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## General Service of JPIC: Message from the members

The General Service of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (GS-JPIC) held its annual meeting from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in Rome. It was the first meeting of the Service since the death of Fr. Kennedy KATONGO, former Director of the Service, on September 14, 2016.

At this meeting, the members of the Service affirmed the essential place of ministry to justice, peace and the integrity of creation in our Oblate life and ministry. As Oblates, this is our way of bringing Jesus Christ and the Gospel to all of creation, especially to the different faces of the poor in this age of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

We continue to draw inspiration from Saint Eugene's exhortation to "strive first of all to lead people to act like human beings, and then

like Christians, and finally, we must help them to become saints".

We recognize the many Oblates who, in partnership with lay people and organizations, are already at the forefront of initiatives for JPIC for many years. We advocate for more actions on behalf of justice and peace that are, to a greater extent, integrated with the life of every Oblate and Oblate community. We also urge that our lifelong formation processes endeavor further to nurture our minds and hearts along the path of justice and peace.

We in the General Service will strive to enhance efforts at collaboration and animation, and we invite you to tell us the wonderful stories of your activities and suggestions, in words and images, and send these to [genservejpic@gmail.com](mailto:genservejpic@gmail.com).

## Africa-Madagascar

### KENYA

#### Fr. Gerry's Notebook

*Fr. Gerry CONLAN is an Oblate from Australia who serves now as the treasurer of the Mission of Kenya. He keeps a sort of "diary" of his ministry there. Here are accounts of just two days in his busy life, as published in "Oblate Spirit," from the OMI Lacombe Province in Canada.*

**September 2:** I arrived at our home base in Karen after taking the night bus from Mombasa. The plan was to take the train, which is quicker, but the bus got me to Nairobi in time for the computer technician to give my laptop a thorough cleanout (the system fan had stopped working and the chip was getting very hot). I also went to the industrial

area to order 190 mattresses for the orphanage. Sadly, they no longer deliver outside Nairobi because of hassles with local authorities wanting bribes along the way.

When I left mass to have breakfast at the restaurant, I came across the street boys. As I approached, a man rushed over with two large bags of bread. The street boys then greeted me and politely requested some milk. I offered to take them for tea, but they said, "No, just milk from the supermarket please." So two came with me and when I asked if they needed anything else, they requested soap.

As you look at the faces of these boys, you become worried about their future. On Sunday

we have a youth group meeting and I'll be asking them what they think is possible for them to do for the street boys. I was wondering whether the new governor might be open to doing something along the lines of a food-for-work, clothes-for-work scheme. He has already started employing hundreds of youth for the Sonko Rescue Team that cleans up the city.

After a bit of lunch, my friend Godfrey and his friend drove me home (they thought I was too tired to take the bus). That was kind of them. His friend is the personal chauffeur for the head organizer of the president's movements around Kenya. He's a nice chap whom I've met regularly at Godfrey's for the last few years. He has a GK number-plate (Government of Kenya) so the police leave him alone. (Where can I get one of those?)

**September 24:** Greetings from beautiful Nairobi where we've had rain and sunshine during the week, but we had sad news as well. Fr. Gideon RIMBERIA'S dad has been diagnosed with cancer, two lumps in the stomach and quite advanced. Please pray for the family at this time.

Last Sunday I had a great day driving the Nairobi youth group to Chumvi Divine Mercy Shrine, only 20 kilometres outside the city limits on the way to Mombasa. It's on top of a mountain, and you can see for miles. We reflected on the Gospel – about forgiveness – and I challenged them to ponder if they needed to forgive their parents, or God or themselves. Then we walked the Stations of the Cross and ate lunch, followed by mass and then home. They had a good time, and were very happy.

On Monday, as I came home, I picked up one of our youth who travelled from Kionyo and he came for lunch at Karen. Then I took him to Nyumbani where he met the counsellor to talk about being HIV positive and get re-tested. He had been suicidal last week. I think I'm the only one who knows he's HIV positive. The cost was a bit steep, but how does one say no to a young man in his situation? I told him to pay me back when he can.

The next day, I received a call saying the tests came back negative. "The young man has no

HIV positive in his blood. We did the test twice to confirm. He's clean." I was amazed and happy about the results. I was almost afraid to call and tell him the good news in case it was a mistake. He was also amazed, but a bit cautious and wanted to visit the next day to confirm and see the counsellor. The rest of the day I felt like a dad holding a new baby in his arms. The poor lad had carried the knowledge of being positive for three years.

## CONGO

### Reflecting on the Oblate mission in Africa

Kinshasa is a think tank for reflecting on the mission of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Africa. The provincial superior of the Oblate missionaries in Cameroon and President of the Africa-Madagascar Region, Father Edouard DAGAVOUNANSOU, called it that on November 17 in Kinshasa after a four-day meeting of the Committee for the Oblate Mission in the Africa-Madagascar Region. Father Jean-Pierre BWALWEL, director of the African Institute of Sciences of the Mission, is the chairman of this committee.

Father Dagavounansou was referring to this Institute and to the *African Journal of Sciences of the Mission*, published by the High Institute of Saint Eugene de Mazenod in Kinshasa-Kintambo. "We are lucky to have this institute. Our scholastics should profit from it. Kintambo must be a wondrous place for us," said Father Dagavounansou at the closing of the meeting at the Oblate Provincial House of Kinshasa-Barumbu.

Congo's recently appointed provincial superior, Father Joseph NTUMBA, as host, was the first to speak. He prepared the ground by recalling the thought of the Founder of the Oblate missionaries, Saint Eugene de Mazenod. For Father Ntumba, reflecting on the meaning of the mission in Africa is in keeping with Saint Eugene de Mazenod, who founded the Congregation for mission. And for Saint De Mazenod, the mission is based on religious consecration. Oblates are religious missionaries; this identity is their calling card.

Father Marcel THIAW, of Senegal, recommended the establishment of ways for stronger collaboration so that the African Institute of the Sciences of the Mission becomes more and more a real opportunity for the Oblate Congregation and for all humanity. Formation should make young Africans see themselves as bearers of the charism of Saint Eugene de Mazenod for the benefit of the entire Congregation.

For Father Singini NACIDZE of Zambia, his trip to the Congo led him to the center of the Oblate

mission in Africa or even the world, because what is being done in Kinshasa is simply wonderful and leaves no room for pessimism. Christ is risen, and we are witnesses today. Africa is also witnessing the resurrection of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Father Mathomola SEKOTO, from South Africa, was also grateful for having experienced in Kinshasa the reality which makes it a pleasure to have become and continue to be an Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

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## Asia-Oceania

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### THAILAND

#### Helping the children of Mankhaw

*Fr. Domenico RODIGHIERO, an Italian Oblate working in Thailand, tells of the difficulty the children of Mankhaw encounter in order to obtain an education.*

I have been living for eight months now in my new home, a small mountain village, and from there I take care of two small parishes scattered among the mountains. Mankhaw, the village where I live, has about two hundred Catholics ...

The village is located deep in the Thai mountains and it is very difficult to move around from here, especially in the rainy season. That's why the children of my parishioners attend a small school run by the Border Police (no teacher would agree to move into the forest with the risk of being isolated for long periods of the year). The elementary school has about sixty children, from the first to the sixth grade and, often, lessons are made to "combined" classes due to lack of teachers. The level of education, as you can imagine, is minimal, but at least the children learn to read and write. Many of these children are Catholic; they attend our parish and participate in the regular activities that we offer.

It is lovely to see these children's simplicity and their ability to interact; how they can have fun being together and how they have learned to behave politely and with respect towards others. They rarely fight; they are usually cheerful and jovial.

Certainly such an isolated environment causes great risks for their growth: the lack of opportunities, the difficulty in discovering their talents and using them fruitfully creates frustration and, often, especially the boys, start drinking early and even making use of really unhealthy substances. It is shocking to see an adolescent with no motivation, unable to engage in something constructive and rewarding, a young man who has no other purpose in life than to drink with friends.

My job here is to help these little children, as much as possible, to develop themselves by giving them opportunities. With my confreres, we have made a commitment to provide for their education, from elementary to high school. My predecessor started sending them to some Catholic schools in the city where they provide good education. Those in charge of these schools do not ask for a fixed tuition, as they do with other wealthier boys; they ask for a contribution for school material. It is not a trifle when one considers that this contribution is added to travel expenses (here very high, given the location of the village) and it becomes an economic burden for people who do not earn more than 100-50 Euros per month.

This Christmas, I would like to give my children the gift of a small library and a music room, a healthy environment where they can be together, have fun, appreciate the beauty of a good book and music.

Merry Christmas to all and thank you for your continued prayers and generosity with which you help my mission.

**VIETNAM****Inaugurating the Year of Vocations**

Responding to the call of the Superior General and uniting with nearly 4,000 Oblates in over 65 countries throughout the world, the Vietnam Mission solemnly celebrated the feast day of Mary Immaculate and the inauguration of the Year of Oblate Vocations at the St. Eugene de Mazenod Scholasticate. The celebration took place in the town of Lái Thiêu in the Bình Dương province on December 4, 2017.

Bishop Joseph Nguyễn Tấn Tước of the Phú Cường diocese presided at the Eucharistic celebration. More than 40 priests, including Oblates and the priests coming from 6 dioceses where Oblates are serving concelebrated. Gathered for this occasion were benefactors, the Oblates' close relatives from across the country, and over 150 Oblates, novices, pre-novices, and Oblate candidates in the Vietnam Mission.

At the beginning of the Eucharist, Father Emmanuel TRẦN QUANG KHUÔNG, the superior of the Mission, presented the major development of the Mission over the past 16 years, and he introduced Father Casimir NGUYỄN NGỌC THANH, an Oblate recently ordained on December 2, 2017.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph called Mother Mary the first and the most wonderful Oblate as she devoted her life to carry out God's will. She is a genuine Oblate and an authentic mirror for Oblates to imitate. Mother Mary is aware of belonging to God, so she obeyed God completely, not like an equal partner in a contract, but as a humble servant. The bishop earnestly expressed his wish that Oblates follow the way of Mother Mary, the Patroness of the Congregation; that every Oblate become aware of belonging to God, obeying God's Will completely within the charism of Saint Eugene, in order to bring the Good News to the poor and the most abandoned.

After Communion, the community prayed together for Oblate Vocations.

At the end of the Eucharist, Father Emmanuel

spoke of the need to build a new house for the scholasticate. He encouraged the collaboration of every member of the Oblate family through prayer and sharing to help achieve the project.

Afterwards, the community joined in a simple buffet reception. On this special occasion, each participant was given a gift: an Oblate calendar and a prayer card for Oblate Vocations. (by *Khai TÂM, Translated into English by Đức MINH*)

**TURKMENISTAN****Announcing the Christmas message**

Ashgabat (Agenzia Fides) - "The central theme of my preaching for the Catholic community of Turkmenistan is 'You will be like God', the sentence with which the demon tempted Adam and Eve. Their mistake was that of wanting to be like the Father, but doing everything by themselves and moving away from Him. Instead, the Child Jesus comes to teach us that we can be holy like God; it is He who wants it. Christmas reminds us that Jesus came among us to accompany us on this path towards holiness".

This is what Father Diego SÁEZ MARTÍN, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, told Fides, who went to Ashgabat to "preach, but also to celebrate the Holy Christmas and the arrival of the new year with the missionary confreres". [*Editor's note: Fr. Diego is currently pursuing studies at the General House in Rome. A native of Spain, he has served the Church in both Ukraine and Turkmenistan.*]

The preaching is accompanied by a profound knowledge of the Turkmen Catholic reality: "The first time I was here," explained Father Diego, "was to carry out catechesis in preparation for Easter 2007. When I saw the situation and the people's needs, I asked my superiors if they could give me the possibility of being sent permanently to Ashgabat. So I spent three years in Turkmenistan, from 2010 to 2013".

Fr. Sáez Martín defines the mission in a country with a Muslim majority: "the most beautiful experience of my life, because I was able to live like the first apostles: I, like them, know what it

means to go and proclaim Christ in a place like Turkmenistan, where we must start from scratch; there is no church, there are no structures. I spoke about the Gospel and explained the truths of faith to people who had never heard of it. I can say that I was an apostle of our time. It is a difficult but beautiful task”.

The Oblate will remain in Turkmenistan until 6 January when, together with his missionary confreres, Frs. Andrzej MADEJ, Paweł SZLACHETA and Rafał CHILIMONIUK, will celebrate the Epiphany, during which the gifts of the Three Wise Men will be symbolically blessed. [*Editor's Note: In September of 2017, Fr. Szlacheta received an obedience for the*

*Delegation of Ukraine, so presently, there are only two Oblates, the only Catholic ministers in the country.*)

The Christmas festivities are celebrated in the house of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Ashgabat, but, according to Father Diego, they will also involve the Catholics in other cities, who will travel capital just to live together a Holy Christmas.

Turkmenistan has over 5 million inhabitants, 90% Muslims. The Catholic Church was refounded in 1997 as a *Missio sui iuris* by John Paul II and was recognized by the Turkmen government in 2010. (LF) (Agenzia Fides, 22/112/2017)

## Canada-United States

### UNITED STATES

#### A parish of very many cultures

On October 9, 2017, the country celebrated Columbus Day, which is more and more being celebrated as the Day of Cultures. On that occasion, the Oblates at Saint Patrick parish in Lowell, together with the parish community, celebrated the richness of their backgrounds.

The following 35 different nationalities took part in the Festival:

- **Africa:** (8): Chad, Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda.
- **Asia:** (4): Cambodia, China, Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam.
- **Caribbean:** (4): Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico.
- **Central America:** (6): Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panamá, El Salvador.
- **Europe:** (4): Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Spain.
- **North America:** (3): Canada, Mexico, USA.
- **South America:** (6): Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

While the Festival is a special celebration, it is worth remembering that, every Sunday

the Oblates at Saint Patrick celebrate Mass in five different languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Burmese, Cambodian.

The parishioners at Saint Patrick speak at least 12 different languages: Burmese, English, French, Haitian (Creole), Irish, Khmer (Cambodian), Polish, Portuguese, Quechua (Ecuadorian), Spanish, Swahili (African), Vietnamese.

### NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP, CANADA

#### Pierre Hurtubise and the papal court of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

During their summers at La Blanche, his Oblate confreres noticed the hard work done by Father Pierre HURTUBISE as he gradually completed a historical work on the papal court of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. On November 16, at Saint Paul University, forty or so people saw the fruits of his work, at the presentation of his book entitled *The Sixteenth-Century Papal Court, from Alexander VI to Clement VIII (1492-1605)*. Published by the Vatican Library and the result of more than 30 years of research, this book shows how one can much better understand how the popes lived and governed if one takes into account the members of their court.

In his presentation, Pierre did not fail to highlight the contribution of several people who, throughout his career, allowed him to publish this

volume, such as the Salviati family in Italy, who gave him access to copious archives and who encouraged all his research. Congratulations, Pierre, for your perseverance in carrying out this major work of your academic life! ([www.omi-qc-on.com](http://www.omi-qc-on.com))

*(Editor's note: For many years, the General House also appreciated Father Hurtubise's visits while he was doing his research at the Vatican Archives; he often shared interesting stories with his fellow Oblates in Rome. So our congratulations as well!)*

## UNITED STATES

### Dedication of George McLean Center

The formal dedication of the *George F. McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values* was held on Nov.13, 2017, in the Vincent P. Walter Board Room in Curley Hall at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Approximately 50 scholars from around the world attended the event to honor Fr. George McLEAN, a philosopher whose work over 40 years was to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding on basic human and social issues, especially among teachers in major universities.

After the welcome by the provost of CUA, Fr. Charles HURKES read a letter of appreciation to the University from the Oblate provincial, Fr. Louis STUDER, for “recognizing the value of Fr. McLean’s lifelong passion to bring about greater understanding, compassion and hope for all people of the world to live together in peace with great appreciation and celebration of our differences.”

In his keynote address, Fr. John STAAK noted that “Fr. George stayed above the deconstructionist frenzy and worked creatively to engage people, regardless of their philosophical system or approach, gently guiding them to build a philosophy that supported the dignity of human freedom. This center, then, will face the challenge of engaging the various philosophies around the world in a similar manner of creative development. “Central to this mission of creative engagement resides the task of investigating the dynamics of growth in human freedom.”

Later, men and women from Canada, China, Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Philippines, Pakistan, Ukraine, CUA, Georgetown University, New York, and Milwaukee briefly expressed their personal memories and appreciation of Fr. McLean.

The event was preceded by a noon memorial Mass in the Caldwell Hall Chapel at the Catholic University. (OMI-USA, January 2018)

## ASSUMPTION PROVINCE, CANADA

### Two parishes celebrate anniversaries

#### 70 years: Sts. Peter and Paul, Welland

On October 1st, the parish community of Sts. Peter & Paul warmly welcomed some special visitors during the celebrations around the 70th Anniversary of Oblate ministry in the parish. The bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines, Most Rev. Gerard Bergie, came to celebrate Mass in honour of this special occasion. He was joined by Fr. Alfred GRZEMPA, the recently appointed Provincial of Assumption Province, who paid his first visit to the parish. Fr. Grzempa was accompanied by Br. Tadeusz ORZECZOWSKI.

Parishioners packed the church for a bilingual Mass in English and Polish, in which thanksgiving was rendered to God for the Oblate ministry in this parish. Bishop Bergie offered his deep gratitude for the work of many dedicated pastors over the years. Their work helped with the building and sustaining of the Polish community in Welland, as well as care for the conditions of the neighbourhood around the parish. Fr. Grzempa replied by thanking Bishop Bergie for his kind words, and his openness to the work of the Oblates in his diocese. (Tom Dillon, parishioner)

#### 60 years: St. Hyacinth’s Parish, Ottawa

St. Hyacinth’s Parish in Ottawa is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The main jubilee celebrations took place from October 21 to 22. The jubilee Mass on Saturday, October 21, was presided by Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, SJ, of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, assisted by the Bishop of the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson’s Bay, Most Rev. Antoni Wiesław KRÓTKI,

and the auxiliary Bishop of Ottawa, Most Rev. Christian Riesbeck CC, and 14 priests. Among the priests was former pastor of the parish, Fr. Janusz BLAZEJAK, as well as Fr. Mieczyslaw BURDZY, who was the administrator of the parish for a time. On Sunday, October 22, there was a Mass offered in thanksgiving for the 60 years of the parish, presided by Bishop Antoni Wiesław Krótki, assisted by Fr. Alfred GRZEMPA, provincial of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Assumption Province, and Fr. Professor Wojciech KOWAL, who has served the St. Hyacinth parish community for over 20 years.

These events were preceded by the first parish mission in the history of the parish, carried out by Missionary Oblates from Poland: Fr. Sebastian WIŚNIEWSKI and Fr. Sebastian ŁUSZCZKI. A missionary Cross was blessed and placed in front of the church, to commemorate this mission.

In the post-war years (1945-49), a large group of soldiers from Great Britain and Italy, prisoners of concentration camps and refugees arrived in Ottawa. From the very start, it was important to them to have a Polish church and a Polish priest.

Since 1948, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have provided Polish émigrés in Ottawa and surrounding areas with pastoral care. In 1949 Father Francis ORSZULIK organized a mission for the Poles living in Ottawa. In 1951, Fr. Jan SAJEWICZ came to Ottawa to undertake the construction of a church for Poles. At the end of January 1957, an official act established the parish for Polish emigrants. In July 1957, the construction of the church was completed. The first Mass was celebrated on August 4, 1957.

## UNITED STATES

### Youth ministers gather

San Antonio, Texas -- Oblates and Youth Ministers representing Canada, the United States, and Baja California (Mexico) gathered for a Youth Minister Forum organized by the Oblates Working with Youth and Young Adults Committee. One of the most obvious reasons for the meeting was to gather and network as workers in the Lord's vineyard as part of the Mazenodian Family.

The opening night started with dinner and night prayer before the Oblate Cross and the lighting of four candles, representative of the different areas of the Canada/US Region.

Dr. Alex Gotay (Houston-based Catholic Youth Minister) and Mr. Mike Patin (Catholic speaker from Lafayette, Louisiana) contributed tools and certain elements of methodology to approach youth ministry. They each presented their themes in unique and relatable ways.

Frs. Jesse ESQUEDA and Frank SANTUCCI focused on the pastoral and spiritual aspects of Oblate ministry with youth and young adults. Fr. Santucci spoke of the origins of St. Eugene's personal conversion and the development of his pastoral efforts with the youth of post-Revolution France and the creation of the Youth Congregation of Faith in Aix, his pastoral ministry to youth. Fr. Esqueda recalled that youth ministry efforts should have an Oblate identity and he suggested 5 pillars or values for Oblate Youth Ministries.

Fr. Ray COOK presented data from a survey on "Personal Struggles: Young Adults and Faith." Data from the survey reveals that young adults struggle with certain issues such as: genuine prayer rather than devotionals; mental illness and anxiety; and pornography. He encouraged youth ministers to learn from such information in order to guide youth ministry efforts.

Gabriela Karaszewski (Director of Young Adult Ministry -- Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston) highlighted young adult needs and reinforced the call from Pope Francis to have a missionary outlook towards that population. The missionary call includes: 1) becoming a culture of encounter; 2) listening to concerns; 3) accompaniment through action and words; 4) going out to meet the people. She concluded that young adults are seeking community and not a program, so young adult ministry should create the community and not simply serve them.

The Forum concluded with the annual youth rally of the Tepeyac-Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes' Shrine. This year's theme was #KnowYourSelfie.

In the spirit of a contemporary world that offers so many identities and false expectations, the rally focused on recognizing one's own identity as being fully human, a faithful Christian and the call to be an authentic saint. It was an effort to inspire youth from Oblate and neighboring parishes to see

St. Eugene's methodology for ministry, especially with youth. "If we are willing to share so much in the digital world, why not share the Kingdom of Heaven?" -- Dr. Alex Gotay. (By Fr. Juan GASPAR in [www.omiusa.org](http://www.omiusa.org) )

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## Latin America

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### CHILE

#### First retreat on Oblate spirituality

Greetings to the Oblate family. We want to tell about the latest events of the OMI Laity in Chile, focusing mainly on the first Oblate Spirituality Retreat held in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Paul Parish, in the city of Antofagasta. The retreat lasted from the night of November 17 until the night of Saturday, the 18<sup>th</sup> and its theme was: "*Among yourselves charity, charity, charity...*" (Saint Eugene) and on the outside, the "*Liberation of Peoples.*" (CELAM documents)

The main objectives of this meeting were: to provide a space for spiritual nourishment through community prayer as an Oblate family; pastoral formation for Oblate youth ministry; unification of criteria for a national Oblate youth ministry; reinforcement of the idea of responsibility and belonging to the charism of the OMI Youth and OMI Laity, an idea that was already being worked on in Chile by Father Sergio SERRANO. This could be expanded especially at this time of the closure of missions in communities such as Mundo Ideal ("Ideal World", a Scout Foundation) and in the Antofagasta parish of St. Paul.

The retreat was preached mainly by the provincial, Father Antonio MARIANGELI, and logistics were taken care of by Karen Schwartz, Emanuel Henríquez and the current project managers, Oscar Quiñonez and Sebastián Cortés.

Next December 16 and 17, respectively the dates of the arrival of the first OMI missionaries appointed to the mission in Chile and commemoration of the beatification of the OMI martyrs of Pozuelo de Alarcón and the layman Candido Castan, there will be the commitment of new laity and the renewal of promises of others, some for the fourth time.

### PERU

#### Evangelizing in the high sierra

*(Editor's Note: From time to time, Fr. Nicholas HARDING sends letters and photos about his ministry in rural Peru: this one came just in time for the holidays and we are happy to share his story.)*

Greetings ! Here in Peru, being south of the equator, we are beginning summer. Since I am 15 minutes from the Pacific Ocean, it helps maintain a mild climate year-round. In January, I will begin my third year here. I am very grateful to God: good health, an exceptionally fulfilling and fascinating mission. Nevertheless, there are many difficulties and challenges. Also, the parish where I am pastor is so huge, it threatens to be overwhelming.

The most daunting aspect is reaching our towns in the high sierra (over 4,000 meters) on dangerous, windy, dirt roads at distances that can take more than 8 hours. Also, the "UPI's" or recent invasions of squatters, with thousands of shacks (no water or drainage, no paved roads, almost no schools or clinics) is almost surreal and humanly speaking impossible to evangelize. However, that is where the Christmas message of hope in the Messiah rescues me from despair. We are only two priests to visit about 50 communities.

There is a great deal of popular piety among the people...both Afro-Peruvian and Indian. In one community, they made a Christmas tree from tires painted green. In the more developed portion of the parish, secularism has affected/infected the young. Also, there is widespread abuse of drugs and alcohol. Sects from the USA abound.

People work in the agricultural fields (citric

fruit, grapes, asparagus)...very low wages by US standards. There are vast chicken farms. In the mountains there is a huge variety of potatoes. We have some maquiladoras/factories producing T-shirts (hard to believe but the wage is only about sixty dollars for a 60 hour work week). There are several polluting mines in the parish area (gold, silver, lead, copper.)

There is quite a bit of HIV, TB and zika virus (I recently had a funeral for a baby). I have had many funerals for people killed, but it is not as violent as Tijuana. We have a massive prison with 2,400 inmates.

I have had numerous instances where Divine Providence has been exceptionally evident: protection, helpful people sent to me, inspirations for solutions, delightful moments to keep a sense of humor, fine health up until now.

The Bishop of Ica, Hector Vera, came for our feast day (Christ the King) and confirmed over 300 young people. We are still doing first communions which will perhaps total 1,000.

Every Saturday we do infant baptisms, which will be about 1,000 this year.

A messy part of being pastor is recruiting, animating and selecting lay leadership for ministries or apostolates. We need to balance the need for rotation: new blood versus continuity and valuable experience. I need to offer and organize formation of laity for the summer vacation period in January and February.

I am able to relax on my day off by going to the nearby ocean beach (but the water is quite cold). Also, in the parish there are ancient archaeological sites of the Chincha civilization (the Huaca Sentinela, for example). There are prehistoric petroglyphs at Huancor. There is a beautiful chapel built by Jesuits in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the next door town of el Carmen (with Hacienda San Jose which was a slave plantation).

I think the meaning of Christmas is summed up well by St Athanasius "the Son of God became a Son of Man, so that sons of men can become sons of God." (omiusa.org)

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**Anniversaries -- February 2018**


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**65 Years of religious life**

17/02/1953	10077	Bro. Gerhard Wiesenmuller	Central European
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**65 Years of priesthood**

08/02/1953	08596	Fr. Carlo Mattiussi	Mediterranean
15/02/1953	08408	Fr. Félicien P. Labat	Lacombe
22/02/1953	08387	Fr. Paulin Van Eeghem	Belgium & Holland

**60 Years of priesthood**

09/02/1958	09391	Fr. Luigi Russo	Mediterranean
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**50 Years of religious life**

17/02/1968	11912	Fr. Michael Foley	Natal
17/02/1968	12381	Fr. Ronald Houreld	South Africa, Northern
17/02/1968	11909	Fr. Christopher Lockyer	Natal
17/02/1968	11911	Bishop Edward Risi	South Africa, Northern

**50 Years of priesthood**

04/02/1968	11320	Fr. Gerard Vandesompele	South Africa, Central
11/02/1968	10806	Fr. David Shelton	Australia
17/02/1968	10868	Fr. René Villegas	Bolivia

**25 Years of religious life**

06/02/1993	13536	Fr. Neil Augustine Frank	Natal
06/02/1993	13476	Fr. Siphon Petros Kunene	Natal
06/02/1993	13404	Fr. Lamulumundeni Edward Memela	Natal
06/02/1993	13537	Fr. Vusumuzi Maxwell Phenyane	Natal
06/02/1993	13456	Fr. Joseph Phiri	Zambia
06/02/1993	13403	Fr. James Robert Ralston	South Africa, Northern
17/02/1993	13451	Fr. Vitalis Marole	South Africa, Northern
17/02/1993	13681	Fr. Phuthasa Peter Waiphrot	Philippines

## Suffrages for our Deceased

2017 -- No. 83-91

Name	Prov./Del.	Age	Died at	Date
Fr. Romeo Villanueva	Philippines	78	Quezon City (Philippines)	29/04/2016
Fr. Omer Desjardins	OMI Lacombe	84	Winnipeg (Canada)	04/12/2017
Bro. Gérard Buisson	France	79	Metz (France)	12/12/2017
Fr. Nicola Ferrara	Mediterranean	87	Santa Maria a Vico (Italy)	20/12/2017
Fr. Pierre Mercier	France	96	Lyon (France)	21/12/2017
Fr. Jorge Wavreille	Bolivia	87	Cochabamba	21/12/2017
Fr. Emmanuel Motheho Morallana	Lesotho	58	Maseru (Lesotho)	24/12/2017
Fr. Jules Dion	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	89	Richelieu (Canada)	25/12/2017
Fr. Patrick Thompson	United States	83	Alamo Heights (USA)	30/12/2017

2018 – No. 1-2

Bro. Bernard Lefu Mokoena	Lesotho	52	Maseru (Lesotho)	02/01/2018
Fr. Canisius Moraes	Colombo	69	Kohuwala (Sri Lanka)	07/01/2018

*“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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