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## With praise and thanksgiving to God

### Letter of the Superior General for the closing of the Oblate Triennium

L.J.C. et M.I.

Dear Brother Oblates,

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Mazenodian Family,

Greetings of peace in this New Year of Our Lord, 2017!

With praise and thanksgiving to God for grace upon grace we have received in celebrating our 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a missionary society founded on January 25, 1816, I officially declare the closing of our Oblate Triennium on January 25, 2017. These three years have been an intense pilgrimage of grace in response to the 2010 General Chapter call to a profound personal and community conversion to Jesus Christ. In the years to come we will continue to reap the fruits of this communal journey of conversion. I am grateful to all the Units that made this a special event through so many meaningful initiatives. Many thanks go also to the whole Mazenodian Family and Oblate Youth for your involvement, spirit of celebration and prayer throughout the Oblate Triennium!

The Oblate Triennium is closed; however, the dynamic of conversion continues in our Oblate life and mission as long as we are alive! The Acts of the 36th General Chapter, “Evangelizare Pauperibus Misit Me” will be the principal guide for the Congregation during the next six years. The General Chapter “articulates our missionary vision” (C 126) and the expression of this vision will be found in the Acts of the Chapter. The Acts

contain the Chapter members’ discernment as to “God’s will in the urgent needs of our times” (C 125). They reflect how we understand the Spirit’s call to be faithful to the charism in the present moment of our history.

I appeal to all Oblates and those who share the Oblate charism to take time to read the Acts of the 36th General Chapter, and to ponder them prayerfully. Local communities, district gatherings, meetings, assemblies and retreats will study, discuss and see how to live what is contained in the Chapter document. This will strengthen our unity as Saint Eugene hoped: that we would be a family with one heart and one spirit.

Here I will briefly mention some of the highlights of the General Chapter in the hope that you will read the Acts in their entirety.

- The General Chapter, with Mission as its theme, strongly affirmed our fidelity to the Oblate charism centered on preaching the Gospel to the poor and most abandoned. The Chapter challenges us to identify the “new” poor in each context where Oblates minister.
- The mission with youth, a growing concern among Oblates and to which some Oblate Units have developed innovative and significant approaches, was also given missionary priority by the members of the General Chapter.
- The area of information technology, social media and communications was placed as a vital dimension of Oblate missionary work for the coming years.

- The members of the General Chapter saw throughout all these missionary calls, the importance of the financial dimension of mission. It is essential that Units become sustainable in an interdependent way so that we can continue to do mission in the poorest and most difficult places.
- The Chapter members recognized the vital importance of missionary formation at all levels, beginning with a prenovitiate experience that is organized in a formation community and offers substantial preparation for the novitiate.
- The importance of the ministry of Oblate vocational discernment was fully supported by the Chapter members as a commitment to the future of our charism in this historic year of our 200<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. We have affirmed the life and future of the Congregation at the service of the Reign of God.
- Perhaps the greatest challenge presented to the Congregation by the General Chapter is found in the theme of “interculturality.” This will call us to new ways of thinking and living. For years we have spoken of crossing borders and living in international and multicultural communities and ministries. The Spirit is calling us to a deeper conversion to form intercultural communities.

We will need to do formation in order to understand what this signifies. Growing into interculturality will demand an intentional, self-reflective effort, requiring changes in our way of thinking, living in community and doing mission. This is both an exciting and, in a certain way, a frightening call which will demand much courage on our part.

This is a very brief resume of the priorities the General Chapter discerned as a response to the Spirit’s call to us. In the “Acts of the 36th General Chapter” you will read more about this and other important elements of our road map for the next six years.

On another note, on December 11, the Church celebrated the Beatification of Blessed Joseph Thao Thien and 16 Companions, Martyrs of Laos, among whom are six Oblate martyrs. This

was a most significant event for the Church of Laos and for us as we recall our Congregation’s dedication to this mission which at one time was a Province with nearly 100 Oblates. We are grateful to the Postulator General and every Oblate who helped move this process along, not without some difficulties. Let us make our acquaintance with our six brother Oblate Martyrs and spread devotion to them.

In Madrid, on the weekend of December 16, the Oblates of the Pozuelo community organized an encounter with the family members of the Oblate Martyrs of Spain who were beatified in December 2011. About 25 relatives and 15 Oblates were present to share memories and mementos of those martyrs of 1936. The weekend was a deeply moving experience and the sharing was done in a very sacred climate. This was the first such gathering and everyone expressed a desire to continue.

A question stays with me: What are all these Oblate martyrs – Joseph Cebula, the Oblate Martyrs of Pozuelo and of Laos – calling us to live today?

On October 7, 2016, at the gathering of Chapter members with the Holy Father, the message he delivered and his presence with us created a holy encounter. We experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Everyone was filled with immense love for the Congregation and with hope and joy for our future. That visit with Pope Francis made me relive the words our Founder penned on August 15, 1822 referring to “...our dear Society. It seemed to me that what I saw, what I could put my finger on, was that within her lies hidden the germ of very great virtues, and that she can achieve infinite good; I found her worthy, everything pleased me about her, I cherished her rules, her statutes; her ministry seemed sublime to me, as it is indeed. I found in her bosom sure means of salvation, even infallible, such is how they looked to me” (*Selected Texts* p. 119). These words of Saint Eugene bless us today.

I look forward to a fascinating journey over the next six years with the entire Oblate family. Our

missionary journey is not an easy one. Jesus' faithfulness will sustain us. The smile of Mary Immaculate, her loving gaze, is upon us and we dedicate our missionary lives to her once again

so that we will be true to the Oblate charism.

Louis Lougen, OMI  
Rome, January 6, 2017

## General Administration

### **EUGENE DE MAZENOD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE The bicentenary of the parish mission preached by Oblates in Fuveau**

In September 1816, the missionaries of Provence, who later became Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, preached a parish mission in Fuveau. They were four: Eugene de Mazenod, François de Paul Henry Tempier, Pierre Mie and Sébastien Deblieu. At the end of this mission Marius Suzanne, born in Fuveau, became a member of this budding community.

This year, the Christian community of Fuveau took an initiative to commemorate the bicentennial of this mission and that of the foundation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. During Holy Mass

on September 25, 2016, a commemorative plaque of the mission was blessed and mounted on one of the pillars in the Church's nave. Another plaque was mounted on the mission cross, planted on the edge of the road, "route du Nord". The mission cross was erected during the 1816 mission preached by the Missionaries of Provence.

After a shared meal at St. Mary's school, the participants attended a skit on the life of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and the missionary activities of his community.

The day ended at the Church with a prayer led by the Aix Oblate community and 20 Oblates, from different countries, who were participating in the De Mazenod Experience session in Aix. (Krzysztof ZIELENDĄ)

## Africa-Madagascar

### **LESOTHO A Cardinal for Lesotho**

*Fr. Anthony MATSOSO, the Provincial of Lesotho, expresses the joy of the Oblates and the faithful of that country at the naming of Cardinal Sebastian KHOARI.*

As the Oblate Province of Lesotho we want to express our heartfelt congratulations to the first Cardinal from Lesotho, Emeritus Bishop of Mphahlele's Hoek, His Eminence Sebastian Koto Khoari, O.M.I., on his elevation to the Sacred College of cardinals by His Holiness Pope Francis. We join the Church in Lesotho and the whole Basotho Nation in gratitude to God for the singular honor for the local Church, the Congregation and the people of Lesotho. This is of special significance for all of us in Lesotho on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the country following 98 years of British rule, and 154 years since Blessed

Joseph Gerard, "the apostle of the Basotho" set foot on the land and the foundations of the local Church were laid.

Born in 1930, at Ha Koabeng, Butha-Buthe, the new Cardinal received his primary education at St Paul's Mission school, and his secondary education at St Theresa's Seminary in Roma, and after a year of Novitiate, made his first profession of vows as an Oblate on 6 January 1951 at Villa Maria, Quthing, in Lesotho. He then proceeded to St. Augustine's Major Seminary in Roma where he pursued his studies in Philosophy and Theology in preparation for the sacred priesthood. He was the first priest to be ordained by the first Mosotho Bishop, who later became the first Archbishop of Maseru, Archbishop Emmanuel 'MABATHOANA, at his home in St. Paul Mission on 21 December 1956, a year before completing his theological studies. Among his more notable assignments was as priest in charge of Mazenod Mission and

as Administrator of the Cathedral Parish of Our Lady of Victories in the capital, Maseru.

Father Sebastian Koto Khoarai was appointed Bishop of the newly erected diocese of Mohale's Hoek, cut from the territory of the Archdiocese of Maseru and comprising the two civil districts of Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek, to the South of Lesotho, on 10 November 1977. He was ordained bishop by Archbishop Alphonsus MORAPELI of Maseru on 2 April 1978, with the Cardinal Archbishop of Capetown, the Apostolic Nuncio, the Royal family, the Prime Minister and government officials and several thousands of people from Lesotho and South Africa in attendance.

In announcing the new cardinals, at the end of the Angelus in St Peter's Square on Sunday 9 October 2016, the Holy Father said: "To the members of the College of Cardinals, I will join also an Archbishop and two Bishops Emeriti who are distinguished in their pastoral service and a priest who has rendered a clear Christian witness. They represent many bishops and priests throughout the Church who build up the People of God, announcing the merciful love of

God in the daily care of the Lord's flock in the confession of faith".

The new Cardinal has truly distinguished himself as a dedicated pastor and father of his flock. Everybody knows him as a hard worker and indefatigable pastor and missionary to his people. He built churches, convents of women religious, health centres and had completed laying the foundation and erecting the steel structure of the new cathedral church, founded an orphanage and a training centre for the pastoral education and training of the diocesan pastoral agents and formation of the faithful in the faith. He has shown himself a man of prayer, compassionate and caring: a true father of his people.

Due to old age and health consideration, His Eminence could not attend the consistory held by Pope Francis for the new cardinals on 19 November 2016. Special arrangements are now at advanced stage for the celebration that will be held on the 21 January 2017, at Mohale's Hoek Diocese, whereby he is going to receive the red hat.

We wish him the best and thank God and the Holy Father for him.

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## Asia-Oceania

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### PHILIPPINES

#### "A crime that cries to heaven"

While the Oblate parish of Santo Niño in Midsayap, on the island of Mindanao, was celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace, eighteen people, including a police officer, were wounded when a grenade exploded outside of the church.

Fr. Jay VIRADOR said that the faithful inside the church did not wait for the rites of conclusion of the Mass. The quickly left the church to find safety elsewhere.

Initial suspicion focused on Islamic or communist elements who have been known for similar attacks in the past, but further investigation seemed to point to criminals linked to drug cartels and traffickers. The grenade exploded near a police car, perhaps as a message to the police

to back off from the government's war on the illegal drug trade.

Cardinal Orlando QUEVEDO, the Archbishop of Cotabato, called the grenade attack on this parish in his diocese "a crime that cries to heaven."

Acts such as this "will not stop the peace process in the southern Philippines, nor will they manage to cause a rift between groups working on negotiations with the Philippine government, which is proceeding along a resolute path of mediation and reconciliation," Cardinal Quevedo said in a statement to *Vatican Insider*.

### COLOMBO

#### Books for poor children

Nearly 50 children living in a multiracial and interreligious neighborhood of Colombo

received Christmas baskets with school supplies, books and other educational material. The baskets were the gift which the Oblates of Mary Immaculate gave them during their traditional Christmas gathering.

The event has been taking place for 10 years and was organized by the Centre for Religion and Society (CRS), managed by the Missionary Oblates in Sri Lanka. The Director of the Centre, Fr. Ashok STEPHEN, told AsiaNews: “When we share and when we give something to needy persons, we must not give them what we like or what we want, but what they need.”

The material given to the little ones will be useful to them in the school year that is about to begin and will be a big help for their parents who do not have the resources to buy pens, notebooks and text books.

In fact, the children come from the neighborhood

of Summit Town of Mattakkuliya, Colombo. It is an area that came into being in 1971 to host hundreds of poor families who were living on the margins, in the streets of the capital of Sri Lanka, begging to survive.

Here, a cultural and religious mix lives together: the majority is Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu, but there is also a small group of Christians. There are both Tamil and Sinhalese living there.

The multi-ethnicity of the neighborhood was obvious on Christmas Eve as the children sang songs in Sinhalese and English. Fr. Stephen reports that children took part in a Christmas play and they wanted to send a strong message to their relatives and parents: "Alcohol abuse is harmful to health. For this reason they asked the parents to avoid alcohol." ([http://m.asianews.it/notizie-it/Oblati-di-Maria-Immacolata-donano-cancelleria-e-libri-a-50-bambini-poveri-di-Colombo-\(Foto\)-39542.html](http://m.asianews.it/notizie-it/Oblati-di-Maria-Immacolata-donano-cancelleria-e-libri-a-50-bambini-poveri-di-Colombo-(Foto)-39542.html))

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## Canada-United States

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### **OMI LACOMBE, CANADA** **Outreach to the insecure**

*Brother Daniel DIONNE has been a professed Oblate since 1990. As such, he has served in various ways, both in his native Canada and in the United States. Here, he reflects upon the faces of the poor as he has seen them.*

So far my journey has taken me across Western Canada, in the most isolated communities of the far North and recently, the Southern United States: New Orleans. Now heading Northeast, I have arrived in Hamilton, Ontario. There are many things that make these places different from each other, but much more important are some common concerns.

When I lived in the smaller, less populated communities, the needs of the poor fell on the community as a whole. In this, I have witnessed many beautiful acts of mercy in these places. In the larger populated cities, I witnessed a desire to do more to address poverty. The problem is that poverty has so many faces and requires a

special lens to respond – poverty of food and clothing and the many kinds of medical needs. There are so many specific needs which all require a different response. Perhaps an area of concern which is gaining the most attention in our current society is mental illnesses and emotional disorders.

I named this article “Outreach to the “insecure”. The reason I use this word “insecure” is that I believe insecurities are temporary and they can be mostly overcome. Everywhere I have been, I have noticed there has often been a desire to try to help the insecure person, and even though it may be a short term help, the effort continues and the desire to reach out to people has been encouraged.

Do not for a second think that it is simply handing the person a bit of food, money or clothing that gives us the greatest reward. The greatest return always comes in the gratitude a person often expresses; and this comes when we simply spend the time to listen and empathize. Most often the call is for “unconditional love”, like that which

we always hear about in the Gospel: “Love one another as I have loved you”. It is fitting that the parish pastoral team has chosen this as their motto because it is something everyone can do and costs us only time and it works best, with no judgment.

In New Orleans our team saw the homeless and insecure as either people who are looking for a handout, those in need and those who are the most poor. We provided outreach to all of these people but we did notice that the real homeless and disparaged people were very easy to miss. Some of our people were very loud and drew attention to themselves but were not homeless or as poor as they would have you believe. The opposite was true of the truly poor, those who have nothing. They never turned attention to themselves and were almost always very silent. Don't miss the opportunity to meet these people on their terms and know what Christ meant when he said “The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me” Matt. 26:11. Now that Jesus has risen we turn to the poor once again, and this time we can see the face of Christ in each person we meet; and we wonder if they see in us the unconditional love that has been instilled in our hearts. (<http://www.omilacombe.ca/>)

## UNITED STATES

### Oblate Grotto celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the Oblate Grotto in San Antonio, Texas, was celebrated with a vigil Mass of the Immaculate Conception by San Antonio's Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller together with Oblate Bishop Michael PFEIFER, Emeritus of San Angelo, Fr. Leo PEREZ, Director of Grotto Ministries, and Fr. Nino LAJO, Director of Hispanic Ministry at the Grotto.

They were joined by a number of local Oblates as well as Fr. Warren BROWN, General Counsellor, representing the Superior General of the Oblate Congregation. The crowd of pilgrims and friends at the evening Mass were treated to a reception in the Grotto's “Oblate Spanish Martyrs” Pastoral Center, featuring performances by the Boys Choir of San Luis Potosi, Mexico (which happens to be the Archbishop's hometown).

The celebration took place 75 years, to the day, after the original dedication. It is a date few will forget: Dec. 7, 1941, a day chiseled into history — the attack on Pearl Harbor. U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt rightly called it a “day of infamy.”

But for a lot of Oblates and friends gathered at the major seminary on “Rattlesnake Hill”, as the location of the Oblate property was once called, it was a day of great celebration. The dream of Fr. Cullen DECKER, first Director of the Missionary League of Mary Immaculate, had finally come to fruition. In the crowd were the Oblate scholastics who for several years had prepared the site. Many community and Church leaders were also there. And, a young Fr. Matt MENGER, then a teenager from a local Catholic school, was there. He remembers the day well and recalls when the crowd slowly became aware of what was happening half a world away in Pearl Harbor.

How the world, the city of San Antonio, the seminary on Rattle Snake Hill have changed since that day!

What the Oblates inaugurated back on December 7, 1941 to be a center of Marian devotion, a place of quiet refuge and prayer for the missions, has grown to be just that. Today, depending on weather, weekends alone find between 1,500 and 1,800 people at the Grotto, for Masses and devotions. And every day — all day — people come there to be at peace and to pray. Every day the intentions of benefactors of world-wide Oblate Missions are prayed for.

As the community of south Texas knows, devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is also deeply rooted in the religious practice of many Catholics in that part of the country. So, it's no surprise that the north-facing side of the Grotto, the Hill of Tepeyac with its statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, is as popular as the other side of the Grotto with the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

As part of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Grotto, that north side of the Grotto is being expanded. A new Plaza Tepeyac will offer a beautiful and prayerful approach to the little “Hill of Tepeyac”. (By Fr. Bill MORELL in *OMI USA*, January 2017)

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## Europe

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**ENGLAND****SURVIVE-MIVA carries on an Oblate's dream**

*In May 2016, **Oblate Connections**, a revue of the Oblates' Anglo-Irish Province, published an article about the origin of MIVA (Missionary Vehicle Association) founded 90 years ago, in 1927, by the late Fr. Paul SCHULTE (1896-1975). What follows are excerpts from that article, written by Theresa Codd of SURVIVE-MIVA, located in Liverpool, England.*

A German Oblate priest, Fr. Paul Schulte O.M.I. (1896-1975), who became known as 'The Flying Priest', has the honour of being the first person to celebrate Mass in the air! This first aerial Mass ... took place on 6th May 1936 onboard the giant Zeppelin airship LZ 129 Hindenburg. ...

Fr. Schulte's life was full of adventure and reads like a story from the *Boys' Own* magazine! He was training for the priesthood when World War I started and he was conscripted to serve in the Prussian 4th Guard Grenadier Regiment. After two and a half years in this regiment he was wounded and, after recovering from his injuries, he joined the Air Force, trained as a pilot, and served in Palestine. After the war Fr. Schulte returned to his studies and was ordained an Oblate Priest in 1922. His first posting was to South Africa.

In 1925 a tragic event inspired Fr. Schulte to found an organisation that is still in operation today, namely MIVA, which stands for 'Missionalium Vehiculorum Associatio' (Missionary Vehicle Association). It was in June of 1925, in Namibia, that a childhood friend of Fr. Schulte, Fr. Otto FUHRMANN, became ill with pneumonia complicated by malaria. In an attempt to get medical treatment Fr. Fuhrmann travelled for five days, passing through the desert, until he finally reached the hospital of the Protestant Finnish mission in Owamboland. However, the delay in getting treatment was fatal and Fr. Fuhrmann died on 23rd June. The loss of his friend, when

swift transport to a medical facility could have saved him, led Fr. Schulte to found MIVA in 1927 with the aim of providing modern vehicles for missionaries, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The motto of the organisation was *Obviam Christo terra marique et in aera* ("Toward Christ by land and sea and in the air").

To get his scheme off the ground Fr. Schulte needed to gather support and funds and he received permission to return to Germany to promote his cause. On his way home he visited Pope Pius XI who approved his plans. ...

Fr. Schulte was next assigned to a parish in Northern Canada and he set about bringing medical aid and supplies by plane to remote Oblate missions, particularly north of the Arctic Circle. In August 1938, hearing that fellow Oblate, Fr. Julien Cochard, who was based in Arctic Bay, the most northerly Catholic mission in the world, was seriously ill with double pneumonia he mounted a 2,200 mile medical evacuation. In his Stinson Reliant floatplane Fr. Schulte flew through storm force winds and thick fog in order to rescue Fr. Cochard, and received a special blessing from Pope Pius XI for his services. Fr. Schulte attributed the success of this heroic mercy flight to Our Lady of the Snows and, according to Fr. Peter MINWEGEN'S (†1977) memoir "when he was afraid of an imminent crash during a snowstorm he promised our Lady to spread her devotion under that title if she came to his aid and saved him in this emergency."

After his time in Canada Fr. Schulte was transferred to St. Henry's Seminary in Belleville, Illinois where, during World War II, because he was German, he came under suspicion of being a spy and the authorities ordered him not to travel but to remain in Belleville, where he was kept under F.B.I. surveillance. Fr. Schulte now set about spreading devotion to Our Lady of the Snows and, in the early 1940s, he commissioned the artist John Watson Davis (1870-1959) to paint a picture of Our Lady under this title.

The painting, which now hangs in the North American National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, depicts a missionary and an aeroplane on a sick call to an Inuit mission with Our Lady appearing surrounded by rays of the Northern Lights.

After the war, Fr. Schulte continued his work for MIVA until his death in Swakopmund, Namibia, in 1975. He is buried beside his boyhood friend, Father Otto Fuhrmann. Today Fr. Schulte's foundation, MIVA, continues to support the Church's mission of spreading the Good News, through the provision of essential transport. There are 'MIVAs' in Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, and in Great Britain (SURVIVE-MIVA). SURVIVE-MIVA was founded in 1974 and has funded over 5,000 modes of transport over the last 42 years, thanks to the generosity of the Association's supporters. In 2015 alone the charity supplied 82 modes of transport (15 community health outreach vehicles, 37 motorbikes/ mopeds, and 30 bicycles) to 10 countries. ([www.survive-miva.org](http://www.survive-miva.org))

## **UKRAINE**

### **Christmas Eve with the poor**

It was very cold in Kyiv on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January: -15C. But the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish organized a Christmas Vigil in the parish center for about 400 elderly, homeless people of Kyiv, people who are forced to beg. (Eastern Rite Christians celebrate Christmas on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January.)

This was not an everyday activity, but a feast around the table with old friends. The Oblates were happy that on that extremely cold day, the poor came together and were warm and safe. Through this action, the Oblates wanted to remind everyone that when it is cold, one should pay attention to those who live on the streets. Even sharing with about 500 poor a simple bowl of soup twice a week helps them to stay awake in the cold and to save their lives when it is -15C outdoors.

The table was beautifully decorated. According to the Christmas Eve tradition, there were 12 homemade food dishes prepared. Thus, the poor could feel themselves at home, a place which they had suddenly lost due to the war in the eastern part of Ukraine. Celebrating with the poor were the Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti; the President of Caritas Ukraine, Fr. Petro Zharkovsky; the Superior of the Oblate Delegation, Fr. Pavlo VYSHKOVSKYI and the Oblates of the media community together with Brother Sebastian JANKOWSKI who takes care of the poor every day.

The poor people greeted the Apostolic Nuncio and told him how much good they receive from God through the Missionary Oblates who have been engaged with them for the past 4 years. The Nuncio sincerely thanked the Missionary Oblates for their service in favor of the poor and wished that the poor might feel on this holy night the love of God who never leaves them alone, even on a cold evening, when we remember his birth.

To prepare a great feast like this, the help of many people was needed: the volunteers who are regularly helping the Missionary Oblates, as well as the donors from the other Oblate Units. When we missionaries lack money in order to feed the poor weekly, we stand in front of the church begging, exactly like our poor friends do. So we sincerely thank each and everybody who helps us!

## **SPAIN**

### **The seed of the Martyrs bears much fruit**

Life is the most precious gift we hold in our hands. That is why, when we meet people who put that gift in second place, leaving first place to their Christian faith, we cannot remain indifferent. But what happens when those people are of our own flesh and blood? What happens when the Martyrs are members of our own family?

On the weekend of 16-18 December, in Pozuelo de Alarcón, a very touching gathering took place. Family members of the Spanish Oblate Martyrs and the Oblates shared these days that were loaded with emotion, faith and gratitude.



The gathering, which was called “Keeping the memory of the Martyrs,” touched many a heart.

There were various objectives:

1. To bring together family members closely linked to the Oblate Martyrs.
2. To share experiences, feelings, information and objects related to the person of the Martyrs.
3. To gather firsthand testimonies of those close to the Martyrs in view of a documentary about the story of the Martyrs.

Judging from what was shared at the end of the meeting, where one could sense a unique joy, these objectives have been by and large achieved.

There were many moments to be highlighted: it was the first gathering for getting to know others who are united by the blood of the martyrdom of their loved ones; the pilgrimage to the House of the Martyrs; listening in small groups to the relatives’ story of veneration of their family martyrs; getting to know and celebrating the Eucharist in the big cemetery of martyrs in

Paracuellos del Jarama; the exchange of material and information, various reports and moments shared in a simple and friendly way.

There should be special mention of the participation in the gathering of the Superior General of the Congregation, Fr. Louis LOUGEN, and two members of the General Administration, Frs. Cornelius NGOKA and Warren BROWN. It was a precious and important gesture that showed that the Oblates want to be with the families of the Martyrs from the “very heart of the Congregation.”

One can gather many conclusions from those days. Fr. David LÓPEZ summed them up: “The gift of the Martyrs has become a responsibility for us, family members and Oblates. We must make known the beauty of the witness of the Oblate Martyrs and of the layman, the father of a family, Cándido Castán.”

For that and for all that was experienced in those days, we must proclaim: “Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate! Blessed Francesco Esteban and his companion martyrs, pray for us!” (<http://nosotrosomi.blogspot.com.es/>)

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**Anniversaries -- February 2017**


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**70 Years of religious life**

1947.02.17 08798 Bro. Raymond Des Chênes Lacombe

**70 Years of priesthood**

1947.02.14 07294 Fr. Francis Montalbano United States  
 1947.02.23 07773 Fr. Paul Michalak Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**65 Years of religious life**

1952.02.17 09861 Bro. Antoine Dominique Haiti

**65 Years of priesthood**

1952.02.02 08166 Fr. André Houle United States  
 1952.02.17 08150 Fr. Tommaso Campagnuolo Mediterranean  
 1952.02.17 08255 Fr. Georges Laudin France  
 1952.02.17 08296 Fr. Lucien Le Calvé France  
 1952.02.24 08219 Fr. Oscar Pauwels Lacombe

**60 Years of religious life**

1957.02.02 10824 Bro. Jerome Prazma Lacombe  
 1957.02.17 10245 Fr. Roberto de Valicourt Brazil

**50 Years of priesthood**

1967.02.17 11285 Fr. Hendrik Deceuninck Belgium/Holland  
 1967.02.17 11134 Fr. Johan Van Calbergh Belgium/Holland  
 1967.02.19 11149 Fr. Kamiel Degrieck Belgium/Holland  
 1967.02.19 11133 Fr. Achiël Vermeulen Belgium/Holland  
 1967.02.26 11172 Fr. Anthony Clancy Anglo-Irish

**25 Years of religious life**

1992.02.05 13402 Fr. Tony Rodney Daniels S. Africa, Northern  
 1992.02.05 13459 Fr. Callistus Dominic Khathali General Administration

**25 Years of priesthood**

1992.02.16 13053 Fr. Luc R. Young Chen Yin Australia

## Suffrages for our Deceased

**2016 No. 86-93**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Prov./Del.</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Died at</b>	<b>Date</b>
Fr. Charles Borski	United States	24/09/1943	Houston	13/12/2016
Fr. Anthony Boyhan	Anglo-Irish	17/08/1941	Dublin	13/12/2016
Fr. Joseph Pitts	United States	22/02/1934	Belleville	18/12/2016
Fr. Joseph Pirson	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	20/04/1924	Trois-Rivières	22/12/2016
Fr. Joseph Goutier	OMI Lacombe	12/09/1938	Saint Albert	23/12/2016
Bro. Waldemar Gutberlet	Central European	01/10/1929	Hünfeld	26/12/2016
Fr. Ernst Schönhammer	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	16/05/1938	Ottawa	30/12/2016
Fr. Joseph Sergent	France	02/03/1937	Ernée	31/12/2016

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Prov./Del.</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Died at</b>	<b>Date</b>
Fr. Peter Chrysanthus Fernando	Colombo	04/12/1941	Colombo	04/01/2017
Fr. Loorthusamy Sowriappan	Mexico	09/12/1957	Mexico City	06/01/2017

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

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