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Message of the Superior General for the launching of the guidelines for the Mission with Youth

Dear young people, it is with great joy that I greet all of you. I hope we can meet in person when I visit each of your countries in the coming years. For me this moment is much more than just a virtual meeting. My gratitude to the Commission for all their hard work throughout these years, in which they have produced these documents that I consider extremely important for our shared mission. I am also grateful for the work of all those who have made this meeting possible. I thank all of you for your efforts to participate, some of you with great sacrifice because of the time difference. From one part of the world to the other, and from morning to evening, we are gathered with a shared passion: that Jesus be proclaimed to the poorest and that the young people of our charismatic family play an active role in this mission.

These past few days, I have reflected on what happened in Aix when St. Eugene founded the Congregation of the Youth. In those days, St. Eugene, together with some young people, proclaimed the Good News to other young people. They all discovered that it was essential to create an association to strengthen their missionary action. That is why St. Eugene wrote the statutes expressing his missionary vision: to make young people fully human, Christian, and Saints.

On a day like today, Eugene and the young people met to read those statutes, discuss them, to pray, and to launch the Aix Christian Youth Association. I can only imagine the emotion of that first group of young people as they identified with the proposal that Saint Eugene was making: how much enthusiasm they must have felt to participate joyously as active members of the Association. How much generosity in putting those statutes into

practice and how many missionary fruits were born from that first encounter?

Today, you are those young people gathered with St. Eugene and the entire charismatic family he started. You are the young from all parts of the world and you represent many others who may not have been able to be here today. You are gathering from various countries in Africa, America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. We are all children of St. Eugene, brothers and sisters, in this great family that the Holy Spirit gave to his Church, which began with St. Eugene and a group of young people. A great family with diverse charismatic expressions: lay people together with consecrated women and men. I hope that we all have those same feelings as those young people 200 years ago, that same passion, that same enthusiasm.

Today we will officially launch the guidelines for the mission with young people. This document is a tool that will be very useful and which has many resources to help develop our mission. This document is intended to serve everyone, especially young people, so that we can build our identity as missionaries of the poor and as members of a family that has produced so many saints in the Church. It must not be a dead document, it must be made flesh in the life of each one of us. Our own life will help us to make the document dynamic, always at the service of the mission, a living document that allows us to live the joy of the Gospel and the joy of being missionaries.

Even more important is to know that this document expresses the identity of our charism and reflects the missionary dream of St. Eugene and the first young people. Thus, it is also a

document that defines communion among us. Communion also with all the generations of young people and Oblates who have felt the call to be missionaries in our charismatic family. How beautiful it is to know that we are treading new paths but following in the footsteps of all those young missionaries who have gone before us! How beautiful it is to think we are opening new paths for others who will come after us! Let us dare to be missionaries with the young! Let us be protagonists of this mission!

Dear young people, I have great confidence in you. I am convinced that you will help us to renew our charismatic family. As you know, young people and Oblates walked together in the first years of our existence. They shared moments of common prayer in the Oblate chapel in Aix; they shared games and moments of reflection. They shared their sorrows and their joys. Above all, they shared their common mission. Today, just like yesterday, you, young people, can help us renew our Christian identity and Oblate mission. I have so much hope in you that I dare to ask you to help with your enthusiasm all of us, Oblates, and the other members of our charismatic family to be missionary saints. I believe that St. Eugene himself, speaking through my words, entrusts this same mission to you: be the leaders in the renewal of our whole family and help us to be the most united missionary family on earth.

How do we do this? It's all about living the Gospel to be fully human, Christian, and saint. It's all about stepping out of our comfort zones and reaching out to other young people to show them they can be part of our missionary adventure. It's all about helping each other respond to God's will who wants what is good for all and excludes no one from his promise of salvation. It is as simple as allowing the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's dream for each of us. That is the purpose of these documents we place in your hands today. Thank you to each of you for daring to play an active role in this adventure.

Our last General Chapter invited us to be pilgrims of hope in communion. Let us all go together on this pilgrimage where Jesus meets us as he did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus—a missionary pilgrimage to give hope to the poor and the world. Together in communion with the young and the poor, we strive to live the joy of the Gospel. I ask the Lord to give us that same passion St. Eugene demonstrated for Jesus Christ, the Church, Mary, and the poor. May Mary accompany us with her maternal smile in our difficulties. May St. Eugene and all the Blessed Oblates, many of whom died very young, intercede for us and help us to renew the whole missionary family.

*Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate!
Rome 3 June 2023*

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Second online meeting of the Committee for the Constitutions and Rules

The Permanent Committee for the Constitutions and Rules, which was named by the Superior General in the January / February Plenary Session had its second online meeting Friday, 23 June 2023.

This second meeting was to review the Committee's objectives as mandated by the 37th General Chapter. It was also to look at developing a plan for animation and also its collaboration with Aix-en-Provence in that task. The meeting culminated in discussing the mandate from the Superior General with regards to the restructuration of the Congregation. Following steps laid down in the Acts of the 37th General Chapter, the committee has embarked

on a process of proposing to the Superior General material for his initial discussion with the entire Congregation in that regard.

Some of the questions that came out and needs continuous reflection are: 1) What is the status quo of community life and mission? 2) How can we renew our community life and our mission in today's world? 3) What kind of structures do we think would facilitate the said renewal? The members of the Permanent Committee for the Constitutions and Rules are: Frs. Constant KIENGE-KIENGE (Congo DR), Martin WOLF (General House), Grzegorz RURAŃSKI (Poland), Sakubita Lawrence LIKE (Zambia/Procurator General) and Warren BROWN (US/General Administration).

Sakubita Lawrence LIKE - Committee Coordinator

OMI JPIC**Healthy planet! Healthy people! Laudato si begins with you and me**

Among all the socio-religious activities that marked the week from May 21 to 28 2023, one of the most significant for us JPIC's animators and protectors of the integrity of the creation, is the Laudato Si' Week. What is Laudato Si' Week? It is a global event for Catholics and all those who commit in defense of the planet. This commemoration "began as a way to celebrate the first anniversary of Pope Francis' world-changing encyclical letter, "Laudato Si', on the Care for Our Common Home". Since then, the annual celebration has become a way for all Catholics to unite and rejoice for the progress we've made in bringing Laudato Si' to life and to commit ourselves to further prayers and actions for our common home".

Indeed, this year again, we celebrate with emphasis this week of Laudato Si' under the topic: "Hope for the earth. Hope for humanity". Also, Laudato Si' Week 2023 is celebrating with the film "The Letter" to mark the eighth anniversary of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical on care for creation. (cf. <https://laudatosiweek.org/>). In addition to the screening of the film, the opportunity is open to other activities at the local level to make this event closer to all.

In this same spirit that, we Oblates throughout several units around the world, we lived this week of reflection and action as our participation in taking care of our common home. A motto affirms "charity begins at home", it means that people should deal with the needs of people close to them before they think about helping others. Charity and fulfillment of his requirements is something that should be started at our home, which includes family, friends and neighbors. Charity is the founder's testament to all the Oblates, his children. With this purpose, a group of animators of OMI-JPIC, had concerted to undertake a very small activity, but a cheeky activity, to challenge us in each of our respective houses, just to make everyone aware of this need to join forces for a common mission such as saving our planet with simple concrete steps of each day.

Additionally, we had noted the different reactions from the members of our houses, and we shared some in our groups. According to the sharing of more than one, the reactions were diverse and sometimes full of emotions from those who were not always capable to live with limitations or those who were very sensitive to a "necessary joke". In fact, here in Rome, - already the night before the opening of Laudato Si' week - we graciously proclaim "out of order" our elevators and gave a reading to those who go up or down the stairs. It was a crazy success! but it almost pushed somebody to ask for the resignation of the director of Justice and Peace in this house (this is not entirely true!).

But sometimes a daring demonstration can help to allow certain tendencies to panic due to lack of good will in the hour to take care of our planet from our own homes and communities. So dear OMI-JPIC Animators, I tell you all this, just to encourage you in taking common initiatives to become coherent actors whose carry out sustainable actions for the good of all.

From now, the challenge is launched, and we all have the invitation of the oblate general administration that asks us to dare everything possible to implement the 37th General Chapter which reminds: "We have been made aware of our inadequate efforts for the care of the environment. We are thus challenged to commit ourselves more fully to prioritize ecological conversion as a fundamental part of our lives and an integral part of our evangelization" (cf. Acts of the 37th General Chapter, B. Hope, 11.1).

Finally, I invite you not to give up and to put yourselves into action in your pastoral units and places so that together as witnesses of the good news of God to the poor with many faces, we sow joy and hope.

Happy Feast of Pentecost!

*Fr. Jean-Hérick JASMIN,
OMI-JPIC, director*

May 25th, 2023.

OBLATE LAY ASSOCIATES

First Coordinator of Lay Associates and Associations

Stefano Dominici: During the April-May 2023 Plenary Session, the Superior General, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO received the consent of his Council to establish in the congregation the position of Coordinator of Lay Associates and Associations.

Father General has appointed Mr. Stefano Dominici, a lay associate from Italy, as the first Coordinator of Lay Associates and Association, effective 1 June, 2023. Stefano is well-known in the Oblate world. He was a member of the central team that organized the 2nd Lay Associates Congress in 2022. He was also part of the team of Associates that made a presentation at the 37th General Chapter (2022). Stefano is married to Marina and together they have 2 grown-up children, Greta and Diego.

Stefano brings to the position a wealth of gifts: his administrative gifts working in the Italian Air Force, many years of working closely

ASSOCIATION OF OBLATE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

AOIHL Meets in Obra, Poland

The Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning (AOIHL) met June 6-9 at St. Bernard Scholasticate in Obra, Poland.

This meeting was the 15th yearly meeting of the group and the first in-person meeting since 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Oblates of the Polish Province hosted the meeting. The meeting had been originally scheduled for June 2020 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Oblates' presence in Poland. One of the agenda's highlights was to review the 37th Oblate General Chapter's recommendations to the AOIHL group and formulate a follow-up plan.

At present, nine Oblate Institutes are members of the group. The 37th General Chapter established the AOIHL as an official network of the Congregation for the mutual support and development of the Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning. The AOIHL established itself in 2008

with Oblates and others in the charismatic family, in Italy and the European region, his passion for mission to the poor.

Among other things, Stefano will maintain the network of associates and associations within the congregation, and working together with others, both vowed Oblates and associates, he will propose to the Superior General and his Council ways of implementing the mandates of the 37th General Chapter on Lay Associates.

I am pleased to present to you Stefano, on behalf of Father General, and look forward to walking with him as a fellow Pilgrim of Hope in Communion.

Stefano was introduced to the General House and IRS communities during the eucharistic celebration in honor of St. Eugene on Monday, 22 May, 2023. The Superior General blessed him at the end of the eucharistic celebration and gave him the mandate to act in his name.

Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI
(Assistant General for Mission)

as a grassroots group of the individual Institutes' leadership and developed its statutes. Later in 2015, the group ratified a document entitled "Elements of a Vision for Promoting an Oblate Catholic Institution of Higher Learning" in collaboration with the Superior General in council, which the 37th General Chapter reviewed.

Fr. Raymond Mwangala, 1st Assistant General for Mission, was recently appointed by the Superior General in council as the liaison with the AOIHL and the OMI Central Government, and he helped lead the Obra meeting to discuss the Chapter recommendations and their implementation. After their discussion, the group revised the AOIHL statutes to include the recommendations approved by the General Chapter.

Each participant gave a brief report at the opening session on their Institute or Office activities in the past year. On Wednesday afternoon of the meeting, a time was scheduled for each participant to meet one-on-one with their counterparts for planning and better

knowledge of how they might be able to support one another and share resources. The group also participated together in the Solemnity of Corpus Christi Mass and procession with the parishioners and community of Obra. The final day included visiting the Poznan Seminary, the University Library, the archdiocesan cathedral, and a festive lunch with the Oblate provincial community in Poznan.

Those attending the meeting in Obra, and shown in the photo included (left to right) Fr. Francis Nallappan, Rector of the De Mazenod Institute of Philosophy in Perambakkam, India, Mr. Rene Espinosa, Vice President for Administration at Oblate School of Theology (OST), San Antonio,

Dr. Chantal Beauvais, rector of Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Fr. Raymond Mwangala, first assistant general and liaison, Rome, Fr. Piotr Pisarek, Obra Scholasticate, who was also the host of the meeting, Fr. Macaire Manimba Mane, President of De Mazenod University, Kinshasa, Congo, Fr. Damianus Johanes, Chairman of the YPPK Foundation for AMN Maritime Academy, Cilicap, Indonesia, Fr. Fabio Ciardi, Director of the General Service of Oblate Studies in Rome, Dr. Scott Woodward, President of OST, and Fr. Warren Brown, in his role AOIHL group coordinator.

The next meeting was set for June 3-7, 2024, in Cilicap, Indonesia. Fr. Damianus will be the host.

AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

OMISA

South African Oblate Bishops visit Rome

OMI bishops from South Africa began their pilgrimage by spending a few days at the General House where they met the Superior General. The pilgrimage to Rome for the SACBC (Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference) Ad Limina visit for the 5 OMI bishops from South Africa began with a few days spent at the General House. It was a spontaneous agreement among us to plan this prelude to the Ad Limina. It reflects the Oblate connectedness we have deep in our hearts; and the gratitude we feel for all that the congregations has given to us, making us who we are today in the Church.

The founder was appointed a bishop and his charism still inspires us in our episcopal ministry. It was meaningful to spend an evening with the Superior General and some members of the general council. It was a moment of fraternal sharing and mutual appreciation for our vocations in the Church. We expressed our desires to gather all the OMI Bishops for an event, maybe in 2026 when the congregation celebrates the 200th anniversary of papal approbation.

Our Ad Limina visit had a very compact programme of meetings with the dicasteries and other Vatican entities. We remembered that Ad Limina is essentially a spiritual pilgrimage; not meetings. The Masses and visits to the

tomb to St Peter and to St Paul were the most meaningful. Our episcopal ministry draws its strength from the heart of these two apostles. To think of ourselves in the line of succession, with the same mission is both humbling and energising. We could lay the concerns for our local churches and the prayers for our personal strength at the mercy of their intercession. The highlight of the visit was our hoped-for but unexpected meeting with the Holy Father, the living 'Peter' at the head of the earthly church. This gift was granted to us only a few hours after the Holy Father was discharged from hospital. The informally arranged meeting took place in the chapel of Domus Santa Marta and signified for us the unity we have with the Holy Father in the leadership of service to all. It gave fulfilment to our spiritual pilgrimage to Rome. He spoke to us about being close to God in deep prayer, being close to one another in the episcopal fraternity, being close to our priests in our dioceses and being close the people.

It was a tiring week, with much walking and listening and discussion. We enjoyed being together as the SACBC bishops. Our bond of friendship was deepened during this time. As Oblates, we missed not saying "Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate" after singing the Salve Regina and other common prayers.

*Bishop Neil Frank, OMI
(Diocese of Marianhill, South Africa)*

LESOTHO**Gathering of Young Oblates**

Lesotho Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate (LEYOMI) met from the 26th to the 29th of June 2023 at Mazenod Conference Centre in Lesotho.

Young Oblates

This group is for Oblates under six years in ministry. Present in this meeting were 15 young Oblates Priests and their Director Fr. Pali Pitso, and his presence brought the number of participants to 16. The Chairperson of LEYOMI, Fr. Tumisang regrets the lack of Oblate Brothers in this category, "it is very unfortunate that at the present moment, we do not have Oblate Brothers who are members of this group."

Ongoing Formation

This gathering came as part of Oblate's ongoing formation program as stated in our Constitution and Rules; "Ongoing formation encompasses all aspects of our development. It renews and develops our spiritual life and its inner resources and favors our growth in emotional and affective maturity. It increases our pastoral skills. It enables us to be critically aware of the integration of our life and mission at all stages of our development." (C.69)

Sharing of Experiences

Another aim of this gathering was to bring together these young men who are new in the ministry to share their experiences and challenges they encounter in their ministry. Apart from personal sharing, the meeting was enriched by the contribution of different invited guests who gave presentations on certain important topics, these included two Oblate Priests and a layperson.

- Ms. 'Me' Lineo Chabeli presented on Stress and Anger Management
- Paul Katase presented on The Sacredness of Sexuality in our Ministry
- Paul Khatala presented on Adapting to New Missionary Ministry and Young Oblates According to St. Eugene De Mazenod

Regional meeting of Young Oblates

The gathering also aimed at preparing for the regional meeting of Young Oblates which will be held in Livingstone Zambia in August 2023. Under the theme 'Serving Christ and Him Crucified'.

*Fr. Tumisang Paul Bohloa OMI,
(Chair Person LEYOMI)*

ASIA - OCEANIA**COLOMBO, SRI LANKA****RIP Fr. Oswald Firth, OMI**

(Courtesy of the Australian Oblate website - omi.com.au)

Tribute from the Australian Province on the passing of Fr. Oswald Firth, OMI, Former Assistant General (2004 – 2010).

The Australian Province announces with sadness the death of Fr Oswald Firth OMI, on June 19 in Sri Lanka. The Province was blessed to have him as a Missionary here for a number of years, and he was a great Oblate, a kind and gentle priest with a keen intellect.

Oswald Bernard Firth was born in Nugegoda, Colombo, Sri Lanka, on September 13, 1942. He joined the Oblates in 1961, and was

ordained in Rome on December 20, 1967. He was an Oblate of many talents, receiving a doctorate from the University of Human Sciences of Strasbourg in 1973, directing a number of institutions in Sri Lanka, and was First Assistant General for the Mission of the Congregation in Rome from 2004 to 2010.

He ministered in Australia from 2011 to 2014, including lecturing in Philosophy at CTC and working in formation at St Mary's Seminary. He returned to Sri Lanka for 5 years, then again ministered in Australia for 18 months from March 2019, mostly at Dernancourt parish.

We, his brothers in Australia, rejoice in thanksgiving for the life of Fr Oswald Firth and join with you in prayers as our hearts are deeply saddened.

 EUROPE

MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE

“Therefore, O Christians, recognize your dignity...!”

Spain: Celebrating the Feast of St. Eugene de Mazenod, Fr. Ismael, the Superior of the Oblate community in Malaga and parish priest of Nuestra Senora de la esperanza y San Eugenio, puts in evidence the validity, in today's world and context, of the Founder's sermon, which he preached in the church of La Madeleine, Aix-en-Provence, in 1813.

Here's Fr. Ismael's Homily:

We have heard in the Gospel the phrase which is the motto chosen by St. Eugene for the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates. He has sent me to evangelize the poor, the poor are evangelized. And this was the driving force of his life from the moment he converted to the Lord on Good Friday in 1807. That is why we listen to this Gospel text every year. Like St. Eugene, we Oblates feel sent to reproduce in our lives the sending of Christ to evangelize the most abandoned.

As in the synagogue at Nazareth, St. Eugene's first preaching took place in his hometown. A few months after his ordination to the priesthood, he was invited to give Lenten talks in the Church of “la Madeleine”. In that sermon, delivered to the humble and simple people of his town in Provençal, his mother tongue, we find that desire to evangelize the poor, which he would maintain throughout his life. I would like to take advantage of this feast to recall that beautiful sermon and to see how his message still has the same value as it did then. Remembering this message at the historical moment we are living does us a lot of good.

After an introduction, he shows who the poor are in the eyes of the world.

“Workers, who are you according to the world? A class of people dedicated to spending your lives in the drudgery of an obscure work that places you in a situation of dependence and subjects you to the whims of all those for whom you work.”

“Servants, what are you to the world? A class of people enslaved by those who pay you, exposed to contempt, to injustice, even often to the ill-treatment of exacting masters, brutal at times, who think they have bought the right to be unjust to you for the paltry wages they give you.”

“And you, farmers, peasants, what are you to the world? However useful your labors may be, they value you only by the strength of your arms; and, if they take your sweat into account, well in spite of themselves, it is only because you water the earth and make it fruitful.”

“What will become of you poor, beggars, forced by the injustice of men or by the rigor of fortune to beg for your paltry subsistence, to beg, in spite of yourselves, for the bread you need to sustain your existence? The world looks upon you as the refuse of society, unbearable to its eyes, which turns elsewhere so as not to have to pity your situation, which it does not wish to alleviate.”

“There you have what the world thinks, there you have what you are in its eyes! And yet you have chosen him as your master. And to him, you pay homage to this day. What can you expect? Insult and contempt.”

Today we too can ask ourselves, what are we to the world? Now that election time is upon us, we are nothing more than a vote that politicians use to take advantage of us for four years. We too are like the workers of that time, people dedicated to spending our lives in the drudgery of a job that places you in a situation of dependence and subjects you to the whims of those for whom you work.

We are slaves who work all our lives, to maintain our masters, through the abusive and unfair taxes we have to bear. To the world, we are nothing but a mere economic interest that we serve for as long as we are useful to work, produce and consume for our masters, but when we no longer work, produce or consume, we are of no use and are driven to forced euthanasia. What are we to the world? We are nothing more than a collection of cells to be played with, manipulated, and experimented on in the

service of the interests of those who consider themselves our lords and masters.

We are nothing more than mere slaves who have to submit everything to their totalitarian dictates. With their rules and laws, they tell us what we must be, what we must think, what we must say, how we must speak, what we must eat, what we must believe, what we must breathe, and even what to inoculate our organism with. They tell us that we will have nothing, but we will be happier. I dare say, they want to impoverish us into submission and anaesthesia through the media and the internet. That is the real opium of the people today. And those who do not submit, as we are seeing, what can they expect? Censorship, insult, and contempt.

But St. Eugene's sermon continues: "Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith. Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, unfortunate, sick, covered with sores, etc..., all of you, burdened with misery, my brothers, my dear brothers, my respectable brothers, listen to me. "You are the children of God, the brothers of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal Kingdom, the chosen portion of his inheritance. As St. Peter says, you are the holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are, in a certain sense, gods: "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High".

So it is, dear brothers, today through St. Eugene the Lord tells us exactly the same thing. It does not matter what we are to the world, what matters to us is what we are in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of God, we are his children. We are not a mere collection of cells, but a person created in the image and likeness of God, we have the seal of God inscribed deep in our hearts.

Our Father God has given us the beautiful gift of life to live it in such a way that it leads to eternal life. God never forces our human freedom, even if we misuse it. God has created all things in nature for us, for our joy and enjoyment. The Lord has prepared for us a dwelling place in heaven, our names are inscribed in the book of Life. If God is with us, who can be against us? Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God, nothing and no one, no powers, no governments, no ideologies nothing and no one. We are nobody's property; we depend only on God our Father. We are the most precious and the most precious in the eyes of God, we are the most beautiful and the most beautiful thing in creation. As St. Eugene himself said, we are brothers of Jesus Christ.

This is our vocation. This is our mission. This is our task. This is why the charism of St. Eugene, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to St. Eugene lives on. We are sent to pass on this Good News to the poorest, as he did. We are sent to this whole world in which we live today, in need of a word of encouragement and hope, which only God can give us. Jesus Christ is the only Messiah, the only Saviour, the only Redeemer. There is no other.

This is the Good News of the Gospel, we are not subject to the dark powers and interests of this world, but we have dignity, a kingship, a profound beauty given to us by God himself, who loves us and wants us and loves us to the point of giving his life for us. Even if they undo our earthly dwelling, we have an eternal mansion in heaven. Let us give thanks to God for this, and let us pass on this good news as timely today as St. Eugene did. Amen

LATIN AMERICA

FRENCH GUYANA

Oblates decided to close the French Guyana mission: the reasons for this decision

Currently, there are 12 Oblates in the mission of Guyana, in the diocese of Cayenne, including 11 Haitians from the Province of Haiti and a father of Hmong origin from the

Province of France. It was the province of France that founded this mission in 1977, to accompany the Hmong in Guyana. In 1997, the province of France called on the province of Haiti to better support the large number of migrants coming from that country. In 2002, it also called on two Brazilian missionaries for the same reason.

Faced with the pastoral emergencies of the Diocese of Cayenne – namely Brazilian and Haitian migrants, the formation of the faithful, the accompaniment of priests, nuns, and laity – the bishop at the time, Archbishop Lafont requested the support of the Oblates. And both parties signed a contract with specific clauses to be respected. Since then, and it has been 46 years, the Oblates have served the people of God in Guyana as true missionaries. They put the Oblate charism at the service of the local Church through being close to the poorest in poor neighborhoods of Guyana; support for the formation and evangelization of populations and ecclesial animators; community life and internationality.

In short, the Oblate presence in Guyana is part of a particular pastoral context. It follows the arrival of a first group of about forty Hmong families in Guyana between September and October 1971. Indeed, during the repeated civil wars that ravaged the country between 1955 and 1975, these Hmong from Laos took refuge in Thailand to escape the repression of the Laotian authorities. Thanks to the interventions of the French Missionary Oblates in Laos, they managed to bring the 40 Hmong families from a refugee camp in Thailand to French Guyana, where they arrived with two French Oblate priests in the middle of the night, after a brief stopover in Roissy Charles de Gaulle.

On the other hand, the unstable political situation in Haiti after 1990 led to a migration of Haitians to French Guyana. Given the importance of this community, the Missionary Oblates of France, already present in Guyana, quickly understood the need for a joint mission between the two provinces (France-Haiti) to better accompany the growing number of Haitian refugees settling in Guyana. In September 1999, the Province of Haiti sent a team of three Missionary Oblates to Guyana, including a priest, accompanied by two seminarians to strengthen the mission. This experiment lasted more than twenty years.

In Guyana, the Missionary Oblates founded

several parishes with the help of the faithful and their benefactors. Several Oblates have served the Diocese of Cayenne either as vicars general (2 Oblates), or as chancellors or chaplains of migrants, etc. Now, the missionary Oblates in Guyana feel great sadness and delusion at the fact that they must very soon leave this mission for uncertain and unjustified reasons.

In fact, it began because of a misunderstanding between the Bishop of Cayenne, Msgr. Alain Ransay and the Oblates on mission in this diocese. Subsequently, this malaise grew and caused a strong tension between the missionaries and the bishop. The two Oblate Provincials, of Haiti and France, with the support of the central government, opted for the path of dialogue and reconciliation, which did not bear fruit. Consequently, at the end of a meeting that took place at the bishopric of Cayenne on April 19, 2023, Bishop Alain Ransay and his new Episcopal Council, in the presence of the Oblate Major Superiors, unilaterally decided to terminate the contract linking the Diocese of Cayenne to the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This decision was accepted by the Oblates who subsequently confirmed the departure of the Missionaries from Guyana by the end of June 2023.

However, it should be noted that Bishop Alain Ransay after breaking the first contract with the Oblats was kind enough to re-establish another, which according to him must be based on the internationality of the members of the mission, with the presence of one or two Brazilian Fathers. However, the delay proposed by Bishop Ransay was not favorable to the Oblates taking such a decision, which deserves a good discernment in Congregation.

Therefore, the Oblates in Guyana agreed to turn the page of history of their missionary presence within the Church of Cayenne as of June 2023. The mission continues. Let us go out to sea under the protection of our Immaculate Mother Mary and Saint Eugene our founder!

GUATEMALA

35 years as pilgrims in Guatemala

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise.” (Hebrews 11: 8-9)

We want to express our gratitude to the Lord of life and of history who has allowed us, for 35 years, to be part of this pilgrimage with his people in these beautiful lands. We also thank all those sons of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, who, like Abraham, set out, and with their presence and missionary commitment, have left their mark in history and in the lives of many people and communities.

The story of this journey cannot be told without the committed presence of the laity, men and women of faith, families, young people and children, who have been part of it as catechists, celebrators of the Word, promoters of health, ministers of the Eucharist, trainers of pastoral workers, Oblate laity, animators of Ecclesial Base Communities, and of ecclesial movements, as well as the consecrated religious who are pilgrims in these lands, and with whom we have shared this path together in the life and faith of our people.

All pilgrims have an ideal -a compelling idea- that sets them in motion towards the Goal.

Thus, on 2 July 1988, the first 5 Oblates arrived in Guatemala to share life and faith with the people of the diocese of Quiché, one of the regions most affected and hurt by the internal armed conflict that lasted from 1960 to December 1996. This group of intrepid, far-sighted young men from Peru, Mexico, the USA and Argentina (Pedro, Héctor, Daniel, José Alberto) led by Fr. Gerardo Kapustka, “the old man,” took over the first 4 Oblate parishes, in the municipalities of Sacapulas, Cunén, Uspantán and Chicamán (currently we are present only in Chicamán).

When reopening the churches and parish houses that were quite deteriorated, since they had been used as military barracks or

clandestine detention centers, the Oblates compared their apostolic labors to the small beginnings of our congregation at the time of the Founder. Their main ministry was visiting small, impoverished rural towns, far from medical centers. The rate of illiteracy was high. Malnutrition had left its mark. The abandonment of the churches and of religious practice due to the fear of nearby bombardment, the lack of trust: these were daily elements with which the newcomers would have to work, in addition to their ignorance of the native languages. But they were sustained by their faith experiences, their community meetings and the desire to live and accompany this suffering people with the creative force of the Gospel.

However, the lives and dreams of the Oblates in those first years were strengthened by the people’s quick response; by the presence of those engaged in pastoral tasks; by the values of sharing in solidarity; by the desire to form reconciled families and communities; by the desire to live a dignified life, to celebrate faith and life. Another valuable element in going through this stage was the support and closeness of the diocesan bishop, in addition to several native priests and nuns, who had maintained their presence, their closeness in the life of the Quiché diocese. They gradually helped the Oblates to live in this persecuted, martyred and prophetic Church, which strove to live communion and participation, and which longed to live the yearned-for Peace.

During those first years, there was the opportunity to help rebuild the life and hope of the people that had been fractured by the internal armed conflict. It was a great opportunity to develop listening skills and learn, as far as possible, other languages, other ways of community organization and to share Oblate spirituality. For several years our way of being pilgrims of hope in Guatemala has been through sharing the Gospel in missionary communities by visiting and spending time with families and communities that had suffered the reality of violence. We accompany them in the search for justice and in the knowledge of their rights.

This has entailed a great effort to incorporate

into our objectives and pastoral plans spaces for listening, where we learned to take time to share life with people, with the communities to which we have been sent. In the rural areas, community celebrations, including the Eucharist, conclude with joyfully shared coffee, atole [a sweet corn-based drink], tortillas and food contributed by each family.

In response to the formation needs of the new Oblates in our region (Latin America), in an environment that will help them live and engage in their discernment of the Oblate missionary life, with the approval of the Archbishop of Guatemala City and our Superior General of those years, Fr. Marcelo Zago, the new Latin American María Inmaculada Novitiate, started in 1994 on the outskirts of the city.

In that same year, after an evaluation and community discernment, in order to meet the challenges of the Diocese of Quiché according to our charism, three Oblates decided to commit themselves to the pastoral care of the Cristo Redentor parish, in the jungle region of Ixcán (on the border with Chiapas, Mexico). Once again, the task of listening, accompaniment and formation in the care of the environment; the defense of human rights; catechetical formation; theological-pastoral reflection; and comprehensive health care continues. This has been our way of accompanying the people and communities of this region for 25 years.

This apostolic work was shared with other men and women religious and diocesan priests. Some of these towns were made up of people who had fled the internal armed conflict in Mexico and who, like in the stories of the People of Israel, told in the Old Testament, returned to start over from scratch, to rebuild their lives and hope in their homeland, equipped only with their dreams and their experience of faith that had sustained them during their time in exile. Also at this time, some young aspirants to Oblate life knocked on our doors to respond to the Lord's invitation to start a formation journey, a reason for joy and hope for our missionaries who gladly opened a vocational house.

In 1997, faced with the needs of pastoral care for the residents of the San Ignacio neighborhood, the Oblates asked the archbishop to take charge

of part of the parish of Our Lady of Belen. Thus, the quasi-parish of Santa Cecilia was born, in today's populated zone 7 of Mixco, which together with the novitiate and the central house have witnessed the great growth of this part of the city and which we continue to accompany to this day.

A difficult and painful event experienced in these years was the one that happened on 18 May 2008. On the route between Alta Verapaz and Playa Grande, Quiché, during an armed robbery, Fr. Lorenzo Rosebaugh, OMI, who was driving a minibus with most of the Oblates from Guatemala, was assassinated. In this incident there were others injured who fortunately were able to recover. The expressions of solidarity, the affection of the communities, the closeness of the brothers, the search for justice, and community prayer were vital so that despite the violent death of Fr. Larry, it was possible to celebrate the new life and the forgiveness that springs from the Easter experience. Today, Fr. Lorenzo continues to inspire the new generations of Oblates to be generous, courageous and risk-taking in the context of our pilgrimage today.

On 2 January 2016, eager as we were to expand our horizons in the country and in gratitude to Bishop Julio Cabrera Ovalle, an Honorary Oblate who invited us to come to Guatemala, we decided to open a new Oblate presence in the diocese he served. We were given the care of the Divine Mercy Parish, in Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado, in the Diocese of San Francisco de Asís, Jutiapa, (on the border with El Salvador). Our pastoral work here continues to be listening to the reality of the suffering of the families that emigrate to the north; being present to give comfort in situations where there is the absence of fathers or mothers of families; accompanying the life and faith of the small missionary communities; the formation of pastoral workers; and, pastoral work with young people.

In March 2018, after a process of several years, we managed to open the San Eugenio de Mazenod Comprehensive Health Center "FUNVIMA", a place that attends to the comprehensive health needs of residents and other people who pass through this area. It is an experience where the Oblate Lay Family collaborates actively. Many of the initiatives

are motivated and directed by them in coordination with the brothers who work in the Delegation. At this center, many people have found support for their physical, spiritual or psychological health. Here, parents of the children who enter the nutrition programs know that they will have a different future. Here they can live a day of spiritual retreat and there is also a space for recreation and parties.

What lessons have we learned from these 35 years of pilgrimage in these lands and what challenges are we missing to deal with today's reality?

“What more sublime purpose than that of their Institute? Their founder is Jesus Christ, the very Son of God; their first fathers are the Apostles. They are called to be the Saviour’s co-workers, the co-redeemers of mankind; and even though, because of their present small number and the more urgent needs of the people around them, they have to limit the scope of their zeal, for the time being, to the poor of our countryside and others; their ambition should, in its holy aspirations, embrace the vast expanse of the whole earth.”

Saint Eugene de Mazenod 1818

Today, we are still but few Oblates in the Delegation. We recognize ourselves as humble cooperators of the Savior, fragile and limited men, but who have experienced the great, merciful embrace of God that has enabled us to be witnesses of his goodness in the midst of his people. We have committed ourselves to adopting the pastoral guidelines of the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* in our way of living and announcing the Good News, so that our mission and our communities might be ecological, inclusive and self-sustaining.

We also want to maintain an openness in each community to our Oblate brothers and to the members of the Mazenodian family who wish to live and share these dreams in these “chapinas” [Guatemalan] lands.

Although today we have several native Oblates, our Delegation has had the grace to build intercultural communities that have enriched it, since we have Oblates from various parts of the world: Canada, the United States, Mexico,

Peru, Italy, Brazil, Belgium, Argentina, Congo, Poland. This has challenged us to expand our minds and hearts so that we all have a place in our communities. It has not been an easy road but we try to respond with our “yes,” every day. Some Oblates who worked in the Guatemalan delegation during these 35 years have returned to their countries of origin; others left the priestly ministry; and some others are now at rest in the House of the Father. From there, they continue exercising their task so that we can continue this work which the Lord in his goodness has entrusted to us.

The response and commitment of the Oblate laity, who deeply live the following of Jesus, building ecclesial communities, makes us love and be present in the works entrusted to us. In addition, due to the presence of the novitiate in the Delegation, we have been able to meet and share with a large number of novices who are currently exercising their ministry in their respective units.

The Oblates of Guatemala are grateful for these first 35 years of presence and we wish to remain attentive to the calls of the Lord, to respond and be present "where life cries out" for a hope of salvation that only Christ can fully offer. We wish to continue accompanying the People of God, taking the risk of a missionary church, a community of communities, fraternal and synodal, so that from its smallness, from its origins, it continues to be a servant of the people of our time. Through the gaze of the crucified Savior, we see the world redeemed by his blood, with the desire that the men in whom his passion continues may also know the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3, 10). C.4 b.

We have seen our Good Mother as a pilgrim who walks and directs us to follow in the footsteps of her Son. She lives and transmits to us attitudes and encouragement to continue the pilgrimage in our land today, like many Guatemalan women, *Mujeres del Alba* [Women of the dawn], women of struggle, of courage and commitment to her people, who animate the lives of their families and their communities. To them who teach us to live the Gospel in an ever-new way, to these mentors and companions, goes all our gratitude.

ANNIVERSARIES - JUNE 2023

75th Anniversaries of Ordinations

05/06/1948	07650	Fr. Clarence Zachman	United States
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70th Anniversaries of Vows

24/06/1953	10106	Bro. Fernando Thibodeau	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
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70th Anniversaries of Ordinations

12/06/1953	08679	Fr. Joao Bernardo Duhamel	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
24/06/1953	08523	Fr. Armand Carignan	Philippines

65th Anniversaries of Ordinations

01/06/1958	09239	Fr. Edward Vrazel	United States
05/06/1958	09851	Fr. René Lapointe	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
11/06/1958	09289	Fr. Gaston Rioux	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
22/06/1958	09570	Fr. Jan Chmist	Pologne

60th Anniversaries of Vows

13/06/1963	11418	Fr. David Ullrich	United States
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60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

09/06/1963	10190	Fr. William Thompson	Lacombe
18/06/1963	10219	Fr. Neil Macaulay	Bolper
24/06/1963	10297	Fr. Marian Biernat	Pologne

50th Anniversaries of Vows

08/06/1973	12250	Fr. Roberto Hickl	United States
24/06/1973	12228	Fr. Marciano Andres	Philippines
24/06/1973	12289	Fr. Doroteo Reyes	Philippines

50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

29/06/1973	12211	Fr. Jan Gerlowski	Pologne
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25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

12/06/1998	13479	Fr. Slawomir Oblak	Assumption
20/06/1998	13436	Fr. Stanislaw Golab	Pologne
20/06/1998	13440	Fr. Grzegorz Krzyzostaniak	Pologne
20/06/1998	13437	Fr. Lukasz Majdan	Pologne
20/06/1998	13474	Fr. Maciej Pajak	Assumption
20/06/1998	13408	Fr. Mariusz Piwowarczyk	Central European Province
20/06/1998	13439	Fr. Wojciech Turski	Pologne
27/06/1998	13472	Fr. Santi Ardiri	Mediterranea

ANNIVERSARIES - JULY 2023

70th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1953	09466	Msgr. Ramiro Díaz Sánchez	Mediterranea
26/07/1953	09504	Msgr. Denis Croteau	Lacombe

65th Anniversaries of Ordinations

06/07/1958	09617	Fr. Michel Oger	France
13/07/1958	09291	Fr. Marcel Chénier	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
13/07/1958	09350	Fr. George Kirwin	United States
13/07/1958	09322	Fr. Claude Tardif	Lacombe
27/07/1958	09438	Fr. Heribert Stumpf	Central European

60th Anniversaries of Vows

25/07/1963	11919	Bro. Ernesto Magán	Mexico
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25th Anniversaries of Vows

23/07/1998	13817	Fr. Benedicto Frías	Mexico
23/07/1998	13868	Fr. Edward Leonidas Terreros Inga	Peru

25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

06/07/1998	13335	Fr. Tarsisius Riswanta	Indonesia
10/07/1998	13486	Fr. Anthony O'Dell	Lacombe
11/07/1998	13456	Fr. Joseph Phiri	Southern Africa
21/07/1998	13532	Fr. Varaprasathem Anthonyswamy	India



Suffrages for our Deceased - May-June 2023

No. 26-41

NAME	DATE	DIED AT	BORN	PROV/DEL
Fr. Justin Trudel	02/05/2023	Richelieu	22/04/1932	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
Fr. Achiel Peelman	03/05/2023	Sint-Niklaas	15/06/1942	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
Fr. Edgar Nolzco Almeyda	06/05/2023	Lima	27/07/1973	BolPer
Fr. Don George Fernando W.	16/05/2023	Kohuwala	18/01/1933	Colombo
Fr. Michael Gumede	21/05/2023	Durban	09/03/1950	OMI Southern Africa
Fr. Andre Dubois	22/05/2023	Richelieu	03/03/1936	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
Fr. Sergio Natoli	24/05/2023	Palermo	06/10/1949	Mediterranean
Fr. Roy Boucher	26/05/2023	Arnprior	28/03/1940	Lacombe
Fr. Patrice Morel	01/06/2023	Pontmain	05/08/1927	France
Fr. Luigi Russo	08/06/2023	Capua	26/08/1934	Mediterranean
Fr. Hendrik Koen	09/06/2023	Waregem	16/06/1944	Belgium & Netherlands
Bro. Jean-Yves Poulin	15/06/2023	Richelieu	15/03/1931	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
Fr. Gabriel Jadaud	16/06/2023	Les Herbiers	21/10/1937	France
Fr. Oswald Firth	19/06/2023	Kohuwala	13/09/1942	Colombo
Fr. Donald Arel	23/06/2023	Portland	22/07/1938	United States
Bro. David du Preez	28/06/2023	Pretoria	20/07/1934	OMI Southern Africa

“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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