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## The letter of the Superior General for the Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019

L. J. C. et M.I.

Dear Missionaries,

“Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on mission in the world.” This is the theme for the Extraordinary Missionary Month called by Pope Francis: “I have asked that the whole Church revive her missionary awareness and commitment as we commemorate the centenary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV (30 November 1919).” As Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, vowed and lay people, living this missionary charism inspired by St. Eugene, we are provoked by these words of Pope Francis. They remind us of our 2016 General Chapter call to leave nothing undared in reaching out to the new faces of the poor.

In this Extraordinary Missionary Month and beyond it, I bring before you some considerations:

1. Eugene’s missionary heart went to those least touched by the Church, those neglected, forgotten and abandoned by ordinary pastoral care. Are we convinced that our world needs to know the Good News? Do our lives reveal this Good News? What can we do to go beyond caring for those who already come to us? How are we reaching out to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him?

2. The present Synod for Bishops on the Pan-Amazon Region has a daring theme and a courageous methodology which Pope Francis has chosen. We hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth in unison, calling for concerted

pastoral, social and economic efforts for the life of the people and the ecology of the region. Of the 8 countries and French Guyana that constitute the Pan-Amazon Region, we Oblates are in six of those countries and in French Guyana.

- I have asked each Region of the Congregation to indicate one Oblate for the challenging mission in the Pan-Amazon Region.

- Many Oblates are also present in some of the countries of the Congo River Basin: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroun, Zambia and Angola. As missionaries in both the Pan- Amazon Region and the Congo River Basin, can Oblates join forces for the life of the peoples and the ecology of these two regions?

3. Even before his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*, the Holy Father had been drawing our attention to the plight of our planet. Fr. Joshua I. Kureethdam, SDB, told the Union of Superiors General on May 22, 2019, that there may be only 11 years left before a tipping point is reached and the destruction of the planet will be irreversible. The urgency of acting now cannot be over-emphasized. A helpful tool for ecological conversion for our communities comes from VIVAT International: “ECO LIFE and ACTION”. Please download it to discern how we can act in favor of the integrity of creation. Go to: <http://vivatinternational.org/eco/>.

4. In this Extraordinary Missionary Month, I appeal to you, Major Superiors and formation teams, to foster the missionary passion of Eugene de Mazenod in our men in first formation. I also appeal to the Major Superiors to revive the spirit of Mazenodian generosity and audacity by

identifying some missionaries to be sent ad extra through an obedience from the Superior General. Units will be blessed for being generous.

5. Oblates at the local level promote many activities which reflect a commitment to social justice, to the art of peace-making, and to the question of the environment. Yet, we generally still see JPIC ministry (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) as separate from pastoral work. This Extraordinary Missionary Month calls us to integrate the social doctrine of the Church in all our ministries and pastoral activities. I invite Units to take up again the OMI JPIC “Companion in Mission” produced by the JPIC General Service of the Congregation in order to awaken this ministry as an integral part of evangelization. Please download: <https://www.omiworld.org/wp-content/uploads/OMI-JPIC-CiM-ENG-June-29.pdf>

The following words from *Maximum Illud*, referring to missionaries, reflect the heart of St. Eugene, who insisted that we be missionaries to the poor and saints: “But, above all, as we have already said, it is a holy life that is indispensable for those who are getting ready for the apostolate. Indeed, it is necessary that the one who preaches God be, in fact, a man of God”. We ask Mary Immaculate to intercede for us so that our missionary passion is reignited to embrace the calls made to us in this Extraordinary Missionary Month and that, by God’s grace, we become saints.

Thank you for your commitment to live the fullness of the Oblate charism in its missionary zeal and desire for holiness.

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

## General Administration

### A MISSIONARY OBLATE – MAN OF ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

#### *An Oblate Reflection for the Extraordinary Mission Month October 2019*

**Antoni Bochm, OMI**

The mission we fulfill is primarily the mission of Jesus Christ. He called us to himself and entrusted it to us but it still remains His mission of saving the world. The consequence of this is that we are not the first actors in the Lord’s field but joyful workers in his mission. This awareness should influence a lot our style of life and our style of work. We are disciples and messengers of Christ with all significances of that. Sometimes during different meetings, formation sessions, or individual encounters we hear the opinion that as Oblates we are missionaries and not monks in the sense that we are called to the active life, to be always present among the people, to undertake activities to lead them to Christ and to give them the help they need in their journey. Partially, that’s true—we are not monks—but we cannot forget that for being good missionaries

of Christ we need to be close to him and to have a deep relationship with him. Simply, the condition for being a good missionary is a deep spiritual life. Someone said that we cannot serve Christ without Christ; we cannot participate in the mission of Christ while neglecting our relationship with him.

Last July in Odra, Poland, the Congregation’s leaders held its Inter-Chapter meeting. One of the aims of this event, according to the Rule 128e, was to evaluate our commitment to the mission as we were invited by the 2016 General Chapter. Before and during the Inter-Chapter meeting itself, the regions, units, and the whole assembly of participants looked at what the Congregation had been able to realize from the recommendations of the last Chapter and where we can speak about failures in implementing them. The participants also asked themselves: what are the reasons that in many places of the Congregation we were not able to fulfill everything that was planned? The different reflections and deliberations led the participants to see clearly that in the fulfillment of the bold but also very concrete recommendations

of the Chapter, it is necessary to have courage and readiness to leave sometimes what is to us well known, as in the ways of doing mission and living community life. However, the realization of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit requires also that we have hearts that are ready for conversion. Conversion means that we always turn our face towards Jesus. Thus, the Inter-Chapter participant grasped that in the actualization of our vocation a deep spiritual life is just as important as our missionary zeal, our creativity, and our audacity to go and proclaim the Good News and serve the poor. As missionaries going out very often to the most abandoned and poorest people we should be or become, contemplative men.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod, in the first Rules said: "In imitation of these great models (Jesus, Christ and Apostles), one portion of their life will be given over to prayer, interior recollection and contemplation in the privacy of God's house wherein they will dwell together in common. The other portion will be entirely consecrated to outside works requiring the most active zeal..."

Father Fernand Jetté went even further in saying that when Eugene de Mazenod spoke about the "apostolic man" he meant more about the Oblate's manner of life rather than his missionary activities.

In our mission we would like to imitate Jesus, Christ our Master. When we look at Him we see Him as a very active man: staying with the people, preaching, healing, helping, etc. But a few moments later we also see Him praying and staying in intimate relation with the Father.

Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the Word, of sincere conversation with the Lord our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervor dies out. The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer..." (no. 262).

For the missionary, time spent with Jesus Christ in prayer and contemplation is never a lost time. From here he draws power, inspiration, new zeal; in prayer he also asks for the fruitfulness

of his missionary works. Again, Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* indicates to us that a "true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigor and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain, and in love, will convince nobody" (no. 266).

Our Constitution no. 2 tells us: "We are men set apart for the Gospel, men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to cooperate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us. We strive to reproduce in ourselves the pattern of his life."

This cannot happen without time dedicated for prayer, meditation, studies, etc. We are missionaries, but religious missionaries, and this means that we are men of God and of the people, called to do mission, but also to build this mission on the rock which is Jesus Christ.

Through the time dedicated for being with Jesus we show that we understand whose mission it is and who is the Savior who gives efficacy to our activities to fulfill the mission.

It is not by chance that Saint Therese of Lisieux became the patroness of mission although she never left her monastery. The fruits of our mission come from two sources: our different activities that witness to our love for Jesus amidst people, and our following Jesus with hands put together in prayer.

In our missionary endeavors it is thus necessary to find balance between contemplation and action. On one hand, prayer cannot become an escape from missionary and pastoral work. At the same time, the number of missionary activities cannot steal away the time which should be dedicated to our encounter with Jesus. Finding the balance between these two components of our life will allow us to really look at the world and its needs through the eyes of the crucified Savior (cf. C. 5).

## GENERAL POSTULATION

### Welcome to the New Postulator General!

With the consent of his Council, meeting in Plenary Session on October 10, 2019, the Superior General appointed Fr. Diego SÁEZ MARTÍN as Postulator General, for a first term of three years. His term of office is to begin on November 1, 2019.

Fr. Diego was born in Madrid, Spain in 1979 and he joined the Oblate family in 1998. After being ordained a priest in 2004, he received obedience to continue his service in Ukraine, where he went as a finally professed Oblate in 2002 and as a deacon in 2003. His mission in Ukraine lasted from 2002 to 2010. During that period, he served in various capacities such as Parish Vicar, Chaplain to the Spanish-speaking migrants in Kiev, Director of Vocations and as Formator. It was in 2010 that he left Ukraine to join another Oblate mission, this time in Asia, Turkmenistan. Until 2013, he became the Treasurer of the "Missio Sui Iuris" of Turkmenistan (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) and Attaché for administrative matters of the Apostolic Nunciature in Turkmenistan. From 2013 to 2017, he held the responsibility as the Director of the Catholic Media Center of the Conference of Latin Bishops in Ukraine & Director of "Eternal Word Television Network" (EWTN) in Ukraine. In the meantime, he also served as the Superior of the local OMI community in Kiev for one year.

## GENERAL COMMITTEE OF OBLATE BROTHERS

### Preparing for the anniversary of the first oblation in the congregation

The General Committee of Oblate Brothers was asked to offer help in preparing the anniversary of the first oblation in the Congregation.

On November 1st, we celebrate with the universal Church the feast of All Saints and in the Congregation we remember that day of 1818 when, for the first time, the Missionaries of Provence pronounced their religious vows. October is traditionally the month of the mission. This year Pope Francis asked that a special effort be made in this direction. He decreed the month of

In 2017 he was given obedience to join the Oblate General House community in Rome and pursue Licentiate studies on Spiritual Theology at the Gregorian University.

Other than his native language Spanish, Fr. Diego is fluent in English, Russian, Ukrainian, Italian and French. He also has a working knowledge of Polish. Due to this unique ability for languages, he often became an obvious choice of the General Administration, to serve as a translator for important meetings. They include the 2016 General Chapter and 2019 Inter-Chapter. He has also been serving as a translator for the Oblate Communications Service since 2010.

It is the duty of the General Postulation Office to study and present to the diocesan curia and the Holy See, for beatification and/or canonization, the causes of Missionary Oblates who have shown concrete signs of holiness in the heroic exercise of all virtues, or who died as martyrs. The office also works on the causes of other persons who have lived their own vocation in some sort of relationship to the Oblate congregation.

Because of its importance to the Oblate mission, the General Postulation Office has existed since 1891. We remember with gratitude the past Postulators General of our Congregation, very specially Fr. Diego's predecessor, Fr. Thomas KLOSTERKAMP who held the office, also while serving as the Superior of the General House.

October 2019 "Extraordinary Missionary Month" with the title and theme: "**Baptized and sent: the Church of Christ in mission in the world**". We offer a reflection from this theme "Baptized and Sent" to prepare for the anniversary of the first oblation in the Congregation. Let us rediscover how for our Founder the call to embrace the religious life and to commit to the vows, was an integral part of his founding vision.

You will find below the document and a space to share your answers to the question: *#My Mission is ... and yours?* (A campaign that allows each person baptized, to express himself on his Christian mission in the world, via a simple sheet and a photograph).

*Bro. Benoît H. Dosquet*

## EXTRAORDINARY MISSION MONTH A new edition of Oblate Missiologists

A new edition of Oblate Missiologists has been prepared for the October Extraordinary Mission Month requested by Pope Francis: *Oblate Missiologists: A Workbook 2019*. Seventeen authors from our five regions have contributed, and the editor, Fr. Harry WINTER, has added appendices on our six and one half (Cardinal Ling, I.V.D. from Laos) Oblate cardinals, and on Oblate ministry in the Arctic.

For the first time, our new General Administration Mission Committee, and the Mission Committees of the five regions, are at least sketched. May we hope that Oblates in each region will now offer insights on their New Evangelization activities to their regional Mission Committee?

Fr. Ron ROLSHEISER has described Oblate Missionary work as the best-kept secret in the missionary world. During this October Extraordinary Mission Month, may we open the secret at least for ourselves? Read *Oblate Missiologists: A Workbook 2019* to begin.

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## Africa-Madagascar

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### CAMEROON A session on affectivity in the life of the priest and the religious

The scandal of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults in the Church is a challenge to all of us. It is not a reality specific to a particular continent or local church.

The ecclesiastical province of Garoua (Cameroon), made up of four dioceses (NGaoundéré, Garoua, Maroua-Mokolo, Yagoua), to fight against this phenomenon, opted for a preventive method. Information and training being the most effective method of preventing this disease, the ecclesiastical province of Garoua organized one this summer at the inter-diocesan major seminary of Maroua.

It was opened to all the priests under five years of priestly ordination in the ecclesiastical province. All the Oblates under five years of priestly ordination, and brothers on temporary and perpetual vows in the province of Cameroon, also took part in the session. It lasted five days, from July 1 to 5, 2019.

The central theme was: “Affectivity in the life of the priest and the religious”. The aim was to help participants better understand their human and vocational identity in relation to sexuality so as to better live the values of chastity. There were 49 participants and two bishops from the ecclesiastical province were present.

The objective was to break the taboo of speaking about the sexuality of priests and religious in the African cultural context. And to this effect, there was a laywoman among the speakers. There exist cases of sexual abuse even if no one talks about. And even when it is talked about, some try to relativize it appealing to cultural realities. But the major challenge is how to convey the message so as to create a collective awareness. And because no war can be won without identifying the causes of the war and the enemies to be faced, the three interveners deployed their knowledge within the five days to pass the right message to the participants.

During her interventions, Sr. Daniela Migotto, missionary of the Immaculate, made it clear that a misunderstood sexuality is poorly lived because

sexuality is not just simple as we take it. It encompasses the four major dimensions of human life namely: the psychological, physiological, rational and spiritual dimensions.

Ms. Stéphanie Ngadji is a lawyer at the Cameroon Bar. She spoke about the types of abuse and penalties provided by the Cameroonian legislator. In case of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adults by a minister (or religious authority), the Cameroonian legislator has doubled the sentence of the latter.

Fr. Thomas Bang, OMI, is a canonist and has specialised in the protection of minors and

vulnerable adults. His presentation was on the types of sexual abuse, the procedure in case of *Notitia Criminis*, the competent court, and the penalties provided by the Code of Canon Law. He also spoke about the *Motu Proprio Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* and the last *Motu Proprio* of Pope Francis, *Vos estis lux mundi*.

The participants were not just thankful to their bishops and the presenters, but even wished that the session be integrated into their formation program. And with this session, the jinx on the topic was broken as many other bishops have started expressing their desire for the session to be given in their dioceses.

## WESTERN SAHARA

### Celebrating the Extraordinary Missionary Month in the Sahara

*Fr. Luis Ignocio (Chicho) Rois, OMI*

You may wonder how one can celebrate being baptized and missionaries in a place like the Sahara. After hearing the Pope's invitation, our Oblate community has set in motion with the simple idea of sharing our joy of being missionaries in this context.

We will use our blog <https://omisahara.wordpress.com/> and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/misionomisahara/> to share bits of our history and our present. Every day photos, videos, thoughts and even anecdotes will appear that speak of God's gift to us with this missionary vocation.

In addition, we are finishing the edition of a book on the "History of the OMI Mission in the Sahara" that is written by Beatriz García, a Doctor in History who has done a wonderful job digging through the archives and interviewing many, Oblates and locals, so that we can recall the wonders that God has done in our mission.

With our few Christian parishioners, (most of whom are migrants in their most vulnerable stage, since they are neither in their country of origin nor have they reached the goal of their dreams), we will pray the rosary, reflect on our baptismal and missionary identity and celebrate it both in El Aaiún and Dakhla, every day of this month. The two cities separated from each other by 530 kilometers.

As an Oblate community, we plan to dedicate our monthly meeting of ongoing formation to the theme proposed by Pope Francis: "*Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World*". We will end the missionary month on October 30 with a "desert retreat" (one of our privileges is that we have all monthly community retreats in the desert) and on Thursday 31 during our traditional hour of worship before the Blessed Sacrament, we will renew our oblation remembering the anniversary of the first oblation in our congregation.

The climax will come in the month of November when we will celebrate 65 years of Oblate presence in the Sahara mission celebrating with Christians and Muslims the anniversary of the first masses celebrated in the churches of San Francis in El Aaiún and Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Dakhla.

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## Asia-Oceania

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**AUSTRALIA****Celebrating 125 Years of Oblate Presence**

*By Christian Fini, OMI  
(Provincial of Australia)*

Recently, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate celebrated the arrival of the Order in Australia and the dedication of St Patrick's Fremantle as a Basilica.

The Oblates first landed in Fremantle in 1894, under the supervision of Fr Gaughren OMI, the Anglo-Irish Provincial who was accompanied by two other priests, Fr Daniel O'Ryan OMI and Fr Roger Hennessy OMI. On the evening of Thursday 19 July, the three priests were welcomed to our shores by 350 people.

The 125th Anniversary is an opportunity to give thanks for the past, to acknowledge the many blessings in our Province today and to prepare for another 125 years of service in Australia.

To mark this special occasion the Province hosted the De Mazenod Family Gathering in Fremantle, with the theme 'Respond with joy to our call to Evangelise'. Sixty-three people from all around Australia and from a variety of ministries gathered together. These were made up of 40 lay people and 23 Oblate Fathers.

Participants were asked to prepare for the Gathering with a community meeting within

**BANGLADESH****A Glimpse of the Oblate Missions**

Fr. Cornelius NGOKA, the 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant General, paid a visit to the Oblate Delegation of Bangladesh from October 15-25, 2019. From the moment of his arrival, he began immersing himself in the milieu of Oblate life in Bangladesh. His presence and visits to our mission centres were indeed inspiring and encouraging.

Although he had to follow a very rigorous

their state, followed by three online formation sessions based on the Oblate Charism. The preparation program allowed for us to maximise the time together during the gathering and spend time listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Oblate missions in the Province. The gathering also provided us with the opportunity to build and strengthen connections between the Oblate ministries and create an awareness of the vocational opportunities that exist within our community and ultimately creating a formal Oblate Lay Association.

The event provided the opportunity to share and learn from each other, to explore the recent vision and mission document developed by the Oblates and to address the realities facing the contemporary life and mission of our Church.

On conclusion of the gathering, participants were asked to 'Think Big' and brainstorm on what can be possible now and into the future. A colourful array of ideas came to light many of which can be implemented in the short term and certainly some long term plans...watch this space!

More importantly the participants left with a greater understanding of the Oblate Charism and a sense of renewed faith.

The weekend concluded with Mass at St Patrick's Basilica commemorating the arrival, which was celebrated with the Oblates of Australia and Priests from the Archdiocese of Perth.

schedule, Fr. Cornelius did not forget to spend some quality time with his Oblate Confreres in Bangladesh wherever he visited. During his stay, he also participated in some of the events organized by the Oblates. Among them were the celebration of the silver jubilee of religious vows of Fathers. Ranjit COSTA and Kajal GOMES, and the Solemn Mass with Most Rev. Bejoy D'CRUZE that marked the celebration of the Extra Ordinary Missionary Month. Formators and formandi of the Delegation also had meetings with him, at the Oblate Juniorate and at the

Scholasticate. They were certainly enlightened and inspired by his sharing.

Accompanied by Fr. Ajit COSTA, the Delegation Superior, Fr. Cornelius was taken to Oblate missions among the indigenous, tea-estate communities, internal migrants, and those people in the peripheries. In other words, he had a firsthand experience of the “sheep” whom their “Oblate shepherds” take care of.

- De Mazenod Girja, Dhaka;
- Divine Mercy Parish, Borlekha;
- St. John Paul II High School, Borlekha;
- Boy’s and Girl’s Hostel, Borlekha;
- Immaculate Conception Parish, Lokhipur;
- Megatila: a Khashi Village, Lokhipur;
- Boy’s and Girl’s Hostel, Lokhipur;
- De Mazenod Church, Khadim;
- Kalagul Tea-estate Primary school, Khadim;

- Lubacherra Tea-estate, Khadim;
- St. Thomas’ Church, Mugaipar;
- Narantola Mission High School, Mugaipar;

“Visiting the Oblate Missions amongst the indigenous peoples and the Tea Garden workers was a very moving experience for me, especially seeing the joy and the enthusiasm of these thousands of children, young boys and girls, who have the opportunity to go to school thanks to the presence and the commitment of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. One of the village leaders told me that it was because of the opportunity given to her by the Missionary Oblates to go to school, to receive good education and to grow in her Christian faith, that she could serve her people with courage and help the younger ones to have a future”, said Fr. Cornelius after returning to Rome.

The Oblates in Bangladesh extend a special thanks to Fr. Cornelius for his encouraging visit, which meant a lot to this growing OMI Delegation.

## COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

### My Experience in Thailand with Young Leaders

*Amila Perera OMI,  
Oblate Scholasticate, kandy, Sri Lanka.*

As an Oblate Scholastic, I would like to share my experiences from the great opportunity to participate as one of the delegates from Sri Lanka in the Asian Youth Academy and Asian Theology Forum 2019, Chiang Mai, Thailand, in August 2019. This was held at the Communal Life of Love and Unity of the Mountain People (CLUMP) Centre.

Seventy young Christian activists from 12 Asian countries and with diverse professions and backgrounds came together for these events. Along with excellent speakers, we discussed and shared diverse issues under the theme “Wisdom of Religions/ Cultural Traditions in Asia as Responding to Ecological Crisis and Human Security”.

One of our most remarkable exposures was in *Pa Pae* village which is located 120Km away from the CLUMP Centre. The village is blessed generously with natural resources viz., rivers, natural springs, fruit orchards, fertile soil and intriguing flora and fauna. This serene atmosphere gave me immense opportunities to reflect on the beautiful spiritual bond that is established between humans and nature.

We were able to explore the unseen rich culture of KEREN and LAWA tribes. Many among the hundreds of families of the village recognise themselves as Christians and Buddhists while few still follow tribal spiritual and ritual activities and practices. It is worth noting that none of the villagers seemed to have forgotten their local culture and traditions, which certainly contributed to the progress and unity of the community.

We also participated in a meeting with the Chiefs and Elders of the community and they voiced their concern regarding the government’s proposed plan on declaration of a national park



in the area, which will be a faltering obstruction for the inseparable unity between nature and the mountain people. “...*It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values.*” (*Laudato Si 146*)

We were well served with organic food and beverages (baby corn and rice wine was my favourite) by our host families and their hospitality towards us was indeed remarkable. Although the villagers have many links with the outside and developed world, they have chosen to live a life of simplicity and with minimum recourses. It is amazing to see the young people who work in the city, come back to the community during weekends. This is a clear sign of how deep rooted their culture is in them and what they envision about the future of the community of *Pa Pae* village.

In the academic forum we discussed topics such as Neo Liberalism, the need to establish a Synodal Church, women leadership role in the Church, and breaking the culture of silence in Asia, gave me an insight and a broader vision into my religious life and spiritual practice. It reminded me continuously of my social responsibility towards the poor, peace building and creating inclusive communities. Our many visits to the NIROTHARAM VIPASSANA meditation centre and speaking to the Buddhist *Bhikkunies* (women monks) living there, gave me

an incredible opportunity and insights to ponder and reflect deeply on the role of women leadership and empowerment in these communities.

As an Oblate seminarian, I consider it important to continue our *Oblate heritage, which we have received from St. Eugene De Mazenod*, our beloved Founder, who put youth at the centre of our call to mission (36<sup>th</sup> General Chapter Art 18). My Thailand experience convinced me once again the importance of empowering young Catholic leaders of the Church for social ministry, which is also an objective of the Oblate JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) programme. It was reminded of two Sri Lankan Oblates, late Frs. Peter PILLAI (1904-1964) and Tissa BALASOORIYA (1924-2013), who contributed immensely to the cause of social justice in the country and established Sri Lankan University Catholic Students’ Movement, with a strong vision towards forming young social activists locally and internationally.

During my Thailand experience, I also understood that Inter-faith dialogue is a challenging process, which advocates differing religious traditions to encounter each other to break down man-made divisions that stand at the centre of most misunderstandings and conflicts. It should be a platform for people reciprocating and understanding different faiths and cultures which then let them live in harmony. Inter-faith Dialogue therefore, should not be something that takes place officially or academically but rather be an essential part of daily life, with the intermingling of different cultures. I am now eager to use Inter-faith Dialogue for peace building wherever I will be as an Oblate.

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## Canada-United States

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### ASSUMPTION PROVINCE It was they, who taught me!

My name is Adam Wojdecki, I am 20 years old and I belong to the Oblate youth group at St. Maximillian Kolbe Parish in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. During the summer I had the

opportunity to go to Madagascar for 3 weeks with the group to experience missionary work.

When I found out that Fr. Marcin SERWIN was planning to go to Madagascar with the youth, I was very excited. I have heard a lot about Madagascar from the Oblates working in the island who visit

our parish, and I was very curious about the work of these missionaries, how they spread the Catholic faith among the Malagasy people and how everyday life looks on the island.

What surprised me the most was the hospitality of the people. Although they were economically poor, they were not poor in their humanness. They were ready to share everything they have. In every village we came to, people welcomed us very warmly. They shared coffee, tea, coconut, or Malagasy donuts with us. Although they didn't know us, they said that we were their family. It touched me very much that the most important thing for these people was not the material help that we provided them, but that we visited them and spent time with them. In many villages, knowing that we were coming to visit them, people came out a few kilometers before the village to meet us along the way and help us carry our things.

On the eastern part of the island, we had the opportunity to go with a missionary 6 hours to a village in the jungle to celebrate Mass, which people wait for in anticipation because they can have it only once every few months. We saw how happy they were when they could attend Mass and receive Christ, and what a special day it was for them.

Children in Madagascar have responsibilities from an early age. They look after their siblings and help their parents a lot. They were very eager

to learn new things from us. They were happy to take part in games and activities as well as learning English. They liked Polish songs very much, they enjoyed singing with us, and they quickly learned the words of these songs in Polish. We were also surprised when during one Mass people sang in Polish "Jesus, I trust in You". Later the missionary told us that this hymn is known all over the island.

We also had a chance to visit a church in Tamatave which was funded by our parish. People were very thankful that they received help and wanted us to thank our fellow parishioners.

This missionary experience taught me the importance of community, sharing with others, and how important it is to live for others and not just for yourself.

Seeing the conditions in which Malagasy people live, how difficult it is for them to obtain basic needs, and yet, they are happier than we are here, showing me that material things are not as important as living in community. Seeing their deep faith, and how they look forward to each Mass, showed me that we often underestimate the fact that we have easy access to the church, priests, and daily Mass. Often Sunday Mass is seen by us as an obligation that we need to fulfill and not as a moment of deep encounter with Jesus.

Madagascar taught me many lessons of life, towards which I had turned a blind eye until now.

## **OMI LACOMBE Global Oblate Fundraisers meet in Saskatoon**

During the latest meeting of the Global Oblate Fundraisers (GOFs) which was held at the Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Center, in Saskatoon, Canada, several topics of interest to the Oblate world were considered.

After a brief update on financial information -funds provided by the GOFs offices to Oblate Units totalled close to 5.0 million USD in 2018- the fundraisers shared ideas and experiences and reflected on how to best support the

Congregation. A presentation via Skype by the Congregation's Director of Communications, Shanil JAYAWARDENA explained the Oblates' stand in social media and provided background to the group members most of whom already use social media, on how to use this tool to best connect among each other and with donors. The group also heard from Joe Gunn from a new initiative of Oblate Canadian provinces about Fundraising for Ministries of Justice. Joe talked about ways we can impact and improve the lives of the most vulnerable. But maybe the most important decision of the group during the meeting was to adopt by consensus a policy supporting

the decision of the last Chapters to require the implementation by all Oblate Units of a children and vulnerable populations safeguard policy.

It was decided that starting January 1, 2020, the GOFs will no longer approve any request for funding from Units that do not have such a safeguard policy in place. This decision is parallel to previous group's decisions to enforce certain directives mandated by the Congregation and recorded in Congregation's documents, such as stopping funding to Units that are out of compliance with reporting requirements. Many of the fundraisers are already mandated

#### ASSUMPTION PROVINCE

##### **Rediscovering the essence of our missionary charism**

The first meeting of the Young Oblates of Canada US Region took place in May 2018 at Cap de Madeleine Shrine in Trois-Rivières. The latest meeting happened at Queen of Apostles Retreat Center in Mississauga ON, from September 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 2019. The meeting was a continuation of last years' Congress which was a beautiful synergy of enthusiasm for collaboration. The meetings were a response to the Joint Session (2015) call for increased regional collaboration. CROCUS mandated a Young Oblate committee to plan a regional gathering towards greater collaboration, discussing the possibility of joint efforts in the North America Region. The committee will continue to assist CROCUS in their discernment of the future missionary presence of the Oblates in the Region.

This year's congress invited us to focus on rediscovering the essence of our missionary charism and the role it plays in discerning ministry responses, especially with the current mandates of the 36<sup>th</sup> general chapter. Fr. David Munoz OMI, who works closely with Frank Santucci OMI in Oblate Studies, moderated the first evening. On the second day, Fernando Velasquez OMI spoke about the beautiful possibilities and messiness that is Interculturality. On the third and fourth day, our facilitator, Michelle Miller, who has worked closely with Oblates in Ottawa, ON, led us in a process where

to require proof of safeguard policies by their own governments or donors. In order to assist the Units to comply with the mandates of the chapters the GOFs committed themselves to work with Units lacking safeguard policies to assist them to implement such policies.

As it has been a tradition in all previous meeting, the hosts wanted to share with us the local beauty and traditions, in this case, the Western Development Museum, a very instructional experience to understand the challenges confronted by the first pioneers to the Canadian Saskatchewan Province.

we considered potential sites for collaborative regional ministry. Fourteen sites were considered in our days together.

The May 2018 meeting offered lots of time to get to know each other and our respective provinces. This year, we accomplished two main goals.

- 1) To continue to build and foster Missionary Oblate relationships among younger members of the CA/US Region, along with current CROCUS and General Leadership.
- 2) To begin discernment process to identify one or more existing ministries in the region which we would jointly staff as a regional ministry.

On Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup>, our last evening together, we visited St-Patrick Parish, an Oblate Parish in Hamilton, ON that is embodying the missionary efforts. We celebrated a beautiful liturgy honouring the Canadian Martyrs and, followed by a delicious supper prepared by the parish staff. The meal consisted of food almost entirely from the Province of Ontario.

We were able to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves, but as always, it was hard to say farewell when we all returned to our assigned ministries throughout Canada and the US.

Each evening was filled with jokes, storytelling and delicious appetizers that hopefully will carry us through the year until next congress.

*Juan Gaspar, OM*

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## Europe

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**BELARUS****Oblates will serve in another parish**

A new parish is being established in Minsk, Belarus, led by the Missionaries Oblates of Mary Immaculate. On Saturday, October 26, 2019, the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Minsk and Mogilev - Bishop Jerzy Kosobucki - dedicated the cross and the land on which the parish church is to be built. The oblates and faithful were waiting for that moment for 12 years. The parish is dedicated to Saints Apostles Peter & Paul and Saint Eugene de Mazenod. The ceremony was attended by can. Władysław Zawalniuk - dean

of deanery, Fr. Piotr BIELEWICZ – pastor of the new parish, Fr. Paweł LEMEKH, seminarians with the spiritual Father of the local major seminary and numerous faithful.

Bishop Jerzy, referring to the difficulties that the parish encountered in building the church, pointed out that God's Providence should be trusted. While addressing the faithful, he recalled the importance of the sign of the cross in the life of a Christian, as well as in the heart of the parish community. He also encouraged those gathered to build the Church as a “community of believers”.

**CENTRAL EUROPEAN PROVINCE****On the Road to the Future**

*Sebastian Veits*  
(Oblate Associate)

Approximately fifty Oblates and Lay Associates from Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic gathered at the Provincial House in Hünfeld, Germany, from October 2 – 4, 2019. Together they reflected on the future and the mission of the Oblate Family in the Central European Province. The Gospel passage ‘Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand’ guided us spiritually through the days. As the disciples returned from their missions and intended to rest, the people, mostly the poor, looked out for them and for Jesus. However, Jesus looked at the people with compassion, and told the disciples “Give them something to eat”.

How does Jesus look at the world today? What does He ask us to do today? How best can we be His true disciples? Those who gathered in Hünfeld reflected upon these questions and took the first steps towards a successful vision plan for the future.

The challenges faced by the Oblate family in the Central European Province are obvious: The People of God seem to get further away from the Church. Most of them do not understand our way of life as a call from God. As a result, the support we receive, both moral and financial, is getting increasingly infrequent. Therefore, it has come to a point that financial resources must be used wisely and with great responsibility. We have a great number of elderly Oblates, while the number of young Oblates is declining. ‘What is our mission?’ – this question must be constantly taken into consideration and reflected in the context of our reality.

These and many other questions triggered a lively discussion among the participants. Eventually, we came up with some concrete proposals and a “vision” for the Oblate family in the Central European Province.

These will be further discussed at the Provincial Assembly in February, 2020, and mandatory decisions will be made and be put into practice thereafter.

**POLAND****Festival of Life motivated youth to live  
“Like Fire”***By Marcin Szuścik*

One thousand young people, one week, one God. Workshops, conferences, concerts, games, Masses, prayers, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and much more. What else do you want to see at a Catholic youth gathering? “Festival of Life”, the annual youth programme organized by the Polish Province of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and five dioceses in Poland, had all of the above.

It was held at the “Niniwa” Oblate Youth Centre in Kokotek. Apart from the Oblate youth and the young people from the five dioceses, many groups and individuals from several other parts of the country also participated at this unique event. The theme this year was “Like Fire”. It was embedded in the Old Testament texts concerning the incredible adventures of Elijah! Just to mention a few: miracles, conflicts, challenges, but also moments of doubt and helplessness. During the Festival, the young people had an opportunity to discover similarities between themselves and the great Prophet. Throughout the week, the theme was deepened further by the guest speakers. One significant lay speaker among them was Sylwia Jaśkowiec, a famous Polish cross-country skier, who has taken part in World Championships and the Winter Olympic Games. She not only shared her journey of faith, but also addressed some interesting topics like “How to combine sport and faith”, “How to distinguish good ambition from bad ambition” and “How to open ourselves to God”.

Each of the seven days had conferences, group activities, and workshops. After the Holy Mass

and dinner, each evening offered a ‘fun’ event or two. Among them were concerts, a musical theatre, a stage play, and the Festival Run. The concert of “Arka Noego”, a well-known children’s band, attracted an audience of over two thousand people. This year, probably, the most spectacular event was the musical theater. Performed by over one hundred artists, it was about the Prophet Elijah and his story from the Book of Kings. However, the event most often mentioned after the week ended was the Festival Run, a 7 km run with obstacles, through the forest, lake and swamp. The participants reached their limits of strength but they had smiles on their faces at the end.

The Festival gave ample freedom to the participants. None of the events was made compulsory. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed 24 hours a day inside the chapel, and all those who wanted to be alone with the Lord grabbed this blessed opportunity with both hands. There was also a chill-out zone, where you could do some sports, grilling, or just relax.

Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the OMI Superior General, several of his Counselors, and Paweł Zajac, Provincial of the Polish Province, graced the occasion with their presence on the last day of the Festival. “We must listen to the voice of young people more and more, as you are not only the future, but also the present of the Church”, Fr. Lougen said during his homily.

"Life Festival is a huge undertaking. We are counting on the fact that the festival will permanently appear on the calendar of young people from all over the country". Krzysztof Zieliński, an Oblate youth and a member of the organizational team, commented after the successful ending of the Festival.

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## Latin America

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**BRAZIL****Falling in love with God and loving others with God's heart**

The Provincial Assembly and the annual retreat of the province of Brazil took place Castanhal in the state of Pará, from July 23rd to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. It was a time of study and reflection on the most pressing issues of our society and the Church.

First, we dealt with the theme of sexual abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults. Fr. Serge Traore Moussa, a Missionary of Mercy, conducted this session. Being a current and complex issue, he highlighted the need to stress more on missionary and human dimensions in our community life, rooted in the person of Christ. Thus avoiding causing any act that may leave wounds and pains in people's lives.

Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, which will be held in Rome from 6 to 27 October, was the second theme we worked on. To conduct this session, we had the presence of

Fr. Ricardo Castro, director of ITEPES (*Instituto de Teologia Pastoral e Ensino Superior da Amazônia* - Institute of Pastoral Theology and Higher Education of the Amazon). He presented the structure and purpose of the Pan-Amazon Synod. His explanation made us more sensitive to the situation in Amazon, and it led us to be in communion with Pope Francis and the participants of this upcoming historical synod.

At the end of the Assembly, we participated in our annual retreat. It was preached by Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, the Vicar General of our Congregation. During the retreat he guided us to spend time in intimacy with Christ and helped us meditate on how to “fall in love with God and love others with God's heart”.

We thank the northern district, Fr. Francisco de Assis, OMI, and the other brothers of this unit, for their warm welcome and the excellent organization of the Provincial Assembly and Retreat. We pray to our holy founder St. Eugene de Mazenod to continue interceding for our missionary family.

**CRUZ DEL SUR PROVINCE****First meeting of the lay leadership**

The first meeting of representatives of the lay people who share the Oblate charism, took place in Santiago, Chile, from September 27-29, 2019 with their Oblate advisors. They came from all the four sectors that comprise the *Cruz del Sur* Province: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. They were intense days of sharing experiences, paths, histories, and of visualizing the next part of our "walk together" into the future.

With this direction, we began the first day by sharing the different reports and activities of what the Oblate laity have been doing in each sector. The second day was dedicated to sharing a previous survey that had been conducted with all the members who are associated with the charism - questions and answers, through which we were able to deepen reflection on the different aspects of the life, formation and mission of the lay men and women in each sector.

Then, we also had the opportunity to share what the lay members expect from the Oblates, as well as what the Oblates expect from the laity. It was a very valuable experience, as we agreed on several points of what we expect from each other. We also drew up several concrete proposals about the details of our joint activities, such as: frequency and time of meetings, the names and personal information of the group members, the signs, the times, training, etc. - to find ways to unify the work of Oblate lay men and women in the new province.

Finally, we approved a record of everything that was experienced, shared and worked on, during the three days of this meeting. This is to be reviewed by the base communities to provide feedback that will permit the true “walk together” that we hope for, as an Oblate family. From all that was sent to the base communities, one of the great dreams and challenges posed for the province, is the creation, soon, of common statutes for the four sectors that comprise the Province.

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## Vatican

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**VATICAN****Oblate presence at the Special Synod for Amazon 2019**

When Pope Francis announced on October 15, 2017 a Special Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region, the whole process of listening and dialogue with the Amazonian peoples of nine countries (Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam and French Guyana) found a push that could only come from those who know their cries and concerns, their proposals and challenges. The Latin American Pope, with this Pan-Amazonian Synod, invites us to dialogue, to discern, to listen, to ask God, in order to find new ways for the Church and for an integral ecology.

The Holy Father has called the members to participate as Synod Fathers from October 6 to 27 in Rome, where this important ecclesial event will take place, bringing together more than 250 people. They include bishops, missionaries, lay people, experts and special guests, who, for three weeks, will have the task of discerning with Pope Francis how to put into practice *Evangelium gaudium* and *Laudate sí*.

We transmit the great joy to all belonging to the Mazenodian family that two of our brothers will be participants of the Synod to share their lived testimonies with the Amazonian peoples.

**Bishop Jan KOT**, Bishop of the Diocese of Zé Doca, a territory of the Brazilian Amazon, will be one of those bishops who represent the Pan-Amazonian Region. **Fr. Roberto CARRASCO**, of the General Delegation of Peru, has also been selected as a Synod Father from the list of delegates proposed by the Union of Superiors General.

Bishop Kot is an Oblate missionary from Poland. He was the parochial vicar in Siedlce, Poland, before he arrived in Brazil in 1994. He then served as parish priest, first in Jussarval and then in Vitória di Santo Antão, in the Archdiocese of Olinda and Recife. He was also the parish priest of the Parish of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Alegre do Fidalgo, in the diocese of San Raimundo Nonato. Since 2014, he has been serving as the Bishop of the Diocese of Zé Doca, right in the Amazonian region of Brazil.

Fr. Roberto Carrasco is completing a degree in Social Communications at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. He worked for four years in the Mission of Aucayacu, Diocese of Huánuco, as director of Radio Amistad. He then moved to the Mission of Santa Clotilde, Napo River, where for seven years he served as the parochial vicar. In the Apostolic Vicariate of St. Joseph of the Amazon, he served as coordinator for the Indigenous Pastoral Ministry as well. He is currently leading a joint initiative called "*Amazonia: Casa Común*", a space where various religious congregations, Church organizations and civil organizations interact digitally in their work with the Amazonian peoples. They have prepared more than one hundred activities that will be carried out with the purpose of accompanying the Synod this October.

Both Fr. Roberto Carrasco and Bishop Jan Kot, with the spirit and charism of St. Eugene De Mazenod, will be there at the time of the development of the Pan-Amazonian Synod, living and sharing that collegiality which is nothing but "walking together" for a Church that also has an Amazonian face to it.

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**Anniversaries for November 2019**


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**70th Anniversaries of Vows**

06/11/1949	08797	Fr.	Tissot, Pierre	France
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**65th Anniversaries of Vows**

01/11/1954	10400	Bro.	Landreville, Gérard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
01/11/1954	09847	Fr.	Milan, Casimir	France

**60th Anniversaries of Vows**

01/11/1959	11351	P. Deac.	Koostachin, Michel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
01/11/1959	10812	Fr.	Mader, Martin	Central European Province
01/11/1959	13725	Fr.	Treziak, Heinrich	Central European Province

**25th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

05/11/1994	13084	Fr.	Mabetha, Philip Tumisang	Lesotho
12/11/1994	13080	Fr.	Lekarapa, Martin Serabele	Lesotho

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**Anniversaries for December 2019**


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**70th Anniversaries of Vows**

08/12/1949	09410	Fr.	Filion, Robert	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
08/12/1949	08790	Fr.	Prosdocimo, Camillo	Mediterranea

**65th Anniversaries of Vows**

08/12/1954	10415	Bro.	Givelet, Hervé	France
08/12/1954	09851	Fr.	Lapointe, René	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**65th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

18/12/1954	08580	Fr.	Dillon, Ciaran	Anglo-Irish
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**60th Anniversaries of Vows**

08/12/1959	10819	Fr.	Chai, John	Australia
08/12/1959	11397	Bro.	Hubig, Hans-Bruno	Central European Province



**60th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

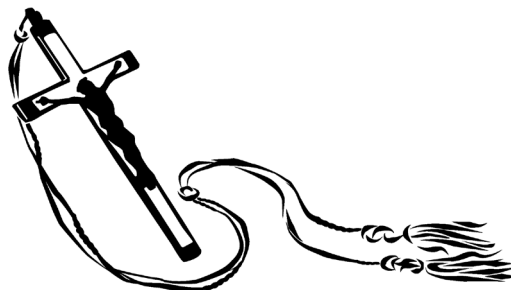
06/12/1959	09619	Fr.	Amadeo, Mario	Mediterranea
06/12/1959	09798	Fr.	Ferraro, Martino	Mediterranea
06/12/1959	09493	Fr.	Gazzola, Sante	Mediterranea
08/12/1959	09690	Fr.	Bugler, Kevin	Southern Africa
08/12/1959	09644	Fr.	Towell, James	Southern Africa
19/12/1959	09508	Fr.	Michel, Robert	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**50th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

08/12/1969	11372	Fr.	Duffey, Brian	Southern Africa
20/12/1969	11438	Msgr.	Paulo, Pierre-Antoine	Haiti
20/12/1969	11796	Fr.	Rademaker, Jan	Lacombe
20/12/1969	11585	Fr.	Ryan, Michael	Anglo-Irish
20/12/1969	11426	Fr.	Schlitt, Dale	United States
21/12/1969	11472	Fr.	Burrows, Charles	Indonesia
22/12/1969	11584	Fr.	Bracken, Michael	Southern Africa
22/12/1969	11592	Fr.	McDermott, Louis	Anglo-Irish
27/12/1969	11664	Fr.	Boulanger, Noël	Lacombe

**25th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

03/12/1994	13207	Fr.	Klosterkamp, Thomas	Central European Province
08/12/1994	13240	Fr.	Elendu, Kevin Paul	Cameroun
08/12/1994	13281	Fr.	Gali, Benjamin John Bosco	Assumption
28/12/1994	13276	Fr.	Diedhiou, Louis	Mediterranean



## Suffrages for our Deceased

August-September 2019

No. 52 - 60

Name	Prov./Del.	Born	Died at	Date
Fr. Daly, Peter	Australia	28/07/1955	Perth	28/09/2019
Fr. Menker, Joseph	United States	03/07/1926	Belleville	25/09/2019
Fr. Philip, Emmanuel Jesuthasan	Jaffna	25/12/1940	Jaffna	23/09/2019
Fr. Glanc, Alfons	Poland	09/04/1933	Katowice	17/09/2019
Fr. Flavin, James	United States	09/12/1935	Lowell	03/09/2019
Fr. Döing, Heinrich	Central European	12/02/1924	Hünfeld	12/08/2019
Bro. Delanghe, Oscar	Lacombe	07/04/1925	Saskatoon	10/08/2019
Fr. Carignan, Ronald	United States	17/10/1932	San Antonio	07/08/2019

*“They are before God, bearing the sign, the kind of character proper to our Institute, the vows common to all its members, the firm habit of the same virtues. We are linked to them by the bonds of a special charity. They are still our brothers and we are theirs. They now live in our mother-house, our main residence. The prayers and the love they retain for us will one day draw us to them and we shall live in our place of rest together with them.”*  
(Letter of Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)

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via Aurelia 290, I 00165 Roma, Italy  
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: [information@omigen.org](mailto:information@omigen.org)  
<http://www.omeworld.org>  
Editor: James Allen; Webmaster: Shanil Jayawardena  
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