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**LETTER FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL  
FOR THE FEAST OF ST. EUGENE DE MAZENOD  
MAY 21, 2020**

**L.J.C. et M.I.**

**“We were born for times like this”**

Dear Oblates, and all our Brothers and Sisters imbued with the Oblate Charism,

May you have a joyful celebration in honor of Saint Eugene de Mazenod!

In a very short period of time our lives have been drastically changed by the pandemic of the coronavirus. Was anyone untouched? Very quickly, the pandemic took over our lives. All forms of media kept the news and the pictures before us: cities of millions, shut down and empty streets; overcrowded hospitals, with stressed-out health care workers; morgues, without space for the bodies of the deceased; over and over the numbers: those who contracted the virus and those who died. Masks, hand gel, social distancing, lockdowns, and essential services jumped into our everyday vocabulary. We saw the excruciating pain caused by the virus and so many people dying alone, in isolation, separated from loved ones, often without the solace of the sacraments. Uncertainty, fear, anxiety and stress; unemployment, no salaries, hunger. The poor hit hardest by the pandemic.

The churches, at the high point of the liturgical year, Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, were closed and empty. Many people expressed their great sorrow at being excluded from the special liturgies, and the inaccessibility to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Live-streaming

of celebrations of the Eucharist were present through the internet and helped fill a vacuum. Who wasn't strongly moved to see Pope Francis, on March 27, walking through the rain in an empty St. Peter's Square, to bestow the Urbi et Orbi blessing? He expressed the pain of the world and our unflinching trust that God is in our midst and holds us tenderly close to him.

We've lost some of our brother Oblates and members of the Oblate family in this pandemic. At the time of this writing, I am aware of five Oblates who died due to the COVID-19. We are praying for six others who have contracted the coronavirus and whose conditions are very serious.

The Oblates and our brothers and sisters who live the Oblate charism have reached out in many creative ways to continue to minister and to be available to people while respecting social distancing and lockdowns. Especially in service to the poor, the home-bound, and homeless persons, bags and boxes of essential needs, food and medicines, masks and hygienic liquids, were distributed. In spite of sickness and death, anxiety and stress, there also have been beautiful signs of solidarity, generosity and bravery. Fr. Shanil Jayawardena, our Director of Oblate Communications Service, has collected, from all around the Congregation, the witness of Oblates and lay people who are living out the charism of St. Eugene in the most diverse circumstances and ways. Please take some time to look at our website, [www.omiworld.org](http://www.omiworld.org), and see what Oblates and our co-workers have been doing.

Two years ago, one of our prenovices expressed this thought: “The Oblates are not a congregation of the past; it’s one of the present and future, and even more so, considering the world today. We were born for times like this.” Isn’t there a spark of St. Eugene de Mazenod in these words? We were born for times like this: a period of fear, anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty, in which the most abandoned, the poorest, suffer the greatest hardship. And at the same time, a period offering new insights, new possibilities, new challenges, calling us drastically to wake up and care for our common home and its peoples.

I am grateful to all of you for your creative efforts in service of our brothers and sisters in this pandemic. At times, risking your own health, you have provided needed spiritual and material assistance to God’s people, especially to those most forgotten by society, those who have no access to the health systems, those who live in dire conditions, the poor with their many faces. Thank you!

We begin our Oblate Week of Prayer for Vocations today. These are days of grace between the Solemnity of Saint Eugene and the Feast of Blessed Joseph Gerard. This is an opportunity to reflect on our commitment to engage young people in God’s mission, to which the Church and the Oblates are committed. The words of the prenovice, “We were born for times like this” can certainly motivate us in our vocation ministry.

In visiting the Congregation, I am impressed that, in many Units there is a clear commitment to the ministry of vocations. This is most evident where leadership has made three things happen. First of all, the Unit leadership chooses to prioritize vocation ministry as a significant part of their ministry of leadership and of the missionary vision of the Unit. Second, the leadership of the Unit expresses this commitment by calling and preparing an Oblate for full-time vocation ministry in the Unit, and by forming a vocations committee of several members, including lay and other consecrated people who live the Oblate charism. Third, in addition to these two essential

elements, the Unit leadership involves the entire membership of the Unit in creating a cohesive, overall plan for the ministry of vocations, organizing districts for local vocation animation.

A lack of commitment to vocations ministry is clearly indicated when an Oblate is appointed as director of vocations and then assigned another ministry, such as in a parish or a school. Vocations ministry demands a full-time commitment, hard work, and intentional support from leadership. It requires an Oblate who is on fire with the charism, who believes in our life and our future, and who is a witness to the joy of Oblate life.

Without new members we will be unable to respond to the call to mission. During this special week, while we pray for vocations to our Congregation and to the many other forms of life that are expressions of St. Eugene’s charism, that is not enough! We are also called to action, to do something! Let’s not be satisfied with meager results. Let’s not repeat the mantra of the self-fulfilling death wish: we have made our contribution to the mission of God and we can now disappear.

I call on St. Eugene to inflame us to be creative and bold in fishing for followers of Jesus who embrace our charism. I invite each one of us to be attentive in actively supporting those who have this special responsibility of vocations ministry, in expressing our gratitude to them and by praying for them, because they have been called to one of the most challenging ministries of all. “We were born for times like this!”

May Our Lady, Comforter of the afflicted and Health of the sick, journey closely with us at this time.

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Father Louis Lougen, OMI

May 21, 2020

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 VATICAN
 

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**Oblate Archbishop retires**

On April 1, 2020 the Holy Father has accepted the resignation presented by Archbishop Jabulani Adatum Nxumalo, OMI from the pastoral care of the metropolitan Archdiocese of Bloemfontein, South Africa.

He submitted his resignation to the Pope on reaching the age of 75 years. Until his resignation, Archbishop Jabulani was one of the four active OMI Bishops in South Africa, a country with a longstanding Oblate history.

At the same time the Pope appointed Mgr. Zolile Petros Mpambani, SCJ as the new Archbishop of Bloemfontein. The Archbishop-elect has been serving as the Bishop of Kokstad since 2013.

Archbishop Jabulani was born in Durban on January 27, 1944. He made his first profession as an Oblate in 1966. A part of his formative years was spent in Rome where he completed a Licentiate in Missiology. He was ordained a priest on 2 September 1974. As a priest, he

served as Dean of Studies, lecturer and formator at St Joseph's Scholasticate when Mgr. Zolile Mpambani SCJ was a scholastic there.

From 1978 to 1984, he served as a member of the Theological Advisory Commission of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. He was also in the editorial board of *Missionalia* *Missiological Review* & a member of the *Missiological Society of Southern Africa*. He published a number of academic papers.

In 1998, he was appointed provincial of the Province of Natal, South Africa and after six months, he was elected General Councilor for the Africa-Madagascar Region during the 33rd Oblate General Chapter.

On 8 July 2002, Pope John Paul II appointed him auxiliary bishop of Durban. On 10 October 2005, Pope Benedict XVI promoted him to be the Metropolitan Archbishop of Bloemfontein.

He has also been the representative of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference to the International Commission on Liturgy.

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 AFRICA-MADAGASCAR
 

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**KENYA****“Working From Home” & Networking**

*Fr Gerard Conlan OMI,  
Missionary in Kenya*

One of the challenges of being a priest here, and worse, a white priest, is that everyone thinks you have money! So, trying to sift out genuine calls for help and those that are just after a freebie is not always easy. The second challenge is trying not to make people dependent on myself or the Oblates. It is good to try and work through proxies. That is something St. Eugene de Mazenod used to do

200 years ago with the Fish Monger wives on the tough wharves of Marseilles, France. Firstly, they would advise Bishop Eugene who was genuine, and then they would act as go-betweens so the assisted person often thought it was the Fish Mongers helping them.

Today as I read the daily homily reflection from USA Bishop Robert Barron (29 March 2020), the following text encouraged me to see Jesus working through our actions to help the youth. “The voice of Jesus can call us... in various ways, by our actions and words to: “Untie him and let him go.”

As a bit of background, one of our Oblate parishes in the countryside established a sub-youth group in the capital city of Nairobi as a way to keep the youth from home united and able to support each other. As the Oblates now have a few parishes, we can now call it Oblate Youth, Nairobi (OYN). As youth from our parishes come to Nairobi for work or study, we encourage them to connect to OYN. Sometimes they do not bother, and that makes it hard to know if their requests are genuine or not. At the same time, many university students go off the rails and get into bad behaviour, drugs and alcohol. Therefore, a cry for help might just be a ploy to get drinking money.

Ten days ago, Alan, whom I had assisted in a small way back in 2017, called me over the phone. His name still came up in my phone contacts, so I could honestly say I remembered him – thank God for technology making us smarter than we might otherwise be! After his initial gambit asking for help, I said I would call back later because I was working with a surveyor on a mountain. Later became the next day, when I just sent a text message asking for his dad's phone number (he complained his dad was not communicating or assisting him) – the number didn't pick up. The next day, Sunday, after assisting at the parish Masses, I called him again. I challenged him about why he wants to waste money coming home when he can study with less distraction in Nairobi – the University was closed due to the coronavirus. He tried to tell me life was too hard there. "Do you really know what is happening in Nairobi, Father?" I replied that I did. After a bit more conversation, he could see I was not taking his side, so he ended the call with the words (not unpleasantly): "I'm sorry I called you Father," and then he was gone. Ouch, that hurt! I was a bit troubled as I prepared to return to Nairobi. But just as I entered the car, a motorbike appeared with Jason, one of my parishioners. We chatted for a while, before I asked him if

he knew Alan. He called several people and discovered a few more details about Alan's family. Turned out Alan's dad was a local alcoholic, his mum was deceased, his step-mum ignored him. It was grandma who was paying the university fees. Between 2017 and recently, Alan had been working part-time to support his living expenses, but the job was over and now he wants to come home, for good, because 'it's just too hard' (he has one year to finish his 4 year degree). After all that sank in, I realized that I cannot allow Alan to pull out of University. Jason promised to consult the family and the local Chief to see what can be done. The Chief has been assisting the elderly grandma to transfer the fees each semester.

I headed off to Nairobi and later sent Alan a bit of money so he could eat while he waits for the local Chief and Jason to work a bit of magic. The next day Jason called and shared that the Chief will summon the family and sort out a solution.

Next step was to call one of the leaders of Oblate Youth, Nairobi (OYN) and ask if they knew him. Geoff said, "I do, and, in fact, he and I were in the same baptism group!" I asked Geoff to call Alan to encourage him and tell him: "Giving up University is not an option he should choose." Geoff reported back that Alan was feeling better and he was now determined to complete the University studies.

We are all locked down for the coronavirus, but that does not mean God is sleeping, and nor should we be. "We can work from home." I do know that the Holy Spirit sent Jason into my path at just the right moment, and Geoff's generosity has grown because of OYN.

I think, with God's help, we may have "untied him, and let him go."

*Notes: Names and places have been changed to protect people's privacy.*

## SENEGAL

### Paschal Triduum in the time of the pandemic

Since confinement and the curfew, spiritual activities have slowed down at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Mission of Elinkin. A 'Rosary Marathon' - 24 hours of continuous recitation of the rosary - took place on March 25 from

midnight to midnight. The parishioners and Oblates participated in it from home, joining the river of intercessors in this pandemic time. But, alas, how can one live the Holy Week with no live-streaming facilities, no gatherings, no big prayer events and, without the customary participation of the people?

Nevertheless, I left with my backpack to go to Carabane Island, the historic place where the evangelization of Casamance - the area of Senegal south of the Gambia - began, with its beautiful church, recently restored and consecrated.

Holy Thursday was celebrated behind closed doors with three young people, and, since the curfew started at 8 pm, there was no way of doing Eucharistic adoration. The next day, Good Friday, with the same three young people, I began the Stations of the Cross around 9 am, going from house to house, each house a Station. We began at one corner of the village, about 4 kilometers from the Church. Throughout our walking journey, there was joy in meeting, praying, sharing, and often sitting in the courtyard of the houses, at the prescribed social distancing. Around six in the evening, we completed the route, covering almost 10 kilometers in total. As for me, what

was more important was that I was able to meet all the families. I blessed their houses, and prayed over them.

Even at the cemetery, there was a Station on the Way of the Cross, to be in communion with those who have gone before us. After I thanked the three young people and sent them home, I remained in the church for the Liturgy of Good Friday. Alone in the usual silence of the place, with peace of heart and bearing with me all the people we met along the Way of the Cross, I thought of St. Eugene on Good Friday. I remembered all of those around the world who have died of the pandemic. I also bore the suffering and loneliness of the sick.

Good Friday in the time of the coronavirus... the mystery of life surprises us, but the mission continues, and becomes more urgent than ever.

*By Fr. Bruno Favero, OMI*

## ZAMBIA Empowering Young People

*By Mike Viola*

For more than 15 years, young people in Zambia have been building brighter futures thanks to the Lukulu Training Centre. The Missionary Oblates help run the centre, which provides job skills to young people who had dropped out of formal education.

“Currently we have about 75 students,” said Bro. Maximillian MWAKACHEYA, Director of the training centre. “Most of our students come from very poor families.”

The training centre offers students courses in five areas: Automotive Mechanics, Carpentry, Computer Studies, Construction and Tailoring. Most courses take two years to complete. Upon graduation, the students have a much greater chance of finding steady employment despite living in the poorest part of the country.

“The training centre has trained many young men and women who now run their own small businesses, especially in carpentry and tailoring,” said Bro. Maximillian.

The training centre is in the Diocese of Mongu. Oblate Bishop Evans Chinyama CHINYEMBA, has been a strong supporter of the centre and recently donated eight laptop computers to be used in the Computer Studies program. Most of the students who complete the Computer Studies program go on to advance studies at the college level.

Brother Maximillian says one of the main challenges of operating the training centre is to come up with the money to keep the school open. He is always looking for sponsors for students who are unable to pay the modest fees. “I am happy with how things are going at the training centre because I feel like we are truly doing Oblate ministry,” said Bro. Maximillian. “We are reaching out to the youth and even more importantly to the poor.”

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**ASIA-OCEANIA**


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**JAFFNA, SRI LANKA****Jaffna holds its first AORC meeting**

The Asia-Oceania Regional Conference (AORC) meeting was held in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, from March 2-7, 2020. It was the first time in history that the Province of Jaffna has hosted and organized the AORC meeting.

We all arrived in Colombo a day before to make our day-long journey from Colombo to Jaffna. During the journey, we were able to visit several places where Oblates are serving, especially serving the poor.

All Units were represented except Korea, as Korea had imparted travel restrictions due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The theme of AORC 2020 was “Challenges of Intercultural Formation in the Asian Context”. Fr. S. M. SELVARATNAM was invited as our resource person. He delivered four very interesting talks (using power point presentations) during the first two days. In the meantime, Fr. Peter Stoll, the regional Councillor, made his report, and each Unit also presented short reports.

During the next two days, different Committees presented their reports and updates on Regional Projects. They are as follows:

**PHILIPPINES****Becoming night crawlers for a worthy cause**

“Stay at home!” is the order of the day to combat COVID-19, but not for the 3.1 million homeless people in Metro Manila.

With the blessing of the community, two of the Oblates from the Shrine of the Our Lady of Grace in Caloocan decided to brave it out as night crawlers:

- Religious Life and Leadership,
- Mission to the new faces of the poor,
- Mission with Youth,
- The Laity,
- Formation
- Finances

On the following day we had a tour of Jaffna city after a special catered dinner at the Provincial house. Friday was the time for elections and reorganizing the AORC Committees.

**The new executive committee of AORC 2020 - 2022**

- President: Fr. Charlie Inzon (Philippines)
- 1st Councilor: Fr. S. Chinnappan (India)
- 2nd Councilor: Fr. Eko Saktio (Indonesia)
- Treasurer: Fr. Khan Paulus (Pakistan)

On the last day, Fr. Selvaratnam had a 'soft' book-launching ceremony. The title of the book was “Formation: In the Context of the New World View”. Mgr. Justin Gnanapragasam, the Bishop of Jaffna, was the guest of honour.

The following day the journey back to Colombo began early in the morning, and again the members had a chance to stop at some places of the Oblate missions.

Many thanks to Fr. Edwin VASANTHARAJAH, the provincial of Jaffna, and all those who helped in organizing a successful AORC meeting.

- to deliver 9.3 million pesos worth of gift checks from Caritas Manila, in partnership with Bishop David of the Diocese,

- to distribute basic food rations (of which 320 sacks of rice have already been distributed and still the demand grows incessantly everyday), and

- to facilitate a handing over of thousands of face masks and some PPEs (Personal protective equipment) from random generous

benefactors in the community, to be given for the front-liners in the hospitals and the back-liners in the streets.

With the uncertainty to what the morrow may bring, hundreds of seeds and seedlings were also distributed to households, promoting a backyard garden for a more sustainable food source as the lockdown stretches for a longer time.

As they frequent their exposure outside, Fathers Pon (Eduardo VASQUEZ) and Rey Emmanuel AMANCIO have settled into makeshift quarters in the Parish Office. This is to avoid contamination of the others, and still staying united with the rest of the community through online Oraison and the Eucharist. Equipped with this spiritual sustenance, together with the Oblate Cross, Holy Water and the blessed salt, these Oblates DARE.

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## CANADA-UNITED STATES

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### UNITED STATES

#### **The difference Cardinal George makes: Marking the late cardinal's anniversary of death**

*Michael R. Heinlein*

The fifth anniversary of the death of Cardinal Francis E. George, OMI, falls in the midst of a global pandemic. In the wake of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, we are faced with new difficulties as well as new versions of pain and suffering, and we wait to see the effects these weeks of social distancing, disease and death will have not only on us personally but on ecclesial life in the world.

I think now what I have often thought in the years since his death: What would Cardinal George say? Or, to play off the title of one of his most memorable works, What is the difference Cardinal George makes? Without putting words in his mouth, I think we can take some educated guesses, based on his life and legacy.

#### **Be perseverant**

Cardinal George's life can teach us a great deal, especially about the importance of trusting in Divine Providence and the acceptance of suffering — both of which are clearly in the disruption polio brought into his life.

When 13-year-old Francis George contracted

polio, his longtime dream of becoming a priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago was over. Told he couldn't be ordained there because of his disability, he was devastated. But it didn't take long for him to find a workaround and, he went to study at a seminary operated by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Congregation welcomed him with open arms.

He quickly rose to a series of leadership positions in the Oblates, which included 12 years in Rome as Vicar General for the Congregation. During those years, Cardinal George had many occasions to visit Oblate missions throughout the world. He traveled down rivers on log rafts, slept on dirt floors and was detained by border authorities, deported and even caught in crossfire.

But that Cardinal George ended up finding a religious home with the Oblates was clearly the work of providence, for members of the congregation take a fourth vow, in addition to those of poverty, chastity and obedience — that of perseverance.

As he got older, the effects of post-polio disease became more debilitating, and he eventually needed a heavy leg brace to stabilize his walking. As a result, the limp that he had had since childhood became more pronounced. As his sister, Margaret, would recall, he never went a day without severe pain. But he didn't let it define him. As a young victim of polio, he was given the following advice, which he often

shared: “There is always someone who is worse off than you. Don’t ever feel sorry for yourself.” He took that advice to heart and lived it daily.

As we face the unknowns of the coronavirus pandemic, we can look to Cardinal George’s example of great perseverance and continue, ourselves, to push through this time of inconvenience, fear and suffering.

Understanding the purpose of suffering, Cardinal George eventually came to explain his crosses as “gifts” and knew that it helped unite him with the crucified Christ. As he once said, “Christianity without the cross is a false religion. Jesus is not a good-luck charm; he is Lord of heaven and earth because he has laid down his life and taken it up again.”

### **Be simply Catholic**

Cardinal George was a man of intense curiosity, expansive breadth of knowledge and a deep, abiding faith. And he was greatly concerned about the divisions within the Church. Rather than dwelling within the realm of “liberal or conservative,” he preferred the dichotomy of “true or false.”

“We’ve sometimes reduced the Church to a set of ideas rather than an encounter with Jesus Christ and with his brothers and sisters in our parishes, our diocese and the world. Church becomes a debating society, people take sides and rack up points,” he once said.

By the way he lived, taught and governed, Cardinal George put into practice what he called “simply Catholicism,” a robust vision for ecclesial faith and life, devoid of polemics and tribalism. His hope for the Church is perhaps even more ambitious now than in 1998 when he first articulated it:

“The answer is simply Catholicism, in all its fullness and depth, a faith able to distinguish itself from any cultures and yet able to engage and transform them all... The Catholic faith shapes a church with a lot of room for differences in pastoral approach, for discussion and debate,

for initiatives as various as the peoples whom God loves. But, more profoundly, the faith shapes a church which knows her Lord and knows her own identity.”

During times of crisis, it is easy for divisions to become even more pronounced. Instead of giving in to continued infighting and discord, we would do better to follow Cardinal George’s urging toward unity and let our thoughts, words and deeds be simply Catholic.

### **Grow in discipleship**

“Catholicism is first of all not a set of ideas or a collection of causes. It is a way of life, a way of following Jesus Christ.” Cardinal George said. When we follow Christ more closely, “it will not only change the way we think and see, it will also change the way we live and act. ... Disciples change their way of life in order to remain in contact with their master, in our case, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary,” he wrote.

There is nothing like a time of trial to help us become better disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition to his post-polio struggles, Cardinal George had two bouts with the cancer that ultimately led to his death. The sufferings of his life were not obstacles to his discipleship, however. Rather than serving to embitter him, they were opportunities for him to grow in his relationship with the Lord.

Cardinal George lived his life with the knowledge that God made each of us to be holy and lived accordingly. “We are here to become saints,” he said. “Everything else is of very, very secondary importance.”

There is so much we can learn from Cardinal George, even five years after his death. His perseverance amid suffering, his pursuit of truth and proclamation of who Christ is, his ability to read the signs of the times and his hope that the Church can be more true to its mission: that is the difference Cardinal George can make in our present moment. As much as when he was alive, Cardinal George remains to be a man for our times.

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## EUROPE

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### **MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE** **Everything will be fine.**

*Fr. Stefano Cartabia, OMI*

"Will everything be alright?"

Night falls on the city of Milan, hit and gripped by the virus, a virus so "regal" that it even has a crown (corona).

I am going to bed. Ambulance sirens... one, two, three... These days it is the familiar sound that breaks the silence of quarantine.

Is there anything I can do to share the suffering of so many people? How can I collaborate? How can I offer life in this situation? These are nocturnal questions while I wait for a refreshing sleep.

"Everything will be fine", proclaim all the media and children's drawings. Without a doubt, I am convinced. In the end, everything will be fine. However, something tells me that I cannot forget about those things that did not go well.

A few hundred meters from my house and a few kilometres away, hundreds of people died. They died alone, isolated, without even a handshake from any family member. They died in a cold intensive care unit where the only friendly hand was that of the doctors and nurses.

Doctors and nurses: the heroes of this time. Massacring shifts, exposed to contagion, without sleeping for days and eating when you can and what you can.

### **POLAND** **Oblate missionaries among the most abandoned people**

Despite severe sanitary restrictions implemented by the Polish government, we are still facing the coronavirus pandemic. We acclaim doctors, nurses, and paramedics

The dead are already resting and already living a full life, without viruses or respirators. Yet their families remain destroyed: children who could not say goodbye to their parents and brides who could not give the last kiss. There are also families without work, shrouded in uncertainty. "Everything will be fine", no doubt. Nevertheless, we must respond to so much pain and so many things that we do not understand, that we cannot understand.

What can I do? What am I called upon to do? Perhaps this is the moment of the heroism of impotence. The heroism of sitting in silence and letting yourself be invaded by the pain of the world; feeling the anguish of the people, the tiredness of the doctors, the tears of loss.

I breathe. Sitting calm and quiet, I take on human impotence and let myself be transformed by it. I breathe. Often the heroism lies in the quietness of a love that assumes impotence. We cannot always "do". Sometimes we simply have to "stay". Stand there, like Moses on the mountain, with our hands up (Ex 17:11).

Be calm and quiet so that our intimate being can dissolve pain and incomprehension.

It is the moment of the heroism of impotence. Impotence which, if we know how to love it, will transform us into thanksgiving and gratitude. Perhaps coronavirus has come to teach us that everything is given, a gift, nothing is possession. Everything passes, only Love remains.

I breathe. Sitting quietly. Another ambulance. But I know, "Everything will be fine."

as heroes, which is true, but we forget about social assistance home staff. Most of them are struggling with new disease outbreaks as older people are the most exposed to COVID19.

The first group that started helping them was young people from the Oblate youth ministry "Niniwa". They spent a few weeks helping in one

of the Polish social assistance homes. Last week they were replaced by new young volunteers.

In the meantime, local governments asked for help from the Polish conference of men's religious orders. Five Oblates responded positively. Frs. Tomasz GALI and Sławomir STAWICKI started their volunteer time with young people from the "Niniwa" community. Father Tomasz helps the novice master at Święty Krzyż monastery and Fr. Stawicki works with homeless people on the streets of Katowice. Now they are working in the "Castle" social assistance home in Lubliniec.

## UKRAINE

### **"Facebook, I am here to do God's work."**

*By Fr. Pavlo Vyshkovskyy, OMI*

I hesitated for a long time regarding the creation of a personal Facebook profile. I asked God and consulted people. I was convinced (and I am!) that I should be more on my knees praying than hanging out with Facebook, as it eats up a lot of time.

When the world heard about the greatness of Divine Mercy, a sudden inspiration struck me - to spread the Good News about God, His love and mercy, particularly through the Internet, the best way to communicate with believers in these times of trouble.

Here in Ukraine we are united with people through broadcasts of the Holy Mass and other prayers. Furthermore, it also became a means to be united with the East, where blood continues to be shed, a region we have somehow forgotten because of the coronavirus. Ukrainian Catholic Television EWTN is watched in Russia as well, and they pray with us. This is a very strong testimony and one of the ways of overcoming war and hostility. Prayer unites us, and it reminds us that the most important language is the language of the heart, the language of love.

The digital world has become a global space in which the faithful can take part in the Eucharist, adoration, pray the Rosary together, listen to catechisms and deepen their faith, in spite of the pandemic. Within a week, more

The most dangerous ministry is provided by Fr. Sylwester MAĆKIEWICZ – Oblate missionary from Katowice. His volunteering concerns people who were COVID19 positive. The staff of the social assistance home in Lubliniec was mentally and physically exhausted. Initially, out of nearly 250 patients, about 20 were infected by coronavirus. One patient has died. There are about 40 patients in the ward where he works. He cleans, delivers meals, and helps in the personal hygiene of patients. His presence is also a help for the medical staff – especially in a spiritual way. Simply, to be with them and support them. Two more Oblates are ready to help if needed.

than a thousand people wanted to join me on Facebook. Many of them wanted to engage in some useful conversation, and at times even confession, although clearly it's not done through Facebook!

This shows that we all need a community, at least a virtual one, in this difficult time. But most of all we need Jesus. He alone gives life. He unites us. Jesus wants us to join Him, to be His "friends", not on Facebook, but in real, everyday life. I reasoned that my communication with others through Facebook would somehow help them to become friends of Jesus in their own lives. My heart is filled with the humble desire that many people get in touch with Jesus through my online sermons, recollections, and other posts.

In my life this has not happened yet, but in the life of saints - yes. After the first sermon of St. Peter, 5000 people were converted! If this incorporeal Facebook has become such a powerful channel between us and God, and between us mutually, then how powerful a tool of God can we be ourselves – real people, when the Spirit of God dwells in us. It was a pleasure to read greetings or comments from people from different parts of Ukraine and the world whom I had met in school, in church, somewhere on missions, or at meetings. Many thanks! However, my goal is not my own personal popularity. I do not want to receive 'likes' or be bombarded with compliments. I am here to evangelize, so I will share with others how I personally experience God in His Divine Word. My wish and prayer is that together we will be an unconquerable instrument of God, and that our life and all virtual space becomes truly God's.

**UKRAINE****COVID-19 epidemic:****Asking the intercession of an Oblate**

*Fr. Diego SAEZ, OMI  
Postulator General*

In the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic, we see how the whole Church is insistently addressing God in various ways. A beautiful initiative has emerged in the Oblate Family in Ukraine, related to one of the Oblate candidates for beatification and canonization: the Servant of God, Fr. Ludwik Wrodarczyk, OMI.

In 1942, in the midst of famines and food shortages during the World War II, people in Eastern Europe, hungry, exhausted, and desperate from so much hardship, were rapidly falling ill and dying without remedy. Because of the occupation, the confiscation of means of transport, young people being sent to the front, etc., there were neither rural doctors nor the possibility of transferring the sick to clinics.

An Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Fr Ludwik WRODARCZYK, had been in the borderlands between Poland and Ukraine (at present, Ukrainian territory) for a few years. The borderlines were on the maps, but not in the heart of this Oblate. Ludwik was fond of cultivating

medicinal herbs and making remedies and drugs, and he attended to the spiritual and physical needs of all those who needed his help, regardless of their religious affiliation or nationality: Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews, Slovaks... Catholics of the Latin Rite, Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, Orthodox, Hebrews...

Fr. Ludwik was able to show the universal divine fatherhood by his life and example, putting himself at risk by travelling from one place to another, overcoming ethnic hatred and encountering the infected, which did not prevent him from being killed later, in 1943. Since 2016, his cause for beatification and canonization has been open. Fr. Marek ROSTKOWSKI, OMI, Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Fr. Wrodarczyk, has composed a prayer asking for the intercession of the Servant of God to pray for the end of the epidemic and for the relief of the afflicted. The prayer has been approved by the competent diocesan bishop in the diocesan procedure, Msgr. Vitalii Skomarovskyi, bishop of the diocese of Lutsk (Ukraine), to be spread among all the Catholic faithful of Ukraine.

We also propose that the Oblates and the entire Oblate family turn to God with this prayer, and we ask that they report all the graces and favors they have obtained to the email address of the Postulator General - [postulatore.generale@omigen.org](mailto:postulatore.generale@omigen.org).

**SPAIN****Oblate Missionary Sisters among the Sick and Dying**

*Missionary Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate, are a young Religious Institute that came into existence in Spain in 1997, when nine women came together to live in community with the intention of following St. Eugene de Mazenod and the steps his sons. Therefore, they make part of the greater Oblate Family. As women consecrated to God, they live the same charism as the Oblates: "To bring the Good News to the poor."*

Spain is currently struggling with the terrifying spiral of COVID-19 cases caused by the

coronavirus. According to the charism of St. Eugene, Oblate missionaries are committed to helping the sick, the dying and their families.

"Each of our communities supports the fight against the epidemic through prayer, but two of our sisters are directly involved in helping the sick," says Sr. Pauline Gosch OMI.

**Oblates on the front line**

Sr. Katharina Ramrath OMI deals with formation of the candidates of the Congregation on a daily basis. She comes from Germany. At present, when Spain is struggling with a growing number of people infected with coronavirus and, at the same time, there is a shortage of

medical personnel, Sister Katharina shares her religious duties with service to the most needy. Given the number of patients reported, tests to detect the presence of the virus genotype are carried out on the most serious patients. The medical history, the conversations with the sick are also an opportunity to pray and to lift them up - to proclaim the Good News and to raise confidence in God's providence.

Hospitals are already overcrowded and the medical services are slowly losing effectiveness. The halls where trade fairs were normally held have now been transformed into field hospitals. The doctors and support staff are overworked. It is difficult to control the situation. According to data provided on Twitter by the Spanish Ministry of Health, the worst situation is in the Autonomous Community of Madrid.

“The situation is difficult, but we try to bring hope,” says Sr. Katharina with a determined voice.

### **Loneliness and hope**

The tragedy of the current pandemic also consists in the feeling of loneliness and uncertainty of their families. Highly contagious diseases require total isolation. This leads to

the loss of real, live contact with loved ones, which is extremely important in the struggle for recovery. Given the number of cases and deaths and the fear that it had created, loneliness is becoming a frightening reality.

Sr. Victoria Romero OMI works daily in a hospital and accompanies patients in their illness. She is currently the only link between coronavirus patients and their families, who cannot see their loved ones. When they are brought to the hospital, they have to face the fact that they may never see them again. Patients feel very lonely.

Man does not get sick only physically. Moreover, not only does the human body experience fear; it is also a complex sphere composed of spirit and soul... In the face of the pandemic we are experiencing, which Spain is currently facing, questions arise in man about hope, about God, about the meaning of life... In this case, the presence of the clergy and consecrated religious should not be overestimated. The Oblate Sisters simply live their charism. They are there where it is most difficult, where man “calls for hope and salvation which only Christ can offer in fullness” (Constitutions and Rules, 5).

## **UKRAINE**

### **Serving the poor during quarantine**

*By Fr. Vadym Dorosh, OMI*

At this difficult time for Ukraine, when, on the one hand, to the east we have the Russian-Ukrainian war, and on the other, the state of emergency and quarantine established throughout the country due to the Covid-19 virus, the need to serve the homeless of the capital (Kyiv) has only increased. With the permission of the civil authorities, and in keeping with the corresponding sanitary and quarantine regulations, a group of people tries to serve the most abandoned population in all possible ways. One of the most active is Brother Sebastian JANKOWSKI, who dedicates his time daily to the homeless, not only giving them food, but also a kind word and his whole heart. Almost from the beginning of his ministry in

Ukraine, he began to serve the poorest. As he explains, it all started when he started making sandwiches and distributing them at the train station. Others began to help him distribute the food. Initially, he could feed only about 20 people. Then some young people from the Oblate parish in Kyiv, the Parish of Saint Nicholas, joined this good cause. Little by little, the number of volunteers, and also of those in need, increased. Gradually it began to assume its own character. Today it is an organization of social assistance to the homeless under the auspices of Caritas-Spes of Ukraine (the Caritas branch in Ukraine for the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite) and with the blessing of the bishop. It should be added that they help homeless people not only with bread and material needs. More than once Brother Sebastian has organized festive Christmas celebrations and dinners for them. Some homeless people have also received help to return to a normal rhythm of life through a rehabilitation process.

In addition to Kyiv, one can also mention the "House of Mercy" opened in Obukhiv, about 30 kilometres south of the capital, at the central house of the Delegation of the Missionary Oblates in Ukraine and Russia. In this house, people in need can listen to a short homily, pray, and dine daily. They also have the opportunity to shower and spend the night.

I once asked Brother Sebastian why he did all this. He answered, "When I serve the poor, I always remember the words of the Gospel of Matthew, that is, that when I feed them, I serve God himself. Furthermore, I am convinced that all of them, in their prayers, intercede for us before our Heavenly Father. That is precisely why we are growing, and I also firmly believe that when I die, Jesus Christ will stand before me with the faces of those dirty people, often crippled and homeless, and say, 'That was me'".

During the Kyiv quarantine, the ministry developed as follows: The homeless kitchen feeds more than 100 homeless people every day from Monday to Friday. That comes to more than 350 liters of soup, about 700 servings, 125 liters of tea, 7 kg of pâté,

10.5 kg of sausages, 150 loaves of bread and 15 packages of butter per week. This is in addition to personal protective equipment for volunteers: disinfectants, masks, disposable tableware and personal hygiene products for the homeless.

In the morning, the kitchen workers go to the social center, where they wash the thermoses and all the containers. Meanwhile, fresh food is prepared in religious houses (thrice a week the Missionaries of Charity, and twice a week the Oblates themselves, under the direction of our chef, Fr. Artur STRONCZEWSKI). Brother Sebastian and Igor, who is one of the volunteers, stock up food, first aid kits, and other necessary supplies and, by 4:00 p.m., leave to pick up the volunteers, going to the Latin Catholic Cathedral of Saint Alexander. From 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., they feed the homeless.

The whole process, from the preparatory stage until the volunteers return home, takes more than 12 hours. It must be said that, if it has always been hard work, now, during the coronavirus epidemic, it has been doubly so, as they have multiplied efforts to do this service daily and to a greater number of people.

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## ANNIVERSARIES - JULY 2020

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### 70th Anniversaries of Vows

16/07/1950	08858	Fr. Joseph Bouvet	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
25/07/1950	08948	Fr. Aladino Garmón	Mediterranea

### 65th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1955	10454	Bro. Nicolás Fernández	Mediterranea
25/07/1955	10108	Fr. Alejandro Villafañe	Cruz del Sur
26/07/1955	09973	Fr. Maurice Lesage	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26/07/1955	09971	Fr. Jean-Marie Pépin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26/07/1955	09968	Fr. Noël Poisson	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

### 60th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1960	10869	Fr. Juan-Manuel Alvarez	Mediterranea
25/07/1960	10871	Fr. José-Antonio Antón-Pacho	Mediterranea
25/07/1960	10870	Fr. Pablo José Fuentes	Cruz del Sur

### 60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

01/07/1960	09530	Fr. Pierre Hurtubise	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
03/07/1960	10139	Fr. Wilfried Rossel	Belgique et Pays Bas
31/07/1960	10080	Fr. Albert Michael Schneider	Central European Province

### 50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

31/07/1970	11374	Fr. Allan Moss	Southern Africa
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**25th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

01/07/1995	13350	Fr. Jacques Nguyen Van Thom	France
12/07/1995	13229	Fr. Andri A. Atmaka	Indonesia
12/07/1995	13228	Fr. Yakobus Priyana	Indonesia
26/07/1995	13269	Fr. James Holland	Lacombe
30/07/1995	13173	Fr. Nsulung Julien Mumpwena	Congo
30/07/1995	13241	Fr. Nsiengi Irénée Ndulu	Congo

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**ANNIVERSARIES - AUGUST 2020**


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**70th Anniversaries of Vows**

02/08/1950	08868	Fr. Lucien Bouchard	United States
02/08/1950	08871	Fr. Roger Couture	United States
12/08/1950	09624	P. Deac. Marcel Lamonde	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1950	08837	Fr. Donald Dietz	United States
15/08/1950	09470	Bro. Paul Haag	France
15/08/1950	08845	Fr. Fortunato Muffolini	Mediterranea
15/08/1950	08838	Fr. Thomas O'Brien	Brazil
15/08/1950	08836	Fr. Paul Wightman	United States
15/08/1950	08841	Fr. William Woestman	United States

**65th Anniversaries of Vows**

02/08/1955	09982	Fr. Roberto Durette	Bolivie
02/08/1955	09980	Fr. Donald Lozier	United States
15/08/1955	09987	Fr. Hervé Aubin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1955	10462	Bro. Henri Bisson	Lacombe
15/08/1955	09998	Bro. Paul Daly	United States
15/08/1955	09995	Fr. Edward George Figueroa	Brazil
15/08/1955	09996	Fr. Michael Hussey	United States
15/08/1955	09994	Fr. Marc Lortie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1955	09932	Fr. Pedru Parunandu Philip Fernando	Jaffna
15/08/1955	09988	Fr. Louis Ponniah	Jaffna
15/08/1955	10002	Msgr. Reynald Rouleau	Lacombe
15/08/1955	10080	Fr. Albert Michael Schneider	Central European Province
22/08/1955	09934	Fr. Price Dorismond	Haiti

**65th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

15/08/1955	08871	Fr. Roger Couture	United States
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**60th Anniversaries of Vows**

02/08/1960	10921	Msgr. Jean-Claude Bouchard	Cameroun
02/08/1960	10878	Fr. Raynald Couture	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
02/08/1960	10916	Fr. André Doyon	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
02/08/1960	10883	Fr. Ronald LaFramboise	United States
15/08/1960	10923	Fr. Denis Bourbonnais	Lacombe
15/08/1960	10940	Fr. Joseph Hitpas	United States
15/08/1960	11089	Fr. Gerardo Le Strat	Lacombe
15/08/1960	10924	Fr. Edward MacNeil	Lacombe
15/08/1960	10936	Fr. Paul Marx	Pologne
15/08/1960	11414	Bro. Johannes Mohlalisi	Lesotho
15/08/1960	11090	Fr. Richard Weixelman	Philippines

**50th Anniversaries of Vows**

15/08/1970	12051	Fr. Seamus Finn	United States
15/08/1970	12198	Bro. Thomas Ruhmann	United States

**50th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

08/08/1970	11574	Fr. Achiel Peelman	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1970	11821	Fr. Guy Guénard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap

**25th Anniversaries of Vows**

01/08/1995	13559	Fr. Harold Fisher	United States
01/08/1995	13700	Fr. John Gordon	United States
01/08/1995	13745	Bro. Andrew Lawlor	United States
02/08/1995	13561	Fr. Juan Francisco Martínez Ramírez	Mexico
06/08/1995	13564	Msgr. Pierre-Olivier Tremblay	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
27/08/1995	13639	P. Deac. Herman Van Steenbergen	Belgique et Pays Bas

**25th Anniversaries of Ordinations**

05/08/1995	13145	Fr. Joseph Thapelo Ntlai	Lesotho
12/08/1995	13297	Fr. Augustin Nwankwo	Cameroun
26/08/1995	13328	Fr. Don Eric Lakman Wasalathanthrige	Colombo

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**Suffrages for our Deceased**


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**No. 41-55**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PROV./DEL.</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>DIED AT</b>
Fr. Clemens Kubitzka	Central European	94	05/05/2020	Hünfeld
Fr. Joseph Balthazard	Belgium & Holland	95	08/05/2020	Baillonville
Fr. Georges Vervust	Belgium & Holland	78	11/05/2020	De Panne
Fr. Leopoldo Yazar	Philippines	66	16/05/2020	Quezon City
Fr. John Chai	China	96	17/05/2020	Hong Kong
Fr. Francis Morrissey	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	84	23/05/2020	Ottawa
Fr. Jean Guéguen	France	95	24/05/2020	Pontmain
Fr. Waclaw Hryniewicz	Poland	83	26/05/2020	Lubliniec
Fr. Ernesto del Blanco	Mediterranean	93	29/05/2020	Madrid
Fr. Leon Witek	Poland	86	09/06/2020	Czestochowa
Fr. Jean-Claude Romain	France	84	10/06/2020	Pontmain
Fr. Jean-Marie Toussaint	Belgium & Holland	89	12/06/2020	Metz
Fr. Jean-Marie Côté	Canada	87	15/06/2020	Richelieu
Fr. Paul Michalak	France	99	21/06/2020	Pontmain
Fr. André Marion	France	93	27/06/2020	Marseille

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