	4	5	1	61,1
United States	6	0	1	2	3	0	57,8
Europe	22	2	6	5	7	2	55,0
Total/Age average	97	8	26	26	33	4	55,2

NB. The four invited capitulars are counted within their Regions:

- Bernard Keradec (Province of Indonesia – Asia-Oceania Region)
- Roman Majewski (Delegation of Madagascar – Africa-Madagascar Region)
- Robert Moosbrugger (US Province)
- Jabulani Adatus Nxumalo Msgr. (Auxiliary Bishop of Durban – Africa-Madagascar Region)

Chapter News No. 8

(The Precapitular Commission – April 24, 2004)

REPRESENTATION AT THE CHAPTER: THE UNITS

A General Chapter hardly resembles a parliamentary assembly in which the delegates sense an obligation to defend the interests of the men and women who elected them. All the capitulars share a common concern for the entire Congregation; they are not first of all the representatives of their respective Unities. This is even more palpable at the time of canonical elections and at the drafting of a capitular document, whatever form it may take.

Neither is the Chapter some kind of “trade fair” where the Regions, Units and Services of the Congregation have their show booths every six years. Since 1850, the Oblate communities and their missionary way of life reveal themselves at the Chapter. They are present, echoing the calls of the poor. And the Chapter listens to them... before it speaks!

How will these Oblate Units be represented at the next Chapter?

- By the *ex officio* capitulars: 41 capitulars
The General Administration (AG) and the Provincials will certainly be present (41 capitulars);
- By the elected capitulars (52) and the invited capitulars (4): 56 capitulars
 - 40 capitulars (including the invited ones) come from different Provinces;
 - 13 capitulars coming from 13 of the 19 Delegations now in the Congregation;
 - 3 capitulars from 3 of the 15 Missions spread throughout the 6 Oblate Regions.

Details:

Regions	Provinces + GA-GH		Delegations		Missions		Total 1		Total 2
	Superior	Member	Superior	Member	Superior	Mm.	Sup.	Mm.	
AM	7	8	2	1	2		11	9	20
LA	6	3		2	1		7	5	12
AO	5	5	4				9	5	14
CA	3	7					3	7	10
US	1	5					1	5	6
EU	7	11	3	1			10	12	22
GA-GH	12	1					12	1	13
Superiors	41 (ex off.)		8 (elected) 1 (invited)		3 (elected)		53		97
Members		37 (elected) 3 (invited)		4 (elected)				44	

AM = Africa-Madagascar; LA = Latin America; AO = Asia-Oceania; CA = Canada; US = United States; EU = Europe;
GA-GH = General Administration and General House.

WYD 2005

Cologne, Germany

A Reminder

GATHERING OF GROUPS ACCOMPANIED BY OBLATES 11 to 15 August 2005 (right before the WYD) Hünfeld, Germany

If you intend to take part in the gathering for the groups accompanied by Oblates, and in the WYD, and have not registered yet, we urge you to do it as soon as possible. It will make the work of planning and preparing this event easier. Do it today!

How to join? It is simple:

1. Make your official registration with the national office of the WYD 2005 in Cologne (www.wjt2005.de) taking care to indicate clearly "FULDA-OMI" in the space reserved for the diocese you want to be received by;
2. As soon as possible contact the organizers of the pre-WYD gathering for the groups accompanied by Oblates:

Thomas Wittemann, O.M.I.
Youth Pastoral Office
Klosterstr 5
36088 Hünfeld
GERMANY

Tel.: +49 6652-94-250
FAX : +49 6652-94-88
E-mail: jugendarbeit@oblaten.de

You will receive the information you need for the gathering.

Useful links:

www.bonifatiuskloster.de (OMI Hünfeld)
www.wjt2005.Net (WYD-OMI web site)
www.wjt2005.de (official WYD Cologne 2005 web site)