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## Missionary Oblates among migrants in the Caucasus

*Fr. Pavlo VYSHKOVSKYI, the superior of the Oblate Delegation of Ukraine, recently spent some time substituting for his brother Oblates working in the Caucasus of Russia.*

On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revelations of the Virgin Mary at Fatima some of people from Caucasus went on pilgrimage to the place where Mary had appeared. Some of our Oblates working in the Caucasus asked to be replaced in their parishes so that they could join the pilgrimage. Thus, I had the opportunity to celebrate the Fatima feast in Russia, the country for which the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima encouraged the visionaries and the whole world to pray for its conversion.

The children had never heard of this “Russia” since they had never attended school and did not know geography. Lucia thought it referred to a great sinner for whom one should constantly pray, and Francisco believed that “Russia” was the neighbor's donkey which had a similar name.

Missionary Oblates arrived in the Caucasus at the invitation of the Bishop of the Diocese of Saratov four and a half years ago in order to serve in 4 parishes which are 60 km away from each other in different directions. Each of these parishes has its own story of people's suffering as well as their joy. We mention just three of the parishes.

**Pyatigorsk** is the main city where the Oblates live and serve a parish which has a history of more than 150 years. The Catholic community was established in Pyatigorsk in 1813. Permission for the church's construction was granted in 1841 by Tsar Nicholas I. During the years of 1844 -

1937 the church was active and the parish grew steadily. Among the congregation were people of different nationalities: Poles, Lithuanians, Armenians, Latvians, Italians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians. In 1938, during the time of Soviet persecution, the church was closed and turned into a gym, an art studio, warehouses, an office building, and later a philharmonic concert hall. Some faithful Catholics, the parish priest, the chairman of the parish council and an organist were shot dead.

On 17 January 1992 a parish community was registered, and they rented the church for Sunday liturgy. Today's parishioners are originally from Russia, as well as a far away as Kamchatka, Ukraine, Belarus, and a neighboring republic to the south, Ossetia, the only Christian republic surrounded by Muslim republics. Also, there are Germans, Assyrians and the Poles whose descendants had built the church. About 120 different nationalities live in Pyatigorsk. The parish is friendly and the people are open, but at a glance one sees that there are more restrictions compared to us; even the Corpus Christi procession is held within the walls of the church building.

**Novopavlovsk** is situated some 60 km from Pyatigorsk. It is very much alive parish in which the majority of the parishioners are Assyrians, the descendants of a former great power of Assyria well known from the Old Testament (see the story of King Nebuchadnezzar, who once had conquered Israel and dishonored the Jerusalem sanctuary). Today, this nation is scattered throughout the world and the Oblates are near them. This is our biggest parish in the Caucasus.

People of all ages come from afar, some by public transportation which operates only once a day; they arrive 11.30. and wait for Mass which is celebrated at 15.00.

Since 1918, the Assyrians have suffered exile, first from Turkey, then to Azerbaijan, then on to Georgia. In 1949, Stalin exiled them to Siberia. After Stalin died, they returned to Georgia; in 1981, many of them moved to Novopavlovsk. There are 45 families and they try to maintain their identity by marrying only other Assyrians.

We also take care of the parish of **Kislovodsk**,

some 60 km from Pyatigorsk. For about 20 years, the Mass is celebrated in a private home, attended mainly by Armenian Catholics. There are about 150 of them in Kislovodsk. For over 250 years they had lived within the territory of modern Turkey, and later after being persecuted by Muslims, they moved to Georgia, where they lived till the genocide of the Armenians in 1915.

Serving in Russia is a true missionary service, full of a number of surprises and continual challenges, but God is always nearby and He always renders help.

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## General Administration

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### CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

#### **Oblate Prayer Book and Oblate Ritual: Praying and celebrating our common Oblate identity**

During the Oblate Triennium, the General Administration undertook to renew the Oblate Prayer Book and to produce an Oblate Ritual as a separate booklet. In presenting the two booklets, Father General writes:

“In this year of the bicentenary of our religious family, I am happy to present this new edition of *Oblate Prayer* to the Congregation. This little book is a resource to help us live the spirit of prayer throughout the day. It reminds us of our Oblate feasts, prayers that are a part of our religious family’s history and customs that express who we are as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It is an aid for our private prayer and will enrich community gatherings with prayers that are part of the Oblate tradition, thus uniting us and deepening our Oblate spirit. Throughout the Congregation and among the laity who live the Oblate charism, there is a strong desire for more resources to help us live the charism. This renewal of *Oblate Prayer* has been made in response to a new and deeper appreciation of our own roots, our traditions of prayer and our customs as a Congregation.

“It is with great joy that during this 200th Jubilee year of our foundation I present to the entire Congregation the *Ritual of the Missionary*

*Oblates of Mary Immaculate*. Now, for the first time in one volume, we have at our disposition all the texts of Masses proper to our Congregation, as well as the rites which accompany the religious life of our members.

“This *Ritual* will be a great aid in helping deepen the Oblate charism among us and among the people we serve. It will help us foster a common heritage, while leaving ample room for local customs and practices around the missionary world. I am hopeful that the frequent use of the *Ritual* will truly deepen our attachment to the Congregation, instill a greater love for our holy ones and help us develop an appreciation for the events which mark our missionary lives as Oblates”.

For now, these two documents are only in English language. Translation work to French and Spanish are still ongoing. We invite every Oblate Unit who needs some copies of both books in English to kindly contact us and we will send you the copies as soon as possible. As soon as the French and Spanish versions are ready, we will inform you. [Cornelius Ngoka, OMI ([cngoka@gmail.com](mailto:cngoka@gmail.com))]

### **GENERAL SERVICE OF OBLATE STUDIES The Founder’s Writings, Volume 21**

With Volume 21, which appeared at the end of 2016, the publication in English of the Founder's writings has finally been completed. They were

edited in French by Father Yvon BEAUDOIN. The last volume of the series, n. 22, had appeared the previous year.

The General Service of Oblate Studies, together with the General Administration, is assessing the timeliness and possible ways to continue the collection with the publication of further writings by the Founder.

The translation of Volume 21 has been quite difficult and has passed through several hands, including Michael HUGHES and Ronald ZIMMER. Finally, Michael Hughes thoroughly revised the translation, perfecting it linguistically.

However, upon publishing the volume, there was made a serious and unforgivable mistake. Instead of Michael Hughes' revision, the previous version was printed, with Bill O'DONNELL's minor corrections.

The error was exclusively that of the Director of the General Service of Oblate Studies, Fabio CIARDI.

We sincerely apologize to Michael Hughes.

The version he worked on is now available on the official Oblate site.

## **EUGENE DE MAZENOD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE**

### **Re-live, Enact and Reproduce the OMI Heritage**

*Brother Felix Bwalya NYAMBE, an Oblate from Zambia and currently a scholastic at the George Sexton House of Studies in San Antonio, Texas, writes about his experience of Oblate life at the house where the Oblates were founded in 1816.*

Each year, Oblate scholastics from international houses of formation from Rome, Poland, Italy and the U.S.A gather for a summer experience in Aix-en-Provence in France. Aix is the birth place of the Missionary Oblates, the "Holy Land of the Oblates" as it is often called.

The Aix experience for scholastics allows the young men in formation to see, to feel and to be

touched by our Oblate origins and particularly the life of St. Eugene de Mazenod and his first companions. The experience invites the scholastics to let St. Eugene speak to them in all the events and encounters. Therefore, the Aix experience is the most enriching experience of every Oblate because it embraces and celebrates the richness of Oblate life.

In attendance was the Assistant General for formation, Fr. Cornelius NGOKA. In his homily during the eucharistic celebration, Fr. Cornelius invited the scholastics to carry the heritage of the Oblates over to the next generation. The Oblate heritage can be lived by charity and zeal for souls; community and mission.

In my opinion, this invitation to re-live, enact and reproduce the Oblate Heritage can be extended to all Oblates more especially as we celebrate, "The year of Oblate Vocations". Led by the Holy Spirit and while responding to the signs of time, "The Church is counting on us to respond to the needs of the poor today, and to 'write new pages' in the history of evangelization". (Letter of Fr. Louis LOUGEN, Superior General, for "The year of Oblate Vocations"). Hence, every Oblate has the responsibility to live and share the OMI heritage.

## **GENERAL HOUSE**

### **Archives: a change of directors**

After almost 15 years of service as the General Archivist, Fr. Maciej MICHALSKI said goodbye to the General House in Rome on September 14, 2017. He has been officially given obedience back to his mother-province of Poland, effective from December 1, 2017. The baton was handed over to the new General Archivist Fr. Jerome Velichor ABARANAM on August 1, 2017.

Fr. Maciej was born on December 22, 1966 in Ostrów Wielkopolski, Poland. He made his first vows on September 08, 1986 and was ordained a priest on June 20, 1992 in Odra. After his ordination, he first served in the capacity of Assistant Pastor in an Oblate parish for one year. From 1993 to 1998, he was a student at the Faculty of Church History in the Catholic University of Lublin. After graduation, Fr.

Maciej was appointed to the Oblate juniorate in Markowice, as a formator and a professor. It was on January 21, 2002, that the then Superior General, Fr. Wilhelm STECKLING, gave Fr. Maciej an obedience as the General Archivist. However, the appointment was made effective from January 1, 2003. Since then he has been serving tirelessly at the OMI General Archives. He was widely appreciated for his orderliness and meticulous systemization. Not only the community of Via Aurelia 290, but also those tens and thousands of treasured books, letters and documents will certainly miss their friend and faithful caretaker.

The new Archivist, Fr. Jerome, is originally from the Province of Jaffna. He was born on February 25, 1970 in Chunnakam, Sri Lanka. He made his first vows as an Oblate in 1992 in Bandarawela and was ordained a priest on May 31, 1997. He first served as the Assistant Pastor of the Oblate parish in Nilavelli, before becoming the pastor of St. Paul's Church, Haputale. Then he became a member of the Formation Staff of De Mazenod Scholasticate in Jaffna while also serving as a lecturer at the Jaffna Major Seminary. From 2004 to 2007, Fr. Jerome was in Rome as a student-priest and successfully completed his licentiate in Church History. He went back to Sri Lanka to join the formation team of the Oblate Scholasticate in Kandy. From 2011 to 2014, he also served on the Provincial Council in the Province of Jaffna. It was in 2012 that he was appointed the superior of De Mazenod Scholasticate in Jaffna. Then in September 2015, Fr. Jerome was made the director of the Educational Resource Centre in

Kilinochchi, a position he held until he arrived in Rome in July this year.

## GENERAL HOUSE

### Fr. Mauro Concardi receives a new obedience

The Oblate General House recently bade farewell to Fr. Mauro CONCARDI, the longtime Assistant General Treasurer. His new assignment will take him as a formator to the scholasticate of the Mediterranean Province, in Vermicino, not far from the Eternal City.

Fr. Mauro was born in Milan on July 4, 1962. He was a diocesan seminarian before joining the Oblates in 1981. After completing the novitiate, he pronounced his first vows on September 15, 1983. It was on October 1, 1988 that he was ordained a priest. In the meantime, he obtained a licentiate in missiology in 1989, the year in which he also received his first obedience to the Oblate mission in Korea.

He arrived in Korea in May 1990, where, in addition to being the treasurer of the mission and serving in various other apostolic commitments, he was also responsible for formation from 1995 to 2004. He was superior of the first group of Korean scholastics from 2003 to 2004.

In June 2004, he received an obedience to the General House where he served as Assistant General Treasurer from March 1, 2005 until September 30, 2016. He received his obedience to the Mediterranean Province on September 1, 2017.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### CAMEROON

#### Meeting of AMR Formation Committee

The Oblate Procure in Garoua, Cameroon, was the site of a meeting of the Formation Committee of the Africa-Madagascar Region on June 29-30, 2017, together with the scholasticate superiors of the Region. Before and after their meeting, they had the opportunity to visit the Oblate scholasticate in Yaoundé. They also joined in a joyful celebration of the ordination of priests and

deacons at the parish next to the Procure.

The meeting featured a discussion of ways and means to foster consolidation, interculturality and more integration among units in the Region; how to put more emphasis on a sense of missionary zeal and Oblate Identity in our houses of formation; and on establishing a viable system to facilitate the exchange of formators between houses of formation in the AMR Region.

The scholasticate superiors were given a platform to express their expectations in view of consolidation and interculturality and more integration in the Region. Some of their hopes and questions were these:

- i. Finding ways to consolidate the houses of formation in the Region
- ii. Finding a practical vision that would foster unity among the units.
- iii. Creating a forum for sharing concerns and support.
- iv. The sharing and comparison of formation directories.
- v. Use of the AMR website to bring resources together.

Two members of the Central Government participated in the meeting: the Assistant General for Formation, Fr. Cornelius NGOKA, and the General Councillor for the Region, Fr. Guillaume MUTHUNDA.

The Regional Councillor spoke about the need for unity, integration and consolidation in the Region. He also said that he hopes that the Region will increase its capacity for mission by forming candidates who are open for the mission of the Region and the Congregation at large.

The Assistant General talked about the statutes of the Regional Formation Committee; he suggested the need to clarify the expectations of the committee members and about financial issues.

The entire meeting was very lively with much interaction. It concluded with a number of recommendations for further study and action.

## **CAMEROON**

### **War refugees of the village of Pikba**

*Brother Ernest MBEMBA, the chairman of the JPIC committee of the Province of Cameroon, describes for us his ministry with poor war refugees.*

Pikba is a village of war refugees, situated some 34 km from Poli. The village is part of our parish territory. Because of the lack of roads, access to this village is possible only by motorcycle, a situation even more complicated during the rainy season.

In early 2014, the war refugees (Cameroonians) from the Nigerian border in far North Cameroon were forced to leave their villages because of the terrorist incursions of the Islamist sect Boko Haram. Almost all their homes were burned and their property looted. Many have lost family members. They came to live in this village where the Lamido (Muslim chief), the town chieftain, gave them a small piece of land.

It is this community of displaced people that I visit once a month, to share their difficulties, to ensure a comforting presence and together to find solutions to improve their living conditions as war refugees. It is a community that lacks everything: school, a health center, arable land, drinking water. In addition, many of its members do not have official documents (birth certificates and a national identity card). I have already made several approaches to the traditional, the administrative and the municipal authorities of Lagdo (80 km from Pikba), the district on which Pikba depends for all these problems; for some of them, we are beginning to find solutions.

And now about the school. After some inquiries in Lagdo, I was able to obtain official recognition of a school that had been established in our area. It has been operating since the beginning of the school year, 4 September 2017. Thus, the 300 or so children of school age (a constantly increasing number) can finally go to school. However, we will be faced with a lack of personnel. I contacted two teachers, young parishioners who had finished at the teacher training school and have agreed to work with the director, the only teacher that headquarters had sent. But their taking over poses problems. With my support, three wooden and straw shelters that will serve classrooms have already been built.

For water, the refugees get their supply in ponds where they compete with the domestic animals. Consequently, there are many water-borne diseases. The refugees want to have wells that do not require maintenance other than drilling.

The vast majority of adults and almost all the young people and children do not have a birth certificates or a national identity card (lost or

burned during the attacks on their villages). I have begun negotiations with the authorities of Lagdo to have these valuable documents prepared, but these procedures take long and require several journeys between the two cities (Poli and Lagdo). We hope that they will make good, because almost 450 refugees are in this situation.

For the land to be cultivated, I met the Lamido of the district of Gouna, the district to which

Pikba is attached, to discuss with him the situation of arable land. He promised to send his collaborators to the site to increase the land area they have available. As they say: "Land to be cultivated is their chief resource; if they do not plant, neither will they eat."

The living conditions of these refugees would improve even more if the problems mentioned above could find a decisive and lasting solution.

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## Asia-Oceania

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### INDIA

#### Beginning of the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Year

The Indian Oblate Mission was founded by the then Provincial of Sri Lanka, Fr. Anthony FERNANDO. The first two pioneer missionaries, namely Frs. Emmanuel MARIAMPILLAI and Stanislaus PHILIPS set foot on this sub-continent on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1968. They were officially accompanied by the then Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, Most Rev. Dr. R. Arulappa, to Kancheepuram where the Oblate Missionaries were installed in a simple ceremony by the Archbishop on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1968.

The provincial of the Province of India, Fr. Chinnappan SANDHAPPAN, wrote in the province newsletter, BORN, a letter announcing the inauguration of a year-long celebration of the 50 year presence of Oblates of Mary Immaculate in this vast country. Here are excerpts from his letter.

My dear brother oblates, greetings in the Lord!

Having culminated meaningfully the bi-centenary celebration of our congregation with the IOC in April 2017, we, the oblates in India, step into another milestone in the history of our Indian Province i.e., the 50<sup>th</sup> year of our Oblate presence in this land of diversity of language, culture and faith. This year of Golden Jubilee was inaugurated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, at our pioneering mission in Kancheepuram. It will continue to have its different phases of celebrations at community, parish, mission and formation/formative levels until the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2018.

As we commemorate this significant event our hearts reflect on our legacy etched with faith, being mindful that, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain" (Ps 127/1). We thank the Lord for the innumerable ways in which he has nurtured our province in its pilgrimage with the poor with their many faces and for giving us men who are committed, dedicated and ready to serve the needs of the province in many ways. Their generosity has led our province to open up new and flourishing missions and communities in various parts of India.

On this joyous occasion, we remember with sincere gratitude our pioneering missionaries from Sri Lanka namely, Frs. Emmanuel Mariampillai and Stanislaus Philips who sowed the seeds of the Oblate charism untiringly, through their missionary zeal and commitment, and the many Missionary Oblates who followed them. We too recall and give thanks to God for all our benefactors (Oblates and non-Oblates), Missionary Associates (MAMI), friends and well-wishers who have constantly supported us through their financial assistance, prayers and encouragement in our mission to the poor, the most abandoned, the children, youth, women and elderly for the past 50 years. We remember them all gratefully and avow them of our continual prayers. (BORN: Bharath Oblate Regional News, June-July 2017)

### AUSTRALIA

#### Impressions of a visit to Oblate schools

*Fr. William MORELL from the United States Province currently serves in fund-raising to support Oblate missions worldwide. He recently*

*visited the Province of Australia. One of the principal ministries of the Oblates there is the education of youth. The visitor from the USA was greatly impressed by what he saw during his visit.*

*Silence.* It's not a word you would associate with 1,400 high school boys packed into a gym... but then, maybe there's something special in Australian water! If it had happened in only one Oblate college (high school) in Australia, I might have assumed it was something external like the water. But at two colleges a thousand miles apart... at two Masses a week apart! No, *silence* was not an accident of place or situation. Nor was reverence, or respect. None of these come to 1,400 boys by accident.

Former high school teachers don't impress easily. For me, it has been 30 years since I taught at the Oblate High School Seminary in Texas. But, I cannot say my memories of those years are dominated by occasions where silence or respect dominated. Triumphant shouts from the ball field or borderline chaos in a classroom or two, an occasional act of exceptional bravery or prowess... for me those memories prevail, not what I saw at these 2 Australian Oblate schools.

In fact, one can learn "quite a lot" if the scene and message are consistent and insistent. The Oblates and their very openly Oblate-inspired ministry with youth at these schools witness clearly to values and priorities St. Eugene championed early in his priesthood with his Association of Christian Youth. Fr Christian FINI, former director of MAMI in Australia, didn't have to point this out as he showed me the campus where he is Rector/Principal and where I concelebrated the huge school Mass in honor of St. Eugene's feast day and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "*Mazenod College*."

But let me speak more particularly about the school where I spent three full days on first landing in Australia. There is absolutely no question of its Oblate association and identity. Look in any direction and you will see an Oblate reference... on a building, in the name of school organizations, and even with the name of a classroom.

I often walked through the complex campus of *Iona College* with its Rector/Principle, Fr Michael TWIGG. It is sprawling and gorgeous, the first Oblate secondary school founded by the Oblates of Australia. But its beauty and size are not what prompted my admiration. No, it was the attitude of the students, 1500 of them... collectively gathered, (just like at Mazenod College) in respectful silence to begin their "Founder's Day Mass" and in the countless individual boys I spoke to or were greeted by. That's what impressed me. I knew their attitudes and their spirit did not come by accident.

I taught high school for 10 years and I have been around high-school age nieces and nephews for decades. Aware that "all comparisons are odious," I won't compare. But I will say the respect, genuine and readily-expressed friendliness, and appropriately-timed silence (without a spoken directive!), frequent reference to the poor, attentiveness to others, all these are very impressive. Not wanting to leave such values to chance expression, they are very consciously and carefully cultivated by the Oblates, the staff, and the very campus itself.

On walls, on steps, passage ways, doorways... everywhere you look are plaques with the slogan words "*# i respect...*": #i respect ... truth, #i respect ... diversity, #i respect ... Eucharist, #i respect ... nature, #i respect... courage, "#i respect..."

As I said, I don't think I impress easily. But the spirit and the respect, even the silence I found at these schools have left me wide-eyed, open-mouthed... and proud of how the Oblates are making St. Eugene's commitment to youth so effective in the nearly 3,000 students I walked among, spoke to... and heard from, in words and with silence.



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## Latin America

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### ARGENTINA

#### Youth Ministry, Nuestra Señora de la Carrodilla, Part 2

*In response to the request of the Provincial Superior, Fr. Antonio MARIANGELI, the JOMI (Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate) group in Argentina has sent us a long report on their various missionary activities. In number 579 of OMI Information, we published the first part of this report. Here is Part 2.*

Our greatest mission and task as Young Oblates is to make known the charism through our way of acting, in the parish groups, with our friends, in our families, at work, at the high school and at the university. This is the image that we bear and thanks to it, the group has grown in number and in spiritual treasure.

Currently we are thinking about the organization of Oblate youth days. It would be would be the revival of the ones that used to be celebrated annually. We need to continue planning and to see what qualities of the charism could help us to focus on ways to serve different kinds of young people today. We are putting our plans in His hands so that He may guide us.

Let us also talk about our present experience in the second edition of the MYM (Mendoza Youth Mission), a mission organized by the Archdiocese of Mendoza involving young lay missionaries, religious men and women, and priests from all parishes in the archdiocese by Archbishop Carlos María Franzini. This event is in response to the invitation of Pope Francis to "Make a mess in the dioceses" at the last World Youth Days in Rio de Janeiro. It consists of a weekend mission, with various types of programs, hosted in schools and parishes in and around Mendoza City. There is the street program (bringing the mission to those we meet in the streets and plazas of the city); the artistic program (bringing the mission through music, theater and the visual arts); the program for the sick (bringing the mission into clinics, hospitals and homes for the elderly); the prison

program (visiting the penitentiary, both men and women inmates); the nighttime program (bringing the mission to people sleeping in the streets, in the bus stations and the plazas); the sports program (bringing the mission into the parks and the cycling paths); and the mission 2.0 (through the communications media).

As JOMI and together with many other youth of the parish at the Saint Eugene chapel, we were about 30 who took part in this experience. We took part in three types of programs: some went to the street program; others to the artistic programs; and others to the program for the sick. In all of them, the mission was to share with others the joy of being Catholic, young lovers of Christ. In the street program, the idea was to tell the people walking down the street or in the plazas who we were and ask them to share with us what they would like to ask of God today or what they would like to thank God for in a special way. As for the arts, the idea was to express the joy of bearing Jesus in our hearts through our dancing in the streets and radiating our joy to all who passed by. Finally, with the sick, we visited the largest hospital in Mendoza and two nursing homes, bringing the people faith, joy, companionship, and listening to them and giving them gifts such as key chains, bracelets and necklaces.

On Saturday night, we shared with the rest of the youth and with the religious of the diocese a youth night, with bands such as Metanoia and times for prayer and adoration.

Once again, it was a very enriching experience to be part of such a big activity, together with the whole diocese. Being able to communicate Jesus, as young people, together with many others, was a source of great strength for us.

### PARAGUAY

#### Oblates "take to the street"

*Fr. Miguel FRITZ, former General Councillor for Latin America, tells of his recent experience marching with the poor.*



“Going out to the peripheries,” as Pope Francis asks of us, is nothing new for us Oblates. That can mean spending hours and days in the street. This was the experience of two Oblates in the Parish of San Eugenio in Teniente Irala Fernández in the Paraguayan Chaco.

I recently returned from the annual assembly of all the religious where we held a demonstration against the unjust judiciary system, marching seven times around the Palace of (In)Justice. Now we have had another demonstration in the Chaco.

The Mennonite Cooperative had placed two toll stations on the roads, against the will of the people; and even without the authorization of the competent authorities. In the beginning, the payment of 25,000 Guaraníes (4.50 US \$) per vehicle would have added up to 1 million Gs. a month, half a minimum wage. The Paraguayan and indigenous peoples organized themselves and, having exhausted all possibilities of dialogue, decided to close the Transchaco Route, the only asphalt road that crosses the entire Chaco.

Knowing that we were supported by Oblate Bishop Lucio ALFERT, Fr. Cristóbal ACOSTA, the parish priest, and I, Fr. Miguel FRITZ, walked with the people. Nearly 15 days of demonstrations brought us to meetings with various authorities, including in the very house as the President of the Republic, clashes with special police forces, and arrest warrants. But in the end, this solidarity was crowned with the dreamed of success: an order of the national government to take away the toll booths.

In those days “in the street,” we really felt we were “in the periphery,” very close to the people.

## **ARGENTINA**

### **Testimony of a young German volunteer**

*The Refugio San Eugenio is a place that has become home for youth on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. There is an Internet radio program, many snacks, scout groups and many teens come there*

*to “heal their body and soul from the scourge of addictions”. There are also various sports, recreational, social and missionary activities. Serving at the Refugio are two Oblates, Frs. Sergio MENEGONI and Antonio MARIANGELI. Here is the testimony of a young German who has spent some months in the Refuge as a volunteer.*

I am Friedrich Hartmann, from Germany and 19 years old. Last year I finished high school and thought a lot about what I was going to do this year. I thought about volunteering in a Christian community, in a social project outside Europe. I met the Divine Word missionaries who send young people out precisely to live such an experience. That's how I got to the Refugio. Here I share community life; this means cooking, praying, working, giving talks and much more.

A little tired but very happy with the afternoon sports activities, I go to the small chapel and get the keyboard ready. Together with the guitar, we start to play and sing songs of praise to the Lord. Slowly this house of God is filled with young people who come in dancing to the rhythm of the music. Each one already knows the melodies and dance steps by heart. It creates a climate of great joy and excitement. When we finish, the preacher steps before the congregation. They all raise their hands and ask the Holy Spirit to move within him, so that he can speak, filled with the experience of life. At that moment, even the noisiest go silent, closing their eyes and entering this extraordinary atmosphere.

“Why do we believe and trust in the Lord?” The preacher begins to speak. “Because he let his Son die, out of his infinite love,” says one. Another adds, “To strengthen me in the challenges of life.” Each of the kids can now respond in turn. Suddenly one of the older kids raises his voice: “Because he changed my life,” he sings out as genuinely and clearly as I have ever heard. This thought touches me deeply and shows me one more face of the merciful God. While the speaker eloquently explains a text of the Bible, I get somewhat lost in my own thoughts, for this last testimony does not want to get out of my head and I begin to reflect on it a bit.

And now something about the situation in the south of La Matanza. This area is part of the outskirts of Greater Buenos Aires, which has 13 million inhabitants. The *Metropolis of the Tango*, the cultural and luxurious center of the city, Buenos Aires, seems quite far away, although it is only 30 kilometers to the north. Here there is another reality and another society, marked by violence, drugs and alcohol. Especially the children and the youth in this area carry the burden and the crosses of all those crimes. For them, there exists only that world.

The lack of focus, the lack of love in their own families, the lack of human values forces them to take to the streets and makes them use drugs, makes them steal. This is the sad fate of many young people. In order to prevent this bad influence and give young people a future, this ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate was founded more than 10 years ago. Therefore, the idea is to love the youth as they are, with all that they have. Together with all the staff of the Refuge, there is created a climate that is totally opposite to the situation on

the street. One deals with the other by respecting him, listening, speaking nicely, playing together. More than anything, you treat the other as a friend or brother.

In the afternoon, the young people come and I spend hours together with them. We play ball, volleyball, ping pong or we drink *mate* while chatting. At those times, I have to be on the watch too, because sometimes they play too hard and that can cause fights. We don't want that at the Refugio, because here we are not in the street. It is difficult to create this atmosphere. But when we have succeeded at that, then we spend a very joyful afternoon, especially for the youth.

Two days a week I offer my "Circus Workshop". I bring out my devil sticks and a balancing tape called a "slackline". The youth like that a lot. And it fills my heart, especially when I see the kids with a giant smile when they have done a trick with the devil sticks or taken some steps on the slackline. Now I'm going back to Germany and I'm a little sad. But I have so many beautiful memories of very nice people and a new language for my country.

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## Canada-United States

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### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

#### A third Oblate centenarian at Richelieu

On August 18 and 20, the community at Maison Notre-Dame celebrated with Father Philippe MONTGRAIN his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The first was with his Oblate family on Friday and on Sunday, with many members of his own family. In his homily for the occasion, the Provincial, Fr. Luc TARDIF, in line with the liturgical texts, proposed that, in part, the secret of longevity for missionary disciples is faith, hope and charity that make us alive and live-giving for the world.

Now, at Richelieu, we have three centenarians, including Father Leo-Paul PIGEON (Dean of the Congregation: 07/03/1914) and Brother Louis RIOUX (Vice-Dean: 09/08/1915). Clearly, the surroundings are themselves an obvious source of quality of life and conducive to longevity. The quality of fraternal life, the cordiality and competence of the staff, the collaboration between

the various personnel in administration, nursing, cooking, reception, hospitality, animation and Oblate leadership contribute to a culture of life and health. A profound thanks to one and all. (OMI INFO, 1 September 2017)



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**Anniversaries for October 2017**


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**70 Years of religious life**

07/10/1947	08945	Bro. Donato Cianciullo	Mediterranean
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**65 Years of religious life**

07/10/1952	09397	Fr. Sante Bisignano	Mediterranean
07/10/1952	09396	Bishop Alessandro Staccioli	Mediterranean
18/10/1952	10040	Fr. Christian Duriez	France
24/10/1952	09399	Fr. John Archbold	Australia

**65 Years of priesthood**

19/10/1952	08349	Fr. Dominique Kerbrat	Lacombe
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**60 Years of religious life**

01/10/1957	10394	Fr. Richard Doll	Lacombe
11/10/1957	10490	Fr. Ludwik Plewinski	Poland

**60 Years of priesthood**

18/10/1957	09370	Fr. George Gruber	Lacombe
27/10/1957	09634	Fr. Gabriel Gérard	Belgium & Holland

**50 Years of religious life**

03/10/1967	12058	Fr. John McGinty	Australia
03/10/1967	11883	Fr. Antonio Pannunzi	Lacombe
08/10/1967	11969	Fr. Michel Brune	France
08/10/1967	11858	Fr. Bernard Dullier	France

**50 Years of priesthood**

09/10/1967	11156	Fr. Joseph Jacek	Lacombe
29/10/1967	11487	Fr. Joseph Bois	General Admin.
29/10/1967	11340	Fr. Geraldo Levron	Brazil

**25 Years of religious life**

03/10/1992	13513	Fr. Stefan Obergfell	Central European
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**25 Years of priesthood**

24/10/1992	13144	Fr. Arthur A. Flores	United States
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### Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 52-61

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Bro. Grzegorz Rosa	Cameroon	19/11/1953	Ngaoundéré	14/08/2017
Fr. Anthony Padidilian	Colombo	18/04/1931	Kohuwela	18/08/2017
Fr. Matthias Menger	United States	25/01/1929	San Antonio	19/08/2017
Fr. Manuel Mina	Philippines	04/10/1946	Cotabato City	30/08/2017
Fr. Bernard Dauguet	France	17/07/1933	Pontmain	01/09/2017
Fr. Joseph Samarakone	India	03/09/1941	Kancheepuram	11/09/2017
Fr. Michael Bradley	Poland	13/10/1925	Herlev	15/09/2017
Fr. Joseph Kane	OMI Lacombe	12/05/1929	Ottawa	17/09/2017
Fr. Louis-Marie Chrétien	France	08/06/1929	Lyon	17/09/2017
Fr. Raoul Martin	France	23/07/1928	Strasbourg	19/09/2017

*“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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