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Leave Nothing Undared – Our Founder’s Challenge for Today

By Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI
Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas

("Pilgrims of hope in communion": A reflection)

Leave nothing undared for the Gospel! At no other time in our history, except perhaps for those first years when our founder was launching a very small, fledgling congregation, have these words been as urgent in terms of defining our challenge. As Oblates, we are facing a number of major challenges in terms of where we will grow to in the younger parts of the congregation and how we will survive in the aging parts of the congregation. What will characterize our growth in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and parts of Eastern Europe? How will the congregation survive in Western Europe, North America, and in some other parts of the world?

Clearly, these questions call for a new daring, both in the younger parts of our congregation and in its aging constituencies. Let me address the two separately.

Leave nothing undared for the Gospel! What is the challenge in these words today for the aging parts of the congregation, more specifically for the Oblates in Western Europe, North America, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and other parts of the congregation where our numbers are shrinking, our average age is very high, and we are receiving few or no new vocations?

Perhaps two images can aid our reflections, namely, that of Abraham and Sarah having a baby in their post-menopausal years and the concept of death by hypothermia.

Scripture tells us that when Abraham was eighty years old and Sarah was seventy, God told them

to set out for a new land where they would give birth to a new child. They believed the promise, humanly impossible as it was, and set out for this new land, but it took them twenty years to get there. Then, when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, she became pregnant and gave birth to a new child. Whatever actually happened here historically is beyond our grasp, but there is a powerful metaphor underlying this, i.e., we can become pregnant and give birth to new life long after it is impossible in terms of human logic and common sense. God can bring about new life, long after common sense says it can't happen? But this is predicated on trust and daring.

I would like to link this to a second concept, death by hypothermia. When a body dies by exposure, it dies this way. As the cold begins to beset the person more and more, the body panics, pulls all of its blood around its vital organs, the heart and the lungs, goes into spasms, and dies. Religious congregations often die in the exact same way. Lacking youthful members and young energy, faced with an aged membership, and lacking new vocations, it is easy, natural in fact, to begin to pull in, to bring the blood around the vital organs, and thus die. I have seen this play out in a number of women's religious communities in recent years and I see the danger in parts of our own congregation. What's the answer?

New daring! As we age, shrink in numbers, and have few new vocations, we must, like Abraham and Sarah, set out to new places, begin new ministries, and draw in new vocations. If we

do not do this, hypothermia will set in and, frankly, we will die. What is asked of us, I believe, is a raw trust in the truth of the Gospel and in the truth that our founder incarnated (when he had very few resources and still risked sending them out everywhere).

But isn't this simply idealistic rhetoric? When in some units of our congregation our average age is approaching eighty years old, can we really start new missions, take on new works, and draw in young life? By all prudence and common sense, no. By risking the Gospel, yes. Nothing is impossible with God. If we risk new birth, the Gospel assures us it will happen.

Radical new risk, I believe, is the challenge for the aging parts of our congregation. Against all common sense, predicated on the truth of the Gospel and our Founder's motto, we must risk doing something new, namely, new missions, new works, asking young men to join us, and inviting laity into our charism in new ways. To not risk this is to accept an alternative that is neither life giving nor life sustaining.

What will these new works, new risks, new missions look like? We don't know, or we would already be doing them. We must pray together, vision together, discern together, and most of all risk together on a raw faith in the truth of the Gospel. God will show us the way.

Leave nothing undared for the Gospel! What is the new daring being asked of the younger parts of the congregation?

The younger, growing units of the congregation need to risk a still greater daring in going to the margins and moving towards the poor. Our founder took precisely that risk when as a young diocesan priest he moved to the margins to serve where no one else was serving. When we look at our history, we see that we have thrived whenever we risked doing this. We must risk moving towards the people who have no one else.

There's a story told about a municipality in England that for some years did its social services this way. On a given day, the government officials who were in charge

of distributing food and other resources to the needy would come to a meeting place and distribute things through the various churches. Catholics would line up behind a particular bishop or priest who represented them. Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Quakers would do the same. But there were always some people who did not belong to any church, whom nobody would claim. The person representing the Salvation Army would call out: All of you who don't have anybody, come with me!"

As Oblates we need to incorporate that into our motto ("All of you who don't have anybody, come with us") particularly whenever we discern as to where to place ourselves and our resources. We must resist the temptation of moving towards security, status, and comfort. And that takes daring, risk, and Gospel trust.

This is a challenge to all parts of the congregation, but a particular challenge to the younger units as they discern where to be and whom to serve. Twelve Step Programs have a wonderful slogan which reads simply: The program works, if you work it! That is doubly true for the Gospel: The Gospel works, if we work it ... and it works precisely to the extent that we work it! If we risk trust, if we risk moving to where our charism calls us, God will give us the future we deserve.

If we risk new birth, the Gospel assures us it will happen. After all, we are people of the resurrection and nothing can entomb us for long.

Reflection questions ...

1. *Reading this reflection, what single idea either inspires me or irritates me? Why?*
2. *How radically do we need to risk (in doing a new thing) in the aging parts of the congregation if we are to survive?*
3. *Are we still moving with deliberateness towards the poor?*
4. *What, in your mind, is one, wild, uncensored dream you think the congregation should try?*

“Walker, there is no path! The Path is made in walking”

By Sandra Prather HOMI,
OMI Lacombe Canada

("Pilgrims of hope in communion": A reflection)

About ten years ago, my husband, sister and I walked three hundred and seventy kilometres of the Camino de Santiago. Carrying backpacks, sleeping in a different village or town each night, for three weeks we were true peregrinos, pilgrims. We were on ‘the way’ to the great Cathedral of Saint James in the beautiful city of Santiago.

Strangers as we were in the country, the worry was that we would get hopelessly lost at some point. Fortunately, the ancient pilgrimage trail through Spain is well marked: frequent, well-placed images of clamshells on posts, sidewalks and buildings indicate the path as well as reassure you that you are still going the right way.

Not all journeys are as clearly marked. Sometimes, unbeknownst even to ourselves, we stray off trail or take a wrong turn. Other times, we are distracted or unfocused and we miss the signs telling us to turn or set out in a different direction. When the happens, we end up lost or wandering aimlessly. That’s why, every once in a while, it is good to stop, look around and, as any good GPS system does, reorientate.

To reorientate means to take new readings, look at the signs around you and ask what adjustments need to be made. Strangely enough, that’s also the purpose of a General Chapter! Every six years, the Oblates gather and reorientate. Prayerfully and discerningly, they look at where they are, read the signs of the times, and ask what they need to do to stay on the right road of proclaiming the gospel with passion and fire. The answers to those questions will guide them for the upcoming six years.

This year, as part of the preparation for the 37th General Chapter, the Pre-Capitular Commission entered into a congregation-wide consultation. They were seeking to identify the ‘signs of the times’ commanding their attention. Their theme, ‘Pilgrims of Hope in Communion,’ reflects the discernment that followed. The elements of ‘pilgrim, hope and communion’ were the signposts chosen to guide the Chapter’s deliberations in setting direction for the near future.

As members of the larger Oblate family, what do these signposts say to us? How might they set our direction as we seek to live the Oblate charism in our milieu of family, work, volunteerism and culture?

1. We remember that we are PILGRIMS.

In other words, we are on the move! Pope Francis reminds us that we are a Church which is ‘on the Way.’ We are pilgrims: history, Francis points out, teaches us that standing still cannot be a good condition for the Church (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 23). Nor is it a good condition for us. Instead, Francis says, we should be characterized by an inner restlessness. I think this is a restlessness that pushes us out beyond our comfort zones, a dissatisfaction with the status quo. Seeing injustice, environmental degradation, violence and hatred, it says, “It should not be this way!” It then moves us to work for change. It is the Spirit saying, “Get out of your rut, seek new and creative ways to be church, to proclaim the gospel, to be witnesses to life.” It is Eugene saying, “Where there are new needs, we must create new means.”

2. We are to be a certain type of pilgrim: we are pilgrims of HOPE!

Why hope I wonder? Why not pilgrims of mercy, or of love? What are the signs of the times that led the Pre-Capitular Commission to choose hope as the virtue we are to embody as we walk?

Perhaps it is this: we live in a time where so many people struggle to find hope in their everyday lives. The reasons are myriad; the personal losses and tragedies of the global pandemic, on-going wars, intractable poverty, the on-going destruction of our environment, and on and on. Maybe, in looking at the signs around them, the Oblates saw the need for someone to be a witness to hope in a turbulent, chaotic and increasingly desperate world.

For us to be witnesses to hope, however, we must ground ourselves in something beyond ourselves. Hope, as Václav Havel wrote, cannot

simply be an optimism that everything will turn out well. It is, rather, he says, a dimension of the soul. It is grounded in a belief and conviction, that despite everything, God wins. Indeed, God has already won. In 2004, in the 34th general Chapter document, Witnessing to Hope, the Oblates claimed hope as their special strength, “our joy-filled sense that at the heart of all [these] difficulties, God who is Lord of this world, is still very alive and worth giving our lives for” [Witnessing p.10]. It is this shared conviction that constitutes us as pilgrims of hope.

3. We are pilgrims of hope in COMMUNION.

Finally, we are meant to do this together. This is the synodal spirit Pope Francis call us to: we journey together side by side, knowing that the Spirit is present in each one.

I think one of the major gifts of the recent Oblate Lay Associations Congress was that it awakened us to a broader understanding of the Oblate family. Watching the videos from each region which highlighted the various ways Oblate laity are living the charism of Saint Eugene, one could not help but be moved and touched. God is at work among us; the Oblate charism is alive and well! Truly, together we are stronger and we are meant to be walking together.

Conclusion

“Walker, there is no path; the path is made in walking”. The path we walk as church, as Oblates and the Oblate family, is not neatly laid out for us. Instead, we have signposts along the

way as we journey. The signposts that point to our being pilgrims of hope in communion, will, we trust, lead us in the right direction.

The logo chosen for the Chapter reflects this. It shows a group of people walking together. They are ‘on the way.’ There are some Oblates among them; there are some children; there are men and women. They look like a pilgrim people. There is a dove-like Spirit hovering over them. They are surrounded by green and growing branches - the promise and hope for a fruitful life as they journey. They look like the church. They look like us.

Reflection questions.

1. “If a Christian does not feel this inner restlessness, if he does not live it, something is missing; and this inner restlessness comes from his own faith and invites us to evaluate what is best to do, what must be maintained or changed.” [Pope Francis, speaking about the synodal church.]

Where do you feel an ‘inner restlessness’ that pushes you want to work for change?

2. But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.” Lam 3:21

How are you a carrier of hope? What or who grounds your hope?

3. “I hope in thee for us.” [Gabriel Marcel, Christian existentialist]

How does ‘being in communion’ strengthen your hope?

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

37th GENERAL CHAPTER

Fr General invites Two Oblates to the Chapter

Seven lay people will also be present for a few of the sessions during the first days of the Chapter.

According to Rule 128a.6, *The Superior General, after consulting the Council in plenary session, may invite up to two other Oblates to the Chapter. The invited capitulars have full voting rights in all capitular acts.*

We are happy to announce that the Superior General has invited Fr. Félix GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, Superior of the Delegation of Guatemala and Fr. Hyacinth NWANERI,

Superior of the General Mission of Ghana to the General Chapter. This completes the list of Capitulars. Also be informed that seven lay people will be present for a few of the sessions during the first days of the Chapter. They will give a follow up and report from the 2nd Oblate Lay Associations Congress.

The Lay Associates invited to the Chapter will be: Mildred March (South Africa), Michèle Mbeukeu (Cameroon), Gigi Velasquez Espinosa (Philippines), Sandra Prather (Canada), Pauline Thomas (Wales), Sebastian Cortes (Chile), and Stefano Dominici (Italy). May these 77 days before the Chapter be a time of prayer and preparation.

LAY ASSOCIATIONS CONGRESS
Report of the 2nd Oblate
Lay Associations Congress

Fr. Peter Stoll, OMI

Thanks to the good Lord, St. Eugene de Mazenod and the Regions and units that participated in the preparation, the 2nd Oblate Lay Association Congress went ahead as planned from 27 to 29 May 2022. It had been postponed because of Covid last year and now this meant there was more time to prepare and also the enthusiasm and expectations were really heightened. Thanks to our facilitators, technicians and translators. the main conference room here in Rome was set up like a studio and we had good participation from the members of the community and also the IRS (International Roman Scholasticate).

DAY 1. CELEBRATE

After prayer and theme song from the Philippine Province and a simple Opening Ceremony, Fr. Fabio Ciardi OMI began with giving a historical perspective of the Lay Associations in the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Then followed a time of CELEBRATING the Lay Associations with each region presenting something of their life and experiences. Of course, it was impossible to put everything into a presentation so the regions could pick some events that they wanted to present. There was also time to hear responses from the regions/units that were gathered live at the same time.

Here is a list of those gathered either by zoom or livestreaming.

Regional / Sub regional Gatherings

Europe: Kokotek (Poland)

Canada-USA: San Antonio (USA)

Latin America: Many units were on a Zoom together

Africa-Madagascar French sub region: Dakar (Senegal)

Africa-Madagascar English sub-region: Johannesburg (South Africa)

Asia Oceania Manila (Philippines)

Many other groups we wish to welcome who are also joining us online:

- Colombo (Sri Lanka) - Jaffna (Sri Lanka)
- Yaoundé (Cameron) - Sassone (Italy)
- Crewe & London (UK) - Hong Kong (China)
- Kenya - South Africa - Lesotho - Botswana
- Zimbabwe - Zambia - Namibia

Many others of course, were connected and sent greetings and well wishes on the Chat in the YouTube livestreaming. On data available from YouTube: Day 1 - 1,600 views, Day 2 - 889 views, Day 3, - 638 views.

DAY 2. CONNECT

With the theme of CONNECTING, it was a heavy day with 15 presentations by various speakers. After prayer presented by the Latin America Region, there were the experience of laity involved in Historical Gatherings around the charism.

1. Aix Congress 96 Congress presented by Emanuele Rossini
2. General Commission of Oblates and Lay people presented by David López OMI
3. General Chapters presented by Sandra Prather
4. Then a major presentation: The Laity have a call to live the Charism as Oblate people by Scott Woodward
5. Followed by another major Presentation: Examples of significant Lay oblates in history by Sebastian Cortes Cruz

After this presentation a break was needed before we continued with the next set of talks. The time was going fast, and the interest was still there to hear more and learn more.

The Next Section was talks of Experiences of collaboration ...Past and Future Hopes between groups of Oblates and Lay Associations

1. A Young Oblate by Sc. Carlos Renedo OMI and a Provincial by Fr. Felix Rehbock OMI shared their experience and hopes.

2. Then some experiences of youth by Lucía Martínez Dojorti from Latin America and Teresa & Glwadys from Cameroun West Africa.

3. For the experiences of families we listen to Mark & Darcie Lich from Canada –USA and Emma & Kyle Hoad from Australia

4. For the experiences of Honorary Oblates (HOMI) we heard from Josef Veselský from Europe and Zenaida & Pedro from Latin America

5. For the experiences of MAMI we listened to Mildred March and Josephine Lungu both from Africa Madagascar and Stefano Dominici from Europe.

So Day 2 gave many insights of what is happening and how people are living and working together as Oblate People.

DAY 3. COMMISSION

This day was like a climax in a sense that as we try to be listening to the various realities of the Associations across the globe, we heard the responses from the questionnaire or workshop on the future.

As usual the day started with a moment of prayer presented by the Africa Madagascar region follows by a keynote presentation by Fr. Frank Santucci entitled: “Committed in Oblation as laity in responding to the urgent needs of the Church”.

After that we listened to reports from the regions of Asia Oceania presented by Jacinta Torres Pueyo, then from the European Region presented by Patrick, Goshia (Malgorzata) and Gerard Bennett. From Africa Madagascar the francophone sub-region we listened to Madeleine Ndour and from the Anglophone sub region we heard from Philile Ndaba. We then heard some responses about what they did hear and impressed them. First impressions were from Canada-USA, and we listened to Joanne Friedt from Lacombe followed by Maritza Nova Delgado from Venezuela responding from Latin America.

We were going according to the scheduled time so well that after the break we took time out to greet and say Hello and wave to the different groups that were there live. But unfortunately, we couldn't say hello to all the groups gathering.

Back again to listen to the reports for “looking to the hopes and dreams for the future” and we had Francis Maza from Canada USA with the 3 voices by video Francis Masa himself followed by Michelle from the USA then Jesse Lopez from USA. From Peru we heard the report from Mili Roxana from Chinchu, Peru for Latin America.

After that we heard impressions from Edwige Manga from Dakar, Senegal then English-speaking sub region we heard from Valentine Wakumelo from Zambia from Asia Oceania and Pat Forters from Manila, Philippines gave her impressions. Andrea from the European region closed the impression session.

Then Fr. Peter STOLL gave an extensive list of those who truly needed to be thanked for their presence and support for making this congress possible.

Fr. Louis LOUGEN, Superior General (after eating a piece of dark chocolate!) gave his final and positive response to all that had been done for the congress. He saw it as a movement gathering as the Oblates head to their up-and-coming chapter in September this year.

A final liturgy from the Aix community lead by Fr. Henricus ASODO from the rooms of the former Carmelite convent which became the founding house of the first community of Oblates.

And finally, the blessing for all given with the Founder's cross by the Superior General brought the whole 3 days to a wonderful ending.

Thanks again to all who made possible this 3-day international Oblate Lay Associations Congress.

See you next time!

POLAND**Lay Associations Congress: A testimony from Kokotek!**

Martine Caffo

(Oblate lay associate from Aix-en-Provence)

The European Regional meeting of the 2nd Oblate Lay Associations Congress was held in Kokotek, Poland in parallel to the main Congress which was held from May 27-29, 2022. Martine Caffo, a pensioner from Aix-en-Provence shares his experience.

I went to Kokotek, Poland, without really expecting any revelation about my mission as a lay person. I have been in contact and connection with Oblates for about 12 years. At Kokotek, as the days went by, rubbing shoulders with others, I became aware of the extent to which the Oblate charism is. Indeed, in meetings, conversations, in the listening without preconceived ideas or judgement, each one was considered in his or her simple humanity, just as he or she is, and was received as a gift.

For me, it is obvious that each person follows his or her own path of faith by living the commandments to the best of his or her ability, but at Kokotek, through the small workshops offered, the discussions, listening to all these interventions via Zoom throughout the world, it is clear that we all, and each one in particular, have a job to do, ideas to contribute and to work together in collaboration with our Oblate priests and brothers in order to accomplish our mission at the service of the poorest. But poor in the broadest sense, not only material poverty, but all kinds of poverty, addictions of all kinds, voluntary or forced isolation, handicaps, realising that we are useful instruments whatever our achievements and their extent.

There is much to do, service is the magnificent path to which we are called, which makes us grow. Let us know how to give simply in joy. In Kokotek universality was beautifully represented, let us then be in communion in order to fulfil our mission.

Here are the highlights of the Congress in Kokotek for the European Region:

Communion

Even though the status of the laity varies greatly within the countries of Europe, there is a need to build community based on the establishment of good and balanced relationships between Oblates and laity. The desire and need for community are pillars of communion. The preparation of this congress was the first step (relationships, networking, working together). Even if face-to-face meetings are precious, the use of new communication technologies allows the maintenance of the relationship, the development of the spiritual bond and the common Oblate identity. However, this community should not be closed in itself but should be open to all, especially to young people who can enlighten our way into the future.

Formation

Despite our European diversities, we feel the need to deepen and clarify our identity as lay Oblates or Associates. Even if some may fear rigid rules and structures, however, there are some common points necessary to understand this identity, such as the preparation of a common formation programme. Resources already exist such as "15 days with Eugene" and other materials, which could be put together online and be made available to all.

However, the exchange of information is not enough. We are fortunate in Europe to be able to live and experience the spirit of St. Eugene by visiting places linked to the life of the Founder (Aix-en-Provence, Palermo, Rome...) or other places of importance to Oblates (Pozuelo de Alarcon for the Spanish Oblate martyrs) which could be another basis for formation.

Oblates should be part of our formation to share and learn together: the lay Oblates can also enrich the life of the Oblates; we can contribute to their formation. The relationship of Oblates in first formation with the Lay Associates seems very important to us. Let us not forget that young people are the future of the Lay Oblates and that we (Oblates and lay people) must support and nourish their journey.

Mission

Mission is to be shared by Oblates and laity, using the talents and vision of the laity, who are

"in the world" in a different way from Oblates. The path must be one of partnership. This means moving from involvement to balanced participation and, in some cases, to leadership. It is a matter of saying to the laity "we are going to do this", to asking the laity, "what are we to do?" thus ensuring the coherence of the common framework.

We must "be" and live the life and charism we speak of. Our mission must be coherent,

relevant and exemplary, especially for young people. The message and our example must inspire them and motivate them to act.

We need to seek out and recognise material and spiritual poverty, loneliness, addictions, and be ready to be missionaries in new ways, bringing hope to these people. We can discover that this poverty is also within ourselves. Mission cannot be detached from Formation and Communion. So, we must also share in this way.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Online session for directors and animators of ongoing formation

From June 20 - 22, the General Administration in Rome organized an online session for directors and animators of ongoing formation from all Oblate Units. I was asked to represent our Unit. It should be recalled that the last two General Chapters have placed great emphasis on the importance of ongoing formation in our missionary renewal. The original plan was to hold a two-week programme in Aix-en-Provence, but due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, a shorter online programme was chosen as an option.

The purpose of this session, which brought together about 30 Oblates, was to share some reflections and tools regarding ongoing formation in view of its importance in the life and mission of the missionary-disciple and the role of ongoing formation directors and teams.

Apart from the time dedicated to conferences, we were able to listen to some concrete experiences of ongoing formation in the units and to exchange on how to improve the experiences of ongoing formation in our units.

Father Amedeo Cencini, an Italian from the Congregation of the Sons of Charity, was our

resource person. He has a long experience in accompanying religious congregations in this field and he inspired us with a profound vision of ongoing formation.

He reminded us that life is the place of formation, the experience of each day, the daily fidelity to religious and missionary commitments. It is the whole of life, with the positive and negative aspects of our experiences, that continually forms us. It is the magisterium of life from which we must always be attentive and ready to learn.

Ongoing formation means being available to learn, to learn from the poor, from the experiences of life, from the events around us, from simple people. It is each Oblate who is responsible for his own ongoing formation and that of his confreres. However, the role of the director of ongoing formation and of leadership, at various levels, is to accompany this process and to ensure that not only is the community environment conducive to it, but that the various activities, programmes, meetings and places of sharing are made available to the members of each unit.

In short, we realise that as Oblate missionaries we must put ourselves in the school of life, learning to learn, with humility and simplicity. We are called to create a culture of ongoing formation.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Global Oblate Fundraisers meet in Hünfeld

From May 30 to June 1, the Global Oblate Fundraisers (GOFs) gathered at the St. Bonifatiuskloster, in Hünfeld, Central European Province, to share ideas and experiences and to reflect on ways to enhance their work in support of Oblate Units.

The meeting started with updates from all participants and revising the donations provided in 2021, as well as the use of those funds by the different Units. Then, discussions moved to the ever increasing number of emergencies affecting the Oblate world, particularly the situation in Ukraine, and the importance of having up-to-

date news to keep the donor based informed of how donations are being used.

A central topic in the agenda was that of the use of social media for fundraising. For that, we had the presence of Shanil Jayawardena, OMI, the Congregation's Director of Communications, who led the discussion on the topic. As he put it, social media is the new way of sharing ideas. It cries out for the missionary presence of the Church. There is need to be where people are, and people are on social media. Although many fundraisers already have a presence in social media, Shanil's valuable advice about different platforms and on how to best reach donors was very well received by the group. In the end, it was decided to have a closed GOF platform, where each member of the group will be able to post stories and pictures for the others to use and share with their donors.

Another highlight of the meeting was the presentation by two teachers of the Oblate School Mariengarden in Burlo, Germany, that talked about their experiences taking their students in mission trips to India. With a video presentation, they explained how those trips change the life and perceptions the German students, not just those of their Indian hosts.

As usual, this meeting provided an excellent opportunity to tune up the work of the fundraisers as a group to best assist the Oblates and the people they serve.

Comme d'habitude, cette rencontre a fourni une excellente occasion de mettre au point le travail des bailleurs de fonds en tant que groupe afin d'aider au mieux les Oblats et les personnes qu'ils servent.

AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

KENYA

OMI-JPIC General Assembly in Nairobi

Jean-Hérick Jasmin, OMI
OMI-JPIC, Director

The General Service OMI-JPIC organized its General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya from June 13 to 18, 2022. It was attended by the regional animators, Miguel FRITZ, Maciej DRZEWICZAK; Benedict LENADIMAI, Daquin IYO; as well as the delegates of the Mission Commission (Guillaume MUTHUNDA, Peter STOLL, Ramon BERNABE [via zoom]) the representative to UN and Organizations (Daniel LeBLANC) and the Director General, Jean-Hérick JASMIN.

For more than a month prior to the meeting, Fathers Fidèle MUKIELE, Gerry CONLAN and Daquin IYO, have been putting everything in place to make this assembly a total success. June 14, all the members of JPIC General Services were already on site at the Kenyan mission campus. This was made possible by an excellent reception plan from Jomo Kenyatta Airport.

We stayed in the two-story administration complex, located in the serene neighborhood of Karen, well known by all as "the little Vatican of Kenya". It is also fair to mention that this building was recently blessed by the Provincial of OMI-Lacombe, Fr. Ken THORSON, on January 17, 2020.

In this warm environment, the scheduled tasks of the JPIC team were carried out as planned. It was a week of deep reflection and discernment in community in a synodal spirit and thanks to a well-distributed agenda accepted by all. The seriousness of the team in the tasks entrusted to them and the good organization of the meetings fills us with joy. We are happy to have shared with the Karen communities the warmth of their cultures and their ethnic diversity.

During the working sessions, we also had some field experiences, such as visits to other communities that are close to us in terms of projects on the protection of the environment and our "Common Home". We also visited the leaders of the Catholic University of Nairobi, which not only has a Center for Social and Ethnic Justice but also engages students in the task of planting fruit trees in the green space of the campus for sustainable ecology.

Two other activities completed our General Assembly in Nairobi: firstly, a visit to the city center of Nairobi - a place that contrasts sharply with the poor outskirts where half-built houses are perched on the hills at the entrance to the city - secondly, we participated in a symbolic demonstration organized by local leaders of the ecological protection communities.

In addition to the beautiful experiences, we had during the recreational sharing sessions that prolonged our working day, we can't forget to mention that the food served daily at the table was tasty, of a hundred percent organic quality and of great variety. In fact, the fresh vegetables

that were served at our meals came from the community's garden.

Finally, the Eucharist celebrated every day with the presence of the local community, was for all of us an act of recollection of our daily life and of thanksgiving for the blessings received from the Lord during this OMI-JPIC Assembly.

We send a warm thank you to the whole team of the administrative house of the Kenya Center and to all the cleaning staff. A very special thanks to Fidèle and Daquin for encouraging us to discover this beautiful country of East Africa; a thousand thanks to Gerry for his fraternal availability.

LESOTHO

The Visitation of the Superior General to the Lesotho Province

Fr. Julius Letsoela, OMI

Upon realizing the manifestation and conception of Christ in her body, Mary could not resist an urge to reach out to others. She reached out to her Cousin Elizabeth to let her experience and share joy, appreciation, and blessing. It was against the background of her encounter with an Angel and incarnation of Christ that she reached out to her cousin. The aroma of her blessedness spread and reached out to both Elizabeth and her child. In a similar manner, the joy and blessings carried by the personality of Fr. Superior General, Louis LOUGEN OMI, the successor of Saint Eugene de Mazenod allowed the Oblates of the Lesotho Province to experience an ineffable spirit of joy, appreciation, and blessing. Father General arrived in Lesotho on July 5th, 2022.

During his stay in the Province, he succeeded to meet with various groups and individuals. Among others, he met with the Provincial

Council, MAMI, Ex-Oblates (whom he referred to as the sons of Eugen de Mazenod), the Lesotho Catholic Bishop's Conference (LCBC), and had a meeting with the members of the Lesotho Province both from Lesotho and Botswana Mission. In that meeting, he was joined by the Councilor for Africa-Madagascar Fr. Guillermo MUTHUNDA.

Father General was also able to visit the nearby Oblate places like Lebreton House for the elderly and sick, 'Maria 'Mabasotho Oblate Pastoral Centre, the Scholasticate, Pius XII College House and Hostels, and Roma Parish where the grave of Blessed Joseph Gerard is located.

The climax of Father LOUGEN's visitation was his opening and blessing of the building of Mazenod Printing Works which was demolished by fire in 2020. On July 10th, he attended the Holy Eucharistic celebration at Regina Mundi Parish, Mazenod.

Fr. General left and headed back to Rome on July 11th, 2022. Indeed "Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home" (Lk:56).

SENEGAL

Training session on the protection of minors

Fr. Constant Kienge Kienge, OMI

A formation session, aiming at creating awareness of the issues relating to the protection of minors and vulnerable people and the promotion of the dignity of the priestly

ministry, was held at the Blessed Mario Borzaga prenovitiate in Senegal on May 20th, 2022. The session was animated by Oblate Frs. Constant Kienge Kienge and Thomas Bang.

Sexual abuse is becoming more and more recurrent in our society, especially in the Church. This phenomenon concerns also men and women who have fully committed

themselves to live in chastity and fidelity to the Lord. Unfortunately, this tendency to want to animate one's sexual impulses is done without taking into account the impact it will have in the lives of vulnerable people, who find themselves as victims of the inappropriate acts of adults who are incapable of mastering and managing their affections in a balanced way.

Therefore, as young people in formation, the session on paedo-criminality that we attended was very enriching insofar as it helped us to become more aware of the damaging realities of today's sexual crimes against children and vulnerable people. Through this formation session, which we hope will be held every year in our houses of formation, we feel that we have not only been alerted to the consequences of sexual perversity towards minors but also to the damage caused by sexual abuse in general. This awareness prompts us to introspection and self-knowledge in order to better deal

with this scourge, which has led the Church to be attacked from all sides and compromising the dignity and the identity of the priesthood.

Furthermore, this formation was for us an awareness-raising exercise insofar as we are called to work with young people in our future missions. So, it is important that we have a full knowledge of the relationship that must exist between the pastor and his faithful. For one who claims to be a shepherd of God's flock, is supposed to bring joy to the hearts of all, and not to turn around and destroy the lives of minors and the vulnerable.

Finally, this formation on paedo-criminality, far from being a means for us to enter into this dynamic of mistrust towards our future parishioners, calls us to become aware of the quality of our future priestly ministry; in adherence of liturgical elegance and in the closeness to God's flock that is in such need of spiritual nourishment on a daily basis.

ASIA-OCEANIA

BANGLADESH

Our Provincial visited us.

Fr. Ajit Victor Costa, OMI

Three Oblate Delegations, namely Bangladesh, Pakistan and Japan-Korea are under Colombo Province and it is customary that the provincial visits these countries during his term of office.

Similarly, Fr. Roshan SILVA, the Provincial of Colombo Province, visited the Delegation of Bangladesh from May 30 to June 16, 2022. Fr. Shivantha WAAS, one of his councillors, joined him halfway through, when he arrived on June 8.

Firstly, Fr. Roshan visited the Oblate missions in Rajshahi Diocese. In St. Paul's Parish, Katadnaga, he visited its two villages Bondupara and Dayolia, Boys and Girls Hostels and Salesian Sisters Convent, and met Most Rev. Gervas Rozario, the Prelate of Rajshahi Diocese. Then he visited Queen Assumed into Heaven Parish, Gopalpur and its 3 villages Gopalpur, Alimoddin and Marmi.

The 2nd phase of their visit (from June 4 to 16) started in Dhaka. It consisted of preaching the annual OMI retreat, meeting with our Juniorists and Scholastics, meeting with Most Rev. Bejoy D'Cruze, OMI, Archbishop of Dhaka, Mass and meeting with the Sri Lankan Community in Dhaka. Then they also visited several Oblate parish communities in the Diocese of Sylhet: De Mazenod Parish, Khadim, Divine Mercy Parish, Borlekha and Immaculate Conception Parish, Lokhipur. Fathers Roshan and Shivantha also had the opportunity to meet with Most Rev. Shorot Francis Gomes, the Prelate of Sylhet.

Undoubtedly, the Delegation of Bangladesh was highly enriched by the visit of their Provincial. The annual retreat, the animation programme, personal consultations, dialoguing with OMI formandi, listening to and encountering the people and their leaders in poor villages, visiting tea gardens and punjees (clustered villages), visiting the partners of our missions including Rev. Sisters and meeting hostel boys and girls under the care of the Oblates were all highly appreciated.

Both Fr. Provincial and Fr. Shivantha were deeply impressed by the tireless work of the Oblates having seen with their own eyes the challenges and opportunities of the Oblates' evangelizing mission in Bangladesh. Fr. Provincial encouraged us to further expand our missions with the same spirit and charism of St. Eugene.

KOREA

At 'Anna's House', to live again.

by Davide Dionisi

(Originally published on osservatoreromano.va/en)

Since 1990 Father Vincenzo Bordo, OMI has been providing shelter and care services to the homeless in the suburbs of Seoul.

He has been awarded the Ho Am Sang Prize, the Korean Nobel Prize for community service. And not by just anybody, but by the giant Samsung. He has never stopped wearing the apron of a helper-cook in his oasis on the outskirts of Seoul, called 'Anna's House'. He is Father Vincenzo Bordo, a missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, originally from Piansano, a small town in the Viterbo area, who in 1990 was sent as a missionary in the Land of the Quiet Morning. Here he found his ideal place in Songnam, a dormitory town on the outskirts of the South Korean capital, the homeland of Cardinal-designate Lazarus You Heung-sik, prefect of the Dicastery for the Clergy.

This great missionary shares with us that, "Initially, with the help of some generous and good lay people, we opened an evening canteen in a small, old, abandoned and run-down warehouse that the neighbouring parish had kindly made available to us. We offered the needy only 80 meals three times a week. But listening to their needs, we extended first to 4, then to 5 and finally to 6 evening meals. Meanwhile, a doctor and his team made themselves available to run a free clinic. Then came the turn of a lawyer."

From the beginning of 1993 until today, Anna's House has offered 3,119,137 meals, an average of 550 per day. Not counting the more than 20,000 health care interventions and 707 legal consultations.

"Faith formation and educating children are to be continued among indigenous people and internal migrants with an Oblate spirit. Oblates must usher new dreams among the people as pilgrims" he said. He promised us his full support and cooperation in days to come.

"The canteen, as well as the other services, was always our priority. But that was not enough. I decided to visit families in the slums and realised that many children were motivated by the desire to study, but did not have access to schools because they did not have enough money," continues Father Bordo. "So, in 1994, with the help of about forty university volunteers, we started an after-school project, called Sharing, to offer not only study, but also sport, music, film forums and much more. It was practically a small oratory."

He adds, "Today the programme is more structured. It has a different name, Ajit, and involves the service of a shuttle bus that four times a week goes out at night to minister to young people living on the street, so much so that since 2015; 39,759 young people have been rescued. This is flanked by the Purumi shelter, the first centre dedicated to the youth, which, thanks to a series of targeted projects, helps the young guests to reunite with their families. For those who wish to find employment, there is the Sharing-house. It is a fully equipped facility where you can stay until you are able to earn money and set up your own business.

Working at 'Anna's House' is not easy and the pandemic has created quite a few problems. "At the beginning there was a lot of fear, so much so that the authorities ordered the closure of all the canteens in the city, including ours," explains Father Bordo. "I opposed this in a resolute and determined manner, convinced as I was, and still am, that this was the time to be more present and closer to our poor by providing them with more substantial and nutritious food to combat covid. Among the people who come to dinner with us are 12 ninety-year-olds, 154 eighty-year-olds and 243 seventy-year-olds. For the sake of these most vulnerable and fragile people, therefore, it was a moral imperative to continue distributing meals and other services".

But the new health regulations were very tight and, as it has happened elsewhere in the world, any form of gathering was forbidden. However, on this occasion Providence came in the form of the parish priest of the neighbouring parish of Seongnam, Father Andrea, who made available the large square in front of the church.

"First of all," resumes Father Vincenzo, "we indicated the places where we could stop, to ensure a safe distance. At the entrance, a team of volunteers measured body temperature, distributed masks and applied disinfectant gel on the hands of our guests. Inside the canteen, another team took care of the kitchen". And the cooks at 'Anna's House' are comparable to those of a large restaurant if you think that to prepare 750 dinners, 160 kilos of rice, 140 kilos of meat and 60 kilos of kimchi (the fermented vegetables of the local cuisine) are needed.

"A third team took care of packing everything into a lunch box," he adds, specifying that, "at the end of the meal, the rubbish was collected amidst the discontent of the residents who, faced with the bustle of people, thought it best to denounce us to the authorities. We were even insulted in the streets because we were considered to be covid carriers". Fortunately, the packed-dinner experience will come to an end in a few days and so, after a two-and-a-half-year stop, Father Vincenzo's friends will return to some kind of normality.

In this long journey with the poor, the oblate missionary says he is convinced that he has learnt

a lot from them: "They have taught me that life is always a gift even in misery and difficulties. I have seen many suicides among the rich, but never among the poor. From them I have also learnt that suffering is not a punishment from God, but an opportunity for human and spiritual growth, because once you have to deal with pain, afterwards you are no longer the same: either you become better, purified or you get angrier and damn yourself even more."

In 2015, thanks to a special presidential decree, Father Bordo was granted a Korean passport. 'A special act, because Koreans cannot have double passports,' he points out. On that occasion, the then Minister of Home Affairs told him, referring to the name Father Bordo himself had chosen, Kim Ha Jong (Servant of God): "By honouring this name you taught us to serve the poor and showed us a beautiful face of God."

But what is the dream of this great missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate today? "I dream of a world without so many poor people," he adds, "a world populated by children capable of welcoming, caring for, loving their elderly parents without abandoning them. I dream of a world without so many elderly people stretching out a wrinkled, trembling hand to others to receive a hot meal. I dream of a society with social care facilities. "Above all," he concludes, "I dream of the day when I will go to our 'Anna's House' and there will be no more beggars at the door and in the streets, and I will be able to close the doors and throw away the key, far away. Because at Anna's House one goes there to live again."

PAKSITAN

Farewell to Two Pioneer Missionaries in Pakistan

By Fr Gulshan Barkat OMI

Two of the three pioneering Oblate Missionaries to Pakistan, Fr. Joseph THEOGENES and Fr. Job Basil SILVA, both from Sri Lanka, were called to eternal rest on July 13 and 14 respectively. Oblates both in Pakistan and Sri Lanka mourn their passing and offer up prayers for the repose of their souls.

Fr. Theogenes was born on 26 January, 1939, in Atchuvely, a village near Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He was a loyal son of two Oblate schools; St. Joseph's College in Colombo and St. Patrick's

College in Jaffna. He made his First Oblation in 1957 and Perpetual Oblation in 1960. It was on 21 December, 1964, he was ordained a priest by the now Servant of God Cardinal Thomas Cooray, OMI, the then Archbishop of Colombo. He chose December 21 for his priestly ordination since St. Eugene De Mazenod, the founder of the Oblates was ordained priest on that day. On 14 February, 1971, he was sent to Pakistan after working for seven years in Sri Lanka.

Fr. Job Basil Silva was also born in 1939, on 29 July to be exact, in Colombo. He made his First Vows on 31 May 1962 and on the same day in 1965 pronounced his Final Vows at Oblate Scholasticate, Kandy. He was ordained priest

on 7 May 1969 by the auxiliary Bishop Edmund Fernando OMI of the Archdiocese of Colombo. When he left Sri Lanka in 1971 to start the Oblate mission in Pakistan he had less than 2 years of priestly experience. That itself shows the amount of trust the Superiors had in him.

The first group of three missionaries, pioneers

After an invitation from Bishop Francis Benedict Cialeo OP of Lyallpur Diocese (now Faisalabad) was extended to the Oblates of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to serve in his diocese, a serious talk began to establish that mission. On 14 February 1971, Fr. Lucien Schmitt, the then Provincial, accompanied three young energetic Sri Lankan Oblate priests namely Late Fr. Lester Silva, Fr. Basil J. Silva and Fr. Joseph Theogenes to West Pakistan to serve in Faisalabad Diocese.

After having followed an Urdu language course, the three Oblates were assigned to serve in different parishes. Fr. Theogenes Joseph was assigned to St. Anthony's Parish, Antoniabad and Fr. Job Basil Silva to St Pius X Parish, Chak Jhumra.

Fr. Basil's vision started deteriorating in 1989 which became an obstacle to his active missionary life and a year later in September 1990 he decided to leave for Sri Lanka for good. In Sri Lanka, he stayed in Oblate communities at St. Vincent's Home, Maggona and Dev Arana, Polwatta. From 2021 he resided in Marian Grove until he was called by the Lord to His eternal abode on 14 July 2022 after two-week long illness.

Fr. Theogenes, on the other hand, remained longer in Pakistan. He was an outstanding missionary with vision for the future. During the period he served as the Delegation Superior, Fr. Theogenes showed qualities of a formidable administrator and dared to take risks in order to explore new ways and opportunities. During his tenure as Superior, Pakistan Fr. Theogenes was proud to witness the first Pakistani Oblate Fr. Inayat Gill being ordained priest in 1986, during his tenure as the Delegation Superior.

Fr Theogenes is held in high esteem in Pakistan for his efforts to implement the concept of Basic Christian Communities. He helped the faithful view themselves as ecclesial entities and the 'Body of Christ'. He was also an educationalist par excellence who worked tirelessly to raise

Catholic community through quality education, technical skills and human/Catholic formation. A number of young men whom he educated, formed and groomed, hold respectable positions in government and private sectors which pulled them and their families out of poverty and raised their economic and living conditions. "We have achieved this much for our families because of Fr. Theo", remarked Mr. Augustine Gian, a former Principal of St. Francis Grammar School Quetta and Mr. Nadeem Bakhshi, an officer at UN World Food Programme in Quetta. He was a spiritual guide to a number of priests and religious. The people looked to him as a model and gave him a title 'Baba ji', a respectable and honorable moniker. As a member of the formation team for a few months in Oblate Juniorate, Multan he employed his skills as a musician, an organizer, an educationalist and a visionary and contributed greatly in the human formation of young men who were on the way to offering their life to God as oblates.

In January 2001, Fr. Theogenes was called to serve in the OMI General House in Rome as one of the administrative assistants. He served in the Philippines for a few years, where he underwent a successful open-heart surgery. Then he decided to return to Jaffna Province and worked as a secretary to the Provincial from 2016 to 2019. Then in 2019 he retired from active ministry and came to the Oblate Retirement Home in Jaffna where he kept himself busy by helping the Juniorists and the Scholastics in the neighbourhood in spiritual accompaniment. On 6 July he had a sudden stroke which resulted in paralysis and loss of speech. With breathing complication worsening, he breathed his last on the morning of 13 July 2022. It is interesting to note that Fr. Theogenes, the youngest son of the family was buried in the same tomb where the eldest son of the family, his brother Fr. Adrian Joseph OMI was laid to rest 20 years ago, in the cemetery attached to the St. Mary's Cathedral, Jaffna.

Our gratitude

The Oblate Delegation of Pakistan pays tribute in utmost gratitude to Fr. Theogenes Joseph and Fr. Basil Silva, the pioneer missionaries for their invaluable years of missionary life in service to the people of Pakistan. You have been faithful servants of the Lord. May your souls rest in eternal peace and be counted among the saints!

In Pakistan Oblates came together to offer a Requiem Mass for the repose of the souls of Frs. Theogenes Joseph and Basil Silva on 18 July 2022 in Our Lady of Mercy Parish Chak 6/4-L, Okara where both missionaries had served together at one point. Fr. Abid Tanveer, Vicar General of Faisalabad Diocese presided

over the Holy Mass and Fr. Khan Paulus, Delegation Superior of Pakistan delivered the homily. Besides Oblates, there were a number of diocesan and Dominican priests along with Holy Family, Dominican and Franciscan Tertiary Sisters of Loretto to pay homage to these two missionaries.

COLOMBO

National Rally of the Children's Movement

*Fr. Asanga Aruna Nanayakkara, OMI
National Director - La-Kri-Vi Children's Movement*

*La-Kri-Vi Children's Movement, the Sri Lankan affiliate of the International Movement of Apostolate of Children (IMAC), held its Annual Animators' National Rally at St. Vincent's Home Maggona from June 11 to June 14, 2022. (The name *La-Kri-Vi* is an abbreviation, with the initial letters of the term "Lama Kriyakari Virayo" in Sinhala language, meaning "Valiant children of action.")*

Famous dramatist Mr. Sriyantha Mendis, a veteran alumnus of the *La-Kri-Vi* Movement, attended the rally's opening ceremony together with Rev. Fr. Dilan PERERA, a Provincial Councillor of the OMI Province of Colombo; Rev. Fr. Justin SILVA, a former *La-Kri-Vi* National Director; Rev. Fr. Subash FERNANDO, the Director of St. Vincent's Home, Maggona along with a number of *La-Kri-Vi* Diocesan Chaplains, Rev. Sisters & Brothers and Senior *La-Kri-Vi* Animators.

The rally was held this year after a three-year hiatus, but given the state of the nation, it wasn't without significant difficulties. However, the animators seized the chance to assemble after a protracted period of silence with great enthusiasm, which led to a participation rate that exceeded 200 members.

The rally's ultimate goal is this sense of togetherness that gives the animators a feel of national belonging and the movement uses this opportunity to teach the animators about its yearly theme so that they can explain it to the *La-Kri-Vi* kids back home. The chosen theme for this year is "My family and I with my Friend, Technology." Thus, the four-day program included a plethora of theme-related sessions, seminars, group activities, indoor and outdoor games, ceremonies of all religions, and acclaim-generating sessions for literature, music, and arts.

Invigorated by those events, the *La-Kri-Vi* animators would begin their yearly activities at their respective cells throughout the island, holding fast to their mission "To Create a New World Through Children."

BANGLADESH

Oblates begin Golden Jubilee celebrations of serving the poor

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Bangladesh marked the start of their 50th year in the country, with a solemn Eucharistic service.

by Sumon Corraya (AsiaNews)

This year, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Bangladesh mark the start of their 50th year in the country. The Golden Jubilee was inaugurated with a solemn Eucharistic service held in Lokhipur, a parish in Moulvibazar district, in the north-eastern region of the country, on July 29, 2022.

Since they arrived almost half a century ago, they have been witnesses to the Gospel in a Muslim-majority country, focusing on tribal communities and migrants, as well as teaching young aspiring priests at the national seminary.

As a sign of the event's importance, some 500 people attended last Friday's Mass, including two bishops, numerous priests, Rev. Sisters, Rev. Brothers, seminarians and hundreds of lay worshippers.

The OMI mission took its first steps in Bangladesh on 29 July 1973 following an agreement between the then Archbishop Theotimus Amal Ganguly of Dhaka, Fr Lucian

SCHMITT, the provincial of Sri Lanka Province at the time and Fr Dalston FORBES, the then General Councilor for Asia.

Fr Ajit Victor COSTA, current OMI superior in the country, told that one of the initial tasks was teaching at the major seminary in Bonani and training the local clergy, combined with pastoral care for English-speaking members in local parishes.

While in the past, there were many foreign priests, nowadays they are mostly local. Out of 31 Oblate priests active in Bangladesh, two are Indian and the rest are Bangladeshi, including six who are missionaries abroad. Today the Oblates work in four dioceses (Dhaka, Chattagram, Sylhet and Rajshahi) and seven parishes. Their contribution is especially significant in education.

The Congregation can also boast of its first bishop, Archbishop Bejoy D'CRUZE of Dhaka, who is the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh.

At the beginning, the main challenge for the first OMI missionaries was adapting to the country, today it is "finding funds to continue the pastoral work," Fr Costa explained.

Almost 50 years after the start of the mission, priests work in seven parishes scattered in three different dioceses, running two high schools, about 40 elementary schools and two seminaries.

"Most parishes are located in remote areas, where tribal people live," Fr Costa noted. This is where the needs are greatest.

"Through prayer and teaching, we transform their lives. We are living witnesses and heralds of the Gospel," contributing "to the training of the local clergy," he added.

The Oblates are also working hard to ensure the dignity of local workers through a fair salary and respect for their rights. And now, as their Golden Jubilee begins, they have an opportunity to "rethink the mission and activities" to serve the local Church.

CANADA-UNITED STATES

A Conversation with Arctic Canada's Bishop Krótki of Iqaluit

By Deborah Castellano Lubov

Pope Francis' final stop in Canada on Friday will be in Arctic Canada, in Iqaluit, where Bishop Anthony Wieslaw Krótki O.M.I. will welcome him, ahead of a significant moment in which the Holy Father will meet with Inuit residential school survivors and hold a public event.

In this interview with Vatican News, the Bishop of Churchill-Baie d'Hudson reflects on why it is so important for the Pope to visit and meet with these survivors, even if only for a few hours, and about the Holy Father's penitential pilgrimage to Canada centered on embracing, healing and reconciling with the nation's Indigenous Peoples.

Iqaluit is the capital and at the same time the largest community of Nunavut Territory in Arctic Canada, a territory home to more than half the country's Inuit population.

The Diocese is a large territory in the Canadian Arctic with 16 communities having a Catholic population. It is a relatively new Diocese in the world with the first mission established in 1912 on the west coast of Hudson Bay, in Chesterfield Inlet. It has been served by five Bishops, starting with the founder of the first mission, French Bishop Arsène Turquetil, O.M.I.

During his Apostolic Visit, Pope Francis apologized several times to the Indigenous Peoples for 'catastrophic' errors of the past committed by many Christians with the residential school system, and has called for research to learn how to prevent such tragedies from ever occurring again.

The Diocese of Churchill-Baie d'Hudson was the first Diocese in Canada to apologize to the former students of a residential school back in 1996, and like other Dioceses in Canada, it recently contributed to the Canadian Bishops Canadian Indigenous Reconciliation Fund.

In the interview, Bishop Krótki denounces “unacceptable abuses” perpetrated upon indigenous in the past, and informs that a number of the Diocese’s Catholic parishes are taken care of by Inuit lay leaders.

Bishop Krotki, what is, in your opinion, the significance of Pope’s visit to Iqaluit and Canada?

By coming to visit Canada, including the city of Iqaluit, His Holiness is telling us he loves the indigenous peoples and wants all of us to live in peace and reconciliation with one another.

It is not important that the Pope comes to Iqaluit but it is important that he comes to the territory of Nunavut, home to over half the Inuit population in Canada. Iqaluit was not chosen because of a large indigenous Catholic population, as the main indigenous population of the city is Anglican.

The Catholic parish is an active parish that includes indigenous people and a large multi-culture non-indigenous population.

Iqaluit was also chosen because of its aviation safety measures, number of hotel rooms to accommodate students and visitors, and its access to political, church and indigenous organization administration in Ottawa.

You speak of the active Catholic parish, which includes indigenous people and is diverse. Could you share more with me about the Church you serve in the Churchill-Baie d’Hudson Diocese?

The Diocese covers a large territory where the only access between communities is by air, a challenge for ministry conducted by a small number of clergy and lay leaders. The Nunavut population--about 80% Inuit--declare themselves as Christians, mainly following the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. A number of our Catholic parishes are taken care of by Inuit lay leaders. While our Diocese was one of the first to form lay leaders to undertake this kind of role in 1968, it is a challenge today to attract the next generation of leaders that suffer from the cultural shock associated with rapid modernization and the social stigma associated with not always living a perfect life.

Our Diocese has a proud tradition of men and women that dedicated their life to bring the Good News to the Inuit, mostly Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the Grey Nuns of Montreal.

Could you tell me more about this tradition?

We have the largest collection of scriptural and liturgical materials printed in an indigenous language in Canada, with a special emphasis in recent years on developing aids for lay leaders. In many ways Inuit have always been integral to spreading the Good News in their land. They guided the missionaries to visit outpost camps, taught them the language, and showed them how to harvest animals from the land and sea. In some areas, they themselves were the ones to bring the message of Christianity to other camps.

Iqaluit is the only community with such a large non-Indigenous population. Many professional jobs are held by outsiders. Governments and Inuit organizations have high targets of Inuit employment that have stalled around 50%. Until the level of education is higher, many of the professional jobs will not be held by local people, and this creates a tension because the group from outside their territory is also able to access scarce housing.

Iqaluit has been called Canada’s youngest and fastest-growing capital city, with a diverse mix of cultures, piled atop an Inuit civilization that stretches back millennia, but as it developed, have there been problems and tensions associated with this development and with co-existence? How do you believe the Pope can help assuage this tension?

Hopefully the presence of the Holy Father will not only bring healing to people affected by the legacy of residential schools but will help to remind us of our common humanity and desire to live together as God’s children.

In our Diocese, we can continue to journey with our congregation members both in their healing path and in joyful events and celebrations, both inside and outside the Church. We can continue to encourage local lay leadership in our parishes.

Pope Francis has offered a profound apology to Canada's indigenous peoples for how many

members of the local Church had been historically involved in this residential school system and the "catastrophic errors" that had been committed. When thinking back to these residential schools, how have you dealt with this?

Our Diocese was only involved with one school for less than 15 years. The educational benefits of that institution have been proven by the number of former students that became leaders in their society, government and in the area of land claims negotiations. The school also

brought some pain and suffering with young people not living at home on a year-round basis as well as some unacceptable abuses.

The Churchill-Hudson Bay Diocese was the first Diocese in Canada to apologize to the former students of a residential school back in 1996. Like other Dioceses in Canada, we have recently contributed to the Canadian Bishops Canadian Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. This will be used for projects to promote healing and cultural revitalization.

OMI LACOMBE

Oblates of Mary Immaculate Welcome Pope Francis on Historic Pilgrimage to Support Healing and Reconciliation

First published on OMI Lacombe website

July 25, 2022, OTTAWA – In response to Pope Francis' arrival on Canadian soil yesterday morning, Fr. Ken Thorson and Fr. Luc Tardif, Oblate Provincial of the two provinces which operated 48 Residential Schools, issued the following statement on behalf of OMI Lacombe Canada and Notre Dame du Cap Provinces:

“The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are pleased to welcome the Holy Father to Turtle Island on an historic pilgrimage of healing and reconciliation. We are grateful for Pope Francis' compassion and leadership in listening to residential school survivors, and guiding all Catholics on the journey forward.

In light of the Oblates' role in the residential school system, we hope the Holy Father's visit will bring healing and solace to all Indigenous people who continue to experience the harm and trauma of the tragic residential schools legacy.

After years of prayer, reflection and building friendships with Indigenous people, we understand the legacy of pain and suffering that was caused by the residential school system, and the Oblates who ran many of the institutions. We recognize that our vision of evangelization hurt the people we aspired to serve, and we have apologized not only for the abuse that took place within the schools, but the colonial attitudes that underpinned their operation.

The first Oblate apology took place in 1991, on the 150th anniversary of our arrival in Canada, on the eve of the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Europeans to the Americas. The moment warranted reflection, and we believe provided Indigenous people with a firm acknowledgement that we regret our role in this system and understand the damage that it inflicted on survivors and intergenerational survivors.

We believe that as Pope Francis embarks on this pilgrimage, he will be guided not only by the stories he heard from Indigenous delegates this past spring, but by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which calls on him to apologize for the Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools.

As a Congregation, we know that an apology is only the beginning of a journey that must be accompanied by meaningful action. To that end, we remain committed to our efforts to help Indigenous researchers, survivors and other partners to memorialize the legacy of those who never returned from residential schools. We believe we have made meaningful progress on this journey, with over 50,000 records transferred to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, while knowing there is much more to do.

Accompanying this work, many Oblate pastors have sought to incorporate Indigenous traditions into Catholic liturgy, including the addition of smudging ceremonies to Catholic Mass. Another proud example of this work is the Oblates' continued presence at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage, which is believed to be the largest spiritual gathering of Indigenous people in North

America. It was the site of the Oblates' apology in 1991 and will be one of the destinations that the Holy Father visits on July 26th.

While we are inspired by the Holy Father's presence, we recognize that many Indigenous people, particularly residential school survivors, remain traumatized by their experiences and may have a complicated reaction to this event. As Oblates, we will listen to those voices with humility and an openness to growing as we continue our work towards truth, justice, healing and reconciliation.

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP

Missionary priest hails Pope's Canada visit as moment of reconciliation

As Pope Francis nears the end of his Apostolic Journey to Canada, Fr. Nnaemeka Ali, OMI, a Nigerian priest working with the Innu First Nations in Canada, upholds the papal visit as an opportunity for reconciliation, and says the Church needs to listen to and work with indigenous communities.

By Fr. Benedict Mayaki, SJ (Vatican News)

Pope Francis begins the last day of his Apostolic Journey to Canada on Friday by meeting with a delegation of indigenous peoples in Quebec, before flying to the northernmost city of Iqaluit for an encounter with residential schools survivors.

The papal visit has included public and private events with an emphasis on the participation of the indigenous populations, and saw the Pope offer an apology for the role of many Christians in the residential school system.

"I am here because the first step of my penitential pilgrimage among you is that of again asking forgiveness, of telling you once more that I am deeply sorry. Sorry for the ways in which, regrettably, many Christians supported the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the indigenous peoples," said Pope Francis on Monday. "I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the Church and of religious communities cooperated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools."

We believe the Holy Father's presence will strengthen our resolve on this journey and we are thankful for his attendance and commitment. As we celebrate this milestone, we will continue to walk with our Indigenous brothers and sisters while building upon the traditions of friendship and affection shared with so many Indigenous communities. We wish to continue this journey so that every day brings new opportunities for gestures of reconciliation and healing. We are committed to learning together to live the Gospel."

The importance of the Pope's visit

Fr. Nnaemeka Ali, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, has worked for the past 8 years among indigenous communities in Canada, serving the Innu First Nation Communities of Ekuanitshit (Mingan) and Matimekush-Lac John (Schefferville) at the coastal shores of Quebec.

Speaking to Vatican News, Fr. Ali highlights that the Pope's visit has been primarily focused on indigenous communities, recalling that the Holy Father had promised the delegation that met with him in the Vatican that he would come to visit the country.

The Oblate priest also says the Pope's visit is a very important moment for Catholics who practice their faith, especially since as it has become evident that some members of the Church have "wounded them in the past."

He says that practicing Catholics greatly desired to "see the Pope in their land. They wanted to see him because he is the spiritual father."

Reconciliation

Fr. Ali notes that "reconciliation is a process" and the Pope's expression of closeness to the indigenous people through his visit can help move forward this "moment of reconciliation". He, however, acknowledges that the indigenous people have been hurt and the process of reconciliation will take time. In fact, the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in the country had called for apologies from the Church. Many Catholic congregations that were involved in the administration of residential schools in the past have apologized to the indigenous peoples,

including the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the first religious congregation to offer an apology in 1991 for their role in residential schools.

The missionary priest further notes that indigenous peoples have gone through various trials and experiences that “have made them lose their spirituality and culture,” and so, his ministry among the Innu First Nations these

past 8 years has included working “to see if they can reconnect with their past and try to valorize their identity and cultures.”

Fr. Ali says his work among the Innu First Nations goes beyond just administering the sacraments, but it makes him “a pilgrim among these First Nations who have always been a spiritual people from the origin.”

NOTRE-DAME-DU-CAP An Ecumenical Experience

Fr. Andrzej Jastrzebski OMI

Fr. Andrzej Jastrzebski OMI, is a professor at St. Paul's University in Canada, he shares with us his experience of ecumenism.

They say that life is full of surprises. This was the case with my encounter with the Coptic Orthodox community, the majority of whom were born in Egypt. One of my students at USP (St. Paul's University) is a Coptic Christian.

Copts began to immigrate to Canada in the second half of the twentieth century. At first they organised themselves to celebrate their liturgies in schools where they rented rooms for their gatherings. Later, they were able to build their own churches. At present, it is a fairly significant group in Canada and the United States.

Within this community a Coptic Medical Association of North America was founded. For the first time this association organised a large conference for their members in Montreal (Laval) 27-29 May. The theme was "Do you want to be healed? John 5,6". Participants were physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, psychotherapists, and social workers from Canada and the United States, in total, there was about 120 participants.

Not only was I invited to participate but I was also asked to be one of the organizers of this gathering. By sharing my knowledge of psychology and spirituality and my musical gifts I experienced a communion between Christians of different traditions who together seek God in the context of the contemporary world. I discovered that all Christian communities have to face the challenge of destigmatising people with mental health problems and finding ways to assist them with compassion.

VATICAN

Mgr. Pierre Olivier Tremblay, OMI, appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee

The Holy Father has appointed HE Msgr. Pierre Olivier Tremblay, OMI, Bishop of the Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee (Canada) transferring him from the titular See of Tino and from the office of Auxiliary of the Diocese of Trois-Rivières.

HE Mons. Pierre-Olivier Tremblay, OMI, born on November 22, 1970 in Montpellier, France, began his studies at the Collège Saint-Alexandre in Gatineau and continued them at the Saint Augustin Seminary in Québec. He obtained a Diploma in Theology from the Laval University of Québec and after his novitiate at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate he made his

first profession on August 6, 1995 in Vanier, Québec. From 1995 to 1997 he continued his studies in Ottawa at the Saint-Paul University obtaining a degree in Missionary Sciences.

On 23 August 1998 he made his perpetual profession and on 22 May 1999 he was ordained a priest.

After three years as Parish Vicar of Chibougamau and Chapais, Québec, he resumed his studies and in 2008 obtained a Doctorate in Practical Theology from Laval University. From 2007 to 2010 he assumed the position of Formator in the novitiate of the Oblates. From 2010 to 2016 he was parish priest of the Sacré-Coeur in Ottawa and from 2016 to 2018 he held the position of Rector of the Sanctuary of Notre-Dame-du-Cap.

Twice he was elected Member of the Provincial Council of the Congregation of Oblate Fathers.

On 21 May 2018 he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Trois-Rivières and received episcopal consecration on the following 22 July. From

January 27, 2021 to April 8, 2022 he held the office of Diocesan Administrator.

He is currently President of the Évangélisation et Vie chrétienne Council of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Québec.

EUROPE

UKRAINE

Testimony of an Oblate military chaplain

During the war, Ukrainians have turned especially to God in prayer. In addition, almost all parishes, regardless of their religious denomination – Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant – collect aid for the military and systematically bring it to the front. But just as important, if not even more so, is the mission of the priests themselves who travel to reach the Ukrainian soldiers. Ukraine wants to officially introduce the position of ‘military chaplain’ soon, but in the meantime this mission is carried out by priests who feel called voluntarily stand alongside the military in places of combat operations. One such priest is Fr. Vadim Dorosh OMI, who for several years has been systematically travelling to the front line and serving the soldiers.

Fr. Vadim Dorosh has been a military chaplain since 2014. He was born and raised in the city of Bar (Ukraine). He was previously a member of the army. He first did compulsory service and then served in the army under contract. There he underwent a process of conversion and entered the Oblate prenovitiate in Obukhiv.

Now as a priest he lives and serves in the community of Tyvriv in the Vinnitsa region. In addition to serving at the Oblate shrine in Tyvriv, he is responsible for youth in that parish and also for the Memorial Museum of the Ukrainian Martyrs of the 20th century, and in the Delegation of Ukraine he is responsible for vocations and meetings of altar servers, as well as for the group of Friends of the Missionaries. Father Vadim recounts:

“When the war started in 2014, I was a scholastic in Poland, where I helped displaced people and migrants from Ukraine. After finishing the seminary, I returned to Ukraine and was

ordained a priest in Bar (Ukraine). Then I also started to travel as a volunteer to the Donetsk region, where I worked with the Christian Relief Service, which has about 20 different corps, in particular the War Chaplain Corps. In 2020, the founder of this service, Andriy Olenchuk, offered me the opportunity to become a military chaplain and I accepted.

The mission of a chaplain is, first and foremost, to be among the military and to represent them in prayer with and for them. In addition, it involves both talking to them and confessing to them.... In other words, we are a witness of Jesus Christ in their midst so that the military understands that God is with them.

For three years now, Father Vadim has been visiting Ukrainian soldiers on a regular basis, spending two to three weeks with them. When asked if it is safe, he replies that there is a war going on in the country, so there is no completely safe place now: “The chaplain is not usually on the front line, although these situations do occur. I have had to be in trenches and barricades.”

A chaplain travels to different places where there is fighting. He says there are several factors that determine where he will go: “In the East, I went to a specific place because of the Christian Relief Service. The ministry there was both military and civilian. We go to the south mainly because of the need for recruits from Vinnitsa.”

Although the soldiers are of different religions, the military chaplains, regardless of their denomination, give their blessing to all. The same goes for the sacrament of confession: “Blessing for all. As for the sacraments, in cases of emergency, for example, during war, when there is a threat to life, the chaplain can confess any Christian, regardless of his or her denominational affiliation.”

But Ukrainian soldiers on the frontline need to talk. Father Vadim recounts what he remembers most about his work as a chaplain:

“Most of the time, the servicemen want to talk. We talk a lot. I remember one soldier sat next to me and talked for almost three hours while I listened. Then he thanked me, I blessed him and he left. Another huge soldier, about six feet tall and strongly built, asked for confession. It turned out that the last time he had gone to confession was more than 20 years ago. I thought then that, indeed, since such a big

and strong warrior kneels down and needs God, we chaplains are needed, that God is really at work and that we are not helpless.”

“On one occasion a unit commander simply ‘unburdened his heart’ He needed to be heard. And another important moment was personally when a military man came up and said: ‘You gave us medallions of the Virgin Mary, but there were not enough for everyone. Moments like this make it clear that for the military it is really important to feel God’s presence close to them.’”

POLAND

The Pope blessed the crowns for Kodeń

A delegation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from Poland went to the Holy Father on the occasion of the upcoming 300th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Kodeń. The Shrine of Our Lady of Kodeń is the main Marian shrine in the diocese of Siedlce, the east of Poland. The Oblates are responsible for this holy place from 1927. Annually, over 200,000 pilgrims visit the sanctuary.

During the Wednesday audience in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican, the Holy Father Francis blessed the crowns prepared on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Kodeń. Delegation of the Polish Province comprised of Fr. Paweł Zając OMI (Provincial), Fr. Krzysztof Borodziej OMI and Fr. Michał Hadrich OMI together with the bishop of the Siedlce diocese – Kazimierz Gurda, requested a papal bequest for next year’s ceremony in Kodeń.

The crowns were made by a well-known Polish artist specializing in goldsmithery and amber – Dariusz Drapikowski. The crown is decorated with amber: white, honey and gold. In the crown of Mary there is also a stone from the grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and in the crown of Christ – a stone from Golgotha.

In a brief conversation with the Provincial of the Polish Province, the Holy Father inquired about the future of the Oblates in the context of the upcoming General Chapter. He was also interested in the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border and in nearby Ukraine. The bishop of Siedlce asked the pope for a blessing for his diocese. [Editor’s Note: the Shrine of Our Lady of Kodeń is right on the border with Belarus and very close to Ukraine].

He was particularly interested in the proximity to Ukraine and Belarus. Last year was very difficult for Kodeń, but on the other hand, the spiritual development continues. The situation on the eastern border led to the fact that in our pilgrim house, not only pilgrims gathered, but also soldiers, policemen, who stayed in this area almost all the time, guarding our security and keeping an eye on borders. Such was the role played recently by the Shrine of Our Lady of Kodeń. From July 1, everything is open and the sanctuary has reopened its mission and the pilgrim’s home. Thousands of pilgrims are gathering again. The Holy Father asked about our future as Oblates, because in September we are starting our General Chapter” – the Provincial of the Polish Province told Vatican Radio.

The celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Kodeń is planned for August 14-15, 2023.

In 1631, the then owner of the property – Mikołaj Pius Sapiaha brought the painting of the Gregorian Madonna to Kodeń. [Editor’s Note: this image was known as the Gregorian Virgin because a tradition says that Pope Gregory I had it painted as a reproduction of the statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Spain which the Pope had given to St. Leander, Archbishop of Seville]. The history of Our Lady’s arrival in Kodeń was described by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka in the novel “Blessed Wine”. During the Russian partition, the image of the Mother of God found shelter in Jasna Góra. It returned to Kodeń in 1927, and since then the sanctuary is under the care of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, who gave Mary the title of Mother of Unity, as Pope joked that “in Kodeń you have an image that belongs to the Pope”. Mary is also venerated here as the Queen of Podlasie.

UKRAINE**Ukrainian youth festival: hope wins over hate**

The "Breath of Life" festival organized by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate offered three days of reflection and fraternity for young people in Tyvriv, near Vinnytsia.

By Svitlana Dukhovych (Vatican Media)

The war in Ukraine grinds on. Those who experience it first-hand are forced to face an endless stream of negative news and images.

Therefore, they must find other ways refresh the soul, body, and mind. The Church in Ukraine seeks to make everyone hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

The Church also seeks to care especially for the smallest and most vulnerable. During the summer months, various Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic parishes are organizing summer camps, pilgrimages, meetings and workshops for children, adolescents and youth, while following the necessary safety regulations.

The festival's new format, adapted to war conditions

On 27-31 July, in Tyvriv, a village near Vinnytsia in central Ukraine, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate organized a festival for young people entitled "The Breath of Life."

In an interview with Vatican News, Father Vadym Dorosh, OMI, explained that this event has been held every year since 2009. In other years, usually 150 to 200 young people came. The usual program included prayer, several workshops and a Christian music concert.

"We thought for a long time about whether to hold the festival this year," Father Vadym explained. "On the one hand, we did not want to jeopardize the safety of the young people, but, on the other hand, we know that this event is very important to them. So, we decided to change the format, adapting it to current needs: there were fewer participants, no concert, instead, more prayer, outdoor activities and reflection."

A true breath of life

"I am glad that despite the war, I was able to participate in the festival," said Maria Teresa, 25, who came to Tyvriv for the fourth time. "In these difficult times, it was very important to feel 'the breath of life' in the meeting with other young people and in the closeness with God through Mass, prayer and night adoration. The very fact that such events are done even in such difficult times helps us to keep hope and faith alive that God wins. Values like love, friendship win, not evil, war and death, because Christ is risen; He has conquered death. That was what I felt strongly during this meeting."

'What moves us must be love, not hate'

In addition to prayers and sports activities, the organizers offered thematic conferences to the youth, one of which, under the guidance of a psychologist, dealt with the topic of preventing and overcoming stress.

"Many young people," Father Vadym said, "have experienced the bombings first-hand, some came from Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kyiv, etc." The neighbouring town of Vinnytsia was also recently the target of the bombing of a civilian building, in which more than 20 people lost their lives and many were injured.

In the face of brutal violence, it is inevitable that people feel outrage and anger. The missionary often talks to young people about these temptations.

"Unfortunately, sometimes hatred can fill even our hearts and we can no longer distinguish between hatred for sin and evil and hatred for the person who does this evil," he said. "During the Festival we discussed this issue in the lecture entitled 'The Lord's Cross and My Cross.' We talked about Jesus Christ who was also tortured, scourged and gave His life, and His words on the cross were, 'Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' That is, we wanted to make young people understand what forgiveness is, and help them understand that hatred, in fact, burns ourselves, and we can't spend energy on that because we have to defend our homeland and do what we can, each in our own place. Our main intention must be love."

LATIN AMERICA

BOLPER**The birth of a new Delegation**

Fr. Warren Brown, OMI

During the April-May Plenary Session of the OMI Central Government, the work of restructuring between two Units: The Province of Bolivia and the General Delegation of Peru, was concluded. The Superior General in council approved the statutes and created a new Unit: The General Delegation of BOLPER.

The new general delegation, BOLPER (Bolivia – Peru), arose because of the changes that have been taking place in the congregation since the General Chapter 2016's amendment of Rule 98.b which requires the provinces to have a minimum of 60 members. Since the former province of Bolivia and the former general delegation of Peru had small populations of Oblates, both entities required a move toward unity in view of strengthening and renewing their missionary commitments and community life. Meetings between the leadership of the two units had already been initiated since 2002, but unfortunately this was interrupted. However, it seems that history wanted to assimilate them in a new way. January 2019 provided the opportunity to restart a dialogue, in the city of Iquique - Chile. This meeting fortuitously energized an act of good intentions by the leadership of both units, of which the Superior General was informed. Fr. Loudeger Mazile, OMI - former General Councilor for Latin America, attended this meeting as representative of the General Administration.

The history of Bolivia-Peru is closely linked by several factors. In 1952 Oblates arrived in Bolivia from the Province of St. Joseph - Canada and in 1957 another group of Canadian Oblates arrived in Peru from the Province of St. Peter. Later, other Oblates

from Canada arrived as missionaries in the Oblate unit of Chile. This makes the initial histories of Peru and Bolivia very similar in vision and mission.

At various times the Oblate missionaries in these units spoke of the socio-cultural coincidence that exists between the two countries, being countries of Andean-Amazonian origin, especially the common origin in the Andean culture.

Since 1990 Oblates in Bolivia and Peru had the experience of a shared formation at the BOLPER Scholasticate, where post-novices from Bolivia and Peru consolidated their formation; formators were exchanged, and the experience of internationality was lived in a formation community. The experience of this house marked the journey of several missionaries. The BOLPER Scholasticate closed the year 2012, marking a very valuable cycle for many Oblates.

Since the initial meeting in 2019 in Chile, the leadership of the two units has been working together to establish statutes and a common understanding. They were assisted by Bishop Alberto Huamán, former general councilor, and Fr. Cornelius Ngoka, assistant general for formation. The BOLPER statutes were approved and the new General Delegation was erected by the Superior General in Council on April 29, 2022, with the official date of inauguration on May 21, 2022, the feast of St. Eugene de Mazenod. The Superior of the Delegation, Fr. Roberto Carrasco, and his council took office on this date. As a General Delegation, BOLPER is directly under the authority of the Central Government, as per Constitution 112 and Rule 112 a.

Our prayer and wish are that this new reality will be a source of renewal, a new beginning for the life and mission of the Oblates, at the service of the poor and the most abandoned.

BOLPER**Radio Amistad: on its way to 30 years in Peru**

Radio Amistad is a private non-profit radio station in Peru, sponsored by the General Delegation of BOLPER of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It was born on November 26, 1992 as 'Radio Pillopinto'. Later, in 1998, it was called 'Radio Amistad'. This year it celebrates its 30th anniversary of service to the people.

It was in May 1988 when Fr. Pablo Feeley, OMI, together with Fr. Roberto Smith, OMI - parish priest of Jesus Salvador parish in Aucayacu - began a common Oblate project: "A rural social communication system".

This project's main objective was to provide the material infrastructure for a rural social communication system, which included a radio station and a communication center. In those years there were almost no means of communication that existed in Aucayacu, besides, one private commercial radio station, Radio Ribereña, that barely covered 10 percent of the district. There were few roads, no telephones and from time to time a few newspapers arrived from Lima, the capital of Peru.

The Oblates of the Aucayacu mission decided to create this rural social communication system in order to provide the population with the necessary information, and at the same time, to be able to spread knowledge in the fields of education, health, agriculture, etc. Through the radio station, the families can be reached and through a communications center, communication channels can be opened in the area so that, through communication, the community can be built.

There were several problems that this project had to go through in this area, firstly, there was no reliable source of electricity and then there was a lack of trainers and instructors for the formation of a team. The support of the National Radio Coordinator was crucial to face this challenge. There was also great fear and anxiety created within the population by both the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian Army. The socio-political situation in the area was one of war. Terror ruled.

P. Pablo Feeley, OMI - founder of the work - was appointed as the person responsible for the project and the center. During his sabbatical

year in 1988, he followed a one-year course at the International Center for Research and Education in Communication (CREC) in Lyon, France, founded and directed by Fr. Pierre Babin, OMI.

Then missionaries set three objectives. The first was to form a group of young people interested in assuming the task of communicating the events that occurred in the community. Thus, about 20 young people, from the 4th and 5th grades of high school, formed the Association of Young Journalism Amateurs (AJAP), where they were trained in interviewing, writing, typing, printing and screen printing. The second objective was to publish a magazine "El Trochero." It contained various topics of current affairs and history of the villages and of people who worked for the benefit of the villages. It circulated for about two and a half years. The third objective was to train five young people to produce radio programs. At the end of the training, the first program which they produced was called "Cultivating Hope", it was aired on Radio Ribereña one hour a week. This is how evangelization through radio began.

At the same time a space was made available on the second floor of one of the rooms of the parish to build an auditorium, a work room and a recording room; aiming at expanding power and improving the equipment of the existing radio station and to create and operate a communications center. The idea was to arrive at the beginning 1990 with a formative proposal that would allow us to dream of having our own radio station in the facilities of the Jesús Salvador parish.

Thus, in November 26, 1992, Radio Pillopinto was born. With a small coverage, the radio transmission began. Years later, when Fr. Hugo Choquez, OMI was in charge of the parish, he changed the name Radio Pillopinto to Radio Amistad. During these years the Oblates who came to the mission were gradually taking part in the dream of the founder: TO BUILD COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION.

In 1993, a Directorial Resolution of the Peruvian Ministry of Transportation and Communications granted the Oblates of Mary Immaculate the renewal of the authorization of the private radio communication service. In 1999, the Oblates of the OMI PERU Delegation decided to establish and register what is now called the 'Radio Amistad Association'.

At the end of 2021 we obtained a new tower and new antennas, thanks to the generosity of some Oblate provinces and the generosity of collaborators, friends and many faithful listeners who have contributed to the achievement of this new goal.

This year, 2022, we celebrate 30 years of Radio Amistad. We want to maintain the spirit of the Oblates and lay people who started the project. Accompanying the people of Alto Huallaga in the process of reconciliation is a mission that we have prioritized.

ANNIVERSARIES - JULY 2022

70th Anniversaries of Vows

16/07/1952	09291	Fr. Marcel Chénier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
16/07/1952	09293	Fr. Bernard Ménard	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
16/07/1952	09289	Fr. Gaston Rioux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
25/07/1952	09251	Fr. Amador Lopez	United States
25/07/1952	09252	Fr. José María Riega	Cruz del Sur

65th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1957	10270	Fr. Argimiro Aláez	Cruz del Sur
25/07/1957	10269	Fr. Eutimio González Álvarez	Mediterranea
25/07/1957	10401	Fr. Saturnino Lajo	United States
26/07/1957	10315	Fr. Claudio Brisson	Cruz del Sur
26/07/1957	10307	Fr. Robert Châteauneuf	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26/07/1957	10305	Fr. Jean-Guy Lavoie	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
26/07/1957	10304	Fr. Rodrigo Marcoux	Mexico

65th Anniversaries of Ordinations

07/07/1957	09112	Msgr. Adam Exner	Lacombe
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60th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1962	11628	Fr. Baudilio Fernández	Mediterranea
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60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

01/07/1962	10081	Fr. Augustine Makhokolo	Southern Africa
12/07/1962	10084	Fr. Vincent McGillicuddy	Australia

50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

08/07/1972	11860	Fr. Kenneth Forster	Lacombe
08/07/1972	11943	Fr. François Paradis	Lacombe

25th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1997	13900	Fr. Félix García Martínez	Mexico
25/07/1997	13791	Fr. Rosalino Thompson	Cruz del Sur

25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

04/07/1997	13391	Fr. Rudi F.X. Rahkito Jati	Indonesia
20/07/1997	13394	Fr. Enwan Roland Dikelele	Congo
20/07/1997	13430	Fr. Clément Fiyungu Oleko	Congo
20/07/1997	13429	Fr. Mbote Wilfrid Gitembo	Congo
20/07/1997	13367	Fr. Futi Sylvain Mangombo	Congo
20/07/1997	13393	Fr. Mane Macaire Manimba	Congo
20/07/1997	13304	Fr. Hengelela Guillaume Muthunda	Administration Generale
23/07/1997	12631	Fr. Aloys Lukens	Lacombe

ANNIVERSARIES - AUGUST 2022

75th Anniversaries of Vows

02/08/1947	08331	Fr. Gustave Pelletier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1947	08341	Fr. Laurent Alarie	Lacombe
15/08/1947	08349	Fr. Dominique Kerbrat	Lacombe

70th Anniversaries of Vows

02/08/1952	09302	Fr. Denis Dancause	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1952	09266	Fr. Bruno Carpene	Mediterranea
15/08/1952	09305	Fr. Guy Fortin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1952	09311	Fr. Gilles Gauthier	Lacombe
15/08/1952	09499	Fr. Noël LeBrun	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1952	09394	Fr. Romualdo Lopardo	Mediterranea

65th Anniversaries of Vows

02/08/1957	10320	Fr. Roger Hallée	United States
02/08/1957	10318	Fr. John Louis Henault	Haiti
15/08/1957	10278	Fr. Alexander Costa	Colombo
15/08/1957	10323	Fr. Vaughan Quinn	Lacombe
15/08/1957	10283	Fr. Philip Singarayar	United States

60th Anniversaries of Vows

02/08/1962	11290	Fr. Raymond Lebrun	United States
15/08/1962	11298	Fr. Terence Conway	Lacombe
15/08/1962	11275	Fr. Denis Grenier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
15/08/1962	11266	Fr. George LaGrange	Lacombe
15/08/1962	11259	Fr. Vicente Louwagie	Mexico
15/08/1962	11256	Fr. Ruben Martinez	United States
15/08/1962	11254	Fr. Clyde Rausch	United States
15/08/1962	11651	Bro. Peter Vasquez	United States
15/08/1962	11265	Fr. Norman Volk	United States
15/08/1962	11260	Fr. Paul Wilhelm	United States

50th Anniversaries of Vows

15/08/1972	12140	Fr. Allen Courteau	Anglo-Irish
15/08/1972	12150	Fr. Louis Studer	United States
19/08/1972	12136	Fr. Jules Goulet	Lacombe

50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

12/08/1972	11925	Fr. Robert Terliesner	Central European Province
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25th Anniversaries of Vows

01/08/1997	13769	Fr. Michael David Powell	United States
09/08/1997	13950	Fr. Ignatius Priyantoro	Indonesia
09/08/1997	13951	Fr. Ignatius Wasono Putro	Indonesia

25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

09/08/1997	13442	Fr. Prasanna Randolph Rodrigo	Colombo
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Suffrages for our Deceased (July-August 2022)

No. 49-63

NAME	PROV/DEL	DATE	DIED AT	BORN
Fr. Gijsberts, Inno	Belgium & Netherlands	02/07/2022	Eindhoven	13/02/1936
Fr. Joseph, Theogenes	Jaffna	13/07/2022	Columbuthurai	26/01/1939
Fr. Sabarre, Luis	Cruz del Sur	13/07/2022	Mendoza	16/10/1941
Bro. Wagner, Jakob	Central European	13/07/2022	Hünfeld	25/07/1940
Fr. Roy, Louis-Philippe	Lacombe	14/07/2022	Saint Albert	14/09/1924
Fr. Silva, Basil Job	Colombo	14/07/2022	Colombo	29/07/1939
Fr. Wronski, Jean-Pierre	France-Benelux	24/07/2022	Montpellier	01/04/1954
Bro. Szymaniuk, Grzegorz	Poland	25/07/2022	Lubliniec	05/05/1935
Fr. Smith, Philip	Lacombe	26/07/2022	Vancouver	31/10/1940
Fr. Tremblay, Juan-María	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	30/07/2022	Richelieu	01/12/1929
Fr. Dukowski, Jaime	Lacombe	31/07/2022	Vancouver	23/03/1941
Fr. Antón-Pacho, José-Antonio	Mediterranean	01/08/2022	Madrid	23/03/1941
Fr. Arena, Domenico	Mediterranean	04/08/2022	Montecompatri	05/05/1952
Fr. Kabat, Carl	United States	04/08/2022	San Antonio	10/10/1933
Fr. Koscinski, Kazimierz	Poland	05/08/2022	Bodzanów	22/07/1961
Fr. Kirtz, Raymond	United States	12/08/2022	Belleville	17/12/1931
Fr. Boucher, Gilmond	United States	14/08/2022	Tewksbury	30/10/1932
Bro. Dickmann, Willi	Central European	17/08/2022	Hünfeld	30/01/1931
Fr. Mathieu, Réal	Notre-Dame-du-Cap	30/08/2022	Richelieu	09/06/1931

“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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Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org

www.omiworld.org

Editor & Webmaster: Shanil Jayawardena

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