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OMI Information No. 590 (English)

September-October 2018

The bicentenary of our 'book of life'

Fr. Paolo Archiati, OMI, Vicar General

These years, our religious missionary family is celebrating important anniversaries. On January 25, 2016, it celebrated 200 years of life, recalling the day when its Founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, began to live together with four of his companions and friends with the purpose of responding to the Church's cry for help as she saw the faith of her members fading and being extinguished, following the devastation of the French Revolution, not to mention the defection of so many of her ministers.

For this small community, to which other young men would soon be added, Eugene soon thought of writing a rule of life, a code that would help them reach the ideal they had set for themselves the day they were gathered together in an old Carmelite convent, in Aix-en-Provence, in Southern France.

In order to develop this rule, therefore, in September 1818, Eugene, together with two of his companions, went to an old castle owned by his family, about sixty kilometers from Aix, his hometown. That is why, in September 2018, we are celebrating the 200 years since that far-off September, in memory of his desire to give his Missionaries of Provence a text that would help them become saints and show them the way to proclaim the Gospel to the abandoned populations of the region, especially the poorest.

This Rule has been retouched many times over the past 200 years, adapted to the situations of the religious family for which it was written, as well as of the Church and the world in which the missionaries have continued to carry out the mission of "evangelizing the poor", in fidelity to the original inspiration of their Founding Father.

Presenting Father Jetté's commentary on the Rule, Father Marcello Zago, then our Superior General, said that the Constitutions and Rules are essential for every religious family. He called them "the point of reference on which the identity of their members depends... a mine to deepen the charism, a concrete way to discern the will of God, a reflection of the Gospel, of which they help us to understand the needs, a means of renewal for people and communities".

The Rule written by Saint Eugene would be approved by the Pope only eight years later, in February 1826, but in the meantime it was the lamp to guide their first steps in religious and missionary life. After the pontifical approval, Eugene would invite his Oblates to embrace the Rule with heart and soul and to practice with ever greater fidelity what it prescribed.

A few years later, in the retreat notes of 1831, he wrote: "Let us esteem this precious Rule, let us have it unceasingly in front of our eyes and, even more, in the heart... We must let ourselves be penetrated by the spirit of our Rules and, to get there, we must make it the object of our continuous meditations". The Rule must therefore be studied, continues Father Zago in his presentation, constantly meditated, and must become the object of our prayer.

“... We want to choose men who have the will and the courage to walk in the footsteps of the apostles,” wrote Eugene de Mazenod in his first letter to Father Tempier, October 9, 1815. The Rules tell us what these men are, what love of Jesus lives in them, what missionary zeal burns in them, what religious life animates them, how they have been formed and how they want to live their community life!

In order for the Constitutions to become a book of life, it is necessary to know them, it is necessary to live them. The intelligence can accept them, the will can accept them, but they must also be accepted by the heart, as they need to penetrate our senses. Only then can we say with all honesty that we have “*internalized*” the Constitutions.

Internalize, a strong word. It takes our whole life to internalize the Rule, and it is still not enough. For this reason, and rightly so, Father Jetté concluded: “Until the most intimate part of our being has been touched, transformed by the love of Jesus Christ... we may not have reached the goal yet, we may still be on the way. What the Constitutions, the book of life, tend towards is to create in us a new life, the life of the apostolic man. It is the wish of our blessed Founder ...”

Speaking to the Oblates gathered in the Chapter on October 7, 2016, Pope Francis reminded them that their first rule of life is charity, to which the Founder has invited us with his spiritual testament, a charity from which derives, as a natural consequence, the zeal for the salvation of souls. This exhortation by Pope Francis combines the beginning and the end of Eugene’s life: his Rule and his Testament. These words of Francis help us not to forget that our religious missionary family has two main principles, closely linked and interdependent. From our desire and our tension towards holiness comes the effectiveness of our missionary action; from the challenges of our mission, faced and lived with the missionary zeal that characterizes us, that holiness is born which is a gift of God for our brothers in the community to which we belong and for the poor we serve.

We just have to open this book and immerse ourselves in it. If we read it with new eyes and with a new heart, we will discover it as “new”, even if the material words may seem ancient ... To discover it as new, it is enough to read it with the eyes of the Church of today, of the humanity of today, of the Congregation of today...

Enjoy the reading!

General Administration

Fr. General’s letter to the Congregation on the 200th anniversary of the first Rule

During the months of September and October, we recall Eugene de Mazenod at his family’s chateau, Saint Laurent du Verdon, writing the first Rule for the Missionaries of Provence. From October 23 to November 1, Eugene preached a retreat on each of the articles of the Rule, and it was approved by the members of the First General Chapter. We remember with some ironic humor how he called the scholastics to vote so that his project of religious life would be approved at that Chapter!

On All Saints Day, 1818, the Missionaries of Provence made their first oblation of chastity,

obedience and perseverance before the Blessed Sacrament. It was too radical at this point to include poverty, and this vow would only be introduced at the Second General Chapter, in 1821. In the Rule, Eugene envisioned missionaries who were to live in an apostolic community, who were to share a life of virtue, prayer and study of the Word of God, and who would preach the Gospel to the poor and most abandoned.

This 200th anniversary of the first Rule invites us to rediscover how very integral to Eugene’s foundational vision was the call to embrace religious life, to make the commitment of vows. I ask that we prayerfully consider two aspects of this anniversary: the call to be missionaries living

the vows and the call to be missionaries bound together by a Rule.

First of all, the Founder wanted this group of missionaries to continue the heritage of holiness and apostolic labors of the great Orders that had been suppressed by the French Revolution and its aftermath. He understood that the vows, living together in apostolic community, and the pursuit of a holy life were essential for the effectiveness of the mission. In his mind, these were not mere add-ons or optional niceties to a missionary life, but integral to the call to preach the Gospel to the poor and most abandoned. Although the number of missionaries was small at our beginning, Eugene's vision was in no way small or timid, but anticipated taking up and continuing the work and holiness of the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Redemptorists, etc.!

Secondly, the Rule was written to express a particular spirit characteristic of the Missionaries and to bind them together for a common mission. The vision, the sense of vocation, the encounter with the mystery of God's love on a Good Friday impelled Eugene to form a community with the mission of announcing God's love and mercy to the poor and most abandoned. Eugene sought to express this spirit in the Rule, which would sustain a common vision and preserve the unity of the small group of missionaries as it crossed its first borders, moving out of the diocese of Aix and into the diocese of Digne.

Responding to the urgent needs of each era, the Rule has evolved and changed through the lived experience of Oblates all over the world and through the communal discernment of successive General Chapters.

I have received a proposal from Brother Benoit Dosquet of the Aix community and from the General Committee of Oblate Brothers, which I invite you to support. To commemorate the 200th anniversary of the first Rule throughout the Congregation, I am asking all our communities to organize a retreat day with a time for adoration. While November 1st is the actual anniversary, in light of pastoral needs we could commemorate this significant date on October 30th or 31st as well. Where possible, an entire day of continuous adoration could take place in Oblate communities and ministries, inviting our collaborators in mission, lay associates and all those connected to the Oblate charism to join with us in prayer.

During this time of adoration, I invite us to renew our vows in the presence of the Lord and with the fervor of Saint Eugene. Let us do this in communion with all our Saints and Blessed Oblates, and in communion with all the Oblates who have gone before us. United with our entire family in heaven and on earth, we will celebrate the solemnity of All Saints and the commemoration of our Faithful Departed as a time of special communion in charity. We can also do this in light of the present situation of crisis in the Church, spending extra time in prayer for Pope Francis, for our Congregation and the entire Church.

Please contact Fr. Shanil Jayawardena at the OMI Communications Office, shaniljomi@gmail.com and notify him of the day and time that your community will have its adoration/day of retreat. We will post this on the OMI website and experience a sense of global communion during these days. Already, I thank you for responding so fully to this request!

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,
Fr. Louis Lougen OMI
Superior General

OBLATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE Thank you, Fr. Jim! – Welcome, Fr. Steve!

After tirelessly rendering his services for 13 long years, Fr. James Francis ALLEN finally says good-bye to the Oblate Communications Service in Rome. The 80-year old veteran Oblate, who is now the Superior of St. Henry's Oblate Residence in Belleville, Illinois, in the United States Province, held the position as the Editor of Publications in Rome since 2005. Replacing him is Fr. Stephen CONSERVA, also from the U.S. Province, who partially undertook the responsibilities of his predecessor in September 2018.

When Fr. Jim arrived in Rome in 2005 as the Editor of Publications, he was also given the responsibility to be the Associate Director of the Oblate Communications Service. He and Fr. Nino BUCCA (the then Director of Communications)

set very high standards for the Service and together worked hard for the development of the Communications Service in the General House.

Always updating himself with the new publishing programs and software, Fr. Jim proved that age is no barrier to learning. Many Chapter Fathers would remember with gratitude his painstaking work as the Recording Secretary in the General Chapters of 2010 and 2016.

Although he left Rome in 2009 and returned to his mother province as a formator at the Oblate Scholasticate in San Antonio, Texas, Fr. Jim continued his services to the General Administration at their request. Hundreds of editions of the OMI Information newsletter, Communiqué and Documentation (-2011) have been edited and published by him over a decade. During his long span of priestly life (almost 53 years), he has served as a teacher, principal, vocation director, pastor, formator, superior and director.

While appreciating and remembering with gratitude his enormous contribution to the Oblate Communications Service, we wish him well for the future, and especially, good health.

Fr. Jim Allen's replacement, Fr. Steve Conserva is also going to provide his services as the Editor of Publications, while residing in the United States. He is currently assigned to the Shrine of St. Joseph the Worker in Lowell, Massachusetts. After being ordained a priest in 1974, he was assigned to formation ministry as a Professor of Theology and Novice Director for the Oblates, as pastor in multi-cultural communities of Florida, California and Massachusetts and as Coordinator of the Oblate mission on the Pacific coast of the U.S., residing in Los Angeles and Tijuana, Mexico. All of that and his studies done at the Gregorian University in Rome and St. Paul's University in Ottawa make him a polyglot just like his predecessor Fr. Jim.

While thanking Fr. Steve for his availability and generosity, we wish him all the best in his new assignment.

INTERNATIONALEUGENEDEMAZENOD CENTER

Ongoing Formation for Formators: Novice Masters' Session

The novice master guides the Novices to grasp the meaning of Religious consecration to discern the Lord's call and, in prayer, make the Novices ready to respond (see C. 55).

Recognizing the important role of the novice master in the Oblate formation, the Superior General and his councilors invited 16 novice masters from all around the world to come together for a workshop. This program was held from the 10th to the 31st of July 2018 at the Centre International Eugene de Mazenod (CIEM) in Aix-en-Provence, France. The theme of the meeting was: "Formation to Oblate Religious Life and Novitiate Experience". Leaving their daily routine of activities and with a spirit of openness, the novice masters were able to prepare themselves to follow this precious gathering.

Some results we were able to draw from this meeting are as follows.

~> Time of Encounter:

This meeting gave everyone the opportunity to share their vocation story. We found out that marvelously God had called us personally as beloved men to be his co-workers and we responded joyfully, and, until now, God is still calling us as disciples to partake in his work of salvation. Like the apostles, we are disciples who have been formed around Jesus Christ, ready to be sent as apostolic men.

Also, through sharing our joys and challenges we were enriched by the experience and reflection of everyone in taking up the ministry as formators in the initiation stage. All this sharing helped us to see the courage and happiness we have in accompanying the Novices to discover their vocation.

~> Time to learn:

We benefited from the conference on spirituality and charism given by Frank Santucci, OMI. He shared with us the practical method of delivering the richness of the Founder's life from the materials we could find in many resources available both in books and online. We learned how to develop some formal studies on these themes for deepening our understanding.

Thierry Anne SJ, the Jesuit novice master, also

helped us to learn more about discernment and vocational accompaniment at the Novitiate. He enlightened us with many examples which often arise during the novitiate time and afterwards. We learned that the novice masters themselves need some supervision to help the Novices grow in their vocation and to help them serve well in the ministry.

~> Time of renewal:

Through prayer, recollection, reflection and pilgrimage to the Oblate holy land, we renewed ourselves. We were able to recall in mind the life of our Founder and everything he did in the past. We will not do the same things as he did, but through attentively reading the sign of the times, we could do something helpful for the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls.

We also built up the sense of belonging to one large community that is the Oblate family. By keeping in contact and sharing life experiences, we support each other to live this vocation and ministry. We had a very great and touching moment when we renewed our Oblation in front of the tomb of our Founder during celebration of the Eucharist.

The Superior General reminded us of the importance of personal accompaniment and the quality of listening to each other. For the Novices the novice master can be a good father and a true elder brother who accompanies his young friends in discerning their vocations. The most important point is to experience the presence of the Lord in the silent atmosphere of the novitiate community. Through contemplation and personal accompaniment, the Novices will grow to be integrated persons. Truly the Novitiate stage is laying the foundation for the Oblate life, therefore all should cultivate the foundation with care. The short time period of living the Novitiate stage will be fruitful and meaningful if we put Jesus Christ as the center of our life and mission. In their ministry the novice masters do not work alone but rather in collaboration with their formation team.

The assistant general for formation emphasized the important ministry of presence in the community for accompanying the Novices. All the structured programs will be useful tools to manage the formation activities with the goal of developing the five elements of formation effectively and meaningfully.

The presence of the novice masters in Aix was like that of pilgrims who could touch and experience the zeal and the spirit of St. Eugene and his first companions. Hopefully, the novice masters will be able to bring this spirit into the life of the Novices.

We gratefully thank the superior general and his councilors for animating us to refresh our commitment, and to the CIEM community members who have accommodated us with a living witness and many types of support.

Finally, in our concluding Mass and ceremony, we were sent to continue our ministry zealously and joyfully.

OMI JPIC

New “OMI JPIC Companion in Mission”

The booklet OMI JPIC Companion in Mission is now out in three languages! This is a resource for our Oblate Units in discerning and acting out the mandate of our Oblate Constitution and Rules to “bear witness to God’s holiness and justice” (C 9) and to work for justice, peace, and integrity of creation as an “integral part of evangelization” (R 9a).

This was a project of the General Service of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (GS-JPIC) under the leadership of its late Director Kennedy KATONGO. The translation and printing of this document was set back by the untimely demise of Kennedy at the time of the General Chapter of 2016. Now we have completed the project and are making it available to the whole Congregation.

Limited hard copies are now being sent out to the Superiors of Units. From our website, the booklet can be downloaded and printed according to the need of the Unit.

We welcome your feedback on how you have used this resource tool for animating the JPIC aspect of our Oblate mission in your Unit, as well as other suggestions to enhance this material for the future.

Fr. Ramon Bernabe OMI
Assistant General

Africa-Madagascar

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Workshop on Financial Sustainability for Scholastics

In response to the mandates of the 35th and 36th Chapters that each Unit generate funds locally and work towards its relative financial sustainability, a workshop took place July 23-27, at the St. Joseph Scholasticate in Cedara, Province of South Africa, with the purpose of preparing scholastics for this new task.

During the last two years, together with the Office of the Treasurer General, the Office of Oblate Mission Sustainability (OOMS) has been developing a program to prepare Oblate fathers and brothers to meet the financial challenge raised by the Chapters. The workshop in Cedara was the fourth of a series that started with a pilot in the Province of Indonesia in 2016, and the second to include scholastics.

The formation program will also include other training methods, such as online courses using the new Congregation's website. The goal is to offer theoretical and practical background and case studies on management topics and financial sustainability, thus providing Oblates with the needed tools to fulfill the Chapters' mandates.

The workshop in Cedara was attended by one Oblate and 21 scholastics, coming from the Provinces of Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa, as well as the missions of Botswana, Chad, and Zimbabwe, and the Delegation of Zambia. The instructors were, Charles Rensburg, OMI, the Treasurer of the new Province of South Africa, and Graciela Etchart, PhD., Director of the OOMS.

Topics included Principles of Organizations Management, Leadership, Communications for managers and leaders, basic concepts of Sustainable Development, and Financial Sustainability. The workshop was active, with collective or in-group reflections and exercises, as well as many examples from South Africa and other Oblate Units, with particular references to experiences from the Scholasticate. The Scholasticate's piggery was used to illustrate how

to analyze the feasibility of and launch successful income-generating activities. Additional efforts to obtain financial self-sufficiency in the Scholasticate are a kitchen garden that provides fresh vegetables to feed the faculty and seminarians, as well as the installation of solar cells to harness the energy of the bright South African sun and reduce energy costs.

Participants received the PowerPoint presentations and exercises used during the workshop but also documents providing more detailed background about the topics developed during the workshop. Asked to evaluate the experience, they concurred that the workshop was productive and had effectively introduced them to topics that are likely to be very useful in their future lives as Oblates in mission, the main goal of this formation.

Each workshop is different because it is offered to a different audience. Even though pre-adapted to the needs of those targeted audiences, it is appropriate to adjust them as need is perceived. At the same time, all those adjustments are a learning experience for instructors and the OOMS.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

St Joseph's Scholasticate at Cedara turns 75

September 8, each year remains memorable for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Southern Africa. It is the day on which St. Joseph's Scholasticate, was sown like the mustard seed, by a team of zealous Missionaries from France in 1943. 75 years later, this little seed has become a mighty tree whose foliage continues to nourish and mould fervent priests and brothers for the local Church and beyond.

It was, therefore, an event to behold, when Oblates from around Southern Africa and from far afield, together with their associates and friends, defied the torrential rains of September 8, 2018, to celebrate 75 years of the goodness of the Lord in their unique activities of Oblate formation at Cedara.

Looking back with gratitude, Father Neil FRANK, the newly appointed founding Provincial of the

recently constituted Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Southern African Province (OMI-SA), recalled some of the greatest challenges the Scholasticate went through to be where it is today. He noted that the Scholasticate which was born in the context of World War II bore, first-hand, the brutality of the socio-political forces of the apartheid regime.

He stated: “I am thinking also of the constitutionalised apartheid of the 50s, the 60s, the 70s, the 80s and the 90s that threatened the non-racial policy of the Scholasticate, even forcing the community to sit in different places in public spaces like in cinemas; it was very hurtful to all the members during that time.”

But looking at the present, he was happy to note: “Our Scholasticate has become more international than it has been previously; South Africans no longer dominate in numbers. This has increased the inter-cultural experience and has enriched our lives. And also provides a good basis for clarifying what are the African questions and seeking the African answers to them.” He expressed the hope that the Scholasticate and St. Joseph’s Theological Institute will, once again, bring contextual theology to bear on the current socio-political problems: increasing poverty, the land issue, corruption, and the education crisis in the country. He further tasked the Scholasticate formation team with developing “a decolonised missionary formation for a decolonised missionary praxis.”

Earlier, in his remarks, Wilfred Cardinal Napier of Durban Archdiocese, who presided over the anniversary Mass, paid glowing tribute to the Congregation for the many gifts and blessings which have been granted to the Church of Southern Africa – fruits of the quality formation of generations of Oblates who continue to play significant roles in the evangelisation of the region.

In his words of thanks, the Superior of the Scholasticate, Fr. Joseph PHIRI, reiterated the willingness of the formation team to carry on the courageous legacy of the formation of responsible “young men who are going to dedicate their lives to working for God.” He further said: “Like our founder said, we have to build human beings first of all and become good Christians and then hopefully, become saints. So, my brothers, aim to be saints.”

Present at the event were several other Oblate major superiors: Fr. Lucas MOTSEMEDI, (Provincial of Namibia); Fr. Jacob SALOOE, (Provincial of Lesotho); Fr. Vincent SAKALA, Delegation Superior of Zambia); Fr. Charles NABWENJE, (Mission Superior of Zimbabwe); Fr. Fidele MUNKIELE, Mission Superior of Kenya).

A memorial stone was erected to rededicate the Scholasticate to St. Joseph our Patron. St. Joseph’s Scholasticate was founded in 1943 to fill the gap created as a result of the Second World War when it became impossible for the Oblates of Mary to send their candidates to Europe for studies which had been the practice until then. Following the advice of Bishop Henry DELALLE, an Oblate scholasticate for Southern Africa took root at St. Joseph’s Hermitage, a former Marist Brothers’ Juniorate in Presbery, Pietermaritzburg, which was not then in use. (Denis Ekwerike MDP)

NB: Denis Ekwerike belongs to Missionary Society of Divine Paraclete, from Nigeria, but resides at the Oblate community and is being formed by Oblate Formation Team.

WESTERN SAHARA

The Oblates in the Church of Northern Africa

The Spanish Oblate Mario León DORADO is one of the three Missionary Oblates serving in Western Sahara. On 24 June 2013, he was appointed by Pope Francis as Apostolic prefect of Western Sahara, prefecture of which he had been the administrator since the resignation of Fr. Acacio Valbuena RODRÍGUEZ in 2009. Here he shares with us his experience at the recently concluded Regional Episcopal Conference of North Africa (C.E.R.N.A.).

Hello brothers,

Although it may sound too poetic, it may be said that a person is alive when he can laugh and cry. Well, in these past days, from September 23 to 26, the pastors of the Catholic churches of Northern Africa met in the city of Tangier to “laugh” and “cry”. And the church in North Africa is a very living church: small, poor, but alive, Alhamdulillah!

By the “caprices” of Providence and the will of God, the Oblates are in charge of the Apostolic

Prefecture of Western Sahara. As Prefect, I have been privileged to participate in the meetings of the Regional Episcopal Conference of North Africa (C.E.R.N.A.), which meets almost every year. In ordinary sessions we are few, barely 19 – in theory, 9 bishops and archbishops, 8 vicars general and an apostolic prefect. In practice, for several years now the bishop of Tripoli as well as the apostolic administrator of Benghazi cannot attend because of the war in Libya. There was another Oblate in Libya for a time, as Bishop Giovanni Martineli, former bishop of Tripoli, often reminded me - Father Enrico D'ONOFRIO.

We were 14 members in attendance at this last session, together with other guests (from Italy, France and Mauritania). It was a unique and very beautiful Church experience. Being few, the relationship is very fraternal. We have known each other for a long time. Our churches are small, as I said, but very alive. Many topics were discussed. Let me highlight two, one **sorrow** and one **joy**:

The sorrow, and a very big one, is the situation of our migrant brothers. They cross our prefecture leaving traces of the Gospel where they pass. They are, without a doubt, our poor to whom we are obligated. The OMI Mission of the Sahara is dedicated to them in body and soul. But in the north, the situation is even more painful. With them and for them, we suffer and cry. In fact, they were the reason of our meeting in Tangier, a city in which they anxiously await the moment of either jumping into the sea or jumping over the fence of Ceuta. It is impossible to live in this city, Tangier, and not feel like crying out about the suffering of these “poor among the poor”. Between the Bishops of Italy and the C.E.R.N.A., the idea of coordinated efforts between the churches on both sides of the Mediterranean takes shape. A delegation from the Commission for Migration (CEMi) of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) arrived in Tangier. They wanted to see “in situ” our reality: what we live on the “other shore”. In our communities, CARIDAD is lived without distinctions. The Oblates also work in coordination with the Church of Morocco. But it is never enough. A brother, a bishop from Algeria, reflected: “Maybe we cannot give an answer to everyone, but we cannot stop suffering for everyone – to make ours ‘the tear’ that the heart of Christ, our Lord, sheds.

Moreover, a **joy**. There are many: the evolution of Islamic societies in North Africa; the new converts who are asking for baptism. But I would stress an event that will take place on December 8: the beatification of the 19 martyrs of Algeria, Bishop Pierre Claverie and his companion martyrs. The celebration will take place, God willing, in Oran (Algeria), on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception! Perhaps we all remember the seven monks of Tibhirine, thanks to the film “Of Gods and Men”, but also among the blessed, will be Bishop Pierre Claverie, Bishop of Oran, and 11 other religious men and women who, with all their heart, chose to share the fate of the people who welcomed them with affection and whom they served. Along with the beatification of our 19 brothers, Algeria will also honor the 114 imams who refused to “endorse” the acts of violence of the radicals and who were similarly assassinated - another 114 “authentic Muslim martyrs”. All of them were witnesses of coexistence, of peace and of encounter. Perhaps they will all help us with their example and intercession. I ask you fellow Oblates to help us respond to one of the Chapter’s appeals: How is our charism concretized and lived in this church, through interreligious dialogue with Islamic culture?

As you can see, many joys, many sorrows... a lot of life, Alhamdulillah! Let us all pray that the Kingdom of God may come. Amen.

CAMEROON

The first Cameroonian Oblate is no more with us!

The province of Cameroon has lost its “Patriarch”, Fr. Alexis Marie ATANGANA, who after having enjoyed 95 years of life, passed away on October 2, 2018.

He joined the congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1951 and began his novitiate on July 26, 1953 at Brosse Montceaux (France). After his first vows on July 26, 1954, he was sent to Rome for further studies in theology. He enrolled in the Pontifical Angelicum University of the Dominican Fathers. After specializing in dogmatic theology, he did another specialization in canon law at the Institute of Propaganda Fide.

Father Antangana was ordained priest on

December 8, 1957 in Garoua by the imposition of the hands of Bishop Yves Plumey, OMI. This very first ordination of an African priest in this part of Cameroon was an event that inspired a large number of Cameroonians and Chadians. Bishop Yves Plumey recalled that he had sent some catechists and pupils from all the parishes of his diocese so that they could see that a black man could become a priest. Not only did he become the first black priest ordained but also the first African missionary priest in northern Cameroon.

From then on Fr. Atangana began his great missionary journey in North Cameroon. While he was still a vicar, he founded several communities and parishes. To his further credit, we may note the creation of the very first primary school of the zone of Guider where he was the only teacher.

Among the difficulties of pastoral care, in this strongly Muslim region, was the incomprehension of the Muslim leaders with whom he attempted a difficult religious dialogue.

Father Atangana was also the founder of “Charity Homes in Cameroon”. After meeting Martin ROBIN, a Stigmatine priest and founder of a

work called “home of Charity”, and following two years as rector at the Minor Seminary of N’Gaoundéré, in dialogue with his provincial, he launched the first “Foyer de Charité” in Cameroon. Mgr Plumey allowed this work to be established in his diocese, especially in the city of Ngaoundéré. In addition to his service as “Father of the Charity Home”, he was entrusted with the ministry of military chaplain.

With an Oblate heart, close to the poor, he founded an orphanage in a home where he welcomed orphans and children in difficult circumstances. From among these children, there have come many senior administrators in Cameroon.

When he retired to Maroua, he taught Canon Law and Dogmatic Theology at the Major Seminary there. He was also appointed Judicial Vicar of the ecclesiastical province of Garoua by Bishop Antoine Ntalou. Fr. Atangana remained active until the end.

On the feast of the holy guardian angels, October 2, 2018, the Lord took him from us. We will accompany him to his last resting place on October 25, 2018 in Garoua.

Asia-Oceania

BANGLADESH

Oblates standing by the poor

The Oblate Investment Pool Trust (OIP) and the United States Province of the Missionary Oblates have both been active members of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (www.iccr.org) for more than twenty years as an expression of their commitment to [Faith Consistent Investing](#).

Immediately upon hearing the news of the catastrophic collapse of the factory building in Rana Plaza in Dhaka in 2013, they became part of a leadership team to organize investors from all across the world, in order to bring pressure on companies in the garment industry to provide support for the families of those who lost their lives or were injured in this disaster, and to address the negligent safety and security

issues that contributed to it. The team was able to bring together some 153 global investors for this worthy cause.

Recently, after almost five years, the investors issued a statement calling for the continuation of the **Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety** until it completes its mandate and government agencies are able to assume its responsibilities.

This statement was in response to a June 2018 High Court ruling stipulating that the Accord’s operational authority will expire on December 1 of this year. The investors urged the government of Bangladesh to appeal again to the High Court to allow the Accord to remain in effect until a national safety regulatory body is established and is fully prepared to assume control of the Accord’s mandate.

ICCR Board chair, Fr. Seamus FINN, OMI, said, “The Rana Plaza collapse focused global attention on the grave risks workers in the Bangladesh garment sector have faced for decades.”

Fr. Finn also stated, “As this statement demonstrates, the investment community is resolved in its commitment to see the sector reformed once and for all. If left to complete its mandate, the Accord will do just that.”

TURKMENISTAN

An Oblate who is ‘under the wing of the angel’

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (Agenzia Fides) – “There is a category of non-believers who ask themselves questions about their own existence after contact with poetic language, because poetry raises questions that mathematics and physics do not. A lady once told me that she had decided to receive baptism after reading a collection of my poems. From this, I understand that being a priest-poet is useful. Poetry is for me a silent testimony of the love of God”. This is what Fides reports about Fr. Andrzej Madej, Polish priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) and Superior of the Mission of Turkmenistan on the eve of the publication of his latest collection in Polish, “Pod skrzydłem anioła” (“Under the Wing of the Angel”).

The Oblate also explains to Fides: “I have been writing poetry for almost 50 years and in many

moments of my life, the Lord has shown me that I should continue. When I was a seminarian in Rome in the early seventies, the superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a great theologian, often used poetic language in his homilies and catechesis. It was there that I learned that symbolism is a great tool for preaching. I am a priest who uses poetry to be even more strongly and deeply a priest”.

Fr. Madej’s compositions are written in Polish, but often translated into Russian. This makes them available to the faithful of Turkmenistan: “My mission is to be among the people, for this reason I do not have time to translate the poems. But some of the faithful who speak Russian, ask me for updates on the latest texts”, he says.

The Oblate has been serving in Turkmenistan since 1997, when John Paul II established the *Missio sui iuris* with which the local Catholic church was reborn. For thirteen years, the presence of the Oblates was tolerated only as representatives of the Vatican Embassy. At first they met in private homes and Mass was celebrated in the diplomatic territory of the Apostolic Nunciature of Ashgabat. In 2010, the Turkmen government officially recognized the Catholic presence. The Turkmen Catholic community, consisting of about two hundred faithful, meets in the chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the capital Ashgabat, and is led by two Oblates. Turkmenistan has 5 million inhabitants of whom 90% are Muslim. (LF) (Agenzia Fides 11/8/2018)

Canada-United States

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

The Mountain Kingdom and the Canadian Oblates

A beautiful volume, “Canadian Oblates in Lesotho” has been published by Archives-Deschâtelets, Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province, Canada. This publication, begun in 1993, was recently completed by the Deschâtelets-NDC Archives team, under the direction of Elaine Sirois for the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from Canada to Lesotho. Their missionary dedication spanned seven

decades, from 1923 to 1993, and counted with 189 Oblates receiving their obediences to the Mountain Kingdom.

Research carried out by various Oblates has brought together short biographies of each of these Oblates; the places they worked in Lesotho; and the years in which they were missioned there. The Preface includes the interesting fact that among the 189 Oblates there were 50 Oblate Brothers and some of the Oblates spent 60 years or more in Lesotho. Almost all of the short biographies are accompanied by a picture of the Oblate it describes.

Upon receiving this precious book from Fr. Luc TARDIF, Provincial of the Province of Notre Dame du Cap, Father Louis LOUGEN, the Superior General, called this volume “a witness to the missionary spirit and generosity of so many Canadian Oblates who gave their lives for the mission”. He hopes that this testimony will encourage other young Oblates to give their lives internationally. He congratulates all the people who contributed to this achievement.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

The jubilation of God’s people

Our confrere, Bishop Pierre-Olivier TREMBLAY was ordained on July 22 at the Basilica of the Shrine of Notre-Dame-du-Cap .. He will serve as auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Trois-Rivières. The celebration was presided over by Bishop

Luc Bouchard, Bishop of Trois-Rivières, in the presence of His Excellency Archbishop Luigi Bonnazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada. Bishop Pierre-Olivier Tremblay chose as episcopal motto “A fire on earth” (Lk 12, 49)

An immense crowd, accompanied by a multitude of priests, deacons and bishops, numerous members of his family, representatives of all the communities of the diocese, members of many religious communities, in short, the whole Church of this area met to welcome and witness this new mission of our confrere Pierre-Olivier. An exceptional choir provided the celebration with depth, joy and sometimes jubilation.

The modern means of communication ensured that the celebration was also seen live in several Oblate places, including in Richelieu. (INFO OMI, 1 August 2018)

Europe

UKRAINE

An Oblate initiative in memory of the martyrs

The solemn consecration of the memorial museum in honor of the Ukrainian martyrs of the twentieth century took place on September 1, 2018, in the Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael in Tyvriv, Vinnytsya.

The Memorial museum was created by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who take care of the local parish. The initiative for its creation belongs to the Superior of the Oblate Delegation in Ukraine and Russia Fr. Pavlo VYSHKOVSKYI.

Six Bishops, including Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine, Fr. Pawel ZAJĄC, the Oblate Provincial from Poland, along with the priests and laypeople who attended the celebration, passed through the fourteen halls of the memorial, the Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ and His followers in Ukraine of the last century.

The exhibits in each of the rooms contain photographs, documents, and personal belongings of those who suffered for the faith, revealing various aspects of the tragedy that took place during the Communist persecution. The imprisonment, deportation, persecution, and the process of investigation of those brutal killings are some of the highlighted aspects. The exposition also reveals the way priests administered the Sacraments and celebrated Mass under inhumane conditions in the camp.

Fr. Vyshkovsky said in his reflection, “this is a place of prayer, a place where you can touch the roots, the place that shows that the blood of martyrs has become a seed from which many believers have grown. This place should help people to think more deeply, to inspire consciousness, and to become a school of faith for the younger generation.

The consecration of the memorial museum was preceded by a solemn Mass presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio. (Translated and adapted from an article originally published on www.credo.pro)

Latin America

BRAZIL**OMI Youth come together**

The 11th meeting of the OMI Youth (JOMI) of the Southeast District of the Oblate Province of Brazil took place in the Oblate Parish of San Pío de Pietrelcina, in the Diocese of Santo Amaro – SP, from September 7 to 9, 2018. Together with hundreds of young people, many Oblate Pre-Novices, Post-Novices and Fr. Patrick OLIVEIRA URIAS, the National Coordinator of the JOMI, graced the occasion. Fr. Sérgio de SANTANA shared his experience with us at the event.

On Friday, as we arrived, we were welcomed with much affection by the youth of the parish and their families. On Saturday, there were various workshops and presentations during the daytime. We all enjoyed that evening, as we had a Sing-along called *Cristoteca*. On Sunday, the Holy Mass was presided over by the Provincial-elect, Fr. Lindomar da SILVA. The afternoon was dedicated to visiting the poor families of the parish and having a deep encounter with their real life situations. A traditional Walk for Peace marked the closing of the gathering that evening.

Below are the testimonies of some of the young people who participated at the meeting.

Lucas Birth: I was very far from God, and the JOMI events brought about my return to Him. A few days before, I was thinking about taking my own life for stupid reasons and today I am smiling to think just how happy and strong the weekend made me.

Brenda de Jesus Pereira: The meeting of the Oblate Youth made me rethink my own answers to some fundamental questions of life. I heard many wonderful stories from others and learned from them. Some even encouraged me to be a missionary.

Isabelle Caroline Caldera de Oliveira: The JOMI this year cleansed me and brought me back

to God's side. It showed me how essential He is in my life, and how I was never alone.

Mayara Jesús de los Santos: During the mission experience, we visited the house of a man, whose illness had taken away his ability to move. As we sat and talked with him, I felt powerfully the presence of Jesus who wanted to teach us that in life nothing should hold us back. We prayed with the man and we sang. He became so happy, and his joy made me more grateful and closer to the Lord.

Diego Nacimiento Farias: Organizing the JOMI, 2018, was an extraordinary experience - a roller coaster of emotions. You have the responsibility to help these young people experience what you experienced 4 years ago. For young people, even a beautiful little smile can bring them to recognize that they are lovable human beings in the hands of God. And, at the same time, we may sow the seed of a young Oblate of Mary Immaculate in the hearts of those young people...

PERU**Beginning new ways for Oblates to be Missionaries**

Fr. Roberto CARRASCO is a Peruvian Oblate who at present lives in Rome, pursuing graduate studies in Social Communications. As a native of Latin America, it is not surprising that he has a great interest in the people who live in the Amazon region. During his vacation, he was able to play an active role in some preparatory events for next year's Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region.

Recently, in the city of Quito, Ecuador, I had the pleasant experience of exercising the task of a professional journalist, at the Pan Amazonian Church Network - REPAM. This network is an initiative, born in September, 2014, in Brazil, to publicize all the work of the Church in the countries that make up the Amazon region. This network is all about responding to the great challenges that the Catholic Church faces in these

lands of Latin America. The network was born as a response to the Church's developing effort in its evangelizing task among the peoples that inhabit this vast region of the world.

With the encyclical *Laudato Si*, REPAM has found sufficient motivation to articulate the missionary work of the Church, concerning issues such as: promotion of human rights, alternatives for development, communication, research, etc. It is also an ecclesial initiative that was born in the Amazon to protect creation and those who inhabit it.

Thanks to Cardinal Pedro Barreto, SJ, who guided me in my interests and encouraged me to carry out my internship in the REPAM Communications Axis, I was able to delve more deeply into the task that the whole team of lay and missionary professionals of REPAM has undertaken, in anticipation of the next Special Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, convoked on October 17, 2017 by Pope Francis. The Synod, scheduled to meet in Rome in October, 2019, will seek new ways for the Church to favor an integral ecology.

Together with Daniela Andrade, head of the Communication Axis of REPAM, I joined the efforts to work on the international campaign to 'Amazonize' the Church - by generating communications materials and messages that generate awareness and understanding of the contents of the preparatory document of the Pan Amazonian Synod. In addition, it strives to develop strategies for planning and programming that are being worked out in Territorial Assemblies as part of the pre-synod process. These involve Bishops, priests, missionaries, religious, laity, indigenous peoples, civil organizations and institutions, concerned about the situation of the whole Pan Amazon.

Visiting the Apostolic Vicariates of Puyo, Tena, Napo, Méndez, Zamora, Aguarico and Sucumbíos in the equatorial Amazon, doing interviews and reports, as well as exchanging formative experiences with both the pastoral agents of communication and the population that lives in Amazonian lands, enabled me to commit

myself more to the task that Pope Francis has asked the Church to undertake in convening the Pan Amazonian Synod of 2019: "The purpose of this meeting will be to identify new ways for the evangelization of that portion of the People of God, especially the natives, who are often forgotten and without prospects for a peaceful future. Also of capital importance is the crisis of the Amazon rainforest, lungs of our planet"

Undoubtedly, this time at REPAM is the beginning of new paths for Oblates as missionaries.

HAITI

Oblates in Haiti Rocked by Earthquake Once Again

The people of Haiti, often called, "the poorest in the Western hemisphere," suffered another earthquake on Sunday, October 6, 2018. News reports indicated that 17 people died and over 300 were injured in the original quake and in an aftershock, which jarred the northeastern part of the country. Devastating as it was, the death toll is just a fraction of the magnitude 7.1 quake in 2010, which is estimated to have killed 300,000 people.

The magnitude 5.9 earthquake was centered under the ocean about 12 miles northwest of the city of Port-de-Paix and destroyed homes there and in the nearby communities of Gros Morne and Saint-Louis de Nord. The quake was only lightly felt in the nation's capitol, Port-au-Prince, which is about 135 miles away. Thousands still sleep outdoors fearing more aftershocks like the one which struck on Sunday.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who have several ministries in Haiti, were largely unaffected as their parishes and institutions are located away from the epicenter of the earthquake. A notable exception is Bishop Pierre-Antoine Paulo, OMI, Bishop of Port-de-Paix, it is believed he was not injured in the quake.

Long-time Oblate Missionary, Fr. John HENAULT, sent the following email to Bro. Richard Cote', providing a first-hand account of the disaster:

We had a big scare last evening at 8: 12 pm. I would have never believed a house could shake so much and not fall apart. Over the years, the walls had a few cracks and were mostly cosmetic but now many have opened up and are going to need serious repair. The few seconds it lasted sure seemed like a long time. I had experienced the quake on Île-à-Vache in 2010 but it wasn't at this magnitude. Most people in Gonaives spent the night outdoors. Most of the injuries in Gonaives proper were caused by people trying get out of their houses because we had had rain before and it was dark. The 2 hospitals in Gonaives were jammed with patients with bruises and broken legs, arms etc. However a parish 15 miles from here had its' roof removed. 2 hospitals, we heard, were damaged in Gros Morne 20 miles from me and in Port de Paix.

As of last evening, the local radio stations were giving 11 as the number of deaths that had been reported at that time. The quake epicenter was 12 miles North West of Port de Paix at sea. It

was only 7.3 miles below the surface. There was question of a possible tsunami but it was cancelled during the night. Later I hope to go see my St. Damien's Leper Clinic because it is the 3 bottom floors of a 3 story building. However, this is a new building and was built with the new earthquake procedures required in new constructions.

This quake was felt in all our Oblate parishes in Cap Haitien, Ferrier, Ouanaminthe, Capotille, Mt Organiser and Carice. However, I have no news from these areas. It was felt all the way to Port au Prince and the Dominican Republic. The shock waves traveled South and East at the same time. After I send this email, I hope to get on my amateur radio station and see if they need help with communications. Haiti now has several seismic monitoring stations in place so we now have accurate readings as to what is going on. If and when I get more confirmed updates I'll keep you all informed. In the meantime, keep us all in your prayers.

Anniversaries for November 2018

70 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1948-11-21 | 08596 | Fr. Carlo Mattiussi | Mediterranean |
|------------|-------|---------------------|---------------|

60 Years of religious life

| | | | |
|------------|-------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1958-11-01 | 11176 | Bro. Aurele Gallant | Notre-Dame-du-Cap |
| 1958-11-01 | 10591 | Fr. Jürgen Jagelki | Central European |

60 Years of priesthood

| | | | |
|------------|-------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1958-11-16 | 08940 | Fr. Mario Andreotti | Mediterranean |
|------------|-------|---------------------|---------------|

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 88-111

| Name | Prov./Del. | Age | Died at | Date |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------------------------|------------|
| Fr. MacDonald, Hugh James | Lacombe | 72 | Ottawa (Canada) | 29/10/2018 |
| Bro. Derewonko, Jozef | Central European | 51 | Hünfeld (Germany) | 14/10/2018 |
| Fr. Baratto, Virgilio | Lacombe | 93 | St. Albert (Canada) | 13/10/2018 |
| Bro. Rajapakse, Rabindra Francis | Colombo | 62 | Kohuwala (Sri Lanka) | 05/10/2018 |
| Fr. Atangana, Alexis | Cameroon | 95 | Yaoundé (Cameroon) | 02/10/2018 |
| Fr. Cavagne, Daniel | France | 93 | Vico, Corsica (France) | 25/09/2018 |
| Fr. Tremblay, Ghislain | Notre-Dame-Du Cap | 72 | Richelieu (Canada) | 23/09/2018 |
| Fr. Hoffart, Louis | Lacombe | 86 | Saskatoon (Canada) | 08/09/2018 |
| Fr. Simard, Victor | Notre-Dame-Du-Cap | 87 | Richelieu, (Canada) | 07/09/2018 |
| Fr. Guillet, Gerald | Lacombe | 81 | Chilliwack, BC (Canada) | 06/09/2018 |
| Fr. Blackburn, Maurice | Lacombe | 94 | St. Albert, AB (Canada) | 01/09/2018 |
| Bro. Huyben, Jos | Belgium And Netherlands | 85 | Heerlen (Netherlands) | 30/08/2018 |
| Fr. Martignago, Rino | Mediterranean | 70 | Cuorgnè (Italy) | 28/08/2018 |
| Fr. Pigeon, Léo-Paul | Notre-Dame-Du-Cap | 104 | Richelieu (Canada) | 26/08/2018 |
| Fr. Wynne, James | United States | 92 | Belleville (U.S.A.) | 19/08/2018 |
| Fr. Vermuë, Martien | Belgium And Netherlands | 87 | Nijmegen (Netherlands) | 19/08/2018 |
| Fr. Basista, Rudolf | Poland | 84 | Malmö (Sweden) | 17/08/2018 |
| Fr. Ward, Edward | United States | 82 | San Antonio (U.S.A.) | 14/08/2018 |
| Fr. Narvaez, Julio Cesar | U nited States | 43 | Tijuana (Mexico) | 11/08/2018 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|------------|
| Fr. Silva, Camillus A. | Colombo | 72 | Kohuwala (Sri Lanka) | 09/08/2018 |
| Fr. Kuryvial, George | United States | 85 | Belleville (U.S.A.) | 07/08/2018 |
| Fr. Liekens, Ernesto | Belgium And Netherlands | 81 | Mexico City (Mexico) | 03/08/2018 |
| Fr. O'Doherty, John | Australia | 84 | Brisbane (Australia) | 31/07/2018 |
| Fr. Rushton, Christopher | Lacombe | 70 | Hamilton, ON (Canada) | 30/07/2018 |

“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)

OMI INFORMATION is an unofficial publication
of the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
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Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Shanil Jayawardena
Printing & circulation: Shanil Jayawardena