



Integral creation, Interculturality, and Inter-Religious Dialogue

The General Mission Committee and the General Service of JPIC wrapped up their 5-day joint meeting with initial plans for animation resources on three areas of mission—integral creation, interculturality, and inter-religious dialogue. The mandate to help in the animation of the Congregation comes from the General Chapter 2016. Their proposals will now go to the Superior General and Council for the next directions.

Five years after the release of *Laudato Si'*, the concern for an integral ecology has become even more critical with the awareness that it is the poor who bear the brunt of the effects of climate change. The environmental issue is thus inextricably also a social issue. The responsibility to collaborate with all sectors in moving towards a more sustainable ecology and economy is incumbent upon us Oblates as missionaries to the poor.

Interculturality challenges us to conversion in our life in apostolic communities. It is our response to the increasing division, racism, exclusivism, and individualism in the world today. At the joint meeting, the participants recognized the invaluable role that initial and ongoing formation plays in ensuring that Oblates choose interculturality as a lifestyle and a way of doing mission.

Inter-religious dialogue is linked to our call to build peace in partnership with people of other faiths and traditions. We have Oblates in mission in contexts where responding and living up to this call is arduous and dangerous.

The initial plans of the two committees regarding animation in these areas calls for Oblate leadership teams in all Units to be more proactive, focused, and creative. Needless to say, we are all called to a profound spiritual and prayerful attitude towards these challenges.

There were twelve participants to the joint meeting—six from the General Mission Committee: Rafael Tianero (Asia-Oceania/Philippines), Jarosław Róžański (Europe/Poland), Antonio Messeri (Latin America/Cruz del Sur), Marcel Thiaw (Africa/Senegal), Fernando Velazquez (Canada-US/United States), Ramon Bernabe (Assistant General for Mission); and six from the General Service of JPIC: Miguel Fritz (Latin America/Cruz del Sur), Daquin Iyo Iyan (Africa/Kenya), Daniel LeBlanc (Canada-US/United States), Guillaume Muthunda (Interim Director of the Service of JPIC, General Councillor for Africa-Madagascar), Peter Stoll (General Councillor for Asia-Oceania) and Alberto Huamán (General Councillor for Latin America).

The crafting of the tools for animation was preceded by dialogues with three resource persons: Father General Louis Lougen, OMI; Sr. Sheila Kinsey, FCJM, Executive Co-Secretary of the JPIC Commission of the Union of International Superiors General (UISG) and the Union of Superiors General (USG); and Seamus Finn, OMI, Chief, Faith Consistent Investing, OIP Investment Trust and Chair of the Board of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

 GENERAL ADMISNITRATION

SOUTHERN AFRICA**General Committee for Formation Meeting**

P. Cleber Lopes, OMI

The General Committee for Formation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate met in Cedara, South Africa from February 26 to March 3, 2020.

The committee, coordinated by Cornelius NGOKA, the Assistant General for Oblate Formation, is comprised of one representative from each region: Fr. Joseph PHIRI (Africa / Madagascar), Fr. Ross KAPUNAN (Asia / Oceania); Fr Frank KUCZERA (US / Canada), Fr. Sebastian LUSZCZKI (Europe) and Fr. Cleber LOPES (Latin America and the Caribbean).

The members of the team have been newly appointed, so first we took time to get to know each other. It was a beautiful sharing among brothers, about their history of life and the vocational story. In this way, we reminded ourselves that it is Jesus Christ, who as the center of our lives and our personal Savior, invites us to the mission of OMI formation.

It is significant that our meeting was held in CEDARA! The South African region of KwaZulu Natal, where the first Oblate missionaries gave their all for the mission ad- gentes, and of course, our dear Blessed Joseph Gerard. To get a glimpse of where we were, we went to visit the first house where he lived and to learn a little more about the history of the Oblates in this region.

We first began with a sharing of the regions, a time of listening to the reports prepared by each representative, the positives, the challenges and the future projects. The Oblates working in formation around the world are seeking to respond with great sincerity to the

challenges that arise in this difficult mission of accompanying and forming future missionaries. We were also enriched by the shared experiences of collaboration among different regions.

In the days that would follow, we took time to discuss several important topics: Interculturality in the Houses of Formation, the regency experience of the formandi, the Vademecum of the Pre-novitiate, the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, ongoing formation and the meeting of the Post-Novitiate superiors, which will take place in Aix in July this year.

Living together with the Oblates at Cedara, both the formandi and the formators, gave us an experience of "feeling at home" as brothers. The Oblates in South Africa have not measured efforts for a fraternal and friendly welcome, offering space and services so that the meeting of the committee was very fruitful.

Besides the sharing with the formandi at the Post-Novitiate in Cedara, we also had time to visit the Pre-novitiate house, another beautiful moment of listening and sharing.

Now the task of the representatives of each region is to bring all those rich sharing, inspirations and challenges to their respective regions, to reach out to the provincials and major superiors, formators and formandi, and continue to shed light on the mission of OMI formation.

We are grateful to God for this important and beautiful moment in the welcoming land of South Africa, and to our brother Oblates of the OMISA province. Besides contemplating the beautiful natural landscapes that God has given it, we thank South Africa for providing us with a "back-to-school" experience; to learn from a society that has always sought freedom and equality among people, and continues to be a model of the search for the Kingdom of God.

OFFICE OF OBLATE MISSION SUSTAINABILITY

Continuing to build capacity towards Financial Sustainability

In response to the mandates of the 35th and 36th Chapters that each Unit generate funds locally and work towards its own relative financial sustainability, the Office of Oblate Mission Sustainability (OOMS), with the support of local Oblate instructors and lay collaborators, has continued to offer workshops on the basics of management and financial sustainability. The targeted audience continues to be scholastics, formators and, in some cases, young Oblate priests and brothers. During the last five months, we offered three workshops, one each in Cameroon, Paraguay, and the Philippines.

The first of them was at the Yves-Plumey Scholasticate in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Sixty-one scholastics from ten different countries attended the training in French between the 22nd and the 28th of September, 2019. From December 11 to 17, we offered the same program in Spanish to one formator and seven students from three countries of the José Gerard Scholasticate in Asunción, Paraguay. Finally,

COMMISSION ON MISSION WITH YOUTH

Two youth appointed to Youth Commission

With the consent of his Council, the Superior General has appointed Mr. Marcin Szuscik from Poland and Ms. Claudia Tincep Vasquez from Peru as lay youth members of the Commission on Mission with Youth, for a first term of three years.

The Oblate members of the Commission are: Christian FINI (coordinator), Claudio CARLEO, Antonio D'AMORE, Jaime MALLO, Patrick Oliveira URIAS, Marcin SERWIN, Alberto HUAMÁN CAMAYO (liaison with the OMI Central Government). Ms. Emma Rice from Australia will also be in the Commission as a resource person.

during the week that lasted from January 6-11, 2020, a similar workshop was offered in English to 21 scholastics from ten countries and three formators of Our Lady of Assumption Scholasticate, in Quezon City, Philippines.

As in previous workshops, the main topics were Principles of Organization Management, Leadership, Communications for managers and leaders, basic concepts of Sustainable Development, Financial Sustainability, and Accountability and Transparency. The workshop included collective and in-group reflections and exercises, as well as examples from the Oblate world, with emphasis on the regions where the participants came from. During the last two workshops we also included films to illustrate Leadership and the traits of a good leader.

Prior to the workshops, participants received documents providing more detailed background to the topics that would be discussed. Evaluations of the workshop continue to be positive, with very interesting suggestions for the future. The OOMS and instructors are adjusting the training programme to accommodate some of those suggestions and, in this way we continue our own learning experience as well.

Mr. Marcin Szuscik, 25 years old, married, has been actively working in the office of Oblate Youth Center NINIWA in Poland since 2015. He has participated in and coordinated various events such as NINIWA meetings, retreats, pilgrimages, bike expeditions, Festivals of Life, etc.

Ms. Claudia Tincep, 25 years old, single, graduated in Economics. She actively participates in the Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate YOMI since 2013. She has participated in and coordinated various national meetings of the YOMI Peru, youth missions, parish missions, meetings with parish and diocesan youth, etc. Claudia is also a diocesan coordinator of Family Catechesis.

 AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

D.R. CONGO**New year with the prisoners**

Father Basile OBIEJE is an Oblate of Nigerian origin who is currently on a mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was assigned to the parish of Notre Dame/Kikwit-Plateau, in the diocese of Kikwit, located 520 km from Kinshasa. On the first day of the year, he went to celebrate Holy Mass at Kikwit prison, where pastoral responsibility has been entrusted to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

My first Mass of the year 2020 was with the prisoners at Kikwit. They were very happy and shouted every time I spoke in Kikongo. We

made noise to the point that those who weren't at mass came to see. From the first reading, I gave them hope for 2020, and they nodded their heads when I spoke of sin and the resolution to take advantage of the promised blessings.

In short, I told them not to lose hope and that they consider the cause of their imprisonment as a mistake to be corrected this year. I reassured them that 2020 is a year of blessing if they believe and entrust their situation to God. They were shouting AMEN, AMEN ...

But still, they asked me for material help but I had nothing to give them. Let us keep them in our prayer.

GUINEA BISSAU**“We must persevere and make justice triumphant.”**

In the local African tradition and, in this case, in Guinea Bissau, there are many positive elements that should not only be welcomed, but supported and encouraged, as the Church teaches us. Likewise, there are beliefs, traditions and behaviors that we cannot accept, because they are contrary not only to our Christian doctrine, but also to the fundamental rights of the person. One of these is forced marriage.

It often happens in some families that the marriage of daughters is decided on by their parents, especially their father or uncle. Mothers and the rest of the family generally agree with these decisions. The daughter may marry while still fifteen years old, or even younger, and often without knowing the future groom, who may be a much older man than she is, and many times already married. There is polygamy here. The father, or the uncle, in case the father died, makes arrangements with the future son-in-law, receiving substantial gifts from him. The date is set, and when the day comes, the daughter must go, whether she wants to or not.

There are many such episodes that I had to deal with, but I now share with you the first among them. It happened many years ago, but in the end, you will realize why I share it now:

It was the years 2010-2011. I lived in the N'Dame Spirituality Center, about ten kilometers from the center of Bissau, the capital of the country. Not far from the center there is a village called N'Dame. The PIME Fathers (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions), who had been in the Centre before us (they were the founders) had built a school and helped the village in various ways, such as the distribution of water (coming from a well in the Centre) and assistance in sanitary care, aid that continued even after their departure. The Centre is run by a community of Sisters. I took care of the spiritual aspect.

One day, the Sisters told me that a girl from the village, called Lucia, had gone to them crying because her father had told her that she should marry a man she did not even know, and with whom her father had already made arrangements. They had arranged the marriage for June (it was the month of April). The girl was just over 15 years old and the man she had to marry was much older and had other wives. I went to talk to her father, whom I knew well. His name was

Lona. He told me that it had been decided and that he couldn't change his mind. He told the Sisters, who tried to convince him otherwise, that he could not lose his honour by breaking his promise. Very strange concept of honour!

I began to think. I told myself that it was not possible to let it go with the excuse that we had already done our part. It was a very critical time for Guinea (political vendettas, arbitrary imprisonments...) so it was difficult to trust the civil authorities. I asked Father Michael, a Franciscan who had always dealt with difficult cases, especially prisoners, if he could advise me. He gave me the telephone number of a certain Luis, who was the head of the Human Rights Commission in Guinea. I called Luis and he told me that a certain lady, a Judge of children's rights, could help me. Her name was Filomena and she had her office in the Ministry of Justice. I immediately went to the Ministry. "Cuidado dos menores" (Protection of minors) were the words written on her office door. Filomena was not there at that time, nor in following days, but, after many efforts I did finally meet her.

Filomena listened attentively to Lucia's story. At the end, she said to me "That is why we are here. There are laws in Guinea, and we are here to enforce them. The fact is that many people don't know this, and even if they did, they are afraid of the serious retaliation that could come from their families or the people in the village". In Lucia's case, she told me that, in order to resolve this, I would have to come back, but this time with Lucia and with her identity document. A school document would have been enough, as long as her age was correctly mentioned. When I returned to N'Dame, I sent for Lucia, and I told her, without so many words: "Would you be willing to come with me to the court and tell your story to Judge Filomena?" "Sim, N'misti" (yes, I want to), she immediately answered me. Being little more than 15 years of age, she already showed great courage.

When I took Lucia to Judge Filomena, she listened to the story carefully, asking specific questions. It was also confirmed that she was 15 and a half years old. Filomena, like a mother, understood the tragedy to which so many girls like Lucia had to undergo. She promised Lucia that she would help her out of this nightmare,

but in order to obey what the Law required, she would have to return with her father, who would be then asked to sign a declaration in which he would let his daughter free to complete her studies, and to marry whenever and whomever she wanted. At this point Lucia answered:

"My dad will never accept. If he knew I was here, he'd kill me."

"Don't worry, we have our own methods. Your dad will never know you were here. Leave it to us." The Judge gave me an appointment for another day, so we went back to N'Dame.

The following week I went back to court. Filomena had already prepared the letter of appearance for Lona and her daughter Lucia. She asked one of her assistants to come with me. As we were approaching the village, the lady who came with me said it was better that she got off and walked on foot, so as not to arouse suspicion. Lucia had been already instructed by Filomena: when the lady with the message arrived, she had to pretend nothing had happened, and treat her like a stranger.

The lady arrived at the village, asked for Lona, and gave him the letter from the court. The letter did not contain the reason, so Lona thought it was a good thing and told Lucia that they should go to court. This, cleverly, showed a certain surprise, and everything went smoothly. I was not in the village when Lucia went to court with her father. I returned to N'Dame a week later. Lucia first, and then Filomena, informed me: When the two of them appeared at the court, Filomena asked the usual questions:

"Is this your daughter?"

"Yes."

"What's her age?"

"18."

"Strange, here it says 15! Is it true that you want to give her in marriage to someone?"

"Yes."

"Do you know it's against the law?"

"No, I don't know."

"Now you know. You can't force an underage daughter to get married. Do you know that you can be jailed?"

"No; but how do you know all these things?"

"We know everything, we have antennas everywhere!"

Lona then started to get scared. The idea of going to jail scared him.

“What should I do?”

“If you don’t want to end up in jail, you have to sign a letter stating that you will let your daughter go to school and then get married whenever she wants and to whomever she wants.”

Lona would not have wanted to sign that statement, but fear of going to prison persuaded him to do it. Filomena added: “If by chance you change your mind, a phone call from Lucia will

be enough to send the police and put you in jail.” The years passed. Lucia, after finishing school, attended the university and became a nurse. At the same time, she married Domingos, with whom she now has a little girl, Miriam. Grandfather Lona didn’t want to know either about Lucia or Domingos at the beginning, but with time he reconciled with both of them.

Filomena later helped us solve other cases similar to this one. I personally believe that we must not be afraid to commit ourselves to make justice triumphant, especially towards the weakest, even if this requires time, effort and perseverance.

ASIA-OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA NATIONAL OBLATE YOUTH ENCOUNTER 2020

The National Oblate Youth Encounter (NOYE) is an annual event organized by the Province of Australia. It brings together young people from around the country who wish to share their Catholic faith in tandem with the Charism of St Eugene De Mazenod. NOYE provides a balance of prayer, workshops, open-forums, liturgy, games and free time to enjoy the recreational activities on offer at the campsite. It first began in 2000, known back then as "Youth Coming Together", only with 12 young people. Year by year, it has gone from strength to strength.

National Oblate Youth Encounter 2020 was another successful camp! This year we had over 105 people attend. The support from the Oblate communities around the country helped us break triple figures for the first time in many years, with our venue at capacity.

COLOMBO Oblates continue their efforts for peace and reconciliation

The Oblate Institute of Higher Learning (OIHL) which was established on 21st May 2016 during

This year’s theme “mission is possible” gave us the opportunity to understand exactly what mission is in our lives and how we can go about living out this mission. We were able to break this topic down through three daily talks given by representatives of our Oblate Youth community. Mission for young Catholics can often be challenging in today’s world, however given the opportunity to gather together as a community of young people inspired by the oblate charism enabled us to see that mission really is possible. Encounter was not only a chance to meet with new people from the various Oblate communities, but to personally encounter Jesus through sharing, adoration, reconciliation, and prayer.

This year we were joined by eight Oblates for the whole camp. Their support and presence was hugely appreciated, helping the young people to talk with and understand the Oblate charism on a deeper level. Over the four days, we found ourselves reflective, joyous and moved, and we can’t wait to do it all again next year.

the Bi-centenary Jubilee Celebration, to find a way to comprehensively address conflict transformation which is a crying need in post-war Sri Lanka, has successfully completed three years of training in Peace and Conflict Studies. OIHL awards a Diploma in Conflict and

Peace Studies, which consist of four certificate courses:

- Conflict Transformation
- Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cultural Integration for National Reconciliation
- Psychological Counselling as a Path
- Social Engagement for Peace & Reconciliation

During the three Academic Years (2016-2019), 103 students were enrolled and 12 completed the Diploma, 54 students completed different certificate courses and

37 participated as audit students.

The Certificate Awarding Ceremony for the students of the Academic Year 2019 and the Inauguration of the Academic Year 2020 was held on 11 January 2020, at the Centre for Society and Religion (CSR), Colombo. Fr. Irwin MORAIS, Provincial Superior of the Oblate Province of Colombo cum Chairperson OIHL was the Chief Guest. Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, former United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was the Guest Speaker.

KOREA

Should coronavirus stop us from doing what we ought to do?

Father Vincenzo BORDO, who is called by the name Kim Ha-Jong by the Koreans, was born and raised in Italy, but is now helping the needy in the faraway land of Korea. Since 1992, two years after he came to Korea, he has provided pastoral care for the urban poor in a shantytown in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do Province. In 1993, he established “Anna’s House”, an indoor soup kitchen for dinner meals, and the first of its kind in Korea. Anna’s House provides warm support for the needy and for the homeless, and functions as a shelter for runaway teenagers as well.

With the outbreak of coronavirus, Fr. Vincenzo is at a crossroads, whether to shut down the soup kitchen or continue it as usual. This is how he explained the latest situation on his Facebook page.

Alarmed and concerned by the COVID-19 VIRUS, many friends asked me about the situation here in Korea. Since Saturday, February 22, things have plunged terrifyingly.

Several messages arrived from the Administration and other groups, requesting us (or should I say pressuring us) to close the soup kitchen for the common good.

We are supposed to have a meeting with the Mayor to understand the situation and see possible solutions. It is easy to close gyms... without sport you can live. It is easy to forbid concerts... without music life goes on. Schools and universities can be closed for a period of time... without having scruples of knowledge. You can lock churches, so much so you can pray at home... but can you close down a canteen that serves 550 meals a day for the most needy, especially when, for 70% of them, that is the only meal they can afford to eat? Of course, without good and nutritious food, they cannot survive in this difficult situation anyway. It is a very tricky decision for us to take at this moment.

Yesterday I spent the sleepless night trying to figure out what we can do and how to do it. I ask for your prayers. It is not fair, and we cannot abandon and turn our back on these poor brothers and sisters in times of greatest need.

PHILIPPINES

The Jolo Cathedral bombing...a year later

It was on January 27, 2019, that the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Capital of the Province of Sulu, was bombed during Mass, killing at least 26 people and injuring 116 other churchgoers. On its first anniversary, Christians

in Sulu province prayed together for their safety amid incessant tensions, as well as for peace and harmony among believers of different faiths.

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. Fr. Romeo SANIEL, Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Jolo, issued a statement calling on Catholics in Sulu to continue praying for the full recovery from injuries and trauma of the surviving blast victims.

The island province of Jolo has often been under the threat of terrorist groups, especially the Abu Sayyaf that operates in the fashion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Over the years, Fr. Saniel has earned respect, even among the Muslims, for being extensively involved in continuing interreligious dialogue and promoting Muslim-Christian solidarity. He initiated the Vicariate's peace-building program, which focuses on workshops on countering violent extremism and on building respect and cooperation among religious sectors.

"One year is like yesterday for those who lost loved ones. No words we offer or deeds we perform can ever truly remove the pain of their absence. The victims still demand justice. Concerned Christians and Muslims cry out never again," Fr. Saniel said in his statement.

Here is the full text:

Greetings of peace and solidarity.

Last January 27, 2019, an ISIS inspired group bombed Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo. The twin explosions killed 26 and injured 116 Mass goers. This barbaric attack was condemned by Muslims and Christians all over the world. I was instructed by Pope Francis, "to care for all the victims. Make them feel that the Church will never abandon them. This tragedy should not destroy the harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians in the area."

Today, January 27, 2020, we commemorate the 1st year anniversary of 1/27/19 (the Mount Carmel Cathedral bombing) with the theme, "Keeping their memories alive". One year is like yesterday for those who lost loved ones. No words we offer or deeds we do can ever truly remove the pain of their absence. The victims still demand justice. Concerned Christians and Muslims cry out, "Never again".

Mindful of the mandate of Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, we accomplished the following: First, we restored and inaugurated the newly renovated Mount Carmel Cathedral. We thank those who donated for the restoration of Mount Cathedral. Second, we assisted the victims in terms of cash assistance, hospitalization, initial trauma healing, scholarships, and housing. We thank all the benefactors. Third, we have strengthened our Interreligious dialogue program (IRD program) that promotes harmonious relationships and religious tolerance between Muslims and Christians through countering extremism seminars, activation of interfaith councils, and joint celebrations during Ramadan and Christmas.

The steadfast love and faithfulness of the victims has been our inspiration for the past year. Even as they mourned in pain, they summoned the strength to carry on, which reminds us that together as Christians and Muslims there is nothing we cannot overcome.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of those who perished, and perseverance and healing for those who were wounded. Let peace and greater human fraternity reign in our land.

Fr. Romeo Saniel, OMI
Apostolic Administrator of Jolo
Vicariate Apostolic of Jolo

Canada-United States

UNITED STATES**“Eugene de Mazenod 101” – a new online course**

“Come and I will show you who you are in the eyes of God”

These words come from the first recorded sermon of Eugene de Mazenod as a young priest as he began his ministry to the most abandoned in Aix-en-Provence. They sum up his whole life as Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Bishop of Marseilles, and his continuing ministry to us today in the communion of saints.

You can accept his invitation as you learn about him in this online course: “Eugene de Mazenod 101” (in English) or “Eugenio de Mazenod 101” (in Spanish) presented by the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies at Oblate school of Theology in San Antonio. Your guides are Frank Santucci OMI and David Muñoz Lopez OMI.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP**Yvon Beaudoin and old Simeon**

Fr. Fabio Ciardi, OMI

"Now, O Lord, let thy servant go in peace."

This is the farewell of old Simeon, as we read in the Gospel on the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, celebrated on February 2. A week before that, before going into a coma, Fr. Yvon BEAUDOIN also spoke similar words, which were his last: "I am ready".

On the eve of the Feast of the Presentation, in tune with old Simeon, Padre Ivo was also welcomed into the Lord's peace.

Scholastic Yvon Beaudoin came to Rome when I was not yet born. He left New York on

The aim of this course is:

1/ To help you to gain a deeper knowledge of the life of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

2/ To assist you to understand the charism, mission, and spirituality of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

3/ To see in him and his Mazenodian spirituality a model of holiness that can enrich your life

4/ For members of the Mazenodian Family to be inspired to discover their individual vocation within their specific branch of the Mazenodian Family

The course will be divided into 20 sessions, beginning on March 1. Each session will include a video lecture of around 20 minutes, available to students every 15 days. Supplementary material for each lecture will be available if you want to learn more and go deeper.

September 25, 1947 with the ship “Nea Hellas”, to reach Naples on October 13. He left Rome to return definitively to Canada in 2009: 62 years of work at the General House, in the archives; in the postulation; at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican; 40 years with the Scouts... A terribly regular life. He always loved working alone within four walls, reading old documents and writing a several hundred works and articles, preparing reports for others, always remaining behind the scenes, with great discretion and humility. He catalogued all the writings of Saint Eugene, whom he learned to know and love like no other. Luckily, he had his youngsters, even though his work with them was also very structured. Many of them, today reputable professionals, remember him with great affection and always ask about him...

Once he wrote of himself: “By nature I have

a sweet and pleasant temperament, but my relationships have always been limited to the essentials... My days have always been full, from 5.30 to 22.00, without stopping for breakfast, without watching television except for three or four times a week to see the news, often without dinner because I come home late from the Scouts... I have the same rhythm of life from year to year. Over the years, I have become more patient and reflective, and have usually remained calm and serene. My spirituality is that of daily duty well done, on time. I love to laugh when I am with others and make of myself pleasant company”.

He accepted his limits, without giving up... And that is what he suggested to others when he left Rome:

“To the Oblates I wouldn't say so much to "evangelize", to "be full of zeal", they've always been so; I'd rather say what Saint Eugene said: “be religious”, “be regular” and “work to become saints”. This insistence of the Founder on the life of prayer, on fraternal charity and on perseverance towards holiness, I have highlighted in all the introductions I wrote for the various volumes of his writings! The role of formators is to ensure that the Oblate charism and traditions of the Congregation are transmitted to the new generations of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate”.

Here is his story in his own words:

“I was born in Lac-à-la-Tortue, Champlain County, Canada, on March 19, 1926. I left for Ottawa alone by train, where I arrived at the Juniorate on September 3, 1941. I entered the novitiate at Richelieu in mid-July 1946, with the first of four groups of 40 scholastic novices that year.”

From 1947 to 1953, he was at the Roman scholasticate on via Vittorino da Feltre. "When in the fall of 1953, Father DESCHÂTELETS (Superior General) asked the Scholasticate Superior for two scholastics to make an index of the names of persons, places and subjects of Bishop de Mazenod's writings; I think Father

Jean DROUART had little hesitation in choosing me and Brother (Mathias) Menger. We worked at the postulation office from November 11, 1953 until June 1955. We made about 50,000 files; I then continued on my own, in my spare time, until 1967, to arrive at around 70,000 files. “From 1963 to 1967, I worked a great deal with Father Angelo MITRI in composing for the historical office of the Congregation of Rites the Summarium additionnalis of Fr. Albin's cause, published in 1964, and the Inquisitio historica of Bishop Mazenod's cause, published in 1968. “In 1966-1967, I worked in the Congregation of Religious to put in order the archives of the new section of Secular Institutes. From 1967 to 1982, I was the archivist and the librarian of the Congregation of Rites (1967-1969) which became the Congregation of the Causes of Saints in 1969. From 1983 to 1996, I was a relator or reporter, that is, one in charge of composing the Positio of the future saints. With collaborators I published about 120 of them from 1983 to 2002 (large volumes of about 1000 pages each).

“I officially ceased my work in the Vatican in 1996, at the age of 70, although I still had an office there until I finished the last Positio in 2002. When I left at the age of 70, I was awarded the medal Pro Ecclesia et Pontefice.

“I was the General Archivist from 1983 to 1993. In this capacity, I had to prepare each year the publication of the Acta Administrationis generalis.

“From 1977 to 2003, I prepared and published 22 volumes of Oblate Writings (letters, spiritual writings and the diary of Bishop de Mazenod) and 5 volumes of its second series (Tempier I&II, Gérard I&II, Casimir Aubert). From 2000-2002, I practically prepared alone the first volume of the Dictionary of Oblate History.”

Another area of work of Fr. Yvon was the youth, with whom he worked continuously since 1964, especially with the Scouts: “I loved this apostolate very much and the youth always understood me and held me in high esteem”.

Europe

MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE COMI Annual Conference of Formation

“The fragility of humanity and the world: a look at the challenges of the mission”

With this very current theme, the annual Conference of Formation of the Secular Institute Cooperators of the Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (COMI) took place in Rome from 28 February to 1 March, 2020.

The COMI are consecrated lay people who share the Oblate charism and commit themselves to live it in society and in the Church. Founded in 1951, thanks to the encouragement of Fr. Gaetano Liuzzo, OMI, members of COMI are now present in four countries on three continents: Italy, Uruguay, DR Congo, and Argentina. Their Constitutions and Rules, which received pontifical approval in 2001, provide for collaboration with the OMI Congregation and the presence of an Oblate Assistant who guarantees their communion in the Oblate charism. Their current Assistant is Fr. Fabio Ciardi, OMI.

“In these three days of fraternal and joyful gathering, together with some OMI brothers and lay associates who share the charism, we have communicated our weaknesses as persons and as an Institute. We recommitted ourselves to bear and share each other's burdens, but above all, to look at the mutual beauty that missionary work brings to the Church and society today,” said Pina, a COMI, at the end of the Conference.

POLAND The project “Missionary for Lent”

There are 1903 Polish missionaries currently working outside of their land of origin, and among them are many Oblates. In addition to evangelization, they also work to improve the quality of life of the people they work with.

To so many people around the world, missionaries are the only ones who not

The conference began with a brief greeting from the President, Ileana Chinnici. It was followed by the presentation by Fr. Francesco Volpintesta, OMI, who, under the theme ‘The courage to listen to life’, spoke of how Saint Eugene de Mazenod became aware of his weaknesses and allowed the grace of God to act in him until He gave him “a heart as big as the world”.

On Saturday afternoon, Cristina Jiménez Dominguez, consecrated COMI and geriatrician by profession in Madrid, delivered a speech entitled ‘The joy of Simeon’, reflecting together on how the elderly and the sick can be encouraged to look at the arrival of their definitive encounter with God and Eternity with the eyes of faith. Then, Fr. Aldo D'Ottavio, OMI, spoke about his ‘Experience of Service and Mission’ among factory workers, experiencing the poverty and vulnerability of those who often find themselves at the bottom of the social ladder. Finally, on Sunday morning, the young activist Lorenzo Vecchi, engaged as a volunteer of the COMI, dealt with the issue of ‘Climate Justice: a new mission frontier’, presenting the need and urgency of living a coherent lifestyle with respect for and protection of creation.

Concluding the Conference, the President reminded the members how “our fragility can hide new opportunities, which must not frighten us but must become an instrument for God's action in us”.

only help them spiritually, but also teach them new perspectives on life through education. It is in this perspective that supporting them with prayer becomes no less important. “Missionary for Lent” is a project, initiated by the Oblate Province of Poland, to help these missionaries with prayers during the Season of Lent. Participants, through their fasting, prayer, and other good resolutions, are invited to become active collaborators in missionary tasks.

“The ‘Missionary for Lent’ is proof of the true mission of the Church, it is an act of mercy, laity praying for clergy”, commented Bishop Szymon Stulkowski (auxiliary bishop of Poznań, Poland) during the inaugurating event, which took place on Ash Wednesday. “We hear so much about material support for missionary activities. This is very pleasing, but the need for spiritual support is much greater. Prayer helps a lot for those who often work in extremely demanding conditions in different regions of the world”, explains Fr.

Marcin Wrzos, OMI, editor-in-chief of the Oblate magazine “Misyjne Drogi”.

Through the website misjonarznapost.pl, participants choose a specific missionary and pray for him or her during Lent. Last year, more than 20,000 of the faithful took part in this campaign with great enthusiasm. This year, the seventh edition of the project, over 50,000 people are expected to join this effort and become “missionaries for Lent”.

MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE

A letter of encouragement in times of trouble

Italy is so far the worst hit country by coronavirus pandemic after China. In a letter dated 11 March 2020, Fr. Gennaro ROSATO, the Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, invited all the members of the Oblate family to live this moment of great trouble and discomfort, rooted in faith and love.

Here is the letter:

Dear Brothers and members of the Oblate Family,

We are living in a situation that seems surreal. It finds us disorientated because we are powerless in the face of something that we feel is threatening, especially because it is unknown. Like many others, perhaps we experience not only the discomfort of the precautionary measures imposed, but also a feeling of fear that impulsively assails us. We cannot stop ourselves from feeling emotions. What we can do is try to manage them with intelligence and faith. Intelligence allows us to deal with the situation in a more objective and rational way; faith enables us to make a deeper reading of what we are experiencing, helps us to make sense of what is happening and to orient the choices to be made.

As disciples of the Lord, accepting the call to ask with faith (Lk 11:9), we turn to Him with our needs and those of our brothers and sisters; with a sense of responsibility, we wish to do our part with all our intelligence, energy, and heart, assuring that "everything contributes to the good of those who love God" (Rom 8:28).
United in prayer...

The security measures required have suddenly given many of us so much "free" time to manage. Why not take advantage of it to pray a little more and more calmly? Ideally, we can all join in prayer and pray together. I invite you to make a daily commitment to address this prayer, or other suitable ones, to the Lord, choosing a moment in the day to present it to Him:

“Lord of life and giver of all good, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, St. Eugene and the blessed Oblates, we turn to you to ask for the grace of your protection for us and for every person in the world. We pray to you for all those who are affected by this virus so that they will recover. We entrust to you those who are most committed to dealing with the emergency of the epidemic: the rulers, scientists, doctors, nurses, law enforcement agencies and those who, in various ways, are involved in the collaboration. Support those who suffer most from the consequences of the economic damage, especially the poor, in your providence.

In your goodness have mercy on all those who have died, and relieve the pain of those who suffer from the loss of their loved ones.

Do not let us be discouraged, but give us the grace to trust you, and to contribute, as much as we can, to the good of others. To you we entrust our life and the life of the whole world and we pray that, in facing this moment together, people may grow in solidarity and peace”.

...let us do our part as required (for the Oblate communities in Italy)...

Until April 3 (unless there are further instructions from the Legislator), in compliance with

governmental dispositions, and in a spirit of solidarity with all the Italian people, we are asked not to leave our communities, and to cancel any commitment that does not allow us to guarantee the security norms. By decree, it is permitted to leave one's home only for objectively valid and urgent reasons: to go shopping or purchase basic necessities, to go to the pharmacy, for health reasons or real urgencies generated by serious personal, community, pastoral or family situations. If there is a real urgency to move beyond the borders of one's own municipality of residence or domicile, it will be necessary to fill in the necessary self-certification so as not to incur a criminal offence. In pastoral and liturgical matters, we will adapt ourselves to the ecclesial directives of the Italian Episcopal Conference and of the diocesan Bishops. Each Community, after having diligently examined the civil and ecclesial regulations, should take, in a spirit of communion and co-responsibility, the security measures it considers appropriate to its concrete situation. Within our Communities during this period, we will not schedule meetings or celebrations open to other people; it will be possible to celebrate Community Mass in private form, guaranteeing the due distance prescribed.

...with confidence that "everything contributes to the good of those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

Let us try to live this moment rooted in faith and love. We can abide by these rules out of scruples or fear; As Christians, we can motivate our commitment by living it as a concrete sign of our love for our brothers and sisters, that is, by doing our part to safeguard the health of others, helping to prevent the epidemic from spreading.

We are preparing for Easter, which is the feast of life. It is from this perspective that we must look at the cross of Christ, an event that Jesus himself compares to the labour of childbirth (cf. Jn 16:21). We also read this time of ours as a time of labour, which is not an end in itself, because it will lead to the generation of a new life. Let us live it as a grace that is given to us to review our life and to recover that essential thing that we have perhaps put aside and that is what ultimately gives meaning to our life. As for me, I believe that this reality, which has now become planetary, can, among other things, be an opportunity to review relations between peoples, so that by overcoming selfishness and partisan interests, each one can take to heart the progress and well-being of others in a spirit of solidarity, and of course, of authentic fraternity. Trusting in the help of Mary our Mother and Guardian, our Refuge and Defense, I greet each one in the Lord.

*Fr. Gennaro Rosato, OMI
Provincial Superior*

Latin America

BRAZIL **The visit of the Superior General**

Fr. Sérgio de Santana, OMI

Fr. Louis LOUGEN, the Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is now in Brazil, visiting his Oblate confreres in the Province. The pastoral visitation, which began on February 26, will last for 30 days, before his eventual return to Rome on March 26.

A citizen of the United States by birth, Fr. Louis worked in Brazil for 17 years, until he returned to his country of origin in 1996 and continued his

missionary life there. He served as Provincial of the United States Province from 2005 to 2010 until he was elected to the position of Superior General of our Congregation during the 35th General Chapter.

The purpose of his visit to the Province of Brazil is to get to know more about the development of its missionary activities, and thus prepare us for the Joint Session of CIAL, (Union of Latin American and Caribbean Oblates) and the Oblate General Government, which will take place in Mexico next August.

On Brazilian soil, Fr. Louis will have the

opportunity to visit all the Houses of Formation, talking to the seminarians and formators, and find out more about the commitment of our young people to learn about the Charism of our religious family.

He will also have the opportunity to meet the Oblates in all four Districts of the Province. Thereby, the Superior General will have first-hand experience of the pastoral involvement of the Oblates in the evangelization of the God's people.

This visit of Fr. Louis Lougen in our country comes at a very opportune moment, considering that this year we are celebrating 75 years of Oblate presence on Brazilian soil. It was in 1945

that the first four American Oblates arrived here, bringing all their missionary enthusiasm and willingness to carry out the mission of St. Eugene de Mazenod.

Fr. Louis already had the opportunity to meet with the Provincial Council of the Province of Brazil, from 27 to 29 February 2020, and together they discussed the future of the Oblate mission on Brazilian soil.

May God, St. Eugene, and Mary Immaculate help us, so that with our missionary efforts we will continue to collaborate with the Superior General and his Council to evangelize the poor and the most abandoned!

PERU

The Cry of the Earth and the Poor, and not the Ordination of Married Men

Roberto Carrasco, OMI

(Adapted from an article originally published on Kairós News (www.kairosnews.cl))

Roberto Carrasco Rojas OMI was one of the two Oblate Synodal Fathers at the Special Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region that was held in Rome in October 2019. He makes it clear that the fundamental theme of the Synod on the Amazon was not the ordination of married men, which is what the media are focusing on, but rather integral ecology, and that there is much to rejoice about in this regard. This is his vision expressed from the heart of the Amazon.

A Catholic social communicator has a responsibility to tell people the truth. The fundamental theme of the Synod was not the ordination of married men. It is unfortunate that some media that call themselves Catholic treat this topic with much morbidity, becoming part of some conservative sectors that take advantage of this type of disinformation for their own interests.

Pope Francis, in his last apostolic exhortation "Querida Amazonía" expresses the special interest he has for the Amazon, because for him, the Amazon is a living being that is suffering and is crying out in pain today, and

that challenges us because he makes us see how we are treating nature.

A shared dream

"Querida Amazonía" ("The beloved Amazon") is a dream come true. A dream of many missionaries who hoped that the day would come when this subject would become a serious concern for the Church.

Francis shares this dream because he has placed his eyes and his heart in a place often forgotten by the world and from there he invites us all to take up the challenge in the face of this reality. Francis loves the Amazon and knows how to express it, to the point that he begins his exhortation with some rather affective words: "Beloved Amazon". This is the most beautiful thing that the Church has been able to express to the native peoples of a region of the world.

But this Apostolic Exhortation is a document not only for the peoples or the church of the Amazon. It is addressed to all people of good will. It is the fruit of a whole process of listening. A process that in the Synod has meant a time of grace. This Exhortation is complemented by the synodal contributions that were expressed, discussed, discerned and dialogued in the Final Document of the Synod. We must remember that the Final Document produced by the Synod is one thing and the Apostolic Exhortation is another, and what makes us happy is that the Amazon enters as a theme that has a strong ecclesial character.

Let us allow ourselves to be challenged by this dream of Francis. "The beloved Amazon" is a shared dream. Number 7 of the Exhortation expresses a true summary:

"I dream of an Amazon region that fights for the rights of the poor, the original peoples and the least of our brothers and sisters, where their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced.

I dream of an Amazon region that can preserve its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.

I dream of an Amazon region that can jealously preserve its overwhelming natural beauty and the superabundant life teeming in its rivers and forests.

I dream of Christian communities capable of generous commitment, incarnate in the Amazon region, and giving the Church new faces with Amazonian features."

The "viri probati" ("men of proven virtue")

In the fourth chapter of the Final Document of the Synod, this topic appears as a contribution of the synod fathers. It is one of the many topics that have been touched upon, but not the most important one. It is false that the Synod intended to reduce the viri probati issue as if it were the most crucial issue of this special Synod. We know that the main theme of the Synod was the "new paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology". Let us read number 91 of the Final Document: "With

evangelical courage, we wish to implement new paths for the life of the Church and its service to an integral ecology in the Amazon".

Other issues that challenge us

In number 85 of the exhortation, the Holy Father states, "Inculturation should also be increasingly reflected in an incarnated form of carrying out ecclesial organization and ministry. If we are to inculturate spirituality, holiness and the Gospel itself, how can we not consider an inculturation of the ways we structure and carry out ecclesial ministries? The pastoral care of the Church has a precarious presence in the Amazon, due in part to the immense territorial extension with many places of difficult access, great cultural diversity, serious social problems, and the option of some peoples themselves to be secluded. This cannot leave us indifferent and demands a specific and courageous response from the Church".

There are serious problems in Pan-Amazon territory and that is why the church is required to respond in the same way that Jesus responded to His Father. We cannot stay in the comfort zones of our homes, cars, armchairs or Upholstered Beds. We have to abandon that and reconfigure our mystery of service.

Now it is up to the bishops and the superiors of religious congregations to adopt this teaching and send prepared missionaries to the Amazon.

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

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 21-40

Name	Prov./Del.	Age	Died at	Date
Fr. Henri Méolle	France	91	Pontmain (France)	08/03/2020
Bro. Edmond Genicq	Belgium/Holland	80	Bruxelles (Belgium)	12/03/2020
Fr. Richard Sheehan	United States	85	San Antonio (U.S.A.)	13/03/2020
Fr. Arulnathan Peduru	Jaffna	72	Columbuthurai (Sri Lanka)	16/03/2020
Fr. Joseph Leathem	Southern Africa	84	Johannesburg (R.S.A.)	16/03/2020
Fr. Bernard McCosham	OMI Lacombe	88	Vancouver (Canada)	21/03/2020
Fr. Hilary Peiris	Colombo	67	Sri Jayewardenepura (S.L)	30/03/2020
Bro. Bruno Torres	Philippines	80	Quezon City (Philippines)	30/03/2020
Fr. Anthony Carroll	Anglo-Irish	91	Dublin (Ireland)	02/04/2020
Fr. Raffaele Grasso	Mediterranean	70	Caserta (Italy)	05/04/2020
Fr. René Bélanger	Lacombe	87	St. Albert, AB (Canada)	05/04/2020
Fr. Thomas Scully	Anglo-Irish	89	Dublin (Ireland)	07/04/2020
Fr. John Nolan	Anglo-Irish	84	Dublin (Ireland)	08/04/2020
Fr. John Murphy	Anglo-Irish	94	Dublin (Ireland)	08/04/2020
Fr. Roger Cyr	United States	86	Tewksbury (U.S.A.)	09/04/2020
Bro. Alexandre Gagnon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	91	Richelieu (Canada)	16/04/2020
Fr. Marcel Glintzboeckel	France	95	Lyon (France)	20/04/2020
Fr. Józef Kuc	Poland	86	Lubliniec (Poland)	21/04/2020
Fr. Gerald Flater	United States	89	Tewksbury (U.S.A.)	23/04/2020
Fr. Germain Ranger	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	93	Richelieu (Canada)	29/04/2020