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## Oblation and martyrdom

Fr. Fabio Ciardi

The Conference on “Oblation and Martyrdom” (see the article under ‘General Administration’ on page 3) that will be held in May in Pozuelo, Spain, invites us to reflect on a fundamental dimension of our Oblate vocation: martyrdom.

The first martyr among Oblates was Alexius Reynard, killed in 1875 in Canada by his guides during a trip to the mission of the Nativité. Ten years later, on April 2, 1885, Léon Fafard and Félix Marchand were killed at Frog Lake. Bishop Grandin used some meaningful expressions when writing to Father Fafard’s parents: “... Dear Madame Fafard, you may well compare your grief to that felt by the Blessed Virgin, and with even more reason than those who grieved the victim of Calvary: the dear martyr died for the salvation of his brothers and for the salvation of his killers.” To the parents of Brother Marchand he wrote: the two fathers “supported each other in their many difficulties, they were both victims of their dedication and martyrs of charity...” In 1913 two other Oblate priests dedicated their lives to their mission to the point of martyrdom: Jean-Baptiste Rouvière and Guillaume Le Roux, assassinated in 1913, in Coppermine.

We should also remember the martyrs of Spain, Germany, Bolivia, Chile, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Laos. Being an Oblate means to be ready for martyrdom. It is a recurring theme in the writings of the founder and the first generation of Oblates. Here are just a few examples.

Towards the end of his novitiate, Vital Grandin wrote to his brother on December 15, 1852: “The name Oblate that I must carry brilliantly explains

what I am committed to. I should be a victim, and not just a victim of a single moment, but every day. This is the true meaning of the crucifix that will be hung around my neck and it will remind me at all times that the Oblate’s path is a way of sacrifice and continuous immolation... To date there are no martyrs in our congregation. Oh! If I could only have the joy of becoming the first Oblate martyr!”

During a retreat in 1888 from his place of mission in Saskatchewan, Ovide Charlebois wrote: “... All that I ask You (O God) is to accept every moment of my life as so many small acts of martyrdom. If I am not worthy to shed my blood for You, may my whole life become a continuous martyrdom. Yes, my God, from this moment I want to live like a martyr. Thus I offer You the martyrdom of my life, my good Jesus, and I sign this with my blood, so that You cannot deny me. I want not only my physical suffering to contribute to my martyrdom, but also and above all my moral suffering: temptations, dryness and distractions during prayer, my pride, etc... I want this to be my main act this day; I begin to live as a martyr. O Sacred Heart, teach me to live this way, since Your whole life was a continuous martyrdom”. That same year he noted, somewhat realistically: “Since my last retreat, a pious thought fills my mind..., that is to become a martyr; not a small claim, is it? You will, of course, now ask who will be my killers. It is very simple: the mosquitoes, my Pierric [an Indian orphan who, on the advice of Bishop Grandin, Father Ovide had welcomed to avoid living completely alone in the mission.], my school kids, my mistakes, my temptations, my

anxieties, the hardships I must face, etc..., etc. It's no small martyrdom of a few hours I want, but a martyrdom lasting a lifetime. Since not a single moment goes by without having to suffer, I have said to myself: why not accept everything in the light of martyrdom? Will this not be as acceptable to God as the momentary suffering of the true martyrs? Hence I feel as though above a brazier, that slowly burns me, thus keeping me alive for as long as possible”.

In 1866, Alexandre Taché recalled his 1845 arrival at the mission of Rivière Rouge. Thinking on the first missionaries there who had been massacred by the Sioux Indians in 1736, he wrote, “...let us pray then to this zealous apostle, that he might inspire in us the zeal to consume our lives in the service of this holy cause and, if necessary, to shed our blood for it too.”

This desire for martyrdom became a reality for many Oblates.

The idea of martyrdom had been most present in Blessed Mario Borzaga since his early years of training. This recurs constantly in his diaries: February 19, 1957 – “During the Via Crucis, with my crucifix in my hands, I fervently considered how Jesus has chosen me to continue His Via Crucis: a bearer of the Cross, a priest... Christ's whole life was the cross and martyrdom. I am another Christ, so... I too have been chosen for martyrdom. And if I want to be a holy priest I should not wish for more, because this is the mystery that lies in my hands, every day: the

mystery of the blood, of total immolation, of the complete giving of oneself, of the innocence due to renouncement, of humility before the divine grandeur”. April 19, 1957 – “Good Friday. The martyrs should be imitated, not praised!” June 26, 1957. “Today was the feast of the martyrs John and Paul... It is the martyrs who make the Church, only the martyrs ...”.

Maurice Lefebvre was killed in 1971 in La Paz, Bolivia. In fact, in December, 1967, Father Maurice had written “we too may see and accept what it will cost us to be disciples of Christ in 1968... It will cost us more than just mere words; it will cost us more than wishful thinking; it will cost us more than the translation of certain texts of the Popes and Reformers.”

Michael Paul Rodrigo was assassinated on November 10, 1987, in Sri Lanka. On September 28, 1987, he wrote to his sister Hilda “... The Cross is not something that we hang on the wall or around our necks. Jesus was the first to be hung there... So we must be ready to die for our people if and when the time comes.”

Almost 100 Oblates died tragically during the exercise of their ministry. About thirty of them were proclaimed blessed and recognized as martyrs of the faith. A very small number considering the 15,000 Oblates who succeeded each other over 200 years, yet they are a sign of the radicality required of everyone from the oblation of ourselves to God, to the Church, to the poor.

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## General Administration

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### GENERAL FORMATION COMMITTEE MEETING

#### Finalizing the Vade Mecum of Prenovitiate formation

At our recently concluded meeting in Rome (11-16 February 2019), the General Formation Committee reflected on some of the calls of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter regarding lifelong formation for Oblate life and mission today. We also spent some time evaluating the

recently concluded Year of Oblate Vocations and initiating the remote preparation for the ongoing formation workshop for Post-novitiate formators that will take place in Aix-en-Provence from 7 to 28 July 2020.

However, the focal point of our meeting was the conclusion of discussions on the Prenovitiate formation program for the Congregation. This has been under study since the 2016 General Chapter's renewed awareness of the

importance of this formation stage. It will now go to the Superior General and his Council for further refinement and eventually for their approval. The important elements that emerged during the discussions and that will ensure a fruitful and enriching Prenovitiate experience are the following: it is necessary to provide the prenovices with a stable Oblate community and a team of competent and full-time formators. Moreover, no matter the length of the Prenovitiate experience (at least 6 months according to R. 54b), we must ensure that the main objectives of the formation program are achieved. For the objectives to be satisfactorily accomplished, the committee recommends at least a one-year Prenovitiate program.

In terms of its structure, the Prenovitiate experience will be organized in such a way that the prenovices are properly introduced to the program (orientation stage), are able to deepen and to assimilate the different aspects of the Prenovitiate life (foundation stage) and can integrate the entire experience (integration stage).

Most importantly, the Prenovitiate formation experience serves as an immediate preparation for the novitiate. Thus, it should help the prenovices attain appropriate human and spiritual maturity that will make them ready to begin the novitiate experience.

## **GENERAL SERVICE FOR OBLATE STUDIES**

### **Conference on "Oblation and Martyrdom" to be held soon**

The first Oblate martyr was Brother Alexius REYNARD, killed in 1875. Ten years later, on April 2, 1885, it was the turn of Léon FAFARD and Felix MARCHAND. Since then, almost a hundred Oblates have died violently in mission. Many of them have given an extraordinary testimony of life. Some thirty were proclaimed blessed and recognized as martyrs of faith. The only catalogue is the book by Arthur Smith, *Mártires Oblatos* (1831-1997), published in 2006.

The oblation culminates in martyrdom and martyrdom allows us to understand the oblation in all its depth and its demands. It is a recurrent theme in the writings of the Founder and the first generation of Oblates. It was particularly studied by a 1994 research by Fr. Maurizio GIORGIANNI, "*The martyrdom, 'charism' of the mission*", summarized in three articles that appeared in "*Vie Oblate Life*" in 1994. Since then, no further studies have been carried out on the subject. In the meantime, our Oblate martyrs have been beatified: Joseph Cebula (1999), the Oblates of Spain (2011), the missionaries of Laos (2016). The time has therefore come for a deeper reflection on this theme: Oblation and martyrdom.

To this end, the General Service for Oblate Studies, together with the General Postulation and the Mediterranean Province, has organized a Conference to be held in Pozuelo (Madrid, Spain) from May 4 to 5, this year.

The members of the Oblate Family are invited: Oblates, MAMI, OMMI, MGC, COMI, Las Oblatas, family members of the Martyrs, Lay Friends.

### **The program**

The martyrdom of the Oblates will be studied in the broader context of the twentieth century and involves two moments.

On the first day (4 May), the focus will be on the Oblate martyrs of Spain. The social, political and military situation in the period of the Spanish civil war will be analyzed, to then give space to the narration and the testimonies of the martyrdom of the Oblates.

The second day (5 May) will be dedicated to a broad vision of the martyrdom of the Oblates in different continents, with some examples for each Region. This second moment will be made possible thanks to direct links via webex with the places from which the interventions are foreseen.

The entire conference can be followed by live streaming.

**Call for papers**

In addition to the Reports included in the programme, the Conference welcomes Communications, which, on the opinion of the scientific committee, will be presented during the Conference and/or published in the Acts of the Conference.

The length of the text can vary from 5 to 15 pages (each page 2200 characters, including spaces). The eventual presentation during the Congress, made in person or pre-recorded or live webex, will last 10 minutes.

By March 31, 2019, the title and an abstract of up to 4000 characters with the description of the

presentation must be sent to the address [oblatio@omioblato.org](mailto:oblatio@omioblato.org). The proposals will be evaluated by the scientific committee that will contact the author.

**The themes can be of two types:**

- Theological-spiritual: oblation, martyrdom and their relevance in oblate life in doctrinal reflection or in the testimony of oblate authors;
- Historical: documented testimonies of Oblates who, in different contexts and Regions, killed because of the mission.

The Acts of the Conference will be published in the magazine "Oblatio" and in the series "Oblatio Studia".

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## Africa Madagascar

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### **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Oblate Francophone Sub-Region met in Kinshasa**

The Major Superiors and the treasurers of the Provinces, Delegations and Missions of the Oblate Francophone Sub-Region of Africa met at the Provincial House in Kinshasa, Congo, from 11 to 14 February. They came from Madagascar, Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The key issue of the discussions was how to better organize the two international formation houses in the region, namely, Kinshasa (DRC) and Yaoundé (Cameroon). While Kinshasa houses students of theology, Yaoundé forms the students of the philosophy cycle.

The exchanges concerned both the statutes and finances of the so-called "consolidated" formation houses. The Superiors mainly discussed how to ensure the best living conditions for future Oblate missionaries in French-speaking Africa.

"The question is crucial", said Fr. Louis DIEDHOU, superior of the Delegation of

Senegal. "We, being a missionary congregation, the young African Oblates must be trained in the right manner in order to ensure they will provide a solid missionary service throughout the continent and beyond in the future. Senegal already benefits from the missionary presence of four Congolese, a Nigerian, and a Cameroonian."

Fr. Edouard Dagavounansou, the provincial of the Cameroon Province, also spoke about the meeting when he met with the Scholastics in Kinshasa three days later on February 17. He said that, during the meeting, the Major Superiors of the sub-region insisted on a more systematic common organization of the formation houses of Yaoundé (philosophy) and Kinshasa (theology). He praised the formators for the efforts taken for the "consolidation" of the two houses. He invited young Oblates in the Theologate, who are from Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, Chad, DRC and Angola, to understand that their formation is a formation for mission and living interculturally. "Interculturality has a price, but this price must be paid, in order to realize what is common to us," he further said.



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## Asia-Oceania

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**PHILIPPINES****Archbishop Lampon: ‘My heart bleeds for my people in Jolo’**

Archbishop Angelito Lampon of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had mixed feelings when he assumed his post as head of the Archdiocese of Cotabato. He should be celebrating over his new position, which he took over from Archbishop Cardinal Quevedo, who recently retired.

But when Lampon was installed on Monday afternoon, by the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, it was just a day after two bombs went off at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, killing 21 people and wounding at least 111 others.

Lampon had served in that cathedral for 21 years, regularly celebrating the 8:00 a.m. Mass. But last Sunday, a diocesan priest took over because Lampon was in Manila attending a meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference.

“I have a heavy heart, and this heart is bleeding for my people who perished in the Jolo cathedral bombings,” Lampon said in a brief interview after his installation. “I have known those regular churchgoers who died in the blast,” he added. “They have become my family, my brothers and sisters, my heart is really bleeding for them.”

“It’s a big emotional upheaval inside and yet my faith tells me to continue extending a hand of friendship, in inter-religious dialogue,” the new archbishop said, his eyes slowly turning red.

Still grieving for his flock, Lampon said the Oblates and the Catholic Church would not be cowed by the violence.

**THE PHILIPPINES****Statement of the OMI Province of the Philippines on the Jolo Cathedral Bombing**

We have lost brothers, sisters, and friends, and we are in deep grief and sorrow. We are one with

their families in this difficult time – for they were also a family to us. Our grief is even greater as the bombing happened at a time when the Holy Mass is being celebrated at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral. Indeed, they have died as martyrs witnessing to their Christian faith as they braved to stay in Jolo despite constant intimidation and risks. Our sympathy also extends to the men in uniform whose lives were sacrificed in their duty to protect the community. We condemn in the strongest possible terms this treacherous, inhumane, and evil act of violence against the people of Jolo, especially to the Christian community. Such barbaric deed has no place in a civilized society where sacredness of life and human dignity is respected. We therefore implore all concerned authorities to do their utmost duty to bring immediate justice to victims, their families, and the entire community of Jolo who are deeply afflicted by this atrocity. Over the past decades, our people - Christians, Muslims, and Lumads - have been striving to work together to bring forth harmony, peace, and progress to this land. It is our hope that this tragic incident may not be a source of division therefore, but rather a strong reason to build-up a community that is centered on the values of peace, dialogue, friendship, love, and solidarity that transcends religion, culture, or belief.

*Fr. Charlie M. Inzon, OMI,  
Provincial Superior,  
OMI Province of the Philippines*

**PHILIPPINES****Assistant General visits Jolo Cathedral bombing victims**

Fr. Ramon BERNABE, Assistant General for Mission, recently visited Jolo, Sulu, in the southern Philippines, to convey the Congregation’s sympathies and to express solidarity with the Vicariate of Jolo after the January 27 bombing of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

As of the latest count, 24 persons had been killed by the twin blasts inside and outside

the Cathedral. The dead included 16 civilians, 7 Army soldiers, and 1 person from the Coast Guard. Fr. Bernabe also visited the families of some of the victims. As many as 90 other persons sustained various injuries. Fr. Bernabe visited 15 of them, young and old, who were still in hospitals. Some of them had amputated legs, fractures, third-degree burns, and/or shrapnel wounds. Former Provincial Larry de GUIA, who is a medical doctor, is personally attending to the needs of the injured.

The first blast inside the Cathedral happened at the time of the Second Reading of the Sunday Mass, killing some of the parish's active and regular Sunday Mass goers—among them a husband and wife, elderly persons, a 14-year old girl, the former President of the Parish Council, the President of the local secular order of the Discalced Carmelites, and a teacher. A few moments later, a second blast exploded just outside the main door of the Cathedral, killing Army soldiers who were helping secure the Cathedral, as well as other Army soldiers who had rushed to help after hearing the first blast. Also killed outside the Cathedral were some vendors.

The Mass was presided by Fr. Ricky Bacolcol, a diocesan priest of the Vicariate of Jolo. He did not sustain injuries, but was traumatized by the bombing, which was the second for him, the first being the bombing at the Sacred Heart Chapel of the parish, on Christmas Day 2010.

The Oblates and a number of lay people from the parish were already out of Jolo at the time of the bombing, as they were on their way to Cotabato City to attend the installation of the new Archbishop of Cotabato, Archbishop Angelito Lampon, OMI, formerly Bishop of Jolo for 20 years, who left Jolo only a couple of weeks earlier. The Oblates returned immediately to Jolo after the incident.

One of the concerns now is to attend to the psychological needs of the surviving victims, especially the young. Provincial Fr. Charlie INZON and Vicariate Administrator Fr. Romeo

SANIEL are collaborating to address the myriad issues after the tragedy, which has been officially blamed on terrorist bombers.

The Cathedral, which sustained extensive physical damage, is presently closed and under the control of the military authorities. Masses are being held in two chapels. Only last November in 2018, Father General Louis Lougen visited Jolo, Sulu, in the course of his fraternal visit to the Philippine Province.

The Vicariate of Jolo has been entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate since 1939. Three Oblates, including the Vicariate's fourth Bishop, Benjamin de Jesus, along with a number of lay people, have been killed in violent incidents in these southernmost provinces of the Philippines.

## **BANGLADSH**

### **Conclusion of the Year of Vocations in Dhaka**

After a year of pilgrimage in the life of Oblate vocation, with great joy and gratitude to God, the Oblates of Bangladesh family along with their friends, seminarians, MAMI members and about 200 faithful gathered at De Mazenod Scholasticate to conclude the Oblate Year of Vocations.

Most Rev. Moses Costa, CSC, the Archbishop of Chattagram, His Excellency Archbishop George Kocherry, Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh graced the occasion. On January 24, The Oblates had a day of recollection and reflected on the gift of vocation and the love of Mother Mary for the congregation. On January 25, we had Mass with the faithful of De Mazenod Church presided over by Archbishop Moses Costa, CSC. In his homily he thanked the Oblate Congregation for taking this initiative to observe the Year of Vocation which has been a demand of the time. He mentions 3 important points to respond to God's call.

The first aspect is the silence of heart, which helps us to hear the God's call. "Family is the place where we hear this call. Families should not lose that silence of heart in the

noisy world. Only prayerful families can have that silence,” he explained.

Secondly, we need the guidance of others to walk in responding God’s call. Therefore, we need to seek the guidance of the parents, spiritual directors and formators.

Thirdly, we are responsible for our own vocation. It is a difficult but beautiful vocation because it requires sacrifice and oblation of self.

The bishop further reminded the Oblates that vocation is not our achievement but it is a free gift of God. It is not for personal glorification but for serving and glorifying God.

“Oblates are strongly rooted in Bangladesh Church. This achievement is not for their name and fame, but for the glory of the Lord and for the people. So the families also need to offer their children for evangelization of the poor and the needy.”

After the Mass, Apostolic Nuncio George Kocherry thanked the Oblates on behalf of Holy Father Pope Francis for the dedicated and faithful service in the field of priestly formation and for being close to the poor people in Bangladesh. Then, a short cultural program was organized where the Oblate seminarians staged a short drama on the life of St. Eugene de Mazenod. After that, there was a presentation on spirituality and mission work of Oblates in 4 dioceses of the country. A Magazine was published containing the vocation stories of the OMI Fathers and scholastics. On behalf of the Delegation of Bangladesh, Fr. Ajit Victor COSTA, the Delegation Superior, thanked the Bishops, Priests and Religious and the faithful for their presence and prayerful support in our missions. He also invited all the Oblates to continue to work and grow with the same spirit that we have experienced and shared during this Year of Oblate Vocations.

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## Canada-United States

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### BAJA CALIFORNIA MISSION

#### **WYD scammers can’t stop Tijuana youth group; Thanks to generous supporters**

19 members of the Youth Group at the Oblate Mission Church of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish in Tijuana, along with a number of Oblates are breathing a great, thankful sigh of relief thanks to the fast work of the Oblate Missionary Society, and some generous donors who put a once-in-a-lifetime trip to World Youth Day back on track after it was almost derailed by scammers.

For the past year and a half, the youth group led by Fr. Jesse Esqueda, OMI at the parish has been sponsoring car washes, selling tamales, raffle tickets and doing work of all kinds to raise funds for a trip to World Youth Day, which begins this Saturday, January 19, in Panama. Having raised over \$20,000, the money was placed with a Mexican Travel Agency specializing in

travel arrangements for groups heading to World Youth Day. In addition to the Oblate group, the company was handling travel arrangements for 11 dioceses in Mexico and had collected a total of \$500,000. All seemed in order until Fr. Jesse got the shocking news on Monday January 14, that all the money for all the groups was gone. They were the victims of an elaborate scam.

Fr. Jesse recounted the events on Monday that revealed the scam, “A group from the Diocese of Zacatecas planned to attend the WYD pre-events and was instructed to make a bus ride to Mexico City airport to transport them to Panama. When they arrived at the airport, they were met with confusion by airport personnel about their promised chartered plane to Panama. With attempts to contact the company for explanations, calls were unanswered and their contact person was nowhere to be found. Needless to say, word spread fast to the other 400+ youth that had used the same company.

“The youth are devastated with this reality” Fr.

Jesse said. “Our youth worked for over a year to save money to go to Panama. They sold thousands of tamales, washed hundreds of cars, sold countless raffle tickets and participated in many other fundraising events to raise enough money to pay for their trip. We don’t know what the next step is at this point. We paid over \$20,000 to the company for arrangements for airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals. The youth were looking forward to this great event and to see Pope Francis. This was going to be the first trip outside of Mexico for most of the youth from our group.”

Tuesday night, Fr. Jesse called an emergency meeting to inform the kids. He said the kids were crying, and heartbroken, and expressed doubt that they could go. Some said they gave up hope knowing they won’t be going – Fr. Jesse is working with them.

In this seemingly hopeless situation, some individuals who deal in hope went to work: Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop emeritus of the Texas Diocese of San Angelo, began canvassing his impressive list of contacts. Fr. David Uribe, OMI, Director of the Oblate Missionary Society, the fund-raising arm of the Oblates asked Dennis Kempf, Director of Charitable and Planned Giving at OMSI-Belleville, who they might turn to in this unique situation. Dennis turned it over to his team with the goal of replacing the money within 24 hours. On Wednesday, phone calls by Bishop Pfeifer and Fr. Uribe to donors began replacing the lost travel funds at a surprisingly fast pace. The calls continued and the group inched toward the goal. On Thursday, just before noon, Dennis Kempf received a text saying a donor pledged the remaining amount! Dennis’s text message in response speaks for itself:

*YEAH!!! When my phone dinged with this text, most of my team was within earshot, and they all asked “What did does it say?”*

*I read the GREAT news out-loud, and everyone in CPG yelled “YEAH” all at once! Several of us experienced goose-bumps with this great news. Thank you for asking our donor and thank him SO much for responding to this crisis!*

*GREAT TEAMWORK on raising the money to send Tijuana’s youth to the World Youth Day in Panama!!! – Dennis*

The good news was immediately transmitted to Fr. Jesse who is now scrambling to get a lot accomplished in a short period of time. Latest reports are that the Oblate youth group might be able to join the Monterrey Archdiocese\* Diocese on a chartered AeroMexico flight direct to Panama City, meanwhile they are still working on all the other logistics: where they’ll stay, transportation, food, passes to get into WYD, etc. You can bet that Fr. Jesse and those young people will get it done!

All of this took place in the span of four days. A heartbreaking act of thievery, overwhelmed by prayer and even greater acts of generosity and love. A faith encounter that will rival anything those young people will experience at World Youth Day.

## **WORLD YOUTH DAY**

### **We were present at the in Panama.**

The World Youth Day held in Panama from the 22 to 27 January 2019, was the 16<sup>th</sup> of its kind. This time the religious congregations, both men and women, had been given a great opportunity to demonstrate the diversity of religious charisms in the Church. Some Oblates of the Latin American region, who are actively engaged in vocation promotion, created an international vocational team and participated in the event, representing the Congregation. It consisted of three Mexicans, a Venezuelan, a Brazilian and also a ‘Polish-Mexican’ Fr. Marcin ŁĄCKI, who comes from the province of Poland, but serves in the province of Mexico.

However, there were many Oblates and Oblate youth from different Units around the world like Australia, Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar, Poland, Germany, Spain, Canada, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Congo and Guinea-Bissau.



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## Europe

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**POLAND****Calendar of three religions**

Led by the Oblates, for the second consecutive year, “The calendar of three religions”, was published in Poznan, Poland recently; a unique project undertaken by some Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders in the city. The contribution of the Oblate priest, Marcin WRZOS is significant for this venture.

The Christian-Jewish dialogue and Christian-Muslim dialogue have been going on in Poznan for several years although the Jewish-Muslim dialogue began rather recently. These meetings, often in a cozy atmosphere, are conducted not only in the shadow of the synagogue, the mosque or the churches, but sometimes take place in surprising places like restaurants.

The first calendar of the three largest religions was established in Katowice and was the result of interreligious dialogue and ecumenical meetings conducted in that city. Last year, this idea found fertile ground in Poznan, where Christians, Muslims and Jews live side by side. It is the result of a series of meetings of Imam Youssef Chadid, the deputy Szymon Zadumiński and the Fr. Marcin Wrzos OMI. They co-created this calendar with the help of city authorities, their superiors and their religious communities.

**MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE****An Oblate is honoured**

Fr. Vimalrajan PARUNANTHU who belongs to Jaffna Province in Sri Lanka, worked in the diocese of Palermo (Italy) as a chaplain for the Sri Lankan immigrants for the past six years (2012 – 2018). During those years, he was mainly engaged in the ministry of evangelization and presence for the immigrants. Using his God-given talents and hard work, he brought many of them closer to God, the Church, and one another by means of spiritual activities, sports, arts and education. Pilgrimages, awareness programmes, educational programmes, publication of Tamil and Italian journals, seminars, youth activities,

Its goal is to get to know people of different religions and cultures a little bit more. It is meant to lead to a dialogue of life, an expression of respect and for offering best wishes on the occasion of holiday celebrations, which are also described in the calendar. The dialogue of life consists in harmonious, peaceful living next to each other, despite the differences arising from religion. It is to this spirit of mutual respect and love that Abrahamic religions call their believers.

The Poznan calendar of three religions is special. It includes the history of the development of religion in Poznan. It contains the Julian calendar, but also the Muslim and Jewish calendars, based on different time calculations, dating back to the origin of the world (Jews) or the pilgrimage of the prophet Muhammed from Mecca to Medina (Muslims). It contains the most important feasts of the three religions; it gives details about their days of prayer (the Lord’s day, the Sabbath, the day of the congregation); it names the individual months. The calendar includes, above all, photographs related to Poznan, as well as explanations regarding particular celebrations and holidays of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The calendar has been financed by the City of Poznan and is available for free. The idea of the calendar is a response to a call of the last General Chapter, which called for interreligious dialogue.

forming various pious associations, etc. were common features during his tenure in Palermo. Fr. Vimal had even gone one step further and had established a closer relationship with those migrants who belonged to other religions. The good rapport he had with the Sri Lankan embassy in Italy is also noteworthy. His ministry in the city was very much appreciated by the diocese of Palermo, Oblate Mediterranean Province and the Municipal Council of Palermo.

On January 22, Leoluca Orlando, the Mayor of Palermo recognized the invaluable services of Fr. Vimal with gratitude, by presenting him the prestigious certificate ‘*Tessera Preziosa del Mosaico Palermo*’ at his office in Palermo.

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## Latin America

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**ARGENTINA****"He walked with them": XXVI Youth Congress and Mission**

Recently, in the parish of La Candelaria, in the province of Córdoba, and with the support of the Oblate community and of many lay people of the parish, we celebrated the XXVI Congress of Young Oblates. This time, however, there were not only young people, but also lay Oblates who participated by listening and accompaniment. From Santa Fe, Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and the surrounding area of Córdoba there was a re-encounter of the Oblate family, with Scholastic Brothers from Peru (Gonzalo and Gerson), and Paraguay (Victos, Eduardo and Diosnel). From Uruguay, Fernando and an Italian Scholastic (Giovanni) who is doing his regency there, also participated. We were also accompanied by the COMI in the person of Verónica Amaro who is in the mission of Buenos Aires.

With the determination to listen to the proposals of young people and, from there to set out paths for mission, we began this process last year. We have been carrying out a work of bringing the Oblate youth ministry in the Argentine sector to life again. Ten years ago, the XXV Congress of Young Oblates was held, and since then, other ways of meeting together were chosen. But for many, the memory of and the desire to relive that Congress still lay hidden. Both the vocations congress and the Year of Oblate Vocations have been moments of rethinking the mission with Youth. Visits to each group and parish stimulated participation and allowed us to relive those moments with strength and joyful hope. The final document of the 2018 synod was the basis for this

encounter. "He walked with them... their eyes were opened ... they set off."

It was necessary to meet again, to reflect, to celebrate and to go out to share the good news of Jesus; and we did so.

During the Congress we lived moments of deep reflection on the document of the synod; one night we celebrated Eucharistic adoration and on the next, we venerated the relic of Saint Eugene. This moment was very emotional for all of us; there we prayed for vocations and for the congregation and we were invited to consider our own vocation.

After the Congress, 60 missionaries left for three places in the Prelature of Dean Funes, in the north of Córdoba, to share the mission days in Villa Quilino, in San José de las Salinas and in Lucio V. Mansilla. We lived the mission with joy and many responsibilities, in a climate of life-sharing among the members of each group, as we adapted to the high temperatures of those places. There, the missionaries were accompanied by Father Basilio MALU, who celebrated the Eucharist one day in each place.

At the end of the mission, all returned to Córdoba to participate in the celebration of my Perpetual Oblation on February 2, in our parish of La Candelaria. In this way, we lived an intense week that meant a lot of effort but that left the heart full of joy and hope. Now we need to continue accompanying and reviving, in each community, the identity of the Oblate Charism as a way of living faith and mission. The feed-back we received from those who participated was very positive; it was touching to hear what many of the young people said: "Let's invite others to live this experience!"

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**Anniversaries for March 2019**


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**70 Years of Religious Life**

19/03/1949	09204	Bro. Bernard Durand	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
19/03/1949	09203	Bro. Alexandre Gagnon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**65 Years of Religious Life**

16/03/1954	09647	Fr. James FitzPatrick	Australia
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**60 Years of Religious Life**

07/03/1959	10608	Fr. Ian Mackintosh	Australia
07/03/1959	10607	Fr. Peter John McLaughlin	Australia
07/03/1959	10606	Fr. John Sherman	Australia
19/03/1959	11198	Bro. Roland Beaupr	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
19/03/1959	11197	Bro. Joseph-Elide Francoeur	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
25/03/1959	11199	Bro. Szczepan Pogodala	Poland

**60 Years of Priesthood**

14/03/1959	09466	Msgr. Ramiro Díaz Sánchez	Mediterranean
22/03/1959	10008	Fr. Andr, Durand	France
30/03/1959	09575	Fr. Stanislaw Cyganiak	Poland
30/03/1959	09574	Fr. Alfons Glanc	Poland
30/03/1959	09589	Fr. Jozef Kuroczycki	Poland

**50 Years of Priesthood**

22/03/1969	11434	Fr. Vidal Fuente	Mediterranean
29/03/1969	11467	Fr. Natalino Wan Ibung Belingheri	Indonesia
29/03/1969	11466	Fr. Piergiovanni Gioppato	Assumption
29/03/1969	11347	Fr. Michael Morrissey	Southern Africa

**25 Years of Priesthood**

03/03/1994	13232	Fr. Rogelio Caalim	Philippines
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**Suffrages for our Deceased**


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<b>Name</b>	<b>Prov./Del.</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Died at</b>	<b>Date</b>
Fr. Ollès, Jacques	France	24/04/1937	Nice	28/02/2019
Fr. Mansion, Julien	France	27/12/1931	Strasbourg	22/02/2019
Fr. Cox, Charles	Belgium & Netherlands	01/01/1933	Eupen	17/02/2019
Fr. Oleksiuk, Mieczyslaw	Poland	05/07/1953	Poznan	16/02/2019
Fr. Stempel, Henryk	Poland	03/04/1935	Lubliniec	13/02/2019
Fr. Malotsa, Theophilus	Southern Africa	04/08/1949	Johannesburg	09/02/2019
Fr. Epp, Jean-Baptiste	France	17/05/1936	Strasbourg	06/02/2019
Fr. Bilodeau, Thomas	Lacombe	10/07/1927	St. Albert	05/02/2019
Fr. Levesque, Robert	United States	28/08/1934	Lowell	04/02/2019
Fr. Bolduc, Richard	United States	29/12/1926	Tewksbury	02/02/2019
Fr. Fuseau, Alexis	France	03/09/1921	Lyon	02/02/2019

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