

# OBLATE WITNESSES 1831-1997

James M. FitzPatrick, O.M.I.



OBLATE  
HERITAGE

7



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## 1831 - 1997

by  
James M. FitzPatrick, O.M.I.

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Oblate Heritage Series  
O.M.I. General Postulation  
Rome, Italy  
1998



Cover: Claude Tardiff, O.M.I.

Printed by: Tip. Città Nuova  
Largo Cistina di Svezia, 17  
00165 Roma (Italia)

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### Introduction

In his sweeping Preface to the Oblate Constitutions and Rules the young Eugene de Mazenod described the type of man he wanted to join him in his vision of the priesthood. He called for “...priests, zealous for the glory of God, men with an ardent love for the Church...willing to give their lives, if need be, for the salvation of souls...ready to enter the combat, to fight, even unto death, for the greater glory of his most holy and sublime name.” Some could be tempted to dismiss this as poetic rhetoric, as pious hyperbole, as the flush of youthful fervour. But, in the story of the men of de Mazenod’s vision, there are many who, quite literally, gave their lives for souls. Most have given it in quiet daily dedication to their religious life and apostolate. Others have been called upon to give it in a more vivid way, even to the shedding of their blood. Each has given it in the way that God has called him to give. Just over 13,500 men have pronounced perpetual vows in the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. All these are the Oblate family - living or dead - equally part of the shared heritage, the common history, the family story.

The first Series of “Oblate Heritage” (1992) recounted the lives of six individual Oblates. The second Series (1998) recalls eight groups of Oblates. This present booklet dips into our history to gather together sixty-eight (68) Oblates whose deaths were written in blood. They gave their lives in varying times, places, circumstances - but all died violently consistent with their ministry. The root meaning of the word “martyr” is “witness”. All of these men are, without doubt, witnesses in their dying. Perhaps a few of them may some day be graced with the official title of “martyr”, but that in no way diminishes the excellence of the witness of all. In fact, the Cause of Canonization of some of them has been introduced - Fr. Josef Cebula, the 22 men of Spain, the 6 killed in Laos, Fr. Ludwik Wrodarczyk. But each one of these 68 Oblates gave authentic witness, and fleshed out that early vision of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

The lives of some in this booklet have been written about more fully elsewhere, even in the “Oblate Heritage” Series, but my intention here is to gather together in one place an account of all those men whose death has a special poignancy and significance. Theirs was a death often caught up in violence, a death undergone in accord with the principles of their religious life, a death suffered in conjunction with the demands of the exercise of their ministry. I have made the selection based on information from Provinces and from personal research. It was not easy to draw parameters - and the line is not indelible. Perhaps in some future work, written from a different perspective and for another purpose, the stories of other Oblates who died violently will be told - the 3 U.S. Oblates, Fr. Paul Drone, Fr. Edward McMahon, Br. Michael Braun, beheaded on July 2, 1942 in Sario, Menado, Celebes, whilst trying to escape the Japanese occupation of the Philippines; Fr. Renaud Bouffard, shot in a robbery in Chardonnières, Haiti on May 25, 1971; Fr. Raynald Beauregard who died from stab wounds on December 23, 1971, a day after an attempted robbery at Tlokoeng, Lesotho; Fr. Jean Franche, shot by a drunken man in Inuvik, Canada on May 26, 1974. I am sure that there are others. But each of the deaths of the 68 men commemorated in this booklet represent a singular saga, and they add a unique hue to the Oblate story.

These 68 men are presented in short biographical sketches, with details of death, where available. Perhaps future research will uncover or rectify other facts about them (some present “official” sources have differing dates and data), or arrive at a fuller understanding of the reasons for some of these deaths. This is greatly to be hoped for. But, for the moment, let it suffice for us to be mindful of the witness of these men - ordinary men like any one of us, men to whom God gave an unexpected call, men who died in the echo of the call. The witness of these Oblates, spread over 167 years (1831 - 1997), is a most honourable part of our family heritage.

James M. FitzPatrick, O.M.I.  
Postulator General

# OBLATE WITNESSES: 1831-1997

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# **OBLATE WITNESSES: 1831-1997**

## **Listing by Country**

**BOLIVIA:** Maurice Lefèbvre

**CAMEROON:** Yves Plumey

**CANADA:** Alexis Reynard, Leon Fafard, Felix Marchand, Guillaume Le Roux, Jean-Baptiste Rouvière,

**FRANCE:** Joseph Capmas, François Boussa, Christian Gilbert, Jean Cuny, Lucien Perrier, Albert Piat, Joachim Nio, Justin Pennerath,

**GERMANY:** Friedrich Lorenz

**LAOS:** Mario Borzaga, Louis Leroy, Michel Coquelet, Vincent L'Hénoret, Jean Wauthier, Joseph Boissel

**LESOTHO:** Almanzar Menard

**PHILIPPINES:** Nelson Javellana, Benjamin de Jesus

**POLAND:** Czeslaw Bartosz, Jozef Cal, Jozef Cebula, Jan Finc, Mieczyslaw Frala, Ludwik Janski, Ludwik Kasalka, Jozef Kocot, Tomasz Kosierowski, Jan Kulawy, Pawel Kulawy, Antoni Leszczyk, Alfons Manka, Jan Pawolek, Jan Szamocki, Ludwik Wrodarczyk, Marian Wyduba

**SPAIN:** (Alphabetical by paternal surname): Pascual Aláez Medina, Vicente Blanco Guadillo, Ángel Bocas, Juan José Caballero Rodríguez, Juan Pedro Del Cotillo Fernández, Gregorio Escobar García, Francisco Esteban Lacal, Justo Fernández González, Justo Gil Pardo, Daniel Gómez Lucas, Justo González Lorente, José Guerra Andrés, Manuel Gutiérrez Martín, Juan Antonio Pérez Mayo, Francisco Polverinos Gómez, Eleuterio Prado Villarroel, Serviliano Riaño Herrero, Publio Rodríguez Moslares, Clemente Rodríguez Tejerina, Marcelino Sánchez Fernández, Cecilio Vega Dominquez, José Vega Riaño.

**SRI LANKA:** Michael Rodrigo

**ZAIRE:** Gerard Defever, Nicholas Hardy, Pierre Laebens

# OBLATE WITNESSES: 1831-1997

## Chronological List

<b>1831</b>	January	10	Marseilles, France	<b>Joseph Capmas</b>
<b>1875</b>	June	20	Riviere-des-Maisons, Canada	<b>Alexis Reynard</b>
<b>1885</b>	April	20	Frog Lake, Canada	<b>Leon Fafard Felix Marchand</b>
<b>1913</b>	October	30	Coppermine, Canada	<b>Guillaume Le Roux Jean-Baptiste Rouvière</b>
<b>1936</b>	July	24	Pozuelo, Spain	<b>Pascual Aláez Medina Juan Pedro del Cotillo Fernández Justo González Lorente Manuel Gutiérrez Martín Juan Antonio Pérez Mayo Francisco Polvorinos Gómez Cecilio Vega Domínguez</b>
	November	7	Paracuellos del Jarama, Spain	<b>José Vega Riaño</b>
	November	8	Soto de Aldovea, Spain	<b>Serviliano Riaño Herrero</b>
	November	28	Paracuellos del Jarama, Spain	<b>Vincente Blanco Guadillo Ángel Bocos Juan José Caballero Rodríguez Gregorio Escobar García Francisco Esteban Lacal Justo Fernández González Justo Gil Pardo Daniel Gómez Lucas José Guerra Andrés Eleuterio Prado Villarroel Publio Rodríguez Moslares Clemente Rodríguez Tejerina Marcelino Sánchez Fernández</b>
<b>1939</b>	December	18	Strzelno, Poland	<b>Marian Wyduba</b>
<b>1940</b>	June	28	Kielce, Poland	<b>Jan Finc</b>
	September	10	Gusen, Austria	<b>Jan Szamocki.</b>
<b>1941</b>	January	21	Gusen, Austria	<b>Alfons Manka</b>
	May	9	Mauthausen, Austria	<b>Jozef Cebula</b>
	June	7	Dachau, Germany	<b>Ludwik Kasalka</b>
	August	30	Auschwitz, Poland	<b>Pawel Kulawy</b>
	September	30	Auschwitz, Poland	<b>Jan-Wilhelm Kulawy</b>
	December	9	Gusen, Austria	<b>Mieczyslaw Frala</b>

<b>1942</b>	February	28	Auschwitz, Poland	<b>Jan Pawolek</b>
	April	22	Gusen, Austria	<b>Ludwik Janski</b>
	May	1	Auschwitz, Poland	<b>Tomasz Kozierowski</b>
	October	5	Slupia Stara, Poland	<b>Czeslaw Bartosz</b>
	December	29	Dachau, Germany	<b>Jozef Kocot</b>
<b>1943</b>	May	31	Majdanek, Poland	<b>Antoni Leszczyk</b>
	June	6	Dachau, Germany	<b>Jozef Cal</b>
<b>1944</b>	June	6	Caen, France	<b>François Boussa</b>
	July	24	La Brosse-Montceaux, France	<b>Jean Cuny</b>
				<b>Christian Gilbert</b>
				<b>Joachim Nio</b>
				<b>Lucien Perrier</b>
				<b>Albert Piat</b>
	November	13	Berlin, Germany	<b>Friedrich Lorenz</b>
	November	24	Gaggenau, Germany	<b>Justin Pennerath</b>
	December	8	Okopy, Russia	<b>Ludwik Wrodarczyk</b>
<b>1960</b>	May	1	Ban-Thieng, Laos	<b>Mario Borzaga</b>
<b>1961</b>	April	18	Ban-Pha-Thou, Laos	<b>Louis Leroy</b>
	April	20	Sop-Xieng, Laos	<b>Michel Coquelet</b>
	May	11	Ban Ban, Laos	<b>Vincent L'Henoret</b>
<b>1964</b>	January	23	Kilembe, Zaire	<b>Gerard Defever</b>
				<b>Nicholas Hardy</b>
				<b>Pierre Laebens</b>
<b>1966</b>	July	1	Tsoeneng, Lesotho	<b>Almanzar Menard</b>
<b>1967</b>	December	17	Ban Ban, Laos	<b>Jean Wauthier</b>
<b>1969</b>	July	5	Hat-I-Et, Laos	<b>Joseph Boissel</b>
<b>1971</b>	August	21	La Paz, Bolivia	<b>Maurice Lefèbvre</b>
	November	3	Esperanza, Philippines	<b>Nelson Javellana</b>
<b>1987</b>	November	10	Buttala, Sri Lanka	<b>Michael Rodrigo</b>
<b>1997</b>	February	4	Jolo, Philippines	<b>Benjamin de Jesus</b>

## BOLIVIA

Fr. Maurice  
Lefèbvre,  
O.M.I.  
(1922-1971)

Maurice Lefèbvre was born in Montreal, Canada, on August 6, 1922, and after his final vows on September 8, 1945, was ordained a priest on August 6, 1948. Arriving in Bolivia in February 1953 he immersed himself fully into the local culture, becoming associated with the lives of the working people. He laboured long and hard with and for his people, constantly urging and leading. In 1962, after almost ten years of work in Bolivia, he wrote about his ideal of the life of a missionary,

*“We have taught them many things, but we must apply ourselves above all to one effort, the most important, the fundamental, the only one necessary that is, to love. To teach how to love is more difficult than one thinks, but it is the sum of missionary life.”*

In 1963 he travelled overseas to do studies in sociology in Rome and France. He also toured through Berlin, Poland and Cuba. He returned to Bolivia, involving himself in movements for a more just society in that country and for the betterment of the lives of the people.

In 1971 in La Paz there was a coup against the government of Juan Jose Torres. In one of the street battles a number of people were wounded and killed. On August 21 Fr. Lefèbvre, who was supportive of the resistance to the coup, volunteered to drive into the battle zone to take out the wounded. He knew that it would have been safer to remain aloof, but out of concern for the wounded and dying he ventured into the area, intent on being there for his people and offering them, all the support he could. He drove his van clearly marked as Red Cross, but as he wound through the streets he was fired on. Fr. Lefèbvre, on his mission of mercy, was killed instantly.

He had made his choice - a choice of solidarity with those he loved, a choice of compassion for those suffering, a choice of courage to walk with them in their moments of mortal danger. That choice wedded him to them for always.

## CAMEROON

**Mons. Yves  
Plumey,  
O.M.I.  
(1913 - 1991)**

A Breton from the west of France, and proud of it, Yves Marie Joseph Plumey was born in Vannes on January 29, 1913. After secondary studies at the local Jesuit college he entered the Oblates in 1930, making first vows at Liege, Belgium, then final vows at La Brosse on September 29, 1935. He was ordained in the cathedral of his hometown on June 29, 1937. The following year, after finishing his studies, he received his first obedience to the Oblate mission of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), but the outbreak of war prevented travel. He remained in France involved in mission preaching and parish work at Notre Dame du Sion, at Talence and Bar-le Duc. In 1945 he was military chaplain to French troops in Germany.

1946 saw the opening of a new and lasting chapter in his priestly life. In May he was appointed superior of a new mission area in Cameroon-Chad, and in August he arrived there along with a group of 15 Oblates. This generous complement of men meant a rapid expansion of work. In just one year seven mission stations were established. Others followed, as well as schools, dispensaries, a leprosarium. The Church grew rapidly. A year after his arrival Fr. Plumey was named Prefect Apostolic of Garoua. In 1953 he became Vicar Apostolic, and in 1953 he was named Bishop of Garoua. Returning to his hometown, he was ordained by the Bishop of Vannes, Mons. Le Bellec, on June 29, 1953. His work on the missions continued apace, with Mons. Plumey ever pushing forward - trade schools at Maroua and Tibati, schools for boys and girls in N'Gaoundéré as well as College de Mazonod, the first Catholic secondary school in the north of the country. To foster local vocations he established a minor seminary in 1956, and, as the numbers grew, a major seminary in 1976. The original prefecture confided to the Oblates was divided into five dioceses, and in 1982 Mons. Plumey became an Archbishop. On March 18, 1984, after years of intense work and expansion he retired, passing on the Archdiocese to a local diocesan bishop, Christian Tumi (later Cardinal). But Yves did not rest. He became pastor of a parish in

suburban N’Gaoundéré, and set about building a new church. He was still working there when he was killed in a cowardly attack.

On September 3, 1991, just inside the door of the house in which he was living alone, the body of Mons. Yves Plumey, O.M.I., aged 78 years, was found, bound, and bashed. As the door was not forced, it appears that late in the night he had answered the door to someone he must have recognized (as he would not have opened it at night to a stranger). He was attacked, bashed severely, bound. A later autopsy showed that he also had a heart attack as he was struggling to free himself from the ropes binding him. As little in the house was touched, it appears that robbery was not the motive for the intrusion and attack. The country was in an uneasy political situation at that time, and various politicians, Muslim and Christian, were coming to visit him to consult him, for he was widely regarded as a man of wisdom, of prudence, of peace, and as an expert on so many aspects of the country. Rumours spread of an assassination, of a killing on religious grounds. Who knows the answer? At his funeral, led by Cardinal Tumi and 21 Bishops, a Muslim Cabinet Minister said, “He was a man proverbially known for his all-embracing kindness.” Another Muslim government minister described him as “a prelate with a heart of gold”. His grisly death was a sad end to the life of a man who had given himself for the people and the Church for 45 long and fruitful missionary years.



**Br. Alexis  
Reynard,  
O.M.I.  
(1828 - 1875)**

## **CANADA:**

The parish of the village of Castillon in France is dedicated to St John the Baptist. It was in this parish that Alexis Reynard was born September 28, 1828, and he grew up with an enduring devotion to the parish patron. Entering the Oblates in 1849, he was undecided as to advancing to the priesthood, but absolutely clear in his determination to be a religious and a missionary. His first obedience brought him to the Canadian North. He was a man of tremendous dedication, and where needed skills were lacking he just went ahead and learned them. He served at the mission of Nativity at Fort Chipewyan for 10 years, Providence mission for 7 years, Our Lady of Victories at Lac la Biche for 4 years, then returned to his first mission, Nativity. He was cook, gardener, boat-builder, dog-handler, fisherman, hunter - a jack of all trades, and all of which he mastered with joy for the good of the mission.

In March 1875 Alexis set out to meet with Bishop Faraud, O.M.I. who was to arrive at Lac la Biche with new Oblate missionaries. He joined a large group travelling there, but exceptional floods held back their progress. Alexis decided to strike out on his own, taking an Iroquois Metis guide, named Louis Lafrance, and a young orphan girl he was responsible for taking from Athabaska to Lac la Biche. The journey turned into a nightmare - floods, shortage of food, lack of game to hunt. But the most serious problem was the unwanted, insistent and blatant sexual attention shown to the young girl by the guide. Fearing an attack on her, Br. Alexis had to warn off the Iroquois and keep him separate. This caused arguments and resentment, and led to an explosive situation. In the meantime, the larger group from which Alexis had separated, got through to Lac la Biche, and all were surprised that Brother and his companions had not arrived. Fearing that they were in trouble, a rescue party, led by Oblate Brother Lambert, set out. After some days they found some personal effects of Br. Alexis, and his bare bones in a shallow grave. But then they came upon a chilling sight - traces of a campfire and the remains of a macabre meal, some finger bones and pieces of human ribs.

Brother's skull was found pierced with a bullet. The young Iroquois had fled with the poor orphan girl. It appears that Brother Alexis' protection of the girl had led to an enraged encounter and an attack by Louis Lafrance in which he killed Alexis, and resorted to the Indian custom of consuming part of the good person killed. The date was around June 20, 1875, near Rivière-des-Maisons.

On his first communion day in Castillon, the young Alexis Reynard had said to his mother "I want to be a monk and die a martyr like St. John the Baptist, the patron of our parish." Bishop Grandin, O.M.I., after listening carefully to the local native people and to those who knew the persons involved, was convinced of the heroic death of Brother Alexis, and of the reason for it. In his notes he wrote, "*I consider that Brother Alexis died the death of St. John the Baptist: a martyr for chastity. I retain his clothing and axe as relics.*"



**Fr. Léon  
Fafard,  
O.M.I. (1850  
- 1885)**

In the Oblate cemetery at St. Albert, just on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in adjoining graves lie the bodies of two priests - Leon Fafard and Felix Marchand. The remains were transferred there in 1928, but they had both died many years before, on Holy Thursday, April 2, 1885 in what is known today as the Massacre of Frog Lake.

**Fr. Felix  
Marchand,  
O.M.I. (1858  
- 1885)**

Adelard Léon Fafard had been born in the village of St. Cuthbert, Canada, on June 8, 1850. Entering the Oblates he received his assignment to western Canada, and was ordained a priest by the Venerable Bishop Vital Grandin in St. Albert on December 8, 1875. He worked the first two years with Metis at Buffalo Lake, then was co-founder of Fort Pitt mission, Saskatchewan. He also served the Indians of Turtle Lake, Gurneyville in Alberta, Onion Lake, Saddle Lake, and St. Paul-Des-Cris, Brousseau. He was the founder and pastor of Frog Lake mission. It was here that he was shot to death.



Felix Marchand hailed from the diocese of Rennes in France, where he had been born on April 8, 1858. Entering the Oblate novitiate in Holland in 1880, he was sent to Ottawa University, Canada, for his theological studies. He was ordained by Bishop Grandin in St. Albert on September 23, 1883. With tremendous enthusiasm he threw himself into missionary work with the Metis in St. Albert, Lac-Ste-Anne and Onion Lake, where he founded a school and a mission station. In two short years of priesthood he achieved much. He was in Frog Lake in 1885 perfecting his knowledge of the Cree language. The mission there was a thriving one - church, priest's residence, and school for 40 pupils. Fr. Fafard had fostered excellent relations with the local Indians. But in 1885 disaster struck, and Fr. Marchand was to die just six days short of his 27th birthday.

In 1885 a Metis revolt, originally inspired by Louis Riel, was spreading across the plains of western Canada. The dissidents were split - those following Riel, though determined, were more reasonable; those led by Big Bear were fanatical and were prepared to resort to any means to pursue their goal. In late March Big Bear, with seven or eight hundred men at his back, advanced towards Frog Lake mission. The two priests with most of the people were in the Church praying early on Holy Thursday, April 2, 1885. Bursting into the Church, Big Bear and a group of men decorated with war paint and feathers, ordered all to leave and to march to their camp. On the way the Indian Agent, a government official, stopped and refused to go any further. He was fired upon. Fr. Fafard rushed to the dying man, and whilst giving him absolution was shot in the neck and died instantly. Father Marchand was ahead with another group, but on hearing the shots and the cries that people were wounded and dying, he rushed back, not caring about the consequences. He had gone just a few steps towards them when he was shot in the forehead, and fell dead. On that day 14 people were murdered. Big Bear and his men fell to pillaging and destroying the mission. Dressing themselves in vestments from the Church and in the dead priests' clothing, they shrieked and danced in a frenzy around the burning buildings. Frog Lake was left in

ruins, its two priests massacred. The revolts lasted two months. In the following years the confreres of the two murdered priests converted all the chiefs of the revolt, including even Big Bear himself. In its own way this was a fitting climax to Holy Thursday 1885.



**Fr.  
Guillaume  
Le Roux,  
O.M.I.  
(1885 - 1913)**

Fr. Guillaume Le Roux had been born in Plomodiern, France, on March 31, 1885, and was ordained an Oblate priest on July 10, 1910. He received his first obedience to the Canadian missions among the Inuit peoples of the Northwest Territories. A very able linguist, he was quick to learn local languages and dialects. He was physically tough, a necessity to endure the basic-level living of the Far North.

**Fr. Jean-  
Baptiste  
Rouvière,  
O.M.I.  
(1881 - 1913)**

Fr. Jean-Baptiste Rouvière from La Bastide, France, born on November 11, 1881 was well suited to the demanding life of a northern missionary. Ordained on February 24, 1906, he brought many natural gifts to his work. He was an expert carpenter, who built sturdy residences in the most remote areas, and was able to care for a variety of practical needs. He was no stranger to hard work, and many times survived near starvation. To these physical strengths he added a firm faith, and a love for his priesthood.

In October 1913, the two Oblate missionaries set out on dog sleds to move north to the Polar Sea to join the Eskimos there. It took twelve days to cover the 140 kilometres to the mouth of the Coppermine River. The weather was especially harsh that year, and the lack of food was causing starvation among the people and even the husky sled-dogs. Whilst there two of the Eskimos tried to steal from the priests, but were reprimanded by the Eskimo elders, who advised the priests to move away. Five days later the two priests decided to continue their journey north to bring the Gospel to the Eskimos by the frozen sea. The troublemakers set out two days later to follow, caught up

with them and travelled for a day with the missionaries. As the two priests were clearing a way through the very deep snow they were attacked. Fr. Le Roux was stabbed in the back by the Eskimo Sinnisiak, and he fell wounded, crying a warning. Fr. Rouvière heard the shout and ran back to help. Sinnisiak grabbed Fr. Le Roux's rifle and shot at Fr. Rouvière, who fell at the second bullet, shot in the small of the back. The second Eskimo, Uluksak, then stabbed Fr. Le Roux twice, killing him, and then with the same knife stabbed Fr. Rouvière in the stomach. But this did not kill him. Sinnisiak fetched an axe from one of the priests' sled, and proceeded to chop off Fr. Rouvière's head and legs. After killing both of the priests, the two then cut them open to eat some of their entrails, as well as warm pieces of their livers. This barbaric custom was, in fact, an acknowledgement by the assassins that they admired the men they had killed, and their bravery. The two Eskimos were tried, and confessed all. They were found guilty and condemned to death. But the Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie, Mons. Gabriel Breynat, O.M.I. appealed that their sentence be commuted to "a great act of piety and charity". His plea prevailed, and for almost two years Sinnisiak and Uluksak were detained under loose guard at the Oblate mission of Fort Resolution to learn that the religion of the missionaries was one not of vengeance but of forgiveness and peace, and that the followers of it, like Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux, were prepared even to die for what they believed, in the name of the Crucified.



## FRANCE

Fr. Joseph  
Capmas,  
O.M.I.  
(1791-1931)

The Oblate Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, had called upon his followers to be heroic in the exercise of their priesthood - a heroism which could even include the offering of one's life. In the very earliest days of his Congregation one of his first companions responded to such a call.

Fr. Joseph Capmas, born in 1791, and a priest of the Montpellier diocese, entered the novitiate of the newly-named Missionary Oblates of the Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary with 9 others in 1828. He made his perpetual vows at the end of his novitiate at Marseilles on April 25, 1829. He immediately joined the Oblate mission preaching band, and we have records of him being involved in an intense round of missions and retreats - mission at Bourg-d'Oiseau with Fr. Guibert; jubilee mission at Mure with Frs. Sumien, Martin, Guigues, Guibert; mission at Chichiliane with Frs. Guibert and Sumien; retreat at the seminary of Embrun with Fr. Guibert in the latter part of 1829. During the last months of that year he also served as temporary Novice Master before the appointment of Fr. Honorat. Fr. Capmas had considerable success as a missionary and preacher. Fr. Mie reported that he was assiduous in the confessional and praised his instructions to the people. Fr. Guibert also wrote that he was happy with his preaching, noting that it touched both the educated and the ordinary people. The Founder described him as "*...one of our best members, a man capable of every form of ministry, while remaining simple and obedient, ever ready to do his duty and to do it well, and having no more pretensions than a child.*" It seemed that Fr. Capmas was destined to contribute much to the Congregation and to the Church by his priesthood. Yet, by a strange providence, that priesthood was to be both challenged and cut short.

On his return journey, along with the other priests, from a mission at Savines in early 1830, Fr. Capmas became involved in a curious, but potentially serious, incident, which was deliberately turned into an affront to his

priesthood. A drunken man who jumped out in front of Fr. Capmas' horse was knocked down and killed. The family brought the case to court claiming damages. Despite the evidence of witnesses and the arguments of the lawyers proving innocence, Fr. Capmas fell victim to the machinations of an anti-clerical judge, was found guilty, sentenced to 3 months in jail and given a heavy fine. That this judgement was unjust is evident from the statement of the judge who said, "...let's get our hands on the priests, and we will stop them doing their work". But, because of the insistence of Fr. Guibert, the case was appealed, and at the hearing at Gap not only was Fr. Capmas completely exonerated, but the complainants had to pay 300 francs in expenses.

However, Fr. Capmas is to be remembered for a much more glorious living out of his priesthood. Apart from his preaching, Fr. Capmas took on the ministry of chaplain to the infectious diseases hospital, the "Lazaret", at Marseilles. At a time when infections ran ripe, and there was less understanding and possibility of precautions against them, this task could be a perilous one. In late 1830 a serious epidemic of cholera broke out among soldiers coming back from Africa, and a number were quarantined. Cholera was potentially fatal. Realizing that the men dying in isolation in the Lazaret would have no access to the sacraments in their final hours, Fr. Capmas volunteered to go into quarantine with them. Fully aware of the risk, he placed himself and his priesthood at the total disposition of the dying. He took a courageous priestly decision - a decision born of zeal for souls, a decision which was to demand of him the highest sacrifice. Fr. Capmas fell victim to the epidemic himself and after a painful illness died at 12.30 pm on January 10, 1831. He was buried in the vault of the seminary of Saint-Just. He had put his sacramental ministry before his own safety, and at the age of 40 he gave his life in the exercise of his priesthood. He had been an Oblate for not quite 2 years.

The Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, writing from Nice to Fr. Tempier on hearing of the death of Fr. Capmas summed

up his sacrifice, *“The Lord will have looked kindly on the charity that spurred him to ask for the favour of enclosing himself in the isolation hospital to lavish the graces of his ministry on the many soldiers stricken with the epidemic from Africa.”* Fr. Henry Guibert (later Cardinal Archbishop of Paris) who had worked closely with Fr. Capmas in preaching missions and retreats, and who admired his talents and zeal, wrote to Fr. Tempier on hearing of the death, *“I regard him as a true martyr of charity”*. And for this he is remembered with veneration by his Oblate confrères.



**Fr. François  
Bouso,  
O.M.I.  
(1881-1944)**

Born in St. Congard, France, on February 15, 1881, François Bouso entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and made his final vows and was ordained in the same year - 1905. After ordination he was assigned to the missions of the Canadian Northwest. Here, amid the snow, he proved a keen and able missionary, travelling far and wide to care for the native peoples at their camps. He worked especially around the area of Slave Lake. For reasons of health he had to return to France, and worked in parishes in the Diocese of Bayeaux. As a parish pastor he showed a great gentleness, but the coming events of the war were to show a hidden steel in this very soft-spoken man. When his native land capitulated and the Germans occupied it, his house became a haven for those refusing to be taken for forced labour squads. It also became a centre for the clearing of messages among the French partisans. Fr. Bouso, in his own quiet way, treated the occupation of France as a matter transcending politics. He saw the evil of Nazism, of National Socialism, as a moral issue, and felt that he had to make a stand, not only as a Frenchman, but more especially as a priest. However, the Germans found out about his activity, and he was arrested. Taken to prison, he was found guilty, and was put to death by firing squad at Caen on June 4, 1944.



## The five Men of LaBrosse-Montceaux

**Fr. Christian  
Gilbert,  
O.M.I.  
(1912 - 1944)**

From the Archdiocese of Paris, where he was born on March 10, 1912 at Asnières, Christian Marc Gilbert joined the Oblates and was sent for his seminary studies to Rome. He attended the Angelicum, where he specialized in Moral Theology. He was ordained on July 11, 1937, and was then assigned to the teaching staff of the French Oblate scholasticate. There he was known as the “perfect gentleman” and was a man of deep devotion. A few years before he died he expressed the hope that some day he could devote his life to being a priest among the faithful of the working class areas of Paris.

Father Gilbert had a clear dedication to the need of resisting the evil forces of Nazism. For him this was a Christian duty. He became involved with the “Company of Notre-Dame”, a cell of the Resistance which proclaimed its devotion to Mary, and was working to stand up against the irreligion of the Nazis. When the Gestapo came to the Oblate seminary at La Brosse-Montceaux on the morning of July 24, 1944, Father Gilbert, who had been betrayed by one of the partisans, was taken with others by the Germans to a basement room, and very cruelly beaten. He was led out, hands tied behind his back, in front of all the staff and students. The Gestapo officer, Korf, demanded information about hidden arms. Father Gilbert cried out, “I wish to speak with a priest”. One of the other priests on the staff, Fr. Delarue, called out, “I give you absolution”. Korf immediately shot Father Gilbert who fell to his knees then collapsed to the ground without a sound. He was the first of the five Oblates shot that day. He was 32 years old.



**Scholastic  
Jean-Marie  
Cuny, O.M.I.  
(1918 - 1944)**

Born in Blainville on December 15, 1918 Jean Marie Arsène Nicolas Cuny had worked as a young man for three years as a mechanic in the Peugeot car factory, and was an active member of the Young Christian Worker’s movement - the Jocists - founded by Cardinal Cardijn.

He became an Oblate juniorist, but at the outbreak of the war he joined the army and rose quickly in the ranks. He was involved in heavy combat, and had his commanding officer die in his arms. When France surrendered, he came to the Oblate seminary to pursue his studies for the priesthood. He took his first vows as an Oblate on February 17, 1944.

On July 24, 1944, Jean Cuny, together with 4 other Oblates, was taken by the Gestapo to a room below the seminary chapel and cruelly tortured. He was beaten, and had his head repeatedly shoved into a tub of water bringing him to the point of drowning. He was later led out and made to stand beside the body of Fr. Christian Gilbert who had just been shot. The Gestapo officer, Korf, questioned him. Jean refused to give any information and called out for absolution. This was given simultaneously by some of the priests in the gathered community. Korf then shot Jean who fell to his right side with a long gasp of pain. Korf shot him again in the head as his body slid to the ground.



**Scholastic  
Lucien  
Perrier,  
O.M.I.  
(1918 - 1944)**

St. Charles-la-Fôret was the native village of Lucien Marie Pierre Perrier, who was born there on July 18, 1918. He had to decide between a career in the military and the call to religious life. He felt attracted to both.

He had once written, "It is always said that youth is the age of pleasure. It is not. It is the age of heroism". These sentiments inspired him first of all to become an Oblate of Mary Immaculate and to commence his studies for the priesthood. In fact, just three weeks before his death, he had walked 25 kilometres to Sens where he received the Minor Orders of Lector and Porter from Bishop Lamy. He was equally inspired to do all he could against the Nazi forces, and for his homeland.

Because of his involvement in the anti-Nazi movement he was called by the Gestapo when they invaded the Oblate



seminary on July 24, 1944. Lucien was beaten and almost suffocated in the room below the chapel, before being brought out before the community. Father Gilbert and the seminarian Jean Cuny already lay dead. Perrier refused to answer the Gestapo's questions. One of the priests in the community gave him absolution. Then Lucien made a cross with his hands, transfixed the Gestapo officer Korf with a stare, and then a smile of disdain. He was shot immediately.



**Fr. Albert  
Piat,  
O.M.I.  
(1909 - 1944)**

Albert Lucien Joseph Piat was born at Roubaix, France, on August 20, 1909. After entering the Oblates he completed his novitiate and was sent to Rome for his priestly studies. He studied at the Angelicum in Rome, gaining his Licentiate in Sacred Scripture. Ordained on July 16, 1933 he returned to France and took up his position as a professor at the Oblate scholasticate. During the summer break from his teaching engagements he pursued further studies of ancient Eastern languages at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was a brilliant student. As a person he was of mild character, quietly spoken, and known for his ready smile. At the outbreak of the war he was convinced that resistance to the Nazis was a religious necessity, because of their anti-Christian principles. He held similar views on the moral necessity of "*the demands of disobedience*" as Father Henri du Lubac, S.J., and Father (future Cardinal) Journet. This deep religious conviction moved him to become involved in "La Compagnie Notre-Dame", a cell of the French underground, which drew people together under the patronage of Our Lady to resist the neopaganism of German National Socialism. This quiet man had very strong convictions which moved him to action.

At 5.30 on the morning of July 24, 1944, acting on information obtained under torture from one of the partisans, the German Gestapo, under their officer Korf, entered the Oblate Scholasticate at La Brosse-Montceaux. They called first for the Bursar of the house, Fr. Letourneur,

but he had left the previous evening. Then Father Piat was called out, as were Father Gilbert, the seminary students Lucien Perier and Jean Cuny, and Brother Joachim Nio . Taken to the basement under the chapel, Father Piat was stripped naked and severely beaten with a leather whip. He was also constantly dunked in a tub of water till almost drowned. His feet were burned with metal rods so that he could hardly walk, and had to be driven by car to the open space behind the seminary where, in front of all the students, he was shot. Father Gilbert and the students Cuny and Perier had already been gunned down. As Father Piat stumbled out of the car he attempted to smile at his confreres . Korf raised his gun to shoot him, but it jammed. Father Piat had to stand in the midst of the three other dead Oblates while the gun was replaced twice. One of the priests of the seminary called out the formula of absolution, and Father Piat in his usual manner blessed himself slowly with a large sign of the cross. As he fell, his arms were crossed over his chest.



**Br. Joachim  
Nio,  
O.M.I.  
(1898 - 1944)**

Brother Nio fulfilled the roles of shoemaker, cellarer and porter at the Oblate seminary at La Brosse-Montceaux when the tragic events of the Second World War overwhelmed him. He had been born on November 14, 1898 at the village of St. Jean Brevelay, France, and made his life vows as an Oblate on April 8, 1934. He was a humble man, faithful in the exercise of his religious life, self-effacing.

Brother Joachim Nio was in no way involved in any covert resistance work. His torture and death came about because of his simple devotion to duty, and his work as porter and cellarer, because of material found in the area of his work. He was taken with 4 others to the large room where the community changed their outdoor footwear on returning to the house. Here he was brutally beaten out of sheer cruelty. He was so badly bashed around the face and head that both

his ear drums were burst. His feet were burnt. The beating continued when he was brought out in terrible pain in front of the community, and saw the four bodies of the slain Oblates. The Gestapo officer Korf questioned him twice. Receiving a negative answer, Korf killed him in a burst of gunfire. Brother Nio, the humblest of men, fell - a martyr of obedience, for it was in carrying out faithfully his assigned task that he was drawn innocently into the drama which brought about his death.



**Fr. Justin  
Jean  
Pennerath,  
O.M.I.  
(1902 - 1944)**

Though born at Barst in France, June 4, 1902, Justin Pennerath entered the Oblate Juniorate of St. Charles in Holland. He did his novitiate in Strasbourg, and after studies in Liège, Belgium, he was ordained a priest July 4, 1926. After a short time at the Juniorate of Strasbourg, he was named chaplain to the novitiate-convent of the Sisters of All Saints at Lettenbach and part-time assistant in the parish at Abreschwiller.

In 1941 all the 170 priests of the Metz diocese, including Fr. Pennerath, were expelled by the Nazis in a purge against the Catholic Church. He was named pastor of the parish of Allanmont by the Bishop of Saint-Dié. During this time he felt that his life was constantly under threat, confiding to a fellow Oblate, "I know that my name is on the black list". He refused the offer of leaving the parish for a safer place, as he felt he should remain ministering to his people. Some of his parishioners were involved with the Resistance, hiding and assisting shot-down allied pilots to escape. Fr. Pennerath was fully in sympathy with this, and, aware of the inherent evil in the philosophy of National Socialism, felt it his duty as parish priest to be involved. He was frequently quizzed by the occupying Nazis.

In late 1944 the SS came to the presbytery early in the morning. Fr. Pennerath was questioned and severely beaten because of his refusal to talk. The house and barn

were searched and a radio and other items were found. Bleeding profusely, Fr. Pennerath was taken to the prison camp of Schirmeck, then, because of the advance of the allied armies, together with some captured American pilots whom the local people had been trying to hide, he was taken to Gaggenau concentration camp in Germany. On November 24, Fr. Pennerath and some other prisoners were taken out, forced to dig their own graves and made to kneel beside them. They were then shot in the nape of the neck, followed by a shot in the head to make sure that they were dead. Fr. Pennerath fell into his grave like the rest. Later, when his body was excavated for proper burial, it was discovered that in his case there was no “coup de grâce” shot to the head. How did he die? Perhaps, bleeding from the neck wound, he suffocated in his grave as the soil was heaped on him?



## GERMANY

**Fr. Freidrich  
Lorenz,  
O.M.I.  
(1897-1944)**

Freidrich Lorenz, born on June 10, 1897 at Klein Freden, Germany, was of a simple family background strong in the practice of the faith, and became a novice in the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in August 1926. A month later he was conscripted into the German army, fought on the western front, was wounded twice, and decorated with the Iron Cross. He was proud to be in the army, and always honoured his country. He re-entered the Oblates, and was ordained in 1924. After the seminary he joined the Oblate mission preaching band, where he was a consistent, though

not especially outstanding, preacher. In 1934 he was moved to the parish of Stettin in north-eastern Germany (now Poland). The collapse of the German economy, the rise of National Socialism, the outbreak of World War II drew Father Lorenz back into the army, but as chaplain. He proved most successful here, even courageous in helping local priests. In 1940 Fr. Lorenz, was discharged from the army, as were all religious of officer rank. On his return to Stettin he found himself, perhaps at first innocently, involved in a group which was becoming more and more to realize, and criticize, the growing injustices and atrocities of the Nazis. On February 4, 1943, Fr. Lorenz, along with 40 other people, was arrested by the Gestapo.

After his arrest Fr. Lorenz, with others, was endlessly interrogated and beaten. He seemed crushed, sinking into depression. On December 6th., Fr. Lorenz, with two other priests, was transferred to Halle prison and proceedings against him started. He was unjustly accused of lack of patriotism, and of “undermining the fighting spirit of the people and of the army”. He tried vigorously to defend himself, but he and the two other priests were found guilty, and on July 28th condemned to death. Fr. Lorenz lodged an appeal, which quashed the sentence. But a new trial was set up on September 2nd. After just two days of hearings they were again sentenced to death by decapitation. After many months of rebelling against his fate, of depression, of almost lost hope, Fr. Lorenz entered a period of great calm and acceptance with bravery. During his last hours, he wrote his final will, and in it said: “...*Blood was shed on the Cross: blood is shed on our altars at the renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross. With this blood I unite my poor drops of blood in adoration, worship and glorification of God whom I have served...I die as a Catholic priest, as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate ...*”

During his trial, even one of the associate presidents of the trial, infuriated at the obviously planned miscarriage of justice, shouted out, when the prosecuting lawyer called the priests “criminals, scum of society, asocial creatures” in the courtroom: “*This is not a case of criminals or asocial*

elements. Their only tragedy is that they are Catholic priests." It was because of his priesthood that Friedrich Lorenz, died by the guillotine in the prison yard of Halle, at 4pm on November 13th, 1944.



## LAOS

**Fr. Mario  
Borzaga,  
O.M.I.  
(1932 - 1960)**

Mario Borzaga was born in Trent, in northern Italy on August 27, 1932. Entering first into the local diocesan seminary, he felt a call to a missionary vocation and joined the Oblate novitiate in 1952. He was ordained on February 24, 1957, and in the middle of the year set out for Laos arriving in Paksane where he set himself to study the local language. In November 1958 he was moved to Louang-Prabang region and became pastor of the remote mountain village of Kiu-Kacham. He settled in among the Hmong people, learning their language, but found the rigours of the life taxing. Despite this, he rejoiced in the call of the mission, and gave himself whole-heartedly to the people. All during this time the communist Pathet-Lao were infiltrating the region, and Mario became more aware of the growing danger, occasionally having to go into hiding to save himself. On Sunday April 24, 1960, after Mass, when Mario was tending to the dispensary two young men asked him to come to their village. He agreed to come, planning to visit a number of villages on the same journey. He set out the next day, dressed all in black like a Hmong man, and accompanied by Shiong, a young catechist. From that day Mario Borzaga, priest and missionary, disappeared.

It is recorded that he reached his goal, looked after the sick, made first contact with a group interested in the Catholic faith, then set out to return. The area in which he was

travelling was a dangerous one. Catholics had been attacked. In December 1959, Fr. René Dubroux M.E.P. had been assassinated in his village and in April-May 1961 in Xieng-Khouang area there had been communist disturbances. Mario would have been aware of the peril, but still made the journey. The complete disappearance of Mario Borzaga, along with his catechist would seem to indicate that he was taken by the Pathet-Lao, active in that area. There was a well-founded rumour following his death that those who called him to come to their village were agents of the communists. This would fit in with their way of acting. To this day no trace has been found of his body, but in this silence he is an eloquent witness to missionary dedication.



**Fr. Louis  
Victor Denis  
Leroy,  
O.M.I.  
(1923-1961)**

Louis Leroy entered the Oblate novitiate at the age of 25. He had been born at Ducey, France, October 8, 1923. He worked at his secondary studies with the Oblates at Pontmain but never achieved great results. His vocation, his missionary ambition, even his expressed desire some day even to be a martyr, carried him forward. He was ordained a priest on July 4, 1954, and with great joy, received his first obedience to the Oblate Mission of Laos.

He arrived in November 1955, and his language studies were made more difficult because of the onset of a degree of slight deafness. In November 1957 he became pastor in the village of Ban-Pha. He showed wonderful faith and a willingness to expend himself without limit for his people.

Troops of the communist Viet-Cong entered the village of Ban-Pha on April 15, 1961, where Father Louis Leroy was stationed. They stayed for a few days, asking many questions about the priest. On the morning of April 18th they surrounded the mission, and called Father Leroy out from the Church, where he had just celebrated Mass. They told him that he had to leave and go to Xieng-Khouang. He refused, saying that he wanted to stay with his local community of



Catholics. They demanded that he give him his revolver, and he replied, "I do not need one of those. I have not got one, for I am a priest." He was searched, and all that they found was a handkerchief and a rosary. They searched his house, and then left. Father Leroy went to the chapel to pray, and asked the people to pray also. At 11.30 am a large group of communist forces arrived again and spoke to him. A short time later, dressed in his Oblate cassock and wearing his cincture and cross, but with bare feet and head, he was taken away. Soldiers surrounded the mission, then proceeded to ransack the house and the chapel. An old lady stood in front of the tabernacle to defend it, and was able to frighten the soldiers into not opening it. When they were searching the house, she quickly consumed the Blessed Sacrament, and was able to hand out various Church vessels, chalice and ciborium, to Catholic people to hide. All the villagers were rounded up and subject to a "khosa na" (a propaganda session) in which the priest, his religion and work were attacked. Later the whole mission was pillaged and burned. On the 20th a woman of Ban-Pha saw Father Leroy being taken away into the forest, and a few moments later heard the gunfire of execution. Two days later the locals found his body in a shallow grave, but because of the troops, could not bury it properly. (In 1967 Father Lucien Bouchard was able to visit the area. The resting place of Father Leroy was pointed out to him, and he was able to re-bury his remains). The Sunday after the death of Fr. Leroy one of the Catholics rang the mission Church bell, but only three people came, out of fear of the communists. Many people left the village, never to return, for the soul of the village, Father Louis Leroy, had been destroyed.



**Fr. Michel  
Coquelet,  
O.M.I.  
(1931-1961)**

Born of a large impoverished family in Wignehies, France, August 8, 1931, Michel Coquelet entered the Oblate novitiate at La Brosse-Montceaux and was ordained on February 19, 1956. He was a happy, generous young man of strong faith. Following the completion of his studies he



arrived in Laos around Easter 1957. After language studies in Paksane he was sent to the Xieng-Khouang region where he encountered people of real poverty whom he had the joy to serve in the village of Ban-Pha. The communist Pathet Lao were very active at this time, and it was a dangerous time for Christians especially after the retreat of the royal forces leaving the communists free to pursue their ends. Fr. Coquelet was aware of the situation, but continued his ministry.

On April 15 or 17 Father Michel Coquelet, O.M.I. set out by bicycle for the village of Ban Nam to care for people wounded in the fighting with communist guerrillas. It was a dangerous time to travel, but he felt that he had to go to give the sacraments to those wounded and dying. On the 20th he returned just as fighters pillaged and destroyed the mission house and chapel at Sam Tom. The communists took Fr. Coquelet away to Xieng Khouang. His bicycle was later found in the village of Xop-Xieng, but Father Coquelet was never seen again - a victim of the communist forces moving in Laos. The local people revered him as someone who gave his life on their behalf because of his constant ministering to them in those troubled times.



**Fr. Vincent  
Jean-Marie  
L'Hénoret,  
O.M.I.  
(1921-1961)**

Born on March 12, 1921 at Pont L'Abbé in a part of France well-known for many missionary vocations, Vincent L'Hénoret entered the Oblate novitiate at Pontmain in 1940. Whilst a scholastic at La Brosse-Montecaux he witnessed the massacre of the five Oblates by the Nazis on July 24, 1944. He was deported to the camp of Compigne, but despite all, continued his studies and was ordained on July 1946. The following year he left for the mission of Laos. His first assignment was in Paksane and he proved a willing pastor. In November 1957 he left the Mekong valley to go to the district of Xieng-Khouang and worked in the village of Ban-Ban which at that time had, as well as the few local Catholics, some Thai Deng refugees from

Sam-Neua. It was from here that the communists were spreading their influence and control.

It was the time of the communist take-over in Laos. Early in May 1961, Father Vincent L'Hénoret travelled to Ban Na Tum, five kilometres from Ban Ban. On the evening of May 10 he gathered the Catholics together to hold an instruction class. The next morning he celebrated Mass with the community, and set out to return to Ban Ban. He never arrived.

A woman from Ban Ha Hang, working at some distance from the road later told this story. Father L'Hénoret was riding his bicycle along the road and was stopped by three armed men, and was questioned by them. Some time later she heard three rifle shots, then a few seconds later two more. As the sound of gunfire was common at that time she continued with her work. In the evening as she was returning to the village she came upon a bicycle on the side of the road, then saw the body of Father L'Hénoret lying there, half-covered by his raincoat. She hurried to the village to report it. As it was now dark nothing could be done, but early the next morning the village chief, along with the "tasseng" (the departmental chief) and a group of villagers went to the spot, but the body and the bicycle had disappeared. However, there were traces of blood in the area, despite the heavy overnight rain. Secretly, over the next few days the villagers searched for the body, finding it eventually not far from where the shooting occurred. Father L'Hénoret's body had been thrown into a ditch and only lightly covered. The heavy rain had washed off most of the soil, and his face and an arm were exposed. But, because of fear of the communists, the people could do nothing to bury it properly. The communist authorities later tried to blame the killing on resistance groups, but the local people, and the witness, knew only too well that it was the communist Pathet Lao which was responsible for putting to death this young missionary.



**Fr. Jean  
René Joseph  
Wauthier,  
O.M.I.  
(1926-1967)**

Turned out of their home by the action of the war the Wauthier family left Fourmies in the north of France. Jean Wauthier had been born there on March 22, 1926, and after a period of displacement in the south of France he entered the Oblate novitiate in Pontmain in 1944. He was of robust health with a sense of adventure - he had been a parachutist in his military service. After his ordination on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1949 he completed his studies and a few years later set off for the mission.

Father Wauthier, came to the mission of Vientiane at the end of 1952, and after learning local languages, was sent to Xieng-Khouang province, which was then in the midst of war. He worked in different villages, and in October 1953 became pastor of Ban Nam Mon and Ban Nam Lieng. Here he worked for 13 years, except for a two year period, 1961-1963, when the villages were evacuated because of the fighting. On his return he continued his work of catechizing, looking after the lepers, and caring for the bodily and spiritual health of his villagers. He lived among them as one of them, sharing completely their life, especially the tribulations of the war.

In January 1961, together with Fr. Ollivier, O.M.I., he was taken by the Pathet Lao, and was on the verge of being executed, but was saved at the last moment by the arrival of another band of soldiers. On his return to Ban Na he was greeted with a great outpouring of affection by the people left there. Because of the state of emergency he found it most difficult to travel, but he continued his work with the villagers, the refugees, the lepers abandoned in the forest, and with the many sick and wounded. The war raged around them, and there was the constant danger of communist groups. Father Wauthier was determined to remain with his people. On Saturday, December 16, around 11 pm there was a fierce bombardment. Father Wauthier put on his back-pack, and led two children and three catechists to a safe place by a stream 300 metres from the edge of the village. He told them to hide, to stay silent, and to pray., With his rosary beads in hand, he left them to search out a safer escape route. Suddenly, the small group

heard a shout, “*Kill the priest*”. There was a shot which hit Fr. Wauthier in the neck. He called out, “*Why do you shoot me. Stop. I am wounded*”. The communists answered, “*Shut up!*”. More shots were fired at him. Father Jean Wauthier died in a hail of bullets from the communist guns. The day after his death one of the catechists of the village wrote to the parents of Fr. Jean in France, “*Fr. Jean died because he loved us, and would not abandon us.*”



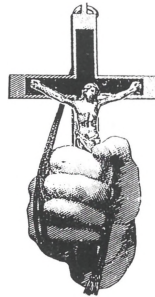
**Fr. Joseph  
Albert Pierre  
Boissel,  
O.M.I.  
(1909-1969)**

A Breton from the small village of Le Laroux, Joseph Boissel arose from strong peasant stock. He had been born on December 20th 1909, and his physical strength was to be both a bonus for him in his missionary work, as it was a wonderment to the Laotian people he served. Ordained on July 4th 1937, he arrived in Laos in October the following year. He worked hard in the Xieng-Khouang region developing the parish of Nong-Het near the border of Viet Nam. However the war destroyed all of this area, and in March 1945 Fr. Boissel became a prisoner of the Japanese. Freed the following year, he returned to his mission and built another community at Ban Pha. Sent to Paksane he became pastor at Nong-Veng, then in 1963 he was moved to Lak-Si to take charge of the villages of Thai Deng and Khmu which were teeming with refugees. Blinded in one eye, he still moved from village to village by jeep.

The small village of Hat-I-Et, Laos, was filled with refugees, and since Easter 1969 had become a dangerous place because of the communist Pathet Lao troops. It was especially dangerous for the priests. The Pathet Lao spread rumours about the missionaries, tried to turn the Catholics against them by organizing “brain-washing” sessions, and made dire threats against the priests. In the village, Fr. Joseph Boissel, O.M.I. continued to care for his people despite the dangers. He was well aware that five of his fellow Oblate missionaries had been killed over the previous years. In the middle of the afternoon of July 5,

1969, together with two women Oblate Missionaries he set out by car to visit the village. A few hours later, at 6.25 pm, a car coming from Muong Kao brought terrible news - the priest's car was found on fire, Fr. Boissel was killed, and the two lady missionaries were missing. A search was begun despite the coming darkness. Finally, the two women, who had been wounded, were found, and then the jeep with the body of Fr. Boissel inside it. The two women missionaries then were able to tell what happened. Shortly after leaving Hat-I-Et three armed Pathet Lao, who had been in waiting, ambushed the priest's jeep, shooting the tyres, which caused it to tip over. One of the men immediately shot Father Boissel. The jeep was set alight, but the two women, despite their injuries, were able to escape into the jungle. The communists were thus able to claim another priest victim in this troubled country.

Father Boissel was buried at Paksane on July 7, mourned by the people he had so bravely served, and who hailed him as a martyr who had poured out his blood for the God he loved.



## LESOTHO

**Fr. Almanzar  
Ménard,  
O.M.I.  
(1906 - 1966)**

On June 3, 1966 the largest crowd ever to gather for a local funeral came together at the Oblate Church in the town of Mazenod, Lesotho. 2000 people packed the Church and overflowed into the grounds. Three bishops with numerous priests led the Requiem Mass for Fr. Almanzar Ménard, O.M.I. whose shocking murder three days before had

stunned the whole nation. Fr. Ménard had been widely loved. He was known as a man of prayer, and was especially revered for the number of priestly and religious vocations he had inspired. There was a deep and evident unease surrounding his death.

A native of Cèdres, Canada, Almanzar Ménard was born on June 14, 1906. After schooling at Valleyfield College he entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, doing his novitiate at Villa Lasalle, and was ordained by Bishop Forbes in Ottawa on June 24, 1934. He was assigned to the mission field of Lesotho (then call Basutoland) and arrived there in late 1935.

His whole life was given to the Basuto people - 31 years of labour and dedication in schools, parishes, social activities, community development projects, care of the poor, the old, the sick, and above all a ministry of word and sacrament. He laboured in seven different missions - Montolivet (1935-36), Hermitage (1936-37), Roma (1937-38), St. Paul (1938-40), Tšepo (1940-50), St. Benedict (1950-64), St. Peter Claver (1964-66) where, on the night of June 30-July 1 he was brutally done to death.

The facts are clear. On the morning of Friday, July 1, 1966, the Feast of the Precious Blood, Fr. Ménard did not arrive at the normal time to celebrate Mass for the Holy Family Sisters at Tsoeneng, 25 miles south of Maseru. One of the sisters went to the priest's residence - a house he himself had built just two years before on coming to the mission. A frightful sight awaited. Fr. Ménard was lying dead amidst a great splattering of blood around the house. A later autopsy revealed that he had been savagely beaten and whipped. He suffered 20 large stab wounds and gashes in his back, and his skull had been smashed in three places.

The agonizing question was - why? The first presumption was that his death occurred in the progress of a robbery - but his watch, radio-set and small change were untouched. Drawers and cupboards had not been opened or searched. It seemed most unlikely that the motive for his death had

been robbery. But then a more sinister motive was suspected - a ritual murder. According to custom, when a person feels lacking in power or position he kills someone whom he regards as a worthy man, a person of importance (or pays for someone to kill for him). Part of the murdered person, e.g. blood or parts of flesh, are then taken and consumed. This is seen as a way to imbibe the spirit, or power, of the murdered person. When Doctor Sigmond examined the body of Fr. Ménard she found clear evidence that a large quantity of blood had been siphoned off from the body and was missing. This, along with the unease in the community, raised the spectre of a ritual murder. Six men were arrested, tried for robbery and murder. They were found guilty of Fr. Ménard's murder. Two were condemned to be hanged, four sentenced to prison terms. But the motive for the murder was never established, and remains unsolved until today. A guarded silence endures.



## PHILIPPINES

**Fr. Nelson  
Javellana,  
O.M.I.  
(1941 - 1971)**

Many priests are blessed with the grace of a long life of service to God and His people. Some, like Fr. Nelson Javellana, are granted just a brief one. Nelson had been born in Kabankalan in Negros Occidental, the Philippines, on November 11, 1941. He entered the Oblate Juniorate in 1957 in Quezon City, Manila, continued to the novitiate, and then on to his priestly studies at San Jose Seminary. As a student he proved to be bright, and his ever-helpful attitude and willingness to work made him very popular. During the years of his theology studies he took a leave of absence for personal reasons. He dedicated this time to



teaching at a high school in Baclocl City, and at the Oblate Notre Dame University in Cotabato City. After two years he returned to the seminary, and was ordained a priest in Baclocl City on April 11, 1971. He started his ministry as assistant priest in the Archdiocese of Cotabato at Esperanza. He was also named Director of the Notre Dame High schools there and in Dukay.

At this time the continuing trouble between Moslem and Christian groups in the area had flared up again. Elections were due, and there was genuine worry, based on past experience, as to the matter of custody of ballot boxes, and also about irregularities in the counting of the votes. A group of the Christian leaders of Esperanza, including Fr. Javellana, was concerned about the justice of the elections. They prepared a petition to the chairman of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) seeking new procedures to ensure a just result. As one of the authors and a signatory of the petition Fr. Javellana set out on November 3, 1971, with a large busload of people, to meet with the government officials concerned. Because of the tense Moslem Christian situation some of the men, but not Fr. Javellana, were armed. The group's intention was to see the Commission chairman to talk about what they saw as Moslem tampering with the previous election. The Comelec chairman arrived on the 5.00pm plane, and the group presented their petition and discussed it at the plane. This done, they set out to return to Esperanza.

A section of the road on the way through Tambunan was steep and muddy, and their bus was proceeding slowly. Suddenly, they were ambushed by an unidentified armed band. Taken by surprise, they were sprayed with heavy automatic gunfire from both sides of the road. Many, including Fr. Javellana, were killed instantly. The rest were attacked, hacked to death, and their clothes and luggage stripped. The local authorities have never identified the murderers.

Thus, Fr. Javellana, working with his people to seek justice in a basic action of democracy, died with them. He had been a priest just short of seven months.



**Bishop  
Benjamin De  
Jesus,  
O.M.I.  
(1940 - 1997)**

“Bishop Ben is dead...murdered!” “It can’t be true...not him” “But he was such a good man” - such were some of the instant reactions heard not only in Jolo and Manila, but as far away as Rome, when the news broke on Tuesday February 4, 1997. Shock, horror, pain, but above all disbelief, welled up. How could this happen to one so transparently good, so genuinely humble, so patently a man of peace? Ben was one of the best of men, loving and loved. Those bullets pumped into him early in the morning in the shadow of his Cathedral wounded many more people than just the bishop.

Benjamin David de Jesus was born, one of six children, on July 25, 1940 at Julong Duhat, Malabon, the Philippines. Never a bright student, Ben struggled hard with his studies at school, but his set purpose, his willingness to work and his cheery disposition carried him through. Two of his sisters became Carmelite nuns, and Ben himself entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1960. Again, he had an uphill struggle with his studies, but once more his dedication won the day. On December 29, 1967, at the cathedral of Cotabato, he was ordained a priest.

Ben then began years of priestly work in parishes and schools. His constant kindness to the little ones of the world, to the less than fortunate, became well-known. He expended all his energies for the people, and always with an infectious smile. He was especially noted for the even-handedness of his pastoral care. Spending the majority of his life on the island of Mindanao, he was well aware of the delicate balance in Christian-Moslem relationships that had to be maintained. In Cotabato and in Jolo he reached out to all in his care, be they Moslem or Christian. He became beloved of both groups, and known as a man of peace. In parish, school or administrative work in the diocese he was fair and just.

In late 1991 Father Ben, as he was affectionately known, received a fresh call to serve. His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, nominated him Vicar Apostolic of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, Bishop of Jolo. After a true interior struggle born of real humility Ben decided to accept this new demand on him. On January 6, 1992, in St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome, he was

ordained a Bishop by the Pope. His new role in the Church called for new vigour, and Bishop Ben, as he instantly became known, was not found wanting. Ever the pastor of the flock, he put himself fully at the service of the people. Among his many concerns was the question of peaceful relations between the Christian and Moslem people of the local area. He was open to all, advising, listening, praying. In this he earned the respect and confidence of all right-minded people. But there were extremists. The bishop received death threats, a bullet was mailed to him, religious were threatened, he was given a full-time police guard. He was called upon to counsel and to calm religious who panicked and who despaired of the local situation. His deep faith consoled many and gave them peace and hope. Bishop Ben persevered in his own work, conscious always of the danger to himself, to his very life. On a visit to the Holy Land less than a month before his murder he carried a cross along the Via Dolorosa. This for him was not just a pious exercise, it was a symbol of his daily living. He knew that he dwelt in the shadow of death.

On Tuesday, February 4, 1997, Bishop Ben had an early morning meeting with the Mayor of Jolo, Hadji Soud Tan, at which peace initiatives were discussed. He left to drive to the Cathedral, arriving about 9.30am. Suddenly his car was blocked by another, and in full daylight two men ran up to his car, and with 45 caliber pistols pumped six bullets into him. As his blood gushed out onto the ground, they escaped in a van. Bishop Ben was dead.

Since that day there have been no clean answers. There was an official enquiry. There are a mass of contradictory statements. Two men have been arrested as suspects. Charges have been made and theories proposed. Evidence has been manipulated, ignored, perverted. Truth seems to have been killed on February 4, 1997 in Jolo just as surely as was Bishop Ben.

One thing only is sure. A man of goodness, a man of peace, a man of compassion was taken away from his people on that sad day.

## **POLAND**

During the Second World War Poland was occupied by the German armies. Poland had been for close on a thousand years a deeply Catholic country. It was only natural that the basic philosophy and excesses of German National Socialism would be opposed by the majority of Poles. This was quite apart from all the political considerations of being occupied by a foreign nation - especially one which had controlled, by earlier conquest, and for many centuries, parts of the nation which traditionally were seen to be Polish, not German.

During the war many thousands of Poles were imprisoned in concentration camps for resistance, for crimes, for religious reasons. The Oblates, like other religious congregations, had members imprisoned and put to death. It is often hard to define accurately the reasons for imprisonment and death - both on the part of the persons suffering and on the part of the perpetrators. Motives are always mixed. In the tensions and disorder of a conquered country, and in the forced relationships with an occupying army, the easily-identifiable attribute of religious belonging can be a convenient catch-all or excuse for oppression. Leaders of the Polish Church were clearly a focus for and symbol of opposition, and the Germans were sensitive to this, especially because of the traditional high profile of priests in Poland, and the respect of the people for them. The Church was also a strong voice against the cruelties and excesses of the Nazis. For Polish priests and religious resistance to these evils went beyond political considerations, important though these were. For them resistance was a moral question - a matter of conscience.

Of the 277 Oblates in the Province of Poland at the outbreak of World War II, 35 were put into concentration camps and 15 of these were either killed or died in prison. These concentration camps were frequently places of inhuman cruelty, both physical and psychological. Starvation, beatings, disease, constant death, indignities,

injustice, fear, torture, degradation, hopelessness - these were the daily lot of the internees. And our Polish Oblates were made victims of this heinous system, in which outrage upon outrage against human beings was the norm. Of the deaths of our Oblates in these camps we recount the details that we have been able to glean. The recital of bare facts cannot tell the real story of horrendous suffering. These accounts are given in chronological order of the deaths of the men.

**Fr. Marian  
Wyduba,  
O.M.I.**

- born: November 13, 1909, Patarzyca, Poland  
- died: December 18, 1939, Gniezno, Poland

Marian Wyduba had been ordained a priest on January 29, 1933, and was immediately stationed at the parish of Markowice. On September 18, 1939 there was a resistance action at Markowice in which 15 Germans were killed. In retaliation for this there was a sweep made of the area by the Germans and, among others, Fathers Wyduba, Cebula, Nawrat and Wrobel of the community of Markowice were arrested and sent to the concentration camp at Strzelno. The latter three were released, but Fr. Wyduba was kept.

Whilst there he was regarded as somewhat of a hero by other prisoners because of his cheerfulness and encouragement of others. On December 18, without warning, a truck arrived at the prison. Fr. Wyduba was whisked away hurriedly and without explanation, taken to some woods close to Strzelno and shot. After the war his body was exhumed and reburied.



**Fr Jan Finc,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Siemion, Poland, September 6, 1910  
- died: Kielce, Poland, June 28, 1940

Ordained a priest on April 8, 1934, Fr. Finc became superior of the Oblate house of Swiety Krzysz. On April 3.

1940, the Gestapo arrived to investigate all the members of the community, and with three others Jan was taken to the prison camp at Kielce, accused of helping Polish partisans. He was never seen again. According to German official records, he was condemned by a war tribunal and shot on June 28, 1940, probably at Kielce.



**Novice Jan  
Szomocki**

- born: Starogard Pomorski, Poland, January 22, 1919  
- died: Gusen, Austria, September 10, 1940

This young man had been in the Oblate juniorate at Lubliniec, and started his novitiate year in September 1939. On May 4, 1940 he was taken to Szczeglin prison, then moved to Dachau concentration camp in Germany, before being transferred to the feared Gusen camp in Austria. He died from maltreatment in that prison on September 10, 1940. He was just 21 years old.



**Scholastic  
Alfons  
Manka,  
O M I**

- born: Lisowice, Poland, October 21, 1917  
- died: Gusen, Austria, January 21, 1941

Having finished his novitiate at Markowice, Alfons made his first vows as an Oblate on September 8, 1938, and commenced his studies for the priesthood at the scholasticate at Krobia. On October 10, 1939 he was placed under house arrest and put into forced labour. On June 4, 1940, along with other scholastics and novices he was sent to the concentration camp at Szczeglin. He was later transferred to Dachau, and then to Gusen. It is reported that he died from utter exhaustion there, January 21, 1941.



**Fr. Joseph  
Cebula,  
O.M.I.  
1902 - 1941**

- born: Malnia, Poland (then, Germany), March 23, 1902
- died: Mauthausen, Poland, April 28, 1941

*As the Cause of Canonization of Fr. Joseph Cebula has been introduced and is already progressing to beatification, along with a large group of other priests and religious who died in similar circumstances, a fuller picture of the life of Fr. Cebula and the details of his death are given here.*

### **Early life, Ordination, Ministry**

Joseph Cebula was born March 23, 1902, at Malnia, in the parish of Otmet, diocese of Opole. His parents were Adrian Cebula and Rosalia Buhl. He was the oldest of three sons, and after primary school he attended Catholic High School at Opole (1916-1918). Because of sickness (lung and stomach problems) he had to interrupt his studies, but was able to continue his schooling. In September 1920 he entered the Minor Seminary of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Krotoszyn, and finished High School. On August 14, 1921, he commenced his novitiate at Markowice. For his first year of philosophy he was sent to Liège in Belgium, but did his second year of philosophy and 4 years of theology at Lubliniec, Poland. He was ordained a priest June 5, 1927. He had already begun to teach at the Minor Seminary at Lubliniec in 1923 whilst still a seminarian, and this continued up until 1931. From 1931-1937 he was Superior of the Minor Seminary. During this time he served as confessor to many convents of sisters. In August 1937 he was named Superior and Novice Master of the Oblate Novitiate at Markowice.

### **Joseph Cebula, Religious and Priest**

Joseph Cebula made a lasting impression on his fellow religious and on the people with whom he came into contact. He was seen as a man of prayer, faithful in the living of his religious life, always understanding and kind, a peacemaker. As a confessor he was much sought after, and

he dispensed the Sacrament with kindness. He spent most of his priestly life in formation of the young. They knew him as a friend, a help in trouble, someone who relaxed and joked with them, but who was at the same time a man of holiness and a model of Oblate life. As Novice Master for five years he found himself facing the difficult period of the German invasion of Poland. Despite the problems, he moved ahead single-mindedly, leading in the ways of holiness. In the 100-strong community he created an atmosphere of tranquillity and prayer, and he always promoted the vocation to the priesthood as a holy and wonderful calling.

### **Life under the Germans: Persistence in Ministry: Arrest**

On October 25th 1939 the invading German army placed the community of Markowice under house arrest, and forced them to work producing food for the troops. Fr. Cebula went along with this, but always saw the religious life of his community as paramount. On October 31, 1940 all were ordered to quit their house within three hours, and it was turned into a camp for Hitler Youth. The Oblate community was dispersed, and left to fend for itself with little resources. Fr. Cebula, despite the daily difficulties and the reign of fear, maintained in his own quiet way, a courageous independence.

When on Dec. 7th 1939 orders had been given to destroy statues of the Madonna in wayside shrines, he refused. When priests were forbidden to minister, he continued to celebrate Mass in secret late at night. In disguise he travelled around, despite army patrols, visiting the sick, performing marriages, baptising, administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr. Cebula was called personally before the local German authorities and was expressly forbidden to carry out his priestly functions. On February 10, 1941, the prohibition was reiterated more strongly against priestly ministry, but he continued to exercise his priesthood. He was found out and, on April



2nd, he was arrested and sent to the camp at Inowroclaw. Five days later, on April 7, 1941, he was transferred to the notorious concentration camp of Mauthausen.

### **Mauthausen, A Time of Suffering**

Because of his persistence in exercising his priestly ministry, Joseph Cebula became an object of special cruelty in the concentration camp right from the moment of his arrival. Even as he changed into prison clothes he was beaten savagely by the guards, and twelve prisoners who worked in the clothing store were ordered to beat him around the head. Immediately after this, as soon as he arrived at his cell block, two German guards with large batons took him to the bathroom area where they beat him for an hour, during which he lost consciousness several times. They then threw him a rope and told him that he may as well hang himself as he was going to be killed anyway. That very same night he was dragged from bed, taken again to the bathrooms and beaten once more.

This kind of savagery was repeated over 10 times during the 20 days leading up to his death. Constantly the German guards ridiculed his priesthood. Regularly they came to the barracks, ordered him to sing hymns and recite prayers as they mocked and beat him. Failing to break his spirit, they put him to work at the hardest task in the camp, breaking stones in the quarry. They gave him an extra large hammer, almost impossible to lift, and continued to harass him, ordering him to sing the Preface of the Mass out loud as he worked. They continued to beat him, and one fellow prisoner who witnessed all this cruelty testified, *“He wasn’t there to work really, but only to be persecuted. He was in reality condemned to death. There wasn’t a spot on his whole body that was not a mass of bruises”*. Despite all this, Joseph Cebula sought to help others. He remained dignified, and inspired dignity. He shared what little food he had, sometimes giving it all away to others. He spoke courageously to the guards and prayed for their conversion.



## Death

On April 28th Oberschaafuehrer Spatz, with others, set about tormenting him again. He was ordered to run towards the “no go” area of the camp. Each time he got there they shouted to him “Stop!”. Over and over again he was forced to face this brutal uncertainty. A last time as he got to the line they shouted “Go forward!”. He did. A volley of shots rang out. Eight bullets tore into his head and shoulders. His body was thrown into the crematorium.



**Fr. Ludwik  
Kasalka,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Konyta, Poland, August 8, 1914
- died: Dachau, Germany, June 7, 1941

Having progressed through his formation in the Oblate juniorate, novitiate, and scholasticate, Ludwick Kasalka was ordained a priest at Obra on September 11, 1938, and assigned to the Oblate house at Poznan. During the first few months of the war he was sent to help out as an assistant in a parish near Zabikowo. He was arrested in early 1940, and sent to the concentration camp at Dachau in Germany. He was a robust man who relished physical work. Because of his strength he was able to work well in the prison camp, at least in the beginning, thus avoiding the usual beatings by the guards. However, he overworked, and together with the lack of right food, his health began to fail. A period of quarantine because of sickness led to a collapse. He could no longer walk and was confined to bed. He suffered terribly, but tried to maintain outer good cheer. But finally, on June 7, 1941, he died of malnutrition.



**Fr. Pawel  
Kulawy,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Lesnica, Poland (then, Germany), June 24, 1977
- died: Auschwitz, Poland, August 21, 1941

After novitiate in Holland, and priestly studies in Germany at the Oblate scholasticate of Hünfeld, Pawel Kulawy was

ordained on May 8, 1902. His elder brother, Jan Wilhem, was already an Oblate priest. He spent the first years of his priesthood in western Canada, leaving there to become one of the foundation members of the new province of Poland. After working in houses at Krotoszyn, Krobia and Lubliniec, he was named superior and rector of the scholasticate at Obra. He later became first pastor of the parish of Koden, and then joined the mission-preaching band at Poznan. In 1938 he was transferred to Swiety Krzycz. In April 1940 the Germans requisitioned the house, and he was imprisoned at the notorious concentration camp at Auschwitz, being given the prison number of 19082. He died there exhausted on August 21, 1941. After his death his body was brought to the gas ovens to be burnt. The trays for sliding the bodies in had been working well. When they tried to slide in the body of Fr. Pawel the mechanism would not work. Despite all their efforts, no one could get it to function properly. So, they took his body outside and buried it. The system for sliding bodies into the gas ovens immediately started to work correctly for the next body.



**Fr. Jan  
Wilhelm  
Kulawy,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Lesnica. Poland (then, Germany), May 15, 1872  
- died: Auschwitz, Poland, September 10, 1941

Jan Wilhelm Kulawy was sent for his major priestly studies to the Oblate seminary in Ottawa, Canada, and after his ordination on May 4, 1898 he continued his studies earning a licentiate in theology. Because of his long and varied work, including many new and foundational efforts, he is remembered as one of the pioneer Polish Oblates - and that in two countries. His first work after ordination was with the many Polish immigrants in Canada, especially around St. Boniface in Manitoba. For reasons of health he returned to Europe in 1904, and after recuperation in Germany, he continued to preach missions and retreats in Germany and in Poland. In 1921, after teaching at the juniorate a Krotoszyn he became superior there. He toured Canada and

the U.S.A. from 1924 preaching retreats and raising funds for the Polish province. In 1927 he returned to Poland to the mission preaching band at Poznan. In 1936 he was sent in charge to the sanctuary of St. Croix. Despite his advanced age, he was arrested by the Gestapo on July 10, 1941 and sent to the concentration camp of Auschwitz. He lasted only two months there, and died of ill treatment on September 10, 1941 - a tragic end for an outstanding Oblate.



**Scholastic  
Mieczyslaw  
Frala, O.M.I.**

- born: Krotoszyn. Poland, October 10, 1920  
- died: Gusen, Austria, December 9, 1941

Mieczyslaw had made his first vows as an Oblate on August 7, 1938, and was studying philosophy when he was placed under house arrest with the rest of the students at Markowice and sent to forced labour on a German farm. In May 1940 he was sent first to Szczeglin prison, then to Dachau, and finally to Gusen. He fell ill from overwork, and then on December 9, 1942 he was gassed to death in a mobile gassing wagon.



**Fr Jan  
Pawolek,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Stary Popielow, Poland (then, Germany), July 10, 1882  
- died: Auschwitz, Poland, February 28, 1942

After seminary studies at Hünfeld, Germany, Fr. Jan Pawolek was ordained on May 9, 1907. He became one of the renowned preachers of missions in Germany and Poland. He was a prodigious worker, and was known far and wide for his good humour and fund of stories. He excelled also as a community man. Besides his preaching he was also responsible for establishing the monthly publication "Oblat Niepokalanej", and he also edited a

number of books on missionary themes. He was a man of many talents. He was still engaged in a variety of publishing endeavours when he was arrested by the Germans on January 8, 1940. He was later released, and was sent to the Oblate house of Swiety Krzyz. There was a constant fear of arrest by the Germans, and Fr. Pawolek's cheerfulness was welcome. He helped in no small measure to uplift the spirits of the community. He was arrested again on July 18, 1941, and sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. Marked with the prison number of 19025, this good man died there on February 28, 1942.



**Novice  
Ludwik  
Janski**

- born: Zurawiniec, Poland, January 17, 1918
- died: Gusen, Austria, April 22, 1942

Whilst still a novice at Markoice, Ludwik was placed under house arrest with all the community and made to work on the farm providing food for the German occupying forces. On May 4, 1940, he was sent by the Gestapo to Szczeglin prison, transferred to Dachau, then to Gusen in Austria. He was put to work there, but was killed with an injection of petrol on April 22, 1942.



**Brother  
Tomasz  
Kozierowski,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Wszalow, Poland, December 5, 1906
- died: Auschwitz, Poland, May 1, 1942

When Tomasz was 30 years old he entered the Oblates at Markowice, making his first vows on February 17, 1936. His first appointment was to Krobia, but in mid-July 1940 he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned at Jarocin. He was later transferred to Poznan, and then to the Auschwitz camp. He died there on May 1, 1942 from the rigours of prison life.

**Fr. Jozef  
Kocot,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Opole, Poland, March 1, 1910
- died: Dachau, Germany, December 29, 1942

Following his initial years of formation in Poland Jozef Kocot was sent to Rome for his philosophical and theological studies, making his final vows there on August 15, 1931. On completion of his studies he returned to Poland and was ordained a priest on July 1, 1934 at Poznan. He taught philosophy at the Oblate scholasticate at Obra, and then spent 1936-38 at the Catholic University at Lublin to further his studies in theology. He was sent to Krobia to continue teaching. At the outset of the war he was visiting his parents at Ostrzeszow, and in October 1941 he was arrested and sent to the concentration camp of Dachau in Germany. Despite his uncertain health, all went well at the beginning, but on November 11, 1942 he was taken to be used as a guinea pig in “medical experiments” at the notorious centre at Auschwitz. These shattered his health. The wounds and incisions made in the experiments were not allowed to heal because of the experiments and remained open. He suffered terrible agonies. Finally, because of this horrendous barbarity, he died during the night of December 28/29, 1942.



**Fr. Antoni  
Leszczyk,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Radzionkow, Poland, December 21, 1908
- died: Majdanek, Poland, May 31, 1943

Ordained on June 17, 1934, Fr. Leszczyk worked before the war as chaplain to the local prison in Swietz Krzyz. When the war broke out he was sent as assistant priest to the neighbouring parish of Slupia Nowa. In 1943 he was arrested on the vague charge of “anti-German activity” and deported to the concentration camp at Majdanek, near Lublin. He never survived. The only detail we have of his death is the date - May 31, 1943.



**Fr. Jozef  
Cal,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Bukawnica, Poland, March 17, 1911

- died: Dachau, Germany, June 7, 1943

Jozef Cal showed exceptional brilliance during his studies in philosophy, and was sent to Rome to continue his studies for the priesthood. He attended the Angelicum and completed the licentiate in theology, and was ordained on July 14, 1935. Returning to the Oblate scholasticate at Obra he taught theology during 1938-39. He was a first-rate professor and was well liked by the seminarians. On January 27, 1940, he was taken by the Germans and sent first to the concentration camp at Komerova, then to Land, and finally to Dachau in May. After three months there he was sent to Gusen where he worked as slave labour in the rock quarries. He was sent back to Dachau, where the savage conditions, the lack of proper food, and the harsh treatment by those in charge took a terrible toll on his health. He contracted tuberculosis, and died on June 7, 1943.

### **Other Polish Casualties: 1942-1943**

Apart from those Oblates who died or were killed in German concentration camps during the Second World War, two other Polish Oblates died during these years, and their deaths are worthy of note. One had a very short life as a priest, but lost it in caring for the sick. The other gave his life for his priesthood after an excruciating death.

**Fr. Czeslaw  
Bartosz,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Topola Wielka, Poland, October 12, 1909

- died: Slupia Stara, Poland, October 5, 1942

Czeslaw Bartosz was born in a small village, part of the parish of Ostraw Wielkopolski. He entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and made his first vows on the feast of the Assumption 1929, confirming these with his final vows in 1932. After his philosophical and theological studies he

was ordained a priest on June 17, 1934. His initial obedience was to parish work, and in 1942, whilst the war was raging, he was stationed at the parish of Slupia Stara. Because of the emergency conditions and the lack of ready medical supplies there was an increased risk of infection and illness. There was an outbreak of typhoid fever in the town. Despite the known risks Fr. Bartosz insisted on visiting the sick and bringing them the Sacraments. Almost inevitably, he contracted the disease, and died on October 5, 1942.



**Fr. Ludwik  
Wrodarczyk,  
O.M.I.**

- born: Radzionkow, Poland, August 25, 1927  
- died: Okopy, Ukraine (then, U.S.S.R.), c. December 8, 1943

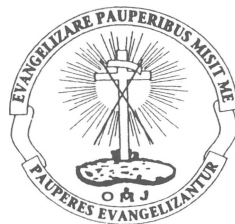
Louis Wrodarczyk was a small farmer and coal miner, so his son, Ludwik, grew up close to the soil. He displayed an early sense of God, and despite the misgivings of his father, he chose to enter the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and was ordained June 10, 1933. He served first for two years in a parish, working prodigiously, despite his indifferent health. His next assignment took him as a director to the Oblate Juniorate, where he added the task of preaching parish missions - both of which he excelled in. Just as the war broke out he was appointed pastor of the new parish of Okopy, two kilometres inside the Russian border. He proved an outstanding pastor whose charity knew no bounds. He brought life to the parish and to surrounding villages, unity and cooperation between Poles and Ukrainians, helped refugees from the Nazis, and was a profound example to all of prayer and dedication. His holiness is still remembered.

The World War stirred up tensions and re-opened old historical wounds. Okopy was in the midst of the Polish-Ukrainian, the Roman-Orthodox dividing lines. In early December 1943 Ukrainian forces swept into Okopy, killing those villagers who had not already hidden in the forest.



Father Wrodarczyk remained in the Church, and was seized and flogged. He was taken to the camp of his captors, stripped naked, in the midst of freezing winter weather, and made to tend their wounded. But anger and hatred for this Roman Catholic priest boiled over, and he was tortured almost continuously for two days. He was flogged, he was tied to a tree as if crucified and used as target practice, without killing him, spikes were stuck into his flesh, and his feet were burned with hot irons. A group of the women tried to get him to copulate with them, and he responded by falling on his knees in prayer. The women then put him onto a table, cut open his chest to expose his heart. He lay there alive for over twelve hours. Finally he was taken outside and cut in two with a cross-cut saw, while bullets were fired into him.

Ludwik may have been arrested by the Ukrainians because he was a Pole, but it is abundantly clear that he was put to death because he was a priest. All the Polish prisoners taken on the night the bandits swept into Okopy were killed straight away. But Ludwik Wrodarczyk, the priest, was saved for cruel tortures. The Ukrainian Orthodox clergy were married, but Ludwig being of the Latin Rite, was celibate. It was on this very point that a group of women attacked him. His refusal to cooperate led directly to his frightful death. He was a veritable model and martyr of celibacy. Ludwik Wrodarczyk when he wished to enter the seminary, had said to his reluctant father, "I will be a priest, if only for an hour". The short few years of his priesthood were glorious both in their achievements and in their ending. The Cause for his canonization was introduced officially in 1998.



L.J.C. et M.I.

## SPAIN

### Spain in the lead up to 1936-39

The years 1936-1939 were years of great agony for the Catholic Church in Spain. The Church was inextricably entwined in the realities of Spanish society at that time, as it had been for centuries - centuries which showed the glory of the Church in the extraordinary flowering of holiness in a galaxy of Spanish saints: centuries which were stained with the horrors of the rabidness of the Spanish Inquisition. The Church in Spain, as in all countries, has to live with the truth of its own history.

The more recent history of Spain was a prelude to the Church's fate in the 1930's. From early 1800 Spain and the Church had lived through years of turmoil, starting with the influence of the extremist ideas of the French revolutionaries resulting in a persecution of the Church, and then the War of Independence against Napoleon (1808-13). 1820 saw a further revolution, with the war between the Carlists and the liberals. 1854-56 brought a further suppression of the Church with the liberalist period.

Revolts of 1868 and the first Republic of 1873-74 left an anti-church legacy. The Church itself, not yet fully recovered from its own internal splits produced by Bourbon Regalism, fell into rival groups of Liberal Conservatives and Liberal Catholics. This did not help to stem the poison of anti-clericalism which had grown among workers' movements since 1843. The first decades of the twentieth century were marked by alternating restrictions by liberal governments and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-30) which gave an uneasy religious peace. The new Republic was born in 1931, and again the Church was attacked - convents burned in Madrid and Malaga, the Jesuits dissolved again, the Primate of Toledo expelled, state confiscation of all Church goods. A Catholic reaction under Jose Maria Gil Robles in 1933 brought some relief, but was not able to change the wide-spread anti-clericalism.

In February 1936 communist revolutionary forces began a push for domination with a regime of anarchy and terror. The Nationalist Movement, under General Francisco Franco, arose to combat the political and social climate created by the Republic. Spain was truly struggling within its own borders. It was in this atmosphere of very mixed history that the Oblates lost 22 men by firing squad.

### **The Oblates in Spain**

French Oblates had first come to Spain in 1882 as chaplains to the Holy Family Sisters in Madrid. Two other houses were established, including a juniorate, but because of later financial problems in France, the Spanish houses were transferred to the U.S. Province of Texas. The three houses of Spain - juniorate, novitiate, scholasticate - were administered from Texas, but placed under the local care of a Vicar Provincial, Fr. Francisco Esteban. But, on December 8, 1932 the houses of Spain, along with those of Uruguay, were combined and established into a Vice-Province, and Fr. Esteban was named Vice-Provincial. In its very first years the Vice-Province was to undergo an horrendous baptism of blood.

### **Horrors of 1936-1939**

The Oblate houses in Spain were all within the first territory taken over by the Marxist guerrillas, who quickly established a reign of terror and committed a host of almost unbelievable atrocities. Rage went wild. The Cathedral of Madrid and numerous churches and religious houses were pillaged and destroyed. Libraries and archives were burned. Bodies of religious were dug up and desecrated. There were wholesale executions without trial. Anarchy ruled. Apart from the deaths and casualties caused directly by the war itself, there are documented cases of 85,940 individual assassinations. Most of these were of lay people summarily tortured and murdered just for being Catholics, for having a crucifix, for carrying a rosary. Records are extant of 6,832

bishops, priests, religious who were murdered, often after degrading and bestial assaults, as well as numerous others who disappeared and whose fate is uncertain. This blood-letting also washed over the Oblates and engulfed them.

### **Oblate Martyrs**

The Oblate Spanish scholasticate was (and still is) at Pozuelo, a short drive from Madrid. The community was drawn from various parts of Spain - professors, recently ordained scholastic priests, brothers and seminarians. None were involved actively in guerrilla activity, but the local officials of the red "Popular Front" were determined to get rid of the Oblates. From July to November 1936 the Oblates were hunted, imprisoned and executed. Their executions occurred on four separate occasions:

**July 24, 1936** - near the town of Aravaca, seven Oblates were shot:

- Pascual Alaéz Medina - scholastic
- Juan Pedro Cotillo Fernández - scholastic
- Justo González Lorente - scholastic
- Manuel Gutiérrez Martín - scholastic
- Juan Antonio Pérez Mayo - professor of philosophy
- Francisco Polvorinos Gómez - scholastic
- Cecilio Vega Domínguez - scholastic

**November 7, 1936** - in Paracuellos del Jarama, one Oblate shot:

- José Vega Riaño - professor of dogmatic theology

**November 8, 1936** - in Soto de Aldovea, one Oblate shot:

- Serviliano Riaño Herrero - scholastic

**November 28, 1936** - in Paracuellos del Jarama, thirteen Oblates shot:

- Vicente Blanco Guadilla - Superior of Scholasticate
- Ángel Bocos - coadjutor brother
- Juan José Caballero Rodríguez - scholastic

- Gregorio Escobar García - scholastic priest
- Francisco Esteban Lacal - priest, Vice-Provincial
- Justo Fernández Gonzalez - scholastic
- Justo Gil Pardo - scholastic
- Daniel Gómez Lucas - scholastic
- José Guerra Andrés - scholastic
- Eleuterio Prado Villarroel - coadjutor brother
- Publio Rodríguez Moslares - scholastic
- Clemente Rodríguez Tejerina - scholastic
- Marcelino Sánchez Fernández - coadjutor brother

### **The first Martyred Group**

These deaths were spread out over a six-month period. On July 22 the communist troops invaded and occupied the scholasticate at Pozuelo. Searching the house they found photos of Mussolini and Pius XI, who together had signed the Lateran Treaty. Taking this as evidence of fascist sympathies they struck. At 3.30 in the morning on July 24, they roused the community, called out seven of the men, bundled them into cars and took them away, without explanation. A layman, Candido Castán who had been sheltering in the house was also taken with them. The details of their deaths are somewhat unclear. It appears that they were taken to the adjacent town of Aravaca, and at 4.30am were shot, along with a group of others. This became clear when the remains of Candido Castán were identified by his widow and family in 1939. All had been thrown into a hole in a field.

### **Oblates on the run**

On the afternoon of the same day the 33 remaining members of the community were taken to prisons in Madrid, and the scholasticate building itself was also turned into a prison for others. On July 25, in the reigning confusion and chaos of the time, all the Oblates were released from prison. Some went to the Provincial house in Madrid, some to their families, some to boarding houses.

On August 9 the Provincial house was occupied and all were thrown out. The Oblates there at the time took refuge in a boarding-house in Carrera de San Jerónimo.

Because of the anarchy and lack of discipline of the various guerrilla groups that ranged wildly through the country, people were arrested, released, re-arrested, shuffled from prison to prison, accused, pursued, or shot without rhyme or reason. As for the Oblates - they were in and out of various prisons, many escaping death simply because the prison they were in did not attract the attention of other communist groups on a particular day. Others died because they were in certain prisons on certain days.

### **Two individual Martyrs**

On October 10, Fr. José Vega, professor of dogmatic theology of the Oblate seminary, was picked up and put into Modelo jail. On the 13th all the Oblates sheltering in the house of Juan José Vallejo were put into Modelo prison, and on the 15th the same happened to the group from the boarding-house of Carrera de San Jerónimo. On November 7 a large group of prisoners, numbering around 1600, were taken from the Modelo jail and executed at various sites, within the prison and at Paracuellos del Jarama and Soto de Aldovea. Fr. Vega was among those killed. He was shot with more than 1000 prisoners, including 29 other priests from various religious orders and congregations, on the evening of November 7 at Paracuellos del Jarama. His body was later identified in the common cemetery there.

On November 8 (or 7?) the young Oblate scholastic, Serviliano Riaño Herrero, who had been in the Modelo prison was called out in the morning roll call of those to be taken out and shot. As he passed a cell with priests in it he called out "Give me absolution. This is my hour". He also called to another Oblate student, Porfirio Fernández (who ultimately survived), "If you see my parents, greet them for me". He walked out to his fate with calmness.

With others he was taken out to a forest thicket near Aldovea and shot there. His body was discovered on December 28, 1939.

### **The final Group**

On November 15, all the Oblates held in the Modelo prison were transferred to San Anton prison. There were still 15 Oblates there. Fr. Delfin Monje and the scholastic Juan Jose Cincunegui were moved out to be shot with 28 other prisoners on the night of November 27. However, a passing cavalry captain saved them by having the whole group transferred to the military jail of Alcala de Henares. These two men lived a long life of Oblate ministry and service, mindful always of the fate that was nearly theirs.

There were still 13 Oblates in the jail of San Anton. On November 28, they were taken by truck along the Aragon highway, and dropped near a bridge over the Jarama river. The Vice-Provincial, Fr. Francisco Esteban Lacal, was among them, as well as Fr. Vicente Blanco Guadilla, superior of the scholasticate. In addition there were 8 scholastics and 3 coadjutor brothers. An eye-witness to their murder later gave an account of what transpired in their last moments. With great calmness, Fr. Escobar, realizing that death was imminent, asked the militia if he could gather his men and give them absolution. His request was granted. There, on the slope of the hill, they embraced one another, knelt and received absolution. Fr. Escobar then called out in a loud voice: "*We know that you kill us for being Catholics or religious; so we are. I, as well as my companions, pardon you with all our hearts. Long live Christ the King*". There was a burst of gunfire, and thirteen Oblates lay dead.

The 22 Spanish Oblates who were martyred during those dreadful days represented a third of the men of the Vice-Province. They ranged in age from 18 to 44. The Cause for their canonization was formally introduced by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1998.



## SRI LANKA

**Fr. Michael  
Rodrigo,  
O.M.I.  
(1927 - 1987)**

Michael Rodrigo was born on June 30, 1927, in Dehiwla, Sri Lanka, and after joining the Oblates in 1947, was sent to the International Scholasticate in Rome for studies. He was ordained in 1954, then he taught at the National Seminary in Kandy. In 1959 he came back to Rome again to complete his doctorate in philosophy.

After teaching for some years at a “School for Ministers” in Badulla diocese, Michael, with two Salvatorian Sisters became involved with a “Christian-Buddhist Fellowship and Dialogue Centre” in the village of Buttala. This was an apostolate of Christian presence among the people. In conjunction with Buddhist monks and lay people, the group started to work for action for local peasant farmers in promoting peace and fraternity. Michael himself looked for opportunities to present their case on the international scene, and travelled widely - Seoul, Ottawa, Bangkok, San Francisco. The Centre, whilst appreciated by many, also caused controversy and opposition, so much so that during 1987 there was debate as to whether it should be closed.

It was in this atmosphere of controversy that Fr. Rodrigo’s death occurred. On November 10, 1987, he was celebrating the Eucharist in the small chapel in Buttala. The two Salvatorian Sisters were assisting. As the Mass ended a shot was fired from the window behind the altar killing Michael instantly. One of the Sisters was also wounded in the shoulder.

To this day the riddle of his tragic death has not been solved. Was it something personal? Was it in retaliation for the sensitizing work that the Centre was engaged in? Was it a message from those opposed to the thrust of the Centre? Theories abound, and many hypotheses have been advanced. But there is still no sure answer. Some day, it is hoped, the truth, the motivation for that bullet, will be discovered, for it is ironic that the man shot was dedicated to peace and fraternity.

## ZAIRE

**Fr. Gerard  
Defever,  
O.M.I.  
(1920 - 1964)**

**Fr. Nicholas  
Hardy,  
O.M.I.  
(1919 - 1964)**

**Fr. Pierre  
Laebens,  
O.M.I.  
(1920 - 1964)**

In Zaire in 1963 a group of young men (“Jeunesse”) were organized to overthrow the government. They were led by one called Muhele, who had been trained in revolutionary tactics and philosophy in communist China. As the year progressed there were increasing acts of sabotage and disruption. The Catholic Church was in danger of becoming a special target as the group influenced by communist principles, saw the Church as an obstacle. In the Jeunesse groups there were two factions as regards the Church. One was extremist, eager to kill and to destroy the Church; another, more moderate, wanted to spare the missionaries who had worked so hard for the common people and brought so many benefits to them. In January 1964 there were increasing danger signals - attacks on missions, arson, murders. On January 22, 1964 tragedy struck the Oblate mission at Kilembe.

The mission at Kilembe, was a large and flourishing concern. It had a beautiful church, priests’ residence, primary schools, a college, Sisters’ convent, a hospital, dispensary, student residences. The Oblate community consisted of the superior, Fr. Gerard Defever, Fr. Nicholas Hardy, teacher at the college, Fr. Louis Sebrechts and a recently arrived Belgian missionary, Fr. Vandenberghe, who on January 22 happened to be away in Ngashi. Fr. Pierre Laebens from Idiofa was visiting the mission at that time. He had arrived on the 18th, hurt his leg, which was then put in plaster. He could not return to his own mission because of this. Three of these men were to be caught up in the horror of Kilembe.

Fr. Gerard Defever, born in Belgium on May 10, 1920 was assigned to Zaire, and had been appointed superior of the mission in August 1963. He was a seasoned missionary. Fr. Nicholas Hardy, born on January 27, 1919 also in Belgium, was a man known for his cheery manner, for his zeal and his great willingness to be of service to others. Fr. Pierre Laebens, also a Belgian, was born on March 20, 1920. He was an idealist, a man of deep piety, quiet and hard-working.

Despite a marked increase in tension, and many danger signals of the activity of the rebel groups, the Oblates at Kilembe stayed at their post. All seemed calm and normal during the day of January 22. What happened that night was related subsequently by eye-witnesses, mostly by the Sisters of the mission, who escaped the slaughter. All had retired for the night. About 11.00pm two Congolese came out of the dark and doused the door of the superior's room with petrol, and a fire bomb (molotov cocktail) was thrown against the residence. Fr. Defever jumped up just as two men called out "*Help!*", and a band of 50 or 60 armed men swarmed out of the bush attacking the house, smashing windows, forcing the doors, throwing more petrol. They called out "*Stop. Stay where you are!*". The sisters from the convent heard the noise and saw the flames. They fled to a storage shed of the college, about 30 metres from their convent, spending the night huddled there hearing all the shouts and the pillage, but unable to help. It was only at dawn, when there was silence, that they dared to come out. They ran straight to their convent, which had been left alone, and went to the chapel to thank God for their deliverance. Just then two people came running, crying out, "*Sisters, come quickly. They have killed all our priests, massacred them like animals*". The sisters rushed out to a scene of horror.

The priests' residence was destroyed, furniture piled up and burned. There was no sign of the priests. They searched the ruins in vain. But then, behind the smouldering ruins of the house, they found them - three mutilated bodies strewn on the grass. Fr. Defever's body was lying in a heap. He had been wearing pyjamas, dressing-gown and slippers, as he seemed to have been able to get out of bed before he was attacked. He had deep slashes in his head, his arm and leg were hacked, one leg crushed, his face and jaw smashed. Fr. Hardy's body was found under a raincoat, one arm extended like the figure of Christ on the cross. One hand was cut off, his legs speared. The body of Fr. Laebens was found nearby horribly mutilated. Already with a leg in plaster, his head had been smashed with an axe. He was covered in stab wounds, and his right arm had been chopped off and was missing. It was never found.

**Oblate  
Witnesses: a  
Final Word**

Fr. Paul Macréam a Congolese Oblate, had survived, as also Fr. Sebrechts, by hiding in another part of the mission. They joined the sisters in the gruesome task of collecting the remains of the three massacred priests to bury them. Gathering what pieces they could find, they put the three dismembered bodies together and buried then in one grave in front of the church. They lie there - an eloquent, but sad, testimony of the ultimate sacrifice that a missionary can make in the service of announcing the Gospel.

When one reads even the briefest account of the deaths of these 68 Oblates of Mary Immaculate one cannot but be stirred by the witness given by such a variety of men over so long a period. And that witness is always the same - openness to God's will, dedication to ministry, love of the people served. These perennial anchors of the religious and priestly vocation held firm in the faith of these men who were, especially in their suffering, surprized by joy - the same joy of which Christ spoke when he prayed that "my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). As sons of their Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, O.M.I., they were "*filled with zeal, ready to sacrifice goods, talents, ease, self, even their life, for the love of Jesus Christ, the service of the Church and the sanctification of their brethren*". These were men whose humanity was raised up, made glorious, by faith. Their faith did not break in the face of threats. It did not become beaten down by all the excesses and cruelties of their time. These pass: faith remains. And for that - thanks be to God.



**O.M.I.**



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