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The first Oblate from Angola

The first Angolan Oblate, Paulo Sango PINDALI, recently made his perpetual profession of vows. Here is the story of his vocation as he himself tells it:

I am Paulo Sango Pindali, born in Lobito / Benguela (Angola) on 1 November 1988. Coming from a Christian home. I benefited greatly from the education received from my parents Zeferino Pindali and Dionisia Afetina. I am in fact the fifth in a family of ten children, including eight boys and two girls. It should be noted that three of my brothers are no longer part of this world because they were victims of the 1999 and 2001 war.

From 2001 to 2007, I studied the humanities, interrupted by military service. These studies were done in two stages: first at the minor seminary of Notre-Dame de La Salette, at Catumbela; then, due to the war, at the Lobito Pre-University Center. After my studies, the institute chose me to be one of those who had to do first aid training. Let me point out that when I was in the minor seminary I had always wanted to become a priest. But after my departure from the seminary this dream had disappeared, because of certain influences in the school where I continued my studies.

It all began again in November 2007 with the vacation of my half-brother, who was a Trappist monk. When he returned to the monastery in January 2008, he asked me to accompany him. As the monastery was only 30 km from the house, I gladly accepted. On arriving at the monastery, it was already late, so Father Prior, Barnabe Sawango, a friend of my family, said to me: *“Paulo, our neighborhood these days is really packed with bandits; spend the night here because it is already late and tomorrow one of the brothers will accompany you to your work place*

at the Soba Catumbela beverage factory”. I was not happy, but I agreed to spend the night at the monastery, all by myself, for my brother was no longer there to look after me. He had returned to the monastic cloister.

At 6 pm, they invited me to prayer; when I saw and heard the monks singing, I had goose bumps and I wanted to stay with them on the spot forever. Back home I asked my parents if I could become a religious, and the answer was positive. A few weeks later, I spoke with Father Prior about joining the monastery; he gave me six months to look it over, without losing my job. In the morning I went to work, from 7:30 to 12:30, counting the cases of beer; and in the afternoon, I returned to the monastery. But during this experience, I felt that my place was not there, because we were not allowed to come into contact with anyone.

One afternoon, the Prior asked me to clean the monks' recreation room; while I cleaned, I was curious enough to read some of the magazines that were on the table. This is how I came across a magazine that talked about various congregations, among them Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Brazil. Impressed by their charism, that of evangelizing of the poor, the poor with their many faces, I immediately began to look into this congregation

The next day I shared the fruit of my reading with the Prior, asking him at the same time to help me to get in touch with the Oblates of Mary. Now he already had a plan for me to begin my monastic formation in Spain or in France. Far from his suggestions, I wanted to consecrate myself as an Oblate missionary. I asked him to

find me the address of the Oblates. Discouraged and even angry, he gave me the number of an Oblate who lived in Luanda. After my contact with him, this Oblate asked me to join him in Luanda for a community experience.

Thus, from 2008 to 2010, I did my stages as an aspirant and pre-novice in Oblate communities and to learn French.

After my novitiate in Ifwanzondo, Congo, I made my first vows as an Oblate in 2011. From 2011 to

2014, I did my philosophy studies at the major seminary St. André Kaggwa, of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa. From 2014 to 2015: a canonical internship (regency) in the community of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Ifwanzondo. At the end of my regency, I was sent to the scholasticate St. Eugene de Mazenod for theological studies. And on 16 September 2017, I made my perpetual vows in Luanda. As of today, I am in the third year of theology. And that is a brief history of my religious vocation.

Holy See

VATICAN

A new role for Fr. Ryszard Szmydki

On September 28, 2017, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, named former Oblate Assistant General, Fr. Ryszard SZMYDKI, to the role of Under-secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Since 2014, he has been serving as the General Secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Works of the Propagation of the Faith.

Born in Poland in 1970, he professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1970 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1978. He holds a Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome and a Doctorate from the Catholic University of Lublin where he taught for a few years. He also spent two years as a missionary in Cameroon.

He was elected to the General Administration in 1992 and served two terms as Assistant General in charge of the mission portfolio.

After his twelve years in the General Administration, in 2005, he returned to his native Poland where he served as Vicar Provincial for the missions. Named provincial of the Province of Poland in 2010, he served in that capacity until being called back to Rome to serve in the Holy See.

Fr. Szmydki resides at the Oblate General House. Asked about his appointment, he stated: *"I accepted this responsibility in obedience to the Holy Mother Church, with a clear mind that my work is a part of the Church's mission of Evangelization. I always feel I am at the service of the people in the peripheries and the missionaries who serve them. I never forget to think of them while working in this office"*.

Another Oblate has been named temporary (*"pro tempore"*) General Secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Works. Fr. Ted NOWAK, originally from the Assumption Province in Canada, who has been working at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for several years, will take on these duties until a permanent General Secretary is named.

Africa-Madagascar

MADAGASCAR

Apostolate of the Sea

Fr. Roman MAJEWSKI ministers with seafarers and fishermen.

Along the whole coast of Madagascar, the Church ministers with seafarers and fishermen.

This is the main objective of the activity of the Apostolate of the Sea, which has been operating in Madagascar since 1973. I have been offering this service in the diocese of Tamatave since last year. I am a chaplain for the Apostolate of the Sea in Tamatave. I work with seafarers and fishermen and their families. I often visit with the lay and religious personnel of the sailors arriving at the

port of Tamatave. We also visit fishermen and their families who live there. We try to provide them with pastoral help by celebrating the Eucharist on ships or, back at home, celebrating other sacraments and teaching catechism.

We also organize social activities. Every Saturday, 190 children of poor sailors and fishermen receive a full meal. Eighty of these children receive help for paying school fees, thanks to what is called the “adoption of the heart.” We also offer these children medical care, doctor visits and medication. We also offer a variety of courses to prepare children and youth for future work and family life. Recently, a course was begun for young people from fishing families who wanted to continue fishing according to the traditional Malagasy method in order to make a better living. Catching fish according to the traditional Malagasy method consists of putting out to sea on small canoes and fishing with a net thrown out next to the canoe. Despite the dangers that lie in the great ocean, they choose to do so because this way of fishing is often the only source of income for their families.

The wives of fishermen and widows of fishermen who died at sea form an association with the Apostolate of the Sea. It consists in handcrafting traditional Malagasy objects and their sale. This activity helps them provide for their own families and homes.

Everything we do in the Apostleship of the Sea is made possible thanks to the help of people of good will who share with us their means. That is why, on behalf of each of us, I would like to say from our hearts to each of you “MISAOTRA” which means “THANK YOU”. Your help makes us feel that we are not on an lonely island.

God bless you! (*Bulletin OMI Madagascar*, September 2017)

LESOTHO

Oblate bishops meet

Bishop Edward RISI of Keimoes-Upington , South Africa, reports on a meeting of Oblate bishops.

The OMI bishops of Southern Africa came together for their biennial gathering at the beginning of September in Mazenod, Lesotho. We spent three days renewing our Oblate fraternity and also visiting places in Lesotho of special significance to the Oblates.

On our first day, we were welcomed by the community at Mazenod and had the opportunity to meet the people who work in the different Oblate ministries. We spent the morning of our second day at Pius XII University in an effort to understand the foresight and farsightedness of Bishop Joseph BONHOMME who played a crucial role in the development of modern Lesotho.

While in the Roma Valley we celebrated Mass at the shrine of Blessed Joseph Gerard and visited the grave of the first Mosotho Archbishop Emanuel ‘MABATHOANA of Maseru. It pained us to see that the scholasticate which played such an important role in the life of the Lesotho church has been temporally closed.

On our last day, we visited Cardinal Sebastian KHOARAI with the intention of celebrating Mass with him in his chapel. The excitement may have been too much for him because the Cardinal was unable to get up for the occasion.

Asia-Oceania

AUSTRALIA

The “Rosies”: a reason to rejoice

Fr. William MORELL from the United States Province recently visited the Province of Australia. While visiting there, he was able to experience the ministry of the Rosies.

“Jumping for joy” is not a phrase I would immediately associate with St. Eugene, at least not from what little I know of his stature and temperament! But still, the phrase came to mind as I moved around the “Oblate world” in Brisbane during my first days in this land “down-under.” What I saw was thoroughly and beautifully

Oblate. One evening, I found myself with the Rosies and their friends.

I must think Eugene would jump for joy at how the Oblates and the Rosies have brought to life, on the streets of Brisbane, the love and concern he himself had for the poor on the fringe of society. Decades ago the Oblates put together an outreach program to form friendships and offer assistance to people on the street. The program and its workers are called Rosies. Today over a thousand volunteers go out to “the evening streets” every night of the week.

Before I left for an evening on the streets with Fr John David, a local Oblate chaplain to the Rosies, the Rosie website told me, “tonight, 20,000 Queenslanders are homeless. Nearly half are women. Over 40% are aged 25 or under. More than 3,500 of those are kids 12...” We went to a town on the outskirts of Brisbane. I don’t know how many Rosie sites there are across the Australian State of Queensland, maybe a couple of dozen. But in the site where I was, the hundred or so folks we met that evening were present in those proportions described on their website.

The Rosies are very sensitive about pictures being taken of their street friends. So I didn’t get the picture I wanted. I sat for a pretty long time on the curb with Mike -- maybe not long enough to truly strike up a friendship with him, but long enough to appreciate his humor and outgoing nature... and to learn a bit about his life as an aboriginal and military veteran. He asked me for nothing... we just talked. He broke up our conversation to help a young mother get some food for her kids.

But really, what can one accomplish in a single evening? What kind of friendship is based on one visit? But that’s the point of the Rosies. It’s never a single evening. For many, it’s night after night or week after week. For some it’s a 10- or 20-year experience. And in that fact is another blessing for the Rosies. Students and grandparents, young mothers and retired executives... lots of kinds of “friendships built through ministry” are formed, in addition to the friendships made sitting on the curbs.

Thanks to Fr David, I had a chance to be with Oblates in a setting much more suited to St. Eugene’s zeal than an assembly hall and meeting room. But you know, even when Oblates are gathered in a meeting room, sitting in chairs, not on curbs... even then, I suspect St. Eugene may be tempted to jump for joy when learns his sons are there to discuss how best to stay true to his spirit and to plot the direction of their ministries and lives toward those people most in need of the Gospel and Christ’s compassionate love.

THAILAND

Continuing service to the Hmong

The Thai-Lao Delegation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate inherited one of the treasured ministries of the congregation from the late Fr. Yves BERTRAI, a French Oblate who spent long years living with the Hmong people in Laos. He ate, worked and stayed with them. He lived like one of them.

The difficulty of having no written language compelled him, together with two other missionaries in 1953, to invent the first system of writing for the Hmong people called the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA). This RPA system is the commonly used system at present. The byproduct was that he was able to put into writing their oral traditions, practices and beliefs, as well as translations of the Holy Scriptures, the Order of the Mass and the other sacraments into Hmong Language. To further the service and ministry to the Hmong people around the world, he began the Good Shepherd Hmong Center (GSHC) in Lomsak, Petchabun, Thailand in 1996. Its main objectives are the proclamation of the Word of God and the preservation of culture and tradition of the Hmong people through print and social media. To meet the objectives, the Good Shepherd Hmong Center collaborated with Radio Veritas Asia in Quezon City, Philippines. Through shortwave broadcasting, Sunday homilies and reflections, topics on Hmong culture and tradition, news from around the world, and Hmong language tutorials are being aired daily for 30 minutes, reaching countries like mainland China, Laos, and Vietnam. All radio contents transmitted, however, are being

produced at the Good Shepherd Hmong Center in Lomsak.

Twenty-one years later, the OMI Thai and Lao Delegation reaffirms its commitment to continue this ministry despite the challenges that the center encounters. One of the challenges is to have its own workplace it was asked to vacate the rented place it has been using for 20 years.

The Center has found refuge in a two-story building owned by the Diocese of Nakhorn Sawan. However, the place and the facilities available are not conducive to the normal operation of the center. Two years have been spent in order to get the approval of a new project: the *OMI Pastoral Center*. Generous

groups and individuals, local and abroad, have contributed to make the project possible.

The Thai-Lao Delegation has already started the construction of the *Oblates of Mary Immaculate Pastoral Center* in Lomsak, Petchabun. The Center is comprised of the Good Shepherd Hmong Center as well as the Yves Bertrais Multi-purpose House. The blessing of the foundation of the Center was done on July 2, 2017, presided over by Fr. Gerry Gamaliel DE LOS REYES, the Delegation Superior. A simple yet very meaningful para-liturgy was prepared. The Oblates of the district, together with their parishioners and other Oblate friends totaling around a hundred people were present. (*OMI Philippines Newsletter*, September 2017)

Canada-United States

ASSUMPTION PROVINCE, CANADA Chaplains to the Scouts

From July 28 to August 12, 2017, Frs. Paweł NYREK and Paweł RATAJCZAK ministered as chaplains to the 9th International Jamboree of the Polish Scouting Association active outside of Poland. It was held in the Tamaracouta Scout Reserve north of Montreal, Quebec.

The Jamboree gathered around 1400 participants, who ranged from 6 to 80 years of age, and came from at least 9 different countries. As chaplains, the Oblates participated in camp fires, animated scouting rituals, accompanied young people on outings and kayak trips, blessed scouting camps, ran and judged competitions (such as the singing event of “Scouting Has Talent”), shared camp meals, gave talks on various topics, and were a constant presence to the scouts and their instructors. The chaplains also celebrated daily Mass for the Jamboree, and heard confessions.

Fr. Nyrek took his Scouting Oath and received the Scouting Cross at the end of the jamboree, while Fr. Ratajczak received his instructor’s rank of Deputy Scout Master. The Polish Scouting Association, active in many Oblate parishes, has as its core principles service to God, to Poland, and to one’s country of

residence, seeking to develop character and virtue in young people.

The ministry of scouting chaplain is a demanding one, but also affords an irreplaceable opportunity to accompany young people – both “guides” and “scouts” – in their journey of faith. Frequently, this happens at camp, usually in an environment of natural beauty. Moreover, a scouting chaplain has a unique chance to work with instructors – many of them young adults – who are discovering their vocation and place in society. Both of these activities fall squarely in the category of “Mission with Youth”, which the General Chapter of 2016 identified as a key component of Oblate identity. (*News and Views*, July-August 2017)

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP, CANADA A diocese gives thanks for services rendered

Upon the conclusion by the Oblates of their many years of service in the diocese of Rouyn-Noranda (Quebec), Bishop Dorylas Moreau wrote a letter on behalf of the diocese to thank the Oblates of the Province of Notre-Dame-du-Cap. Here are some excerpts from this lovely testimony.

On the occasion of the departure of the last three Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Fathers Rémi CADIEUX and René GAUTHIER and

Brother Rolland BEAUPRÉ, the diocese would like to pay tribute to them and to thank them. We also want to mention the presence and work of so many other Missionary Oblates, members of the Oblate Province of Notre-Dame-du-Cap, who have worked in our part of the country since its inception. All of them have been fearless builders, courageous missionaries, of remarkable zeal and tenacity as good servants of the Church.

Obviously, at this moment, our feelings are torn between sadness and well-deserved gratitude. First, sadness in seeing them leave the great region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue that over the years they helped to build. Our gratitude goes to these indefatigable missionaries who spared no time or energy so that the spreading of the gospel might be embedded in the social and pastoral fabric of our Church, long before our young Church saw the light of day in 1974, under the care of Bishop Jean-Guy Hamelin, founding bishop of the diocese of Rouyn-Noranda. ...

Indeed, over the years, many Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have left their mark on the area in a lasting way through many initiatives, some of which are still alive and well. Some have been true builders and founders who have not hesitated to become part of the social fabric of the region, drawing on the dynamism of the Church. Various names will always be engraved in our memories: Fathers Laverlochère, Richard, Martineau, Roux, Lagacé, Bergeron, Cantin, Morin, Patry, Levac, not to mention Brothers Moffet and Hamel, a few names among many others, who have left their mark in the region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue. ...

Through all these works and the living remembrances of so many Oblates, their gospel values, taught and lived, will continue to inspire our generation and those to come. The Congregation has contributed to building a social, ecclesial and educational environment of which we are proud.

And especially we do not forget the main mission of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the most impoverished people in our part of the country. This charism

was a constant concern of these missionaries. Saint Eugene de Mazenod had founded the Congregation precisely by giving it as a motto: "To preach the gospel to the poor". In this regard, the Oblate Missionaries made it their duty to be part of many initiatives for the elimination of poverty in our area. Needless to say, the Congregation did not hesitate, on many occasions, to tap into its personal and communal patrimony to help, support and meet the most pressing needs ...

The diocesan community of Rouyn-Noranda and Témiscamingue warmly thanks the Oblate Congregation of the Province of Notre-Dame-du-Cap for its continued involvement over the years, for the faithfulness and commitment of many missionaries who gave generously of their time, their ardor and their devotion so that this corner of the country where it is good to live might be born and flourish. Our diocese remembers and will continue to remember.

OMI LACOMBE, CANADA

A Guatemalan scholastic in Canada

An Oblate scholastic from Guatemala, Abraham HERNÁNDEZ REYES, wrote to the members of his delegation about his experience of missionary life in Canada.

Three months ago I arrived in Winnipeg, Canada. During this time I have had pleasant experiences as well as challenges in my life, mainly in living in a culture totally different from mine, different from Latin American culture and above all, trying to learn English every day. To do this, I had to study English full-time for two months at the University of Winnipeg. Now I continue to study English, but twice a week: Tuesday and Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., so that I have the opportunity to do pastoral work during the week.

On Wednesdays and Fridays I go to a jail, the "Headingley Correctional Center", with Rusty GARDINER, an Oblate Brother who works as a chaplain there. Also on Wednesday evening, I participate at our Oblate parish, St. Kateri Tekakwitha. We meet with parishioners and

Oblate associates to study the Bible; also on weekends I participate in this parish, teaching a little catechism. Furthermore, I accompany my mentor, Brother Thomas NOVAK, to his various ministries, especially visiting Mexican workers on the farms of the province of Manitoba. We organize Masses in Spanish, sports and above all, many of the workers speak with us about the various sad circumstances at their work and in their families.

I live in community with three Oblates: Father Bernard PINET, 83 years old; Fr. Dominique KERBRAT, 90 years old; and my companion, Brother Thomas Novak, 61 years old; and I am Abraham, 26 years old; an interesting community with much difference of age, but joyful, with community spirit as we have our Masses, prayers, community meals and various pastoral activities.

I also want to tell you that I am grateful to God for giving me this opportunity to have this

experience in Canada, specifically in the Lacombe Province, and grateful to you for supporting me in my Oblate missionary formation, since I am deepening in my vocation through experiences of God and sharing with the Canadian people and at the same time growing in the charism of our Congregation since Canada has a great Oblate history. Here the Oblates often tell me how the first Oblates came to Canada. This for me is interesting because I see with my own eyes the Oblate past in the great churches built by them and in streets and avenues with Oblate names. However Canada is now a secularized society; young people are not feeling an attraction to continue the missionary journey and most of the Oblates are of advanced age. For this reason they have to hand over missions with great Oblate traditions because there is no personnel to continue mission.

My experience continues with great joy and I hope I will be able to share with you everything I am living and thus, enrich our Delegation.

Latin America

PARAGUAY

A triennium of Oblate Youth

Dear brothers and friends, the whole great Oblate family: we have the great joy of announcing to you that during the Oblate youth congress this year, held on September 22, 23 and 24 at Saint Eugene de Mazonod Parish in the city of Teniente Irala Fernández, Paraguayan Chaco, we have developed and launched a triennium of Oblate youth.

The Oblate youth and vocation ministry team in Paraguay, with the support of the rest of the brethren, have decided to make an option for youth during a three-year period -- some intense years when we want to promote work with young people, in line with the pastoral option of our Church in Paraguay and a large youth population.

What motivates us to make this option? There are three principal reasons: the option for youth, called a second priority at the last General Chapter of our Congregation; the Triennium of Youth begun by the Paraguayan Church in

December 2016; and the call of Pope Francis for a Synod to reflect together on youth, the faith and vocational discernment.

For each year of the Triennium of Oblate Youth, we have proposed three themes with their corresponding objectives:

- 2017: youth and poverty
- 2018: youth and the Oblate vocation
- 2019: youth and the Virgin Mary

The great challenge that remains now is to continue what has begun during the youth congress, responding to the concerns of young people and their communities, especially regarding the impact of poverty on their lives, with its consequences: poor health, uneven education, the absence of opportunities for work etc.

Cherished too is a dream for the creation of an Association of Oblate Youth, inspired by the pastoral work of our founder with the youth of Aix.

PUERTO RICO**The devastation of Hurricane Maria**

Fr. Alberto HUAMÁN, General Councillor for Latin America, has sent us some news about Puerto Rico. Let us remember that this country, an island in the Caribbean, for the second time this year has been hit by a hurricane. The first was Hurricane Irma which did not do much damage, but this recent one, Hurricane Maria, has done a lot of damage. The Oblates who work in the mission are Frs. Neal MACAULAY and Mariano MARTÍNEZ.

Fr. Mariano writes: “We are relatively well; we’re tired and we cannot sleep. There is looting and delinquency. The foundations of the school and the parish have been damaged. There is much desolation and fear; everything has fallen apart: none of the systems are working at all – health, transportation, electricity, water, etc.

“Our house has survived: some doors went flying and the wind and water came in. We were swimming in our beds. But all is fine. The people in general are distressed and crying; they tell us they have never seen anything like this. The violence is coming from some who are desperate for water and food. Four days have gone by and the situation is becoming oppressive. The government is doing what it can and it is obvious, but the emergencies are bigger than it can handle. There are people without means of communication and dams are breaking, endangering towns that have to be evacuated. Patients are being transferred from collapsed hospitals. The governor is a young man who is working hard. Many, many months will pass before things return to a semblance of normalcy. Many young people are migrating and abandoning the country.”

We ask all of us continue to accompany them in prayer and in whatever solidarity we can.

Anniversaries -- November 2017

65 years of religious life

01/11/1952	09403	Fr. Johannes Effern	Central European
01/11/1952	09401	Fr. Waclaw Gospodarczyk	Poland
01/11/1952	10058	Bro. Jean-Yves Poulin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

60 years of religious life

01/11/1957	10985	Bro. Guy Côté	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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50 years of religious life

12/11/1967	11966	Fr. Aloys Terliesner	Central European
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Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 62-73

Name	Prov./Del.	Age	Died at	Date
Fr. Donald D. Mac-Donald	OMI Lacombe	84	Vancouver (Canada)	24/09/2017
Fr. Tadeusz Franków	Poland	83	Lubliniec (Poland)	27/09/2017
Fr. Anthony Dummer	United States	76	Buffalo, MN (USA)	03/10/2017
Fr. Pierre Fourman	Belgium/Netherlands	87	Verviers (Belgium)	03/10/2017
Fr. James Lantsberger	United States	89	Belleville (USA)	09/10/2017
Fr. Guido Blanchette	Argentina/Chile	87	Santiago (Chile)	09/10/2017
Fr. James MacGee	United States	86	Tewksbury (USA)	10/10/2017
Fr. Prospero Gacis	Philippines	91	Quezon City (Philippines)	12/10/2017
Fr. Jacques Keyzer	Belgium/Netherlands	93	Nijmegen (Netherlands)	14/10/2017
Fr. Adolphe Careil	France	95	Lyon (France)	20/10/2017
Bro. Yvon Boulianne	OMI Lacombe	90	St. Albert (Canada)	24/10/2017
Fr. Léonce Paquet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	85	Richelieu (Canada)	25/10/2017

“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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