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THE LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUDATO SÌ SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY YEAR

“A WAKE-UP CALL TO GET INVOLVED!”

Dear Oblates, Associates, Partners, Oblate Youth,
and all our Friends and People of Good Will,

Wake up and get involved!

The best scientific calculations about our earth’s climate tell us that the human family has at most 10 years before the deterioration of the earth will become irreversible! We have to act now and together, or this precious gift of God will be destroyed by our ruthless exploitation. The fifth anniversary of Laudato Si’ has become the motivating force for building a worldwide network of Catholics and all people of good will to turn this situation around before it is too late.

We Oblates, Associates, Partners, Oblate Youth, and Friends are committed to this urgent need, and I echo here the call of the 2016 General Chapter that everyone become involved in this critical issue.

To assist us, an initiative of the Vatican is providing us with many resources in this special anniversary year. With your community, see how you can participate in these initiatives which can be found in seven languages by googling:

**“Laudato Si’ Anniversary Year Plan 2020-21”
24 May 2020 – 24 May 2021**

You will see the many significant facets to this Anniversary Year on the website. The major focus of this anniversary year goes beyond May 2021 and includes launching a plan for various types of communities/institutions to make a

commitment to become totally sustainable, in the spirit of Laudato Si’, over a 7-year period. This is a challenge for all our communities and Units. Get involved!

“The Season of Creation”

1 September 2020 – 4 October 2020

One of the events within the special Laudato Si’ Anniversary Year is already upon us, a month dedicated to the gift of creation. This is an ecumenical initiative of the world’s 2.2 billion Christians to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and action. Get your place of ministry involved: parish groups, youth groups, catechetical programs, etc.! See the information and resources in six languages at: www.seasonofcreation.org

The Laudato Si’ Special Anniversary Year and the Season of Creation are filled with the spirit of the Oblate charism, bringing together in a holistic way our commitment to evangelize the poor, the calls of the last General Chapter (see: Acts of the 2016 General Chapter, pp. 10, 11, 20 #7.3 and 21 #9, English edition) and the priorities of both the Oblate General Service of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and the Oblate General Mission Committee.

The cry of the poor and the destruction of the environment go hand-in-hand. The present pandemic is but a small sign of the chaos we have wreaked on nature. Future global disasters will multiply if we do not choose to act

effectively and immediately in favor of the gift of God's creation. This is not a call to become an environmental watchdog. At the heart of our mission to evangelize is the call to conversion, accepting the Good News of Jesus. He came to reconcile us with God and with one another; to heal the brokenness within ourselves, and to reconcile us with God's gift of creation, not as exploiters but as stewards, caretakers. The Gospel calls us as agents of evangelization to restore these relationships at all levels.

Many Oblates and collaborators around the world are already acting to care for our common home in many prophetic initiatives, and for this I thank you. All of us, in all instances of our life and ministry, must embrace fully this urgent concern to act now, to alter the course of human history and opt for the care for God's precious creation.

During the coming year, our Internal Mission Committee of the General Council will be offering monthly webinars to create a worldwide synergy of creative efforts for turning this situation around. Stay tuned!

Thank you for your commitment. We place this critical opportunity before Our Lady, Mother of the Creator, asking her to move us into action in a significant way during this Special Anniversary Year... and beyond!

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI
Superior General

August 22, 2020

GENERAL ADMISNITRATION

GENERAL POSTULATION OFFICE

Two new pictures of Eugene de Mazenod!

For at least 70 years, two images of Saint Eugene de Mazenod were apparently lost.

In the 1950s, Fr. Józef Pielorz, OMI made an album with all the images of Eugene de Mazenod that he could find. However, he could leave us only two photographs on two pictures, because, unfortunately the original pictures were already lost at that time with the inscription: "Are they a painting, a sketch, a design? We do not know who made them, when they were made, or where the originals are kept".

Since then no one, it seems, had found them. Two months ago, they appeared, by chance or by Providence, in the General Postulation Office. We have restored them and made a frame.

They are two drawings made in charcoal and pastel. We do not know the author. If they were already lost in the '50s then my personal opinion is that they were made between 1920 and 1940, either for the 100 anniversary of the experience of Eugene de Mazenod on August 15, 1822, or when

the process of his beatification and canonization was opened in 1935. They are signed with a curious signature: "ЯX.". I wish someone could tell us more about this author.

First picture: "Young Eugene de Mazenod's devotion to Mary in Venice" (charcoal and pastel, 62x46 cm, approximately.). It is a free interpretation of Eugene de Mazenod's Marian devotion at Venice (1794-1797). A drawing of Eugene as a boy kneeling before a statue of the Blessed Virgin holding Jesus in her arms. With hands folded, the child gazes into the eyes of the Blessed Virgin with an evident expression of confidence and simplicity. In Venice, Eugene encountered Don Bartolo Zinelli who composed a rule of life for him focused on Christ and Mary in order to introduce him to the life of faith. His rule urged him to ask Mary to assist him in all his actions. Jesus was presented in the Rule as one who had placed his entire confidence in Mary. Eugene was supposed to follow this example "in union with the sentiments of his adorable heart."

Second picture: "Father De Mazenod's encounter with the Blessed Virgin Mary" (charcoal and pastel 70,5x43,5 cm, approximately). It tries to represent

Father Eugene de Mazenod's prayerful encounter with the Blessed Virgin Mary at Aix on August 15, 1822 (cf. Oblate Writings VI, No 86)".

I found them in early June 2020 in the lower part of a cupboard, at its bottom, of the Postulation archives, rolled up and without any special wrapping. I commissioned its restoration, conservation and framing with the help of Father Fabio Ciardi and his niece.

These pictures were blessed in the Chapel of the General House, Rome by the Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen OMI, in a ceremony held after the Holy Mass on occasion of the solemnity of the

Assumption of Mary and of the 198 anniversary of the experience of our Founder before the statue of Our Lady preserved today in our Chapel and then, they were placed in the small chapel that keeps the most important relic of St. Eugene de Mazenod, his heart. So, this chapel presents a new look now.

We hope you like it! You can find these and more materials on the General Postulation page on Facebook "Postulatio OMI" (www.facebook.com/PostulatioOMI/)

Fr. Diego Saez, OMI
OMI Postulator

AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

CHAD

Bishop Jean-Claude Bouchard OMI resigns

On September 25, 2020, the Holy Father has accepted the resignation of Bishop Jean-Claude Bouchard, OMI from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Pala (Chad). Coincidentally, the day also marked his 80th birthday.

Bishop Bouchard was born in the village of St. Eloi in Quebec, Canada, to a devout Catholic family on 25 September, 1940. What attracted him to the Oblates as young boy was their commitment for the poor and the marginalized. Once, he revealed in an interview, "Had I not entered the Oblates, I would have found a profession that would have permitted me to serve the poor in one way or the other".

After completing the Novitiate, he arrived in Rome to be a member of the International Roman Scholasticate (IRS) in 1960. "J C" (as he was known in the Scholasticate) was one of the volunteers from the IRS who went to help out in Florence after the floods of 1967. During his regency, Fr. Léo Deschâtelets, the Superior

General, asked him to go as a missionary to Chad to teach at and administer the school of Moulkou, Chad. Coming back to Rome after two years, the heart of the young Jean-Claude Bouchard was firmly fixed on Chad and, as a result, he expressed to the Superior General his willingness to return to the central African nation. After being ordained as a priest in August 1969, he received his first obedience to Chad, as expected.

Fr. Bouchard was just 36 years of age when he was appointed Bishop of Pala on February 26, 1977. Since then he remained in that position until his resignation, 43 long years. His services are well recognized and appreciated by the faithful, especially the hard work he put into the building up of a real 'local church'.

Bishop Bouchard participated in the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, the first of two synods popularly referred to as the Synod on the Family, which was held in Vatican City from October 5-19, 2014. He also was the president of the bishop's conference of Chad for many years.

ASIA-OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA**The work of an Oblate during the Spanish Flu**

Over the past few months, the world has grappled to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many parallels have been drawn between this current crisis and the outbreak of the Spanish Flu following the end of the First World War in 1918. A brief comparison with the Australian experience during 1918 to 1919 provides insight as to how well the current health crisis has been managed by both civil and community leaders across the country.

THE SPANISH FLU

The Spanish Flu reached Australia in late 1918 and spread throughout the country during 1919. Over the course of the pandemic, it affected about 40 per cent of Australians and resulted in the death of around 15,000 people at the time the population was over 5 million. On a global scale, the disease killed more than 50 million people and was most prevalent among adults aged between 25 and 34. Island communities, such as Australia, imposed strict quarantine measures to quell the spread of the disease. Government authorities screened incoming vessels from overseas and quarantined local outbreaks. An important quarantine station in Western Australia was at Woodman's Point near Fremantle.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A ship called the Boonah arrived in Western Australian waters on 11 December 1918 and on board were 1,000 Australian soldiers of which 300 were infected with the Spanish Flu. The Boonah had left Fremantle with Australia troops assigned to fight in the Middle East during the First World War. The ship reached Durban, South Africa, three days after the armistice ending the war was signed. In Durban some passengers contracted the flu.

On return to Fremantle, the Commonwealth Government initially refused to allow the vessel to dock. A few days later, 300 soldiers disembarked on to a ferry and were brought to Woodman's Point, where temporary hospitals

were established for the sick soldiers. Woodman's Point was within the boundaries of Fremantle Parish, which was under the care of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In mid-December, Fr John Flynn OMI, the priest at St Anne's in North Fremantle, volunteered to attend the quarantine station at Woodman's Point.

Fr. Flynn was born at Stamullen, County Meath, on 10 December 1869 in Ireland. He was ordained in 1894 at Liege and sailed for Australia in 1899. Newspaper reports from the period record that Fr Flynn embraced his work with the soldiers at Woodman's Point wholeheartedly. A Dutch-Lutheran and a ScotchPresbyterian soldier were interviewed following their release from the station and they expressed admiration that Flynn provided pastoral care to all soldiers regardless of their religion and he tried to cheer up all his visited.

During his first stint at the quarantine station in January 1919, Flynn had caught the influenza himself, but he managed recovered quickly following time on self-isolation. Despite the risks to his health, in March 1919 Flynn returned to the station again to provide spiritual care for dying solders. This was followed by another period in isolation before Flynn returned to work as the priest at North Fremantle. In June, Flynn made the brave decision to return to Woodman's Point a third time and miraculously survived further infection. Flynn's work at the station was heralded as among his great achievements in Western Australia when he was farewelled before returning to Ireland in 1921.

As we continue to navigate our way through these challenging times in 2020, it is important to look at how others have responded with generosity in equally difficult times. Fr John Flynn OMI decided to place himself at the centre of the Spanish Flu crisis in Western Australia and in a position of service to those who most needed it.

The men who Flynn served had sought to serve our nation at its hour of need. A total of 27 soldiers and four nurses died at Woodman's Point. Flynn's example is a salient reminder of Christian generosity in the face of adversity.

EUROPE

**EUGENE DE MAZENOD
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE**
Mazenodian Fraternity in Aix

During the first weekend of September, the Eugene De Mazenod International Centre (CIEM) in Aix-en-Provence welcomed its new student community and launched the new phase of the "Mazenodian Fraternity".

The community is comprised of thirteen young people who chose to live within the historic walls of the Foundation House of the Oblate missionaries and to form, for a year, a true life of fraternity. This first weekend was therefore an opportunity for them to discover not only the other new students, but also the Oblates, the values of Saint-Eugène de Mazenod, and to reflect on the collective projects to be done in the coming year.

On Friday evening, the future "Mazenodian Fraternity" officially got to know each other over a shared meal in the cloister. The evening concluded with a re-reading of the meaning of the confinement. Without distractions, the imposed isolation can also be the occasion for a return to the essential. Like the rest of the weekend, this launch party was both lively and spiritually strong.

The next day was devoted to reflection on the choice of life for an entire year: joining the student fraternity is to desire to live and build oneself with others and the Lord, the desire to drop the masks and welcome one's neighbor. This whole process was nourished throughout the day by remote interventions by Fr. Bonga MAJOLA from South Africa, by other responsible persons of Oblate hostels throughout France, meditations and testimonies from students on their year of life at the foreign locations. Practical debates on the organization of community life as well as future group projects to keep the community in action and in service also took place.

Finally, on Sunday morning, during the weekly celebration in the Oblate chapel, the "Mazenodian Fraternity" was presented to the whole community gathered for the Eucharist.

Such a weekend is always a moment of apprehension, kicking off a new year. However, it seems to augur well for the future. At the end of these three days rich in emotion and various memories, the Mazenodian Fraternity succeeded in its mission: to meet, transmit and take the first steps to build an ambitious spiritual, united and collective journey throughout the year ahead.

UKRAINE
Oblate church elevated to the status of a Shrine

On September 5, the Catholic Church in Ukraine experienced a solemn event - the proclamation of a new sanctuary - The Shrine of Our Lady of Tyvriv and the martyrs for the faith.

It was an event that brought great joy for the Oblates of the Delegation as well, as they were given the task of administering it. Fr. Krzysztof Machelski, OMI, became the custodian of the newly- created Shrine.

Bishop Leon Dubravsky, the Ordinary of the Kamyranets-Podilskyi diocese, celebrated the festive Eucharist. Bishops Radoslaw Zmitrowicz, OMI, Bronislaw Bernacki, and Stanislaw Shyrokoradiuk, as well as priests from various dioceses, concelebrated the Holy Mass.

According to the decision of the Episcopal Conference, the first Saturday of September is celebrated as the Day of Prayerful Remembrance of Martyrs for the Faith, and, on the last Saturday of July, there will be a liturgical celebration in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Tyvriv. The

decree and the signed statutes of the sanctuary were handed over to the new guardian and custodian of the shrine, Fr. Krzysztof.

In his address to the audience, Bishop Leon Dubravsky emphasized, "Only the Virgin Mary can help us, lead us to Jesus, and show us the right direction". "I want this Shrine to be a place where we ask for the graces necessary for the world and for all of us," he summed up. He also restored the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and encouraged people to come to this place to ask for the necessary graces and to receive forgiveness.

At the end of the liturgy, Fr Krzysztof thanked all those who participated and prepared for today's ceremony.

Fr. Pavlo Vyshkovskiy OMI, the Superior of the Delegation, and a researcher of the history of

persecution of the Church in Ukraine, shared his impressions of today's event:

"For us, the Missionaries of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the restoration of this church to the status of a shrine is a great event. It used to be a famous shrine, visited by many pilgrims, but in Soviet times, in 1956, this masterpiece of Podillya was turned into an ugly building - a plastic factory that became a complete ruin in the 1990's.

When, exactly 10 years ago, the OMI Missionaries came to Tyvriv, they immediately started to rebuild the monastery and the church. Today we thank God for the fact that in Tyvriv there is a youth center, a retreat house, and a Memorial of the Martyrs for the Faith, and, from today - a Shrine. This place, once so glorious, is now being revived. Thanks be to God for everything!"

ANGLO-IRISH

Virtual Lourdes Pilgrimage 2020: 19th-23rd of September

We are delighted to present a Virtual Lourdes Pilgrimage beginning Saturday 19th of September to Wednesday 23rd of September.

Even though Covid-19 has prevented our pilgrimage from travelling to Lourdes this year, the Oblate Pilgrimage invites you to join with us online.

Using the theme "Bringing Lourdes Home", we will use these few days to prayerfully bring Lourdes into our hearts and into our homes.

We invite you to join us for these events:

- Opening Service at 7.00 pm (September 19th)
- Daily Prayer at 8.30 am
- Mass each day at 12 noon
- The Rosary at 7.00 pm (September 20th)
- Way of the Cross at 7.00 pm (September 21st)
- Service of Missioning at 7.00 pm (September 23rd)

You will be able to join the pilgrimage events on our website - or if you prefer, on our Facebook page or YouTube channel (see links below). These events will be online and are brought to you by members of the Oblate family in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the island of the Jersey.

While we would have loved to have been together in person for these events, we have maintained small groups in line with Covid-19 restrictions to ensure the safety of all. Please God we will all be together in Lourdes next year.

We invite you to send your petitions for the pilgrimage, either to lourdes@oblates.ie or to the Mission Office, Oblate House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8 or to the Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Ln, Crewe CW2 8JS, UK.

Events will take place ONLINE each day at 8.30am, 12noon and 7.00pm.

CANADA-UNITED STATES

UNITED STATES**Fr. Ron Rolheiser Steps Down as President of OST**

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

For the past 15 years, I have had both the privilege and the responsibility of being the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. I stepped down from that position last week, handing the keys of office to my successor, Dr. Scott Woodward.

I leave this office with a feeling of gratitude. The fifteen years here have been good years. I am proud of where the school has grown to, and I am happy with what those fifteen years have brought into my own life in terms of Oblate community, Oblate ministry, friendships, opportunities for growth, and graces of every kind. I'm deeply grateful.

What's next for me? The word on the street is that I "have retired". Not exactly, and not even close! I have stepped down as President, but not into retirement. I will still be working, full-time, except no longer in administration. I will remain here at Oblate School of Theology as a full-time faculty member and will continue to teach within all three levels of our Spirituality Institute, particularly in our PhD program where I will also be directing theses. But the freedom from administrative tasks will afford me much more quality time to write and, beginning already next week, I will start to work on a book on what is asked of us in our autumn years and how, in the end, we are asked "to give our deaths away". The book will complete the trilogy of *The Holy Longing* and *Sacred Fire*. I will, of course, continue to write my weekly column and plan a series of articles for *The Tablet* on "Chastity as our Lost Virtue".

The plan is to stay here at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, as long as

my health permits me to be productive. I am a two-time cancer survivor, still undergoing ongoing chemotherapy, so I leave it to God and the wonderful cancer specialists in South Texas to determine how long that will be. In discerning what I should do after stepping down as President here a number of signs converged to suggest that I stay here and continue to work at Oblate School of Theology.

What conspired to suggest that decision?

i) Given my age and my ongoing treatment for cancer, this is probably not a good time to launch out into a new mission; ii) my ministry and work for the past 15 years has been here so what makes the most practical sense is to simply continue here; iii) the programs I most want to teach in are here in our Spirituality Institute; iv) I am better resourced as a writer and theologian when I am in an academic milieu and being on faculty here provides that; v) I am already directing a number of students in their PhD theses and do not want to abandon them; vi) I am very much still responsible for our Forest-Dwelling program here which I believe is an important program and which I want to help thrive and grow; vii) finally, and not least, I am living within a good Oblate community and working at a school which is doing important Oblate work. I am not sure I would find as valuable a ministry for me elsewhere at this stage of my life.

So, I have moved offices, but not residences or ministry. Now that I am free of most administrative duties, I am looking forward to having some less-pressured time for prayer, for study, for teaching, and for writing ... and especially for friendship and family.

Thank you all for your friendship, prayers, and support these past years – and for your forgiveness for the many times I found myself too busy to be present to you as I should.

ANNIVERSARIES - OCTOBER 2020

75th anniversary of vows

15/10/1945	08255	Fr. Georges Laudin	France
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65th anniversary of ordination

09/10/1955	08986	Fr. Pierre Ven	France
28/10/1955	08913	Fr. Yves Desmet	Belgium & Netherlands
30/10/1955	08616	Fr. Paolo D'Errico	Mediterranean

60th anniversary of ordination

16/10/1960	09830	Fr. Giuseppe Carnevale	Mediterranean
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50th anniversary of vows

15/10/1970	12246	Fr. Ananda Sunil Claude Fernando	Colombo
15/10/1970	12245	Fr. Mervyn Noel Fernando	Colombo

50th anniversary of ordination

17/10/1970	11705	Fr. Nestor Gregoire	Lacombe
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25th anniversary of ordination

01/10/1995	13256	Fr. André Haman	Cameroon
03/10/1995	13166	Fr. Navarro Jr. Matas	Philippines
08/10/1995	13225	Fr. JorgeAlbergati Tejera	Cruz del Sur
15/10/1995	13336	Fr. Wongwibulsin Paul Prasong	Philippines

Suffrages for our Deceased

No. 75-78

NAME	PROV/DEL	AGE	DEATH	DIED AT
Fr. Tomiczek, Jacek J.	France-Benelux	56	13/09/2020	Provins
Fr. Van Helden, Eugene	Belgium & Netherlands	94	17/09/2020	Kapellen
Bro. Werner, Norbert	Central European	81	20/09/2020	Hünfeld
Fr. Jeyasingham, A. Victor	Jaffna	96	29/09/2020	Jaffna

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

(Letter of Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)

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