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LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION

LJC et MI

Dear Brother Oblates and members of our Charismatic Family,

September 1st is the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It is an initiative of Pope Francis who has also written the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (LS) on care for the common home. The 37th General Chapter told us that care for the Earth “is of special concern to us in our missionary work. We have become aware of our insufficient efforts to care for the environment. We are challenged, therefore, to commit ourselves to the fullest extent possible to make ecological conversion a priority as a fundamental part of our lives and as an integral part of our evangelisation“. (Pilgrims of Hope in Communion PEC n. 11,1).

I am aware that some, perhaps even many, question whether care for the common home is really important to us. There is even a certain resistance, if not opposition, to accept some of the proposals of Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. I would not like to enter here into scientific, political or sociological considerations that certainly need to be debated. My intention is to invite everyone to read, pray and seek ways to put into practice what the Holy Spirit can inspire in us as we confront the texts of *Laudato Si'* and the Document of our 37th General Chapter (PEC).

I have asked our General Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation to prepare tools to help us do that prayerful reading in community to “study *Laudato Si'* affirming its value and urgency in all our communities.

Sustain and promote our programmes and activities in this area, linking with other groups through the *Laudato si'* Church Platform for Action. Be aware of the simple things we can do in our communities, e.g., recycling.” (PEC 15.1)

In this letter I would like to emphasise three dimensions in which we can grow as a charismatic family responding to the call of ecological conversion.

Ecological Conversion: a call to live an ecological spirituality

Some years ago, I read an article reflecting on our dehumanising pace of life. According to the author, a monk, this way of living causes a triple rupture: rupture with God, with creation and with others. The monastic life proposes a humanising rhythm of life that is marked daily by an encounter with God, with all that is created through work, with the community and with the poor. The conclusion, which we can make our own, is that in order to humanise our society we must promote the experience of reconnecting and growing in these dimensions which, besides being deeply interconnected, serve as communicating vessels.

The fact that we are used to looking at the world through the eyes of the crucified (C.4), enables us to listen with our hearts to the cries of the poor and the groaning in travail of all creation waiting to be delivered from corruption (Rom 8:18-23). We have to recognise that many of these painful cries are provoked by us, by our actions and by our omissions.

This is what Patriarch Bartholomew has called the sin against creation, something we must repent of and correct. At the General Chapter we acknowledged our inadequate efforts. Each of us could make our own examination of conscience.

I do not believe that cultivating an ecological spirituality is in contradiction with our charism; on the contrary, I hope it can help us to grow. As missionaries, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who chose to announce the Good News from the poor and invited us to trust in God's Providence by speaking to us of the lilies of the field and the sparrows. To make us understand the transforming power of the Kingdom that we proclaim, he spoke to us of the seeds that grow into great bushes and how they grow in secret and how they bear fruit according to the soil in which they are sown. Jesus invites us to discern the signs of the times as we do the winds that announce warmth or rain. Creation is shaken when Jesus dies on the cross and his rising from the tomb on the third day causes the dawn of each new day to renew our hope in the new humanity and new creation born in his resurrection. He directs history by sending his Spirit to complete his work of recapitulation so that God may be "all in all" (Eph 1:10; 1 Cor 15:24-28).

The hopeful contemplation of creation from the perspective of redemption and definitive recapitulation leads us to love God more, to identify with him, to let him live in us (Constitution 2) and to serve him as his co-workers (C.1). Our relationship with Jesus, carefully cultivated, leads us to discover the Incarnate Word, through whom everything was created and in his creation we discover his presence. We praise that presence every day when we pray the psalms as we praise him present in the poor. Authentic ecological conversion will lead us to grow in intimacy with Christ and will also lead us to action and commitment, for in communion with Christ even the simplest actions take on

a transformative dimension beyond all expectations. Let us, then, be the first to rise up to protest against anything that prevents creatures from responding to the vocation and mission for which they were created. Let us be the first defenders of life, especially human life from its gestation to its natural end, passing through all stages of its development, being creatively active in trying everything in our power to favour the human, Christian and holy development of each person, especially caring for the most vulnerable and caring for our endangered common home. Each member of our charismatic family, each institution and especially the parishes we animate (PEC n. 13) are invited to live and promote an ecological spirituality imbued with our charism.

2. Ecological conversion: missionaries of the poor in dialogue and going out.

"We must not forget that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor, to whom we give our preference" (PEC 11.2). (PEC 11.2). We are missionaries and we go to meet the poor because Jesus has sent us. As pilgrims of hope in communion, our "first service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned" (C. 5). For a missionary, everything that happens is an opportunity to fulfil his mission. The care of our common home offers us great opportunities to meet the poor and others who, with different motivations, are striving for the same goal. We must go out to meet the women and men who are adopting a more sustainable lifestyle in response to the cries of our Mother Earth and the cries of the poor. To go out to meet, to dialogue and to work together; to go out to meet, to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. What an immense field is open to us!

Reading C. 7 in this context, we can find ourselves walking side by side with other brothers and sisters in our Church and with those who confess Christ with whom we can collaborate in ecumenical actions to care for

our common home. Also, with those who, without recognising Christ as their Saviour, work unknowingly to promote the goods of the coming Kingdom. The care of our common home is and will be a field of dialogue and collaboration between believers of different religions who, from their own tradition, proclaim that the Creator wants us to be brothers and sisters responsible for one another and for all of creation. It will also be a place of dialogue and encounter with so many of our contemporaries who do not profess to be believers but who are aware of the need to promote the sustainability of our planet: a place of encounter and even of first proclamation based on mutual respect and collaboration. We walk together with other charismatic families and other social and ecclesial agents and even with inter-religious institutions in various fields, including the promotion of fair financial investments that respect the care of the Planet. We are all called to join in this common march, and I dare to invite you to put into practice the missionary actions proposed by the 37th General Chapter.

“Our mission, in fact, leads us everywhere primarily to those whose condition cries out for a hope and a salvation that only Christ can offer in fullness. They are the poor in their multiple aspects: it is to them that our preferences go” (C.5). The care of our common home is a place of encounter with the poor, victims and called to be the protagonists of change. Always close to them, we have to find ways to put them at the centre of our actions and our lives. Better still, we must learn from them how to live better in order to take care of our common home. In this sense, we should listen to the Indigenous peoples who accumulate ancestral wisdom about the care and respect for our Mother Earth. What would be the most appropriate platforms to learn what the poor and Indigenous peoples can share and teach us?

The care of our common home can be a privileged place of missionary collaboration of our whole charismatic family. In particular, the Chapter speaks of the laity (PEC F. Laudato Si n.4). We have to learn together, we have to learn from each other, we have to pray together, we have to work together. Together we have to fight for the poor and make them the centre of our discernment. Could we choose one or two concrete actions

that we all engage in as a sign of our family commitment to care for our common home? It would be something within everyone’s reach, but which could have a significant impact. For example, let me dream that we would commit ourselves to one of these actions: to reduce the use of plastic, to recycle our waste, to generate clean energy, to consume responsibly with an eye to justice, to facilitate access to drinking water for all, etc.

Since the youth of our societies have shown global leadership in raising our awareness in caring for our common home and ensuring a sustainable future, I ask all the young people of our charismatic family, men and women, lay and consecrated, to lead us in this field. Please, young people, help us to get down to work with concrete commitments to care for our common home. Help us to walk together with you and for you and future generations. In you, young people, I place great hope.

3. Ecological conversion: the joy of evangelical poverty.

“Each Oblate and each community, each ministry and each Oblate institution will undertake a process of reflection and concrete action leading to a “prophetic and contemplative lifestyle” (LS 222), to an “attitude of heart” which looks at creation through the eyes of the crucified Saviour (C 4), and with the loving gaze of Jesus (LS 226; cf. Mk 10:21). (PEC F. Laudato Si’ n.3). Our way of living is a preaching of the Gospel. If we speak of an authentic conversion to care for our common home, we must go to the bottom of our hearts and also of our pockets. It is easier to put solar panels on our roofs than to change our lifestyle. We cannot be like those whom Jesus criticized because, knowing the Law and preaching it, their hearts and actions were far from fulfilling it. By living a simple and supportive lifestyle like that of Jesus, let us all listen to the invitation to live the evangelical counsel of poverty (Mt 5:3; 6:24-34; 19:21; Acts 2:42-47), something that we consecrated persons have committed ourselves to radically embody by professing it in our oblation.

We are called to adopt a way of life that “leads us to live in closer communion with Christ and with the poor, thus challenging the abuses of power and wealth and proclaiming the coming of a new world freed from selfishness and ready to share” (C.20). I wonder how we can do this from the perspective of caring for the common home? A way of life that cares for the planet and at the same time is a channel for living in closer communion with Christ and the poor. Let us look to Jesus, let us live in his way, and let us enter into that dynamic whereby he, being rich, became poor in order to enrich us with his poverty (2 Cor 8,9).

The CC and RR 21 and 22 offer us some indications that we should translate into our particular contexts: putting goods in common, simple lifestyle, giving collective witness of evangelical detachment, avoiding all luxury and all appearance of luxury, avoiding all immoderate gain and accumulation of goods, submitting to the common law of work, prudent administration, trusting in Providence to use with audacity even what is necessary to help the poor, etc. Is this an unattainable ideal? Let us at least set out, as individuals, families, communities and institutions, to move ever closer to this ideal.

We need to discern how our lifestyle and our way of consuming impacts our common home and the lives of the poor. This is essential to our identity and mission. It is not an easy task because we have to fight against the inertia that invites us to blind, dehumanising and ever more accelerated consumption. Distracted by so many things, we do not realise that our joy is fading because we are reducing our relationship with God to a minimum, we are connected at all times to a virtual world that disconnects us from God, from creation, from our closest brothers and sisters in the community and also and above all, we are unconcerned about the poor and about caring for our common home. Unfortunately, we justify a good many of our decisions for daily consumption as necessary for our mission but without really thinking about their missionary impact.

To overcome this kind of “modern acedia” the key word is discernment. We need to make a communitarian discernment that helps us to open our eyes to reality and to the Holy Spirit who always invites us to better love and serve the Lord whose co-workers we are and to share what we are and what we have with the poor. In this sense it would be good to discern whether we are going in the direction recommended by LS 23: “limit the use of non-renewable resources as much as possible, moderate consumption, maximise the efficiency of use, reuse and recycle“. Living in this way will do us immense good in order to develop a more evangelical life in community at the service of the poor. Do we dare to go on pilgrimage together along these paths?

I am convinced that the ecological conversion called for by Laudato Si and PEC requires a personal and collective conversion that will lead us to a change of life in order to leave in our world a mark of charity and tenderness towards the poor and towards our common home. Like Mary, let us live a simple life that leaves no other footprint than that of those who follow Jesus, sowing hope and communion. She is the Mother of the new humanity and of the new creation and in the Mystery of her Assumption into heaven, the poor girl of Nazareth reaches the fullness God dreamed of for his creature and this fills us with hope because we share her destiny. With her, hand in hand, let us walk to the rhythm of the Church which will celebrate the synodal assembly in October. To the Mother Assumed into heaven and Queen of all creation we entrust our pilgrimage to say an ever greater Yes to God’s will for us and to be more responsible for caring for the poor and for our common home. May St. Eugene and our Blessed Oblates continue to inspire and protect us to renew ourselves more ardently in our common charism.

Your brother, pilgrim of hope in communion.

*Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI
Superior General.
Havana (Cuba), August 15, 2023*

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Joint Session with Latin America and Caribe Region

The Joint Session with the Latin America and Caribe Region will be held from August 21 to August 28 in Tepoztlan, Morelos, Mexico. Members of the Central Government and the leadership of the Region will attend this meeting.

The Superior General and his entire council are in Latin America, visiting the Oblates engaged in various Oblate missions. After all the visits are concluded, a joint session will be held between the Interprovincial Conference of Latin America (CIAL) and the General Administration of the congregation.

The theme of the Joint session is PILGRIMS OF HOPE IN COMMUNION. The Central government will convene with the brothers of the Region to discuss the implementation of the mandates enacted by the XXXVII General Chapter held last year in Rome. And in a spirit of community discernment, the Joint Session will engage in a dialogue to discuss how the region responds to the world's current challenges.

To this meeting are also invited representatives of the formators of the region, bursars of the units, presidents of different committees of the region, and representatives of scholastics. This meeting is long expected since the last Joint Session in this region was held online because of Covid 19.

The place and the meeting program were proposed by the region's executive committee with some corrections, approved by Father General with his council.

The General Administration Handbook says: "Joint Sessions with a Region is an opportunity for the Central Government to meet with the leadership of the Region." Indeed that is the opportunity to know each other better, to understand the reality of the region and its respective Units, and to see together the blessings and the challenges of Oblate's mission in the Region.

To know the reality of the countries, the reality of the Church, and the reality of Oblates in different countries, the members of the Central Government are currently visiting all the Units of the Region. All will gather in Mexico a few days before the meeting (August 17) to exchange impressions from the visit and prepare some feedback for the respective Units and the Region.

May the Holy Spirit accompany all meeting participants in Mexico and grant many graces to all Oblates working in this Region!

Antoni Bochm OMI, Vicar General

A Message from the Superior General

The Superior General, Fr. Chicho, wishes to express his gratitude for the WYD experience. He also announces his upcoming visit to the Oblate Mission in Cuba and requests prayers for the Joint Session of the Latin American Region.

Here is the complete message from the Superior General:

Dear members of the Oblate family,
I am deeply grateful for all that we experienced together with the young people of our charismatic family during WYD in Lisbon. The gathering with all the young people and Oblates reaffirmed in me their love for our charism and their desire to be missionaries of and with the poor. The young people demonstrated to me that they not only represent the present and the future, but that they can also help us live with enthusiasm and joy the mandates of our General Chapter and embrace the aspirations of Pope Francis for the Church and humanity.

I am confident that our young people will implement the challenges presented to them and aid us in moving forward, with fervor, akin to Mary, in sowing seeds of fresh hope by living the Gospel.

Lisbon: Oblate Youth meets with the Superior General

Around a thousand Oblate Youth from different parts of the world participating in World Youth Day had the pleasure of meeting the Superior General, Fr. Chicho, in Lisbon, at Parques de Jogos, on Tuesday, August 1.

Here's the message of the Superior General which he addressed to the Oblate Youth.

Thanks to all those who prayed for us and with us. Thanks to the young people who joined us and to those who could not be physically present. I am grateful to God and Mary for this grace, which, I believe, will give us renewed energy to live our charism.

Visit to all the units of the Latin America Region. I invite all members of our charismatic family to accompany the Oblate Central Government in its visit to all the units of the Latin American Region before participating in the joint session with CIAL (Latin American Interprovincial Conference) in Mexico.

I will begin my trip with a visit to the Cuba Mission. Other members of the Central Government have already visited or are visiting one or two Units in the Region. We will embark on a journey together, gaining knowledge about how this Region lives its charism within its context, and we will collaborate to explore ways to address the challenges posed by the previous General Chapter effectively. We will seek occasions to share this new pilgrimage with all, as it enhances our missionary family and our pilgrimage of hope in communion.

*Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI,
Superior General.*

Dear young people.

I have been looking forward to meeting with you here in Lisbon. I thank you for your effort to come and I thank all those who have worked to make this encounter possible. A meeting that fills me with joy.

Thank you very much. In Lisbon, we have the opportunity to walk hand in hand with Pope Francis and to listen to him. He invites us to walk with Mary.

He did the same at our General Chapter where, after kissing this cross of St. Eugene de Mazenod, he proposed to us to walk together hand in hand with Mary. How can we, like Mary, be pilgrims of hope in communion?

First of all, I would like to share with you a dream. I think it is the same dream that St. Eugene had in Aix. I dream that young people become the driving force that helps our entire charismatic family to live the Gospel with joy and enthusiasm and to proclaim it among the poorest. Or I propose, dear young people, that in the next six years, you be the protagonists of the missionary renewal of our charismatic family and that you do it as Mary did with the community of Jesus: the Church, so that we can be pilgrims of hope in communion. Do you want to help us in this adventure?

Pilgrims:

We are pilgrims, and we seek happiness in our lives. With all humanity, we seek the fullness of life, justice and peace. We know that to become fully happy, we cannot stand still. We need to go out of our comfort zones. We need to risk, to grow, to walk. All of humanity is on pilgrimage, and to be fully human, and fully happy, we have to go on pilgrimage to build universal fraternity.

When Mary heard the Angel's announcement, she responded with a big YES to God's plan. Luke's Gospel says that immediately and "with haste, she set out on her journey". Mary did not know very well what the words of the angel meant, and she was afraid and doubted. We too, are afraid and doubtful. Mary set out to serve, and along the way, things became clearer. Mary teaches us that to fulfil the mission, we must leave the familiar; we must abandon our comforts and go on a pilgrimage in search of God's will.

Mary also teaches us that in order to go on a pilgrimage, we need to walk with God. She walked with the presence of Jesus in her womb. We have to do the same, walk with Jesus, who tells us: do not be afraid, I am with you. Do not let fear or doubt impede your pilgrimage. On the way, Jesus will teach us with his Word and strengthen us with his presence. The important thing is that we go on

pilgrimage hand in hand with Jesus and Mary. How can we, Oblates and young people, walk together seeking to respond to God's plan? What are the fears that prevent me from walking?

Hope:

When Mary meets Elizabeth joy, and hope explode in a song of praise to God. It is the Magnificat that speaks of a merciful God who will save humanity, starting from the poorest. A God who does justice, bringing down from the throne the powerful and the proud and exalting the poor and the humble. A God who looks at our littleness for freedom and fullness of life with his mercy. Mary discovers all this by placing herself at the service of her cousin and is thus the servant of all humanity.

When one looks at the situation of humanity, one is tempted to despair. Mary teaches us that Jesus, rich in mercy, is the hope of the poor and the suffering. If we keep the Gospel in our hearts and put it into practice, we will be like Him. The hope of the poor is in Jesus, and it is we who have to proclaim the Gospel by the way we live.

Like Mary, let us keep in our hearts the words of Jesus. Let us be a Gospel that the poor can read and hear. Let us be sowers of hope by placing ourselves at the service of the poorest. And at the same time, let us allow ourselves to be touched by the poor because God has chosen them to act with mercy and save humanity from its drift. Let us learn to read and live the Gospel and to allow ourselves to be evangelized by the poor.

How can we, Oblates and young people, live the Gospel together with the poor? Can you share some experience? What do you find most difficult about the Gospel?

Communion:

The Church invites us to synodality, a word that means to walk together. The last General Chapter invites us to go on pilgrimage in communion and to take care of our common home, our charismatic family. The model for pilgrimage in communion we have in Mary who knew how to build a missionary community, going out and serving.

From the Angel's announcement, she sets out on the road and visits Elizabeth and her family, thinking of putting herself at their service. She will do the same in the house of Nazareth together with Joseph, helping Jesus to grow in stature, wisdom and grace: communion and service. Later she will set out to be Jesus' disciple when he preached. On the cross Jesus gives us Mary as a mother to accompany us in our daily crosses. Mary will be the Mother of the Church, a missionary communion. Her secret was that she always responded with a Yes to the calls of the Holy Spirit and was herself a Temple of the same Spirit.

We cannot walk alone. We need to be in communion with the Church and we need to be in communion with God. We have a very great responsibility to take care of our relationships so that they are evangelical, just as Jesus wanted: love one another as I have loved you, wash one another's feet, listen to my Word and keep it, whoever does this to one of the poorest of my little ones does it to me and I am with you until the end of the world.

Our groups must become a field hospital that cares for all the wounded and also a tent where we meet God and open to welcome and hospitality for all. In my letter of February 17 of this year I wrote: "Let our houses become missionary homes, centered

on Jesus Christ, living the Gospel, welcoming and protecting the most vulnerable and going out on the roads as pilgrims of hope in communion". My dream is that you young people will be the main protagonists in caring for our common home in order to better serve the mission and the poor. How can we make this dream come true? What would we have to change or improve in our groups to live in communion with God, with each other and with the poor?

Conclusion

Dear young people. You will now go and discuss this message in small groups. I look forward to hearing and learning from your conclusions. I am sure that St. Eugene will also be very attentive to your contributions, as he was in Aix with his young people. He had a very intense relationship with many of them throughout his life, some of whom were key Oblates in the early days of the Congregation. Let us walk with him as pilgrims of hope in communion, hand in hand with Mary Immaculate, our mother and model. May they and all our Blessed Oblates intercede for us to be the holy missionaries in the community that God has dreamed of us. Thank you very much!

*Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI
Superior General.*

Father General, a pilgrim at the feet of Guadalupe

On August 24, the Superior General made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The Central Government and the participants of the joint session joined the Oblates and Lay Associates of the Province of Mexico in thanksgiving as they set out as pilgrims to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where Father General presided at the Eucharist.

In this celebration, which marked 80 years of continuous Oblate presence in Mexico, the Superior General invoked the maternal intercession of our Beloved Mother for our Oblate family worldwide. He consecrated the entire Oblate charismatic family to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Here is the homily delivered by the Superior General on this occasion:

August 24, 2023. St. Bartholomew, one of our First Fathers, Mother of God and our Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, we come before you walking today, pilgrims of hope in communion. We come today to the hill of Tepeyac and celebrate the mystery of your Son's love in this basilica that guards your image.

We walk with the Oblates and lay associates of Mexico who are celebrating the 80th anniversary of their missionary pilgrimage through Mexican lands. Together with them we walk with representatives of all Latin America and of our charismatic family from all over the world. We come in the name of many men and women, lay and consecrated, who feel in our hearts beating strongly the advice of our Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, who asked us to always have you as our mother and to profess to you a tender and sincere devotion. How beautiful you are Mary, Virgin of Guadalupe, in your figure imprinted on the tilma that we venerate today!

Drawn by this beauty, we want to consecrate to you today our Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and all the members of our charismatic family. We consecrate to you our works and missions, the elderly and the young, the healthy and the sick, our communities and families and also all the people we serve and in a more particular way the poor and most vulnerable who honor us by allowing us to be of service to them. We entrust to you our missionary sufferings and joys, knowing that you will turn them into a joyful proclamation of the Gospel.

Virgin of Guadalupe, look at us with your merciful eyes and may each one of our persons be engraved in your pupils, look at us and help us to always better serve God and his Kingdom, to serve and love the poorest and most vulnerable. Look upon us and transform our weakness into strength that puts itself at the service, our cowardice into missionary audacity, our lukewarmness into evangelical fire. Help us to try everything to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. Help us to let ourselves be watched by you, to be upright and truthful.

May your gaze console us, transform us and encourage us to be the cooperators of your Son and to live our lives totally dedicated to the plan of salvation for all men as you yourself did, disciple and missionary of your Son Jesus Christ.

Let us also contemplate your image miraculously imprinted on this tilma that for centuries announces your message, a message of joy for the poor and simple, a message of communion among peoples, a message of hope. As we contemplate your hands and your dark complexion, we welcome the proclamation of that new humanity in which all men of all races and of all times are called to participate in the communion of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. A perfect communion in which neither diversity nor the identity of each one is diluted. In you we see the model of interculturality that gives the world the hope of a new humanity in which, without renouncing our roots, we place ourselves at the service of a communion that anticipates and announces the definitive communion in the bosom of the Father. Your dark complexion is already the fulfilled reality of the Good News that transcends our limits and frontiers and announces the universal fraternity that we commit ourselves to build according to the Gospel.

In your praying hands we take refuge: pray for us and with you help us to pray for all humanity, Mother of Mercy. Praying hands that welcome and guard the Word of God until it becomes flesh and life in our history. Praying hands that are the hands of the young worker in the house of Nazareth who knows how to find the presence of God in everything and everyone. As we consecrate ourselves today to you, Virgin of Guadalupe, help us to be always contemplative in action, to welcome the Holy Spirit and to let ourselves always be guided by HIM so that we can always say Yes to God with a life given in oblation, an oblation that is always renewed in our missionary commitment.

In your blessed womb is already present your son who, as the Son of God, shines as a new light that illuminates our nights. A divine light, Mother of Guadalupe, that you carry in your womb to give to the world for which He alone is the hope. Your Son Jesus shines in your womb and in your pilgrimage you sow light and joy. We are pilgrims with the Church that walks synodically and we want to be those who remember and prolong your journey on this earth.

Mother of missionary unity, walk always with us, do not let go of our hand. May we always walk in communion with the Church and with our pastors, especially may we walk in communion with the Pope. Like St. Juan Diego sent by you to the bishop, may we know how to be sowers of communion in the People of God, walking in humility, working for peace, reconciliation and harmony, seeking paths to walk in unity with all Christians, also on pilgrimage in dialogue with those who follow the way in other religions, in dialogue with all men and women of our societies, building together universal brotherhood. Come with us to walk since you are here and you are the mother of all humanity!

Mother of the new creation, your starry mantle invites us to contemplate the heavens. Your dress speaks to us of a creation where so many native peoples have seen the divine presence. Give us the grace to care for our common home and to care with tenderness and respect for all creation. May we work for justice and peace to recover that harmony that reflects your image and of which you are a proclamation, because in you, Immaculate Mother, God has already worked the definitive victory over all evil, over all death, over all sin. May we proclaim, in word and deed, this divine victory over evil by embracing with you a simple life inspired by the Gospel. A life inspired by your song of praise to God, exalting his mercy and justice, choosing to be with and serve the humble and poor in order to announce the salvation that is already dawning.

May your flowing hair, a sign of virginity and integrity, help us to live with a pure heart so that we may be blessed and be able to contemplate God. May we live evangelical poverty in order to proclaim the Kingdom and the obedience of those who cooperate with your Son, as you did at the foot of the cross, helping him to fulfil the will of the Father to the end. Give us, Mary, the gift of perseverance so that our brothers and sisters may reach joy and fullness in their life and mission.

Holy Mary, Virgin of Guadalupe: we are your Oblates. May your shy smile strengthen us. You are here and you are our Mother, do not leave your children abandoned. Choose us to carry your message of evangelical joy to the poorest and make us bold in the face of every danger, give us the strength to go on pilgrimage growing in faith, hope and love so that we may be those holy missionaries that St. Eugene de Mazenod dreamed of, preaching the Good News to the most abandoned and being pilgrims of hope in communion.

As we leave your holy temple, may your image be engraved in our hearts so that we may be an extension of you, Mary, in the Church; may we be Mary in the Mission, may we be Mary caring for the poorest and most vulnerable as you cared for your Son and tenderly care for us today. Thank you Mary for having brought us here to consecrate ourselves in body, soul and spirit to you, Virgin of Guadalupe. We ask your holy blessing and that of your Son, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen

*Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI
Superior General
Mexico, in the Basilica of Our Lady the Virgin of
Guadalupe!*

AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

Oblates gather for a formation session in Figuil

Fr. Dieudonné INAWAY, OMI, was one of the twenty-two Oblates, (priests and a brother) who participated in an Ongoing formation session in Figuil for Oblates with less than 5 years of ordination and perpetual vows. He tells us how they all “listened attentively to the wisdom of their elders.”

In a session moderated by Fr. Noël DOOLALILA OMI, on the first day, we took time to get to know each other better. Then, Fr. Paulin reminded us of the Founder’s vision, which the Oblates are called to perpetuate while maintaining their style of mission. Oblates are witnesses to Christ through their way of being, of preaching, of being close to the poor in their apostolate. Living in community, they must support one another for the good of the Church and the Congregation. In this way, each Oblate must give of himself for the good of his community.

Bishop Antoine Ntalou, sharing his experience as a priest and bishop, told us: “You and I are all former seminarians. And I like to talk to seminarians and former seminarians to find out what their impressions were when they left the formation house....”. For Mgr Ntalou, many priests feel a sense of relief after their first formation, while others regret it. However, the formation house gives each one a certain number of elements for the mission. He suggested a few principles to live by to hold fast to the first things you learn in first formation: to look at and contemplate Christ, to follow the ideal of the cross, which is a message for us who wear it, but also for others who look to us.

Bishop Ntalou ended his talk by reminding us that the Church didn’t start with us. She’s an old lady, dating back more than twenty centuries, with a wealth of experience. That’s why each of us must do our part to improve the Church while remaining humble.

Abbé Gabriel Djibi spoke to us about three aspects: The theological aspect: we are all believers and equal in dignity by virtue of our baptism. This being the case, we need to have a good relationship with the faithful and pass on the faith. The ministerial aspect consists in looking after the groups and movements and preparing our homilies well. Just as Christ organized the apostles around Peter, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons must be in communion with the Pope. In this communion, our job is to continue the vision of the universal Church and that of the local ordinary. On the practical aspect, the protection of minors and vulnerable people was at the heart of our reflections.

Fr. Ludovic, Vicar Provincial, spoke to us about his missionary experience in the Cameroon Province. Three areas were recommended to us: The area of one’s own life: this consists in taking care of oneself and working on one’s qualities and defects. In the Oblate area, our identity must be put to work for our Province. Finally, the Christian area can be summed up in three words: communion, participation, and mission. In short, this session was an opportunity for me to reunite with my colleagues, and it encouraged me to get organized in my mission to enhance our heritage.

Dieudonné INAWAY, OMI

Zambia: Young Oblates respond to the call of the General Chapter

The Oblate Delegation of Zambia is currently hosting a meeting of the Young Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Y.O.M.I) from the five anglophone countries of the subregion of Africa-Madagascar: Lesotho, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

“Serving Christ and him crucified” is the theme chosen to lead the participants who have gathered at the “Luxe Countryside” in Livingstone, Zambia. Among the invited guests is Fr. Lawrence Sakubita LIKE, OMI, the Procurator General, and the Superior General, Rev. Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, who joined the meeting virtually. The enthusiastic participants write about their first-day experience of the gathering.

Our day began with an Eucharistic celebration presided by Bishop Valentine Kalumba, OMI. In his homily, he began by reminding us that “in as much as we all need eternal life, eternal life is not a calculated observance of the commandments or, in our case as Oblates, a calculated observance of the Constitutions and Rules but rather eternal life is founded on having a loving attitude and self-sacrificing generosity towards our brothers and sisters.”

In our ministry as Oblates, we shouldn’t think in terms of actions like the rich young man asking, “What should I do in order to attain eternal life, rather we should be thinking of what should I do in order to draw closer to God.” Bishop Valentine challenged us not only to be observers of the law but lovers of the poor, too, as this is central to our Charism and spirituality as Oblates.

Fr. LIKE presented the topic: “The Constitutions and Rules in Light of the 37th General Chapter—Pilgrims in Ongoing Formation.” In his presentation, Fr. LIKE affirmed the importance of gathering those who are in ongoing formation by giving reference to the General Chapter document, which says: “Formation gatherings of those who are new to full-time ministry are life-giving and life-affirming in helping them “learn from life experience” (ACTS of the 37th General Chapter, 8.2). Assisting one another in living out our Oblate identity is discerned as crucial by the General chapter.

His presentation was divided into three main parts:

- The essence of the Constitutions and Rules,
- The essence of the 37th General Chapter and
- The essence of the relationship between the CC & RR and the 37th General Chapter.

According to Fr. LIKE, the essence of the law is to bring about justice since “all persons are perfectly equal and have the exact same weight on the scale of justice (Hervada). Fr. LIKE recalled that according to commutative justice, all Oblates are equal by virtue of their Perpetual Oblation. Furthermore, according to distributive justice, the Congregation has the duty to provide Mission (Evangelization) and goods to its members, and by legal justice, every member has an obligation to demonstrate their Oblate Identity to the Congregation.

Our day ended with the address from the Superior General via Zoom on “The State of Affairs in the Oblate World and the Call to Interculturality.” The Superior General emphasized responsibility. In other words, to be accountable for the Charism and Mission of the Congregation. He stressed that his main role is at the General level, but each one of us is a Superior General at the local level, and we are all responsible for the Congregation.

The Superior General also spoke about the Acts of the 37th General Chapter, a theme familiar to us all, Pilgrims of Hope in Communion. He pointed out the ways of living the Chapter calls. The Superior General mentioned that “interculturality is not about placing people of different backgrounds together, but it is about recreating our relationships and to be born anew, and this comes from our different cultures.” It is not easy, it is a challenge, but it is doable!

Concluding his address, the Superior General stressed the importance of understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in living the Charism and the significance of learning from the people we serve; despite having so much knowledge and insight on the Constitutions and Rules, we can learn so much from the people, but we must be open to the Holy Spirit. We then had an interaction with him on different subjects.

Cebelihle CIBANE & Conrad KAPEYA,

ASIA - OCEANIA

Oblate Youth: “I would like to share with you a dream.”

The Superior General met with Oblate Youth at Parque de Jogos in Lisbon on Tuesday morning. The event, attended by some 1000 enthusiastic young people, profoundly moved Fr. Chicho as he opened his heart to the Oblate Youth. Emma, an Oblate Youth Leader from Australia, reports on this special event.

This morning, the small pilgrimage contingent from Oblate Youth Australia arrived at Parque de Jogos for the international Oblate youth event. After beginning their pilgrimage ten days prior in the Holy Land, they arrived a little tired but very excited to be united with the entire young De Mazenod Family.

Our last international gathering of young people was at World Youth Day in Poland in 2016, and even though almost seven years have passed since then, it was fantastic to see old friends reunited. It was also wonderful to witness those that have never been to an international oblate youth encounter meeting and get to know other young members of the De Mazenod Family. It was even more special for our Province as we connected with the China Mission Pilgrimage group from Hong Kong, also part of the Australian Province. Both groups will be lucky enough to spend some time in Aix-En-Provence together after World Youth Day to reflect on their pilgrimage.

Unfortunately, we only had 2 hours together, but we made the most of every minute we had with each other. We danced, waltzed, sang, chatted, and took many photos. No doubt, a quick scroll of any Oblate social media page will be filled with videos and pictures from the event.

“First of all, I would like to share with you a dream. I think it is the same dream that St. Eugene had in Aix. I dream that young people become the driving force that helps our entire charismatic family to live the Gospel with joy and enthusiasm and to proclaim it among the poorest. I propose, dear young people, that in the next six years, you be the protagonists of the missionary renewal of our charismatic family and that you do it as Mary did with the community of Jesus: the Church, so that we can be pilgrims of hope in communion. Do you want to help us in this adventure?” Fr. Chicho.

But the event’s highlight was the address from the Superior General, Fr. Chicho. It was a powerful moment of prayer and reflection as we listened to Fr. Chicho reflect on the theme from the 37th General Chapter: Pilgrims of Hope in Communion. Fr. Chicho challenged us to walk with God just as Mary did, to be sowers of hope by placing ourselves at the service of the poor and continue to be in communion with the Church and God. We ended this powerful moment of prayer and reflection by being blessed by our founder, St. Eugene’s cross, and told to “go and be Superior Generals in our communities.”

We thank the European Vocations and Youth Ministry for all the work and time spent preparing and hosting this event under challenging circumstances. The next World Youth Day will allow us more time together.

Emma Rice

Indonesia: Oblates gather as pilgrims of hope in communion

Oblates of the Indonesian Province spent days together to discern God's will and to thank the Lord for the work of salvation which he accomplishes through them.

After the first meeting on 15-17 November 2022, last year, as a Province, the Oblates from around the Indonesian Archipelagos came together for an Oblate gathering held at the Oblate Retreat House in Kaliori, Central Java, on 3-7 July 2023. The aim of the gathering was mainly to give a clear response to the 37th General Chapter Document.

The gathering allowed us as a Province to reflect on how we can implement and contextualize the Chapter message in our respective areas of ministries. As quoted in the Chapter Document, we think that this Gathering was indeed a moment to be "together, in union with the Church, we discern God's will in the urgent needs of our times and thank the Lord for the work of salvation which he accomplishes through us" (C 125).

Two things have made this Oblate Gathering so special. Firstly, it was an occasion for us as a Province to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Oblate mission on Indonesian soil, where the first Oblate arrived in October 1971. Since the pandemic limited our movement and traveling for the last few years, we decided that this year is an opportunity to celebrate the jubilee as a Province. 2023 also marks the 30th anniversary of our Province and the 40th anniversary of our Major Seminary, Wisma De Mazenod, Condong Catur, Jogjakarta.

Secondly, it was the first time we welcomed our beloved Fr. Henricus Asodo, OMI, who is visiting his home Province as a Second Assistant General. He has been away from our Province for over nine years for ministry in Aix-en-Provence.

We had an opportunity for a two-day retreat with him on deepening the General Chapter Document, followed by two days dedicated to group sharing and plenary. The gathering helped us to understand the most profound message of the Chapter and respond to it by reshaping and mapping out our future ministries in the Province as Oblates.

The highlight of the gathering was a thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration presided by Fr. Henricus ASODO. All the Oblates in the first formation were present. Some lay people from our Schools, Clinics, other representatives from some ministries, and the Mazenodian family also attended the celebration. In the last part of the Eucharistic, we listened to the Superior General's message, highlighting the essential points of the Chapter and his special support and blessing for the Province.

What a grand celebration, from the solemn atmosphere during the Eucharistic celebration to the sense of family and togetherness experienced after Mass and felt by everybody present. The presence of different groups livened up the liturgy and the opening of the gathering. We are grateful to all those who contributed in one way or the other, for example, a group of traditional dancers from our Maritime Academy and the different choir groups who graced the gathering with enthusiasm and positive energy.

We recall the message of Pope Francis to the Oblates as recorded in our General Chapter Document when he said, "May your Founder, the charism he transmitted to you, and his missionary vision be and remain points of reference for your life and your work." We look forward to our next gathering for a moment of sharing as pilgrims of hope.

Yohanes Damianus, OMI

Pakistan: Further anti-Christian violence

Oblates in Pakistan participate in a peaceful protest against Christianophobia after the recent events where Christians were violently attacked and their churches torched.

Unexpectedly, on 16 August 2023, 350 Christian families in the town of Jaranwala, 40 km from the regional city of Faisalabad in central Pakistan, were the victims of religion-based violence simply because they were Christians. This is the most recent outbreak of continuing incidents of Christianophobia plaguing Pakistan.

Leaders of a fundamentalist political party and local Muslim leaders incited a mob of mostly young Muslim men to attack and burn 21 Christian churches and to drive the Christian people out of town and into hiding. The mob destroyed Christian homes and defiled Christian graves in the Christian cemetery.

As always in such cases of Christianophobia in Pakistan, the reason for this religious violence was a false accusation made against Christians of disrespecting the Quran. It has always been shown that these accusations lack any foundation. Christians are easy targets for these false accusations because they are considered defenseless members of a religious minority in Pakistan.

The altars were destroyed, the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints and holy images were smashed, and Missals and Holy Bibles were

burnt and desecrated. The Tabernacle in one of the Catholic churches was pulled from the wall and smashed, and the Blessed Sacrament was desecrated. These have been horror-filled days for Pakistani Christians in Jaranwala who had just finished celebrating Pakistan Independence Day on August 14.

The mob was violent. The Christians of Jaranwala were terrified, and their lives were in danger. Some, however, were protected by their Muslim neighbors. The police arrived late and did nothing to stop the mob of about 7,000 Muslims from terrorizing the streets. Bishops and religious leaders in Pakistan have strongly voiced their protests.

Justice Qazi Faez Isa of the Supreme Court of Pakistan visited Jaranwala on 19 August to express his anger at this violation of the constitutional and legal rights of Pakistani Christians. The Pakistani interim prime minister, the interim chief minister of Punjab, and national Muslim leaders have acknowledged that this religious violence in Jaranwala has shamed Pakistan and humiliated it internationally.

The national political leaders and Muslim religious authorities have apologized to Christians in Pakistan. They are collaborating with the leaders of Christian churches to bring about reconciliation which will identify and acknowledge the root causes of Christianophobia in Pakistan and which will work toward equality for all Pakistanis irrespective of their religion.

Gulshan BARKAT, OMI

 CANADA - US

WYD-Canada: “As Oblates, we have much to learn from the Youth”

Nine Oblates from the Assumption Province, who accompanied a group of 422 Young pilgrims to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, feel challenged by the faith and the desire for sanctity demonstrated by the Youth during their pilgrimage in Lisbon.

On July 26, 2023, groups of Oblate Youth Canada departed for Portugal. They came from St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish, St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish, St. Casimir's Parish, St. Therese Parish in Courtice, St. Hyacinth Parish in Ottawa, St. Therese Parish in Kitchener, St. Gabriel's Parish in Burlington, Holy Ghost Parish in Winnipeg, Holy Rosary Parish and Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish in Edmonton. In total, 422 young people, 9 Oblates, and 2 pre-novices made their way to WYD Lisbon.

Most of the group spent the first week in the diocese of Leira-Fatima, where, under the mantle of the Blessed Mother of Fatima, they prepared for the main celebrations in Lisbon. During this time, they had the opportunity to take a pilgrimage to Fatima, to learn more about the Portuguese culture, and to receive the witness of over 10,000 young people who were with them from the host diocese.

After this, the whole group of OYC (Oblate Youth Canada) traveled to Lisbon, where on August 1, they had the joy of encountering the Oblate Youth from different parts of the globe.

Together, they listened to Fr. General, who encouraged them to be pilgrims of hope and form communities with each other and the entire Oblate family. They enjoyed being challenged to be the extension of the hands of the Superior General in their realities and to witness to the Oblates what it means to live out the Oblate Charism daily.

The following days were full of the joys and difficulties of being a pilgrim, as the young people walked long distances to meet the Holy Father and be strengthened by his words. He reminded them that God knows each of them by name and that they are important to Him.

The culminating point of the World Youth Days was the vigil and Mass with the Holy Father. The most enriching witness to the youth was seeing so many of their peers gather for Mass. Everyone fell silent to adore the blessed sacrament, being led by the Vicar of Christ to the Eucharist and Christ himself.

It was a long 13-day journey that strengthened the youth from Assumption Province and will leave a lasting impression on their hearts. As Oblates, we have much to learn from these young people and their desire to be saints.

Marcin Serwin, OMI

 EUROPE

OMI-WYD: Fr. Chicho captivates the hearts of young pilgrims

During their pilgrimage, the young people felt deeply moved by the closeness of the Oblates. Among them, Ivan and Miriam, a young couple and youth from the Oblate parish of Saint Leandro in Madrid, share their experience of having Fr. Chicho with them and their testimony throughout those days.

A large number of Oblates from all over the world accompanied young people to WYD in Lisbon, including the Superior General, Fr. Chicho, and some members of the central government, Fr. Raymond Mwangala OMI, first assistant general, and Fr. Kapena Erastus OMI, general councillor for the Africa-Madagascar region. For us, WYD has been an experience of faith and community. A truly transformative and heartfelt experience that has aided us in discerning numerous things.

In this reflection, I would like to share with you the example of humility, simplicity, and a life of faith that our Superior General has shown throughout this week. First of all, he decided to be with a group of young Spaniards and participate in all the activities with us, regardless of how intense or tiring these things were. Fr. Chicho chose to be with us, and he gave up the commodities of a hotel, or a guest house in order to be close to his people, just like the Pope asks of his pastors.

A young person usually gives up their seat on public transportation or at a rest area so that older people can sit down. However, Fr. Chicho's example put this beautiful custom upside down. He was the first to give up his seat so that others, no matter the situation, could have a place to sit.

Besides all of this, something that caught our attention was his simplicity and sense of poverty. While many of us slept on inflatable mats, and some of us even had two inflatable mats in order to soften the ground, Fr. Chicho slept on the ground on a simple mat without protesting or complaining, regardless of how uncomfortable it was.

Speaking of sleep, we would also like to share the example of God's love and closeness with him. Even though he was exhausted and regardless of what time he would have to wake up, Fr Chicho was seen faithfully every night and every morning. You could easily see him praying Lauds or Vespers. This makes us realize the importance of daily prayer and the need to have God present in our daily lives, even in the smallest things, in the simplest moments, and regardless of the circumstances.

For us, Fr. Chicho has been a great example of service, simplicity, and closeness to the Lord. We thank God for his work of evangelization, for his way of living these days with us, and for his willingness to always be with the people.

Thank you, Fr. Chicho, thank you for these days of sharing with us and for all those special moments you shared with each one of us. Father General has been a great example of prayer and availability of life for and on behalf of others, and we thank the Lord for giving us the chance to live this experience of faith with him.

Iván Ramos Luján y Miriam Alonso Jiménez

Another vision of the WYD

Fr. Ismael, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate from the Mediterranean Province, recently participated in the World Youth Day activities in Lisbon. The Experience provoked in him some deep reflection, here he shares with us his reflections on this unforgettable experience.

32 years ago, I was fortunate enough to participate in one of the annual summer camps held by the parish of San Leandro in (Aluche) Madrid. I am talking about July 1991. It was my first time participating in such an activity. At that time, Fr. Chicho was the parochial vicar of that parish.

A few weeks ago, I accompanied a small group of ten young people from our Oblate parish in Malaga (Our Lady of Hope and St. Eugene de Mazenod) to the Oblate Encounter before WYD, organized by the Mediterranean Province, and later to WYD with all the young people from around the globe. I was taken aback by how Fr. Chicho, whom I had met many years ago when I was a young man of fifteen, is the same one with whom we shared, especially with the group of young Spaniards. I want to talk about two things that show this is true.

In the first place, his way of talking and being a witness to young people of God's love, the love for Jesus Christ and the Gospel, which he tries to live daily, and the love for the poor were things that at that moment helped form my Christian life. He taught me how to read the Gospel, love Jesus Christ, and love those who are most in need. In synthesis, his message resonated directly within me, both in the words that he addressed the young people during the preliminary meetings and then during the Oblate Encounter, when he met Oblate Youth from around the world in the middle of WYD.

Secondly, his way of living and relating to young people. Fr. Chicho has always been a close and attentive person who showed concern for young people. And he has shown this by sharing in our experiences, our own lives, by sharing in our fatigue, standing waiting in queues, not sleeping, etc...the difficulties that any young person experiments during World Youth Day. He reminded me of that first summer camp I shared with him where we didn't have electricity or running water in a hotel in a town in León. On this World Youth Day, thirty-five years later, we have again shared other types of discomforts, just as we did at that time. It was a joy to share these special days with him and other members of the general administration who accompanied us.

The young people were surprised by his closeness and proximity, his willingness to talk to any of them with such naturalness, and his willingness to answer all the questions and personal concerns they had because they were living with an Oblate who was sharing life with them. I was once again affirmed that the Chicho whom I had encountered thirty-two years ago remains the same, and has come to share with us again.

I will end with one last thing. I recently received all the speeches and catechesis Pope Francis gave in Lisbon. It would be nice to be able to have Chicho's two catechesis and his responses to the young people during these days before the arrival of Pope Francis. This will help to have a complete and broader vision of what we lived during those days. We were with two people who, each in their way, have transmitted to us the same message of love for Jesus Christ and the most abandoned in our world.

García Ismael, OMI

OMI-WYDays testimony: “Young people, do not be afraid.”

Inmaculada participated in WYD with the Oblate Youth in Madrid and Lisbon. Now she shares with us her unforgettable experience.

We concluded World Youth Day in Lisbon. The encounter we had beforehand in Pozuelo was lived with great joy because we were able to feel the spirit of the OMI Family alongside the Martyrs, other young people from around the globe, and our Superior General, Fr. Chicho. I am convinced that it was a moment of grace for everyone.

Personally, it was a sign that the message to Fr. Chicho to the young people and the Pope’s message are united with that of the martyrs: the love of God always wins, do not be afraid to be a missionary witness of hope. During these days, I could also feel the communion and catholicity of the entire Church. Numerous young people gathered to hear Pope Francis remind us that Christ loves each one of us. He invited us to become aware of how God looks at us and that he loves us just as we are. Pope Francis especially reminded us not to be afraid but to trust in God and to get up with the courage of Mary.

A particularly moving moment for me was when I saw so many young people from all over the globe kneeling before the blessed sacrament in utter silence. They felt God looking at them, and God was indeed looking at us with tenderness. At that moment, we let ourselves be lifted up by Christ, we helped others be lifted up, and we brought the joy of the gospel to everyone. I thank God for the opportunity to share the faith and charism with young people, with our Oblate brothers, the Oblatas, and the COMI. May Mary Immaculate, Saint Eugene, and the young martyrs continue to intercede for all young people.

The Testimony of Leidy, a young woman from the parish of San Juan Diego

If I were to summarize my experience of world youth day in one sentence, it would be with the following words: “on the road.” From the very beginning of this adventure, which started in Pozuelo and ended with the Commissioning Mass in Campo de Gracia Lisbon, I have seen the parable of the good Samaritan become flesh. On the one hand, I witnessed concrete faces and names that needed that happiness which can only be satisfied by God. On the other hand, there was a willingness of more than 1 million young people from different countries to help each other and themselves to get closer to this joy.

Along the same lines as the parable of the good Samaritan, as we walk through life, we open ourselves to encounter adversities, persons, and the occasional bump in the road. However, in the face of these scenarios that life puts before us, we must ask ourselves what the Pope said at the vigil: “Do we fall and remain defeated, or do we keep trying?” The unanimous response of more than 1 million people, along with mine, was that we get up and we keep going! To get up and continue transmitting the gospel and most importantly transmitting the joy and happiness that one moment or another, was transmitted to us by a face and concrete name.

The Pope’s words became my own. I want to get up and transmit that joy so that others can say “God is good!”, and “God loves us!”, and “God calls us!” because we are not what we are by chance. We have a purpose in God’s plan and we do not have to be afraid because in this journey God is with us.

Inmaculada Pérez Castillo, OMI y Leidy Silva Tercero

Inmaculada Perez Castillo, a native of Malaga, since 2001 is a member of the Congregation of Missionary Oblatas. She collaborates with the mission with the Youth.

Echoes of the WYD: “Encounter, witness, and fear not!”

“What can young people do for the Oblate Family? How can Oblates and young people walk together, trying to respond to God’s plan?”

These questions, addressed by the Superior General, Fr. Chicho to the young people, were the common thread of the days lived first in Pozuelo, as a Mediterranean Province, then in Lisbon as a global Oblate Family.

Fr. Chicho’s invitation to walk together as “pilgrims of hope in communion” echoed many times and was welcomed by the visible desire of young people to make it concrete, each one in his own community. The nearly 300 young Italians and Spaniards listened attentively and in silence to the words of the Superior General in Pozuelo, who invited them not to reduce sharing to a selfie but to know how to go deeper, questioning and examining themselves: after all, each one, in his own reality, is a Superior General! But we all know very well that young people listen all the more when concrete actions and examples accompany words.

Many of them emphasized the beauty of seeing young people, Oblates, families and spouses, and Oblate Associates (COMI) walking together (literally and with backpacks on their shoulders). Fr. Chicho, who, between backpack and sleeping bag, stayed with us in the college classrooms and, with generosity, was always ready to hear confessions on a bench or in the coffee room. His invitation to walk together became concrete and did not escape the young people who, now more than ever, need witnesses ready to accompany them.

The reactions did not lack: from the renewed “Here I am” during the adoration in Pozuelo to the enthusiasm shown during the meetings in Lisbon.

The capacity and desire of young people to get involved and live in depth what was proposed to them was striking. Walk and, if you fall, get up again; walking with a goal [...] with the desire to walk, we walk in hope. Also in Lisbon, the young people (always with backpacks!) listened to and welcomed these words of Pope Francis, who, despite health difficulties, set out on the road first, remembering that each one is called by name, with his or her own limitations and hardships.

Thus, walking together and paying attention to the other became concrete, and it was not uncommon to meet those who were willing to help those in difficulty, from children with disabilities to those who were particularly tired from the heat. It seemed that being a fellow traveler was the constant invitation both at Oblate pre-WYD and WYD! And it is true that when they encounter witnesses, young people are willing to “shine, listen, and not be afraid.”

Paola SANTORO, COMI

 LATIN AMERICA

Mexico: Joint Session with Latin America and the Caribbean

From August 21-29, 2023, the Province of Mexico will host the joint session of the Central Government with the Oblate Superiors of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This comes at an important time in the history of the Province, as the Oblates look back with gratitude on 80 years of continuous presence on Mexican soil. On September 11, 2022, the jubilee year celebrating eight decades of Oblate presence in Mexico was officially inaugurated. Celebrations launched with a solemn Mass presided by Fr Ariel Martínez OMI, Provincial Superior of Mexico, at Santa María de Guadalupe Parish in Colonia San Rafael in Mexico City.

“Third time’s the charm!”

80 years ago, Fr. Valentín Rodríguez, a member of the so-called “Texas Province” (Province of the Southern United States), arrived from Texas to establish the new mission of Mexico at the chapel known as “La Lupita”. He subsequently obtained the necessary permission from Archbishop Luis María Martínez y Rodríguez, Archbishop of the Primate Archdiocese, to settle permanently in Mexico City. It was not the first time that the Oblates had set foot on Mexican soil; it was the third time. “Third time’s the charm!”

The first arrival

After the military intervention of the United States in Mexico and the annexation of Texas, the first group of Oblates unofficially arrived in Point Isabel, Texas in 1849. But in 1852 the Oblate mission in Galveston and Brownsville, across the Rio Grande Oblates, was officially opened with the permission of Saint. Eugene.

Thus, our founder wrote: “Many good things must be done in this territory facing Mexico, where the presence of a good priest can change the lives of the people.” The missionaries visited ranches and towns between Brownsville – Matamoros and Laredo – Nuevo Laredo.

In 1859, the Oblates accepted the main parish of Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas. The Founder became even more enthusiastic about pastoral work in Mexico. Writing to the Bishop of Monterrey in June 1860, he wrote: “I must confess to Your Excellency that for a long time now, my eyes have been involuntarily turned towards the vast regions of Mexico.

What the Fathers tell me of the simple and lively faith of the good Mexican people, lead me to consider that there will be an abundant harvest there, which needs only a few skilled workers, truly apostolic men, who will water (the crops) with their own sweat. Conditions may be bad for such a mission, but it is precisely when hell breaks loose that it is indispensable to multiply the number of good shepherds”.

In 1863, the Archbishop of Monterrey gave the Oblates the mission of Agualeguas, located near Monterrey. From 1864, the Oblates administered the sacraments in Agualeguas, Nuevo Leon. This presence lasted 20 years: they left Mexico in 1884 due to the Texas-Mexican War and its consequences.

Second coming

In 1901, the Oblates again resumed contact in Mexico. The Provincial of Texas visited the Archbishop of Oaxaca, who offered him the Temple of Santo Domingo and gave him the deeds to a plot of land in San Antonio, Texas, for a seminary for his students. The Archbishop had three projects for the Oblates: the reform of his diocesan clergy; the founding of a school for orphans in Chiautla, Puebla; and sending his seminarians to San Antonio, Texas. Six Oblates arrived: three for Chiautla and three for Oaxaca.

The Oblates arrived in Puebla in 1903 to take charge of the Pius College of Arts and Crafts. They also took over the care of parish ministry at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows. Shortly afterward, they started the College of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Acatzingo, Puebla.

The Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910. This resulted in the closing of the college in Puebla in 1911. The Oblates then turned their attention to the Diocese of Tulancingo, Hidalgo. Here they missioned and ministered mainly to the people of the countryside, especially from Metepec and as far as the capital of Oaxaca itself. The Oblates stayed until 1914 when, for their safety, the provincial asked them to return to Texas.

Third arrival

With the end of the Cristero War, the Oblates were looking for a way to return to Mexico and resume their ministry. Valentín Rodríguez, a young Oblate of 39 years of age, arrived in 1943. He began his work in the chapel of La Lupita in Colonia San Rafael, which was very important at the time. He was soon joined by Fathers Teófilo Okruhlik and Francisco Kilday and later by Antonio Martínez, Carlos de Anta, and Francisco Aguirre. Fr. Kilday was entrusted with the Youth Apostolate. The new Church of the Guadalupita was consecrated on October 12, 1954. Built by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in a modern style, it was the first church with contemporary architectural design in Mexico City.

In 1960 the apostolate of the parish was completed with the opening of a medical clinic and dispensary for the needy families of the neighbourhood.

Expansion towards the west of Mexico City began. In 1961, Colegio Vista Hermosa was founded in Cuajimalpa. The Oblates expanded to Lomas de Bezares and Palo Alto in 1964. Later they headed for the northern outskirts of the city, serving communities in the neighbourhoods of Casas Alemán, Esmeralda, Providencia, Ampliación Providencia, Campestre Aragón, and Pradera.

From the beginning of the third arrival of the Oblates in Mexico City, the missionary team was anxious to expand the Oblate presence to other regions of Mexico. Thus, accepting the invitation of the bishop of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca and responding to the Pope's request in 1950, three Oblates arrived in the city of Tehuantepec to work with the poor. First of all, they undertake the restoration of the Cathedral and the Bishop's house. From there, the Oblates expanded their presence to Salina Cruz, San Mateo del Mar, San Pedro Huamelula, Quiechapa, and Tequisistlán.

Several years later, the Oblates arrived in Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero, in 1986 and in Santa Cruz Meyehualco in Iztapalapa in 1988. Fr. Yvan Trembley from Canada began working with the poor on the outskirts of Iztapalapa, founding the centre for impoverished women known as CEMPO.

In Mexico, the Oblates' desire to expand their mission to other parts of Central America resulted in finding a mission in Honduras, but for unforeseen reasons. However, in order to respond to the enormous needs of the diocese of Quiché, which was suffering the consequences of the internal armed conflict, they founded a new mission in Guatemala in 1988. This year the Guatemala Delegation of the Province of Mexico celebrates 35 years of Oblate presence.

In conjunction with the Province of Haiti, the Oblates of the Province of Mexico spearheaded the task of founding a mission in Cuba. In order to respond to the need to ensure the presence of the Catholic Church in a context where the Catholic faith was disappearing, six Oblates arrived in Cuba to work in the dioceses of Cienfuegos, Matanzas, and Santa Clara in December 1997. It has been 25 years since the Oblates arrived on this Caribbean island: Today, Cuba is a mission of the Province of Mexico.

The Oblate presence in Mexico has been fruitful and significant for the Congregation; hundreds of Oblates from various countries have passed through Mexican lands working hard in difficult missions under unimaginable circumstances.

They did it all for the glory of God and the welfare of the poor they served. There are now about 44 Oblates working in Mexico in 11 different communities. Another 18 Oblates are working in Guatemala and Cuba, and we have missionaries originally from the Province of Mexico working in other units of our congregation.

Cuba: “The Cuban reality, you have to live it to believe it.”

Fr. Tomasz Szafranski, OMI, has been ministering in Cuba for a year. Here he writes about his Oblate journey and the present work of the Oblates in Cuba.

In December 1997, six Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate were allowed to enter Cuba after a historic visit by Pope John Paul II. For decades, the practice of Catholicism had been forbidden.

As we celebrate 80 years of continuous Oblate presence in Mexico, in this jubilee year, we recall with gratitude 35 years of Oblate presence in Guatemala and 25 years in Cuba.

On August 24, the Central Government and the participants of the joint session will join the Oblates of the Province of Mexico in thanksgiving as they set out as pilgrims to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where Father General will preside at the Eucharist. In this celebration, we will ask the maternal intercession of our beloved mother for our Oblate family throughout the world. With this liturgy, we will officially close the Jubilee year.

Bede SUJAHARAN, OMI

The Oblates began restoring churches and reintroducing residents to the Catholic faith. Today, six Oblates minister in Cuba, including one American, Fr. Roger Halle, OMI. Despite many challenges, these Oblates have been able to make progress restoring Christianity to the island.

I am Tomas, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. I come from Krakow, Poland, and I am currently living my missionary service in Cuba. But how did I get to Cuba? Here's my story...

I remember graduating from high school and looking for my way in this world. On the one hand, I really liked being in school with a focus on geology. But on the other hand, I felt more and more strongly Jesus' invitation to follow Him on the priestly and missionary path.

As I examined my life, more questions arose: Where? What? Eventually it became clear to me that I wanted to be a missionary. So, I started writing to various religious families that had the word "missionaries" in their name, believing that way I would find answers to my questions. The first to respond were the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, so now I am an Oblate.

While studying in the seminary, I believed that missions were only in Africa. But gradually, growing and deepening my vocation, I became interested in serving the poor somewhere where priests are lacking.

One day, Fr. Gilberto Pinion, OMI, visited us at the seminary, looking for missionaries for his province of Mexico-Guatemala-Cuba. I remember saying to myself, "Why not Mexico?" And so, after two years spent in Poland as a priest, I left to fulfill my dream of a vocation in the missions. I spent over 12 years in Mexico. It was a very nice time to get to know a new culture, completely different for mine. So many beautiful people welcomed me with open arms. I must also say it was a time of growing up, letting myself be "evangelized by the poor." To be honest, it wasn't always easy.

After 12 years in Mexico, it was time to ask myself, "What's next?" Something made me believe that I could take on something new again. I had always heard about the need for missionaries in Cuba, and how difficult and demanding it is to be a missionary on this Caribbean Island. So, I decided to ask to be sent on a mission to Cuba.

Now, I have been in Cuba for a year. A new mission, a new missionary adventure, and new responsibilities. The Cuban reality, you have to live it to believe it. But just like all those years in Mexico, here I also find many beautiful people in need of God. We Oblates have two communities here, one in the Province of Havana and other in the Province of Pinar del Rio. We come from Brazil, America, Sri Lanka, and Poland.

As a community, we serve five parishes. For me, here in Cuba, our first mission is to be missionaries of hope, because there are many people here who have lost it. The second dimension of the mission is the ability to persevere. It is worth mentioning that last year we celebrated 25 years since the arrival of the first Oblates in Cuba. For us, it is a time to thank God, but also to dream, to seek new paths, and to renew our commitment to the missionary land.

As I look back, I never would have thought that a missionary dream would take me to Cuba. But here I am, Lord, to do Your will. And finally, I ask all of you, do not forget the missionaries, pray for us a lot throughout the year. Pray that we may be witnesses of Christ, missionaries of mercy, and hope in this world.

Tomasz SZAFRANSKI, OMI

ANNIVERSARIES FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

70th Anniversaries of Vows

08/09/1953	09570	Fr. Jan Christ	Poland
08/09/1953	09575	Fr. Stanislaw Cyganiak	Poland
08/09/1953	09567	Fr. Casimir Krystkowiak	Assumption
08/09/1953	09589	Fr. Jozef Kuroczycki	Poland
08/09/1953	09543	Fr. Paul-Emile Poulin	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
08/09/1953	09939	Fr. Joannäs Rivoire	France
08/09/1953	09712	Fr. Antoni Skwierawski	Poland
08/09/1953	09948	Fr. Alojzy Sojka	Poland
08/09/1953	09563	Fr. Albert Ulrich	Lacombe
29/09/1953	09809	Fr. Herbert Bromley	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1953	09600	Fr. Sean Coleman	Southern Africa
29/09/1953	09808	Fr. Peter Paul Daly	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1953	09599	Fr. Joseph O'Melia	Anglo-Irish

65th Anniversaries of Vows

07/09/1958	10677	Fr. Donaat Bohe	Southern Africa
08/09/1958	10678	Fr. Albert Buchet	Belgium & Holland
08/09/1958	10559	Fr. Ronald Dechant	Lacombe
08/09/1958	10536	Fr. Joao Drexel	Brazil
08/09/1958	10555	Fr. John Hogan	United States
08/09/1958	10541	Fr. Leonard Inui	Colombo
08/09/1958	10567	Fr. Albert Lalonde	Lacombe
08/09/1958	11004	Fr. Bernard Noyer	France
08/09/1958	10543	Fr. William Sheehan	United States
08/09/1958	10557	Fr. Gerard van den Beuken	Belgium & Holland
08/09/1958	10560	Fr. Alfons Van Loenhout	Belgium & Holland
Bas			
08/09/1958	10556	Fr. Harry Winter	United States
15/09/1958	10571	Fr. Pietro Reginato	Mediterranea
15/09/1958	10574	Fr. Vincenzo Sgambato	Mediterranea
29/09/1958	10580	Fr. Joseph Daly	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1958	10577	Fr. Brian De Burca	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1958	10584	Fr. Ignatius Fidgeon	Southern Africa

65th Anniversaries of Ordinations

08/09/1958	09484	Fr. Charles Hurkes	United States
08/09/1958	09485	Fr. Thomas Killeen	United States
08/09/1958	09499	Fr. Noël LeBrun	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
21/09/1958	09809	Fr. Herbert Bromley	Anglo-Irish
21/09/1958	09600	Fr. Sean Coleman	Southern Africa
21/09/1958	09808	Fr. Peter Paul Daly	Anglo-Irish
21/09/1958	09599	Fr. Joseph O'Melia	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1958	09567	Fr. Casimir Krystkowiak	Assumption
29/09/1958	09563	Fr. Albert Ulrich	Lacombe

60th Anniversaries of Vows

08/09/1963	11452	Fr. Franciszek Chręszcz	Poland
08/09/1963	11447	Fr. John Hanley	United States
08/09/1963	11441	Fr. Herman Hostens	Belgium & Holland
08/09/1963	11454	Fr. Henryk Kruszewski	Poland
15/09/1963	11467	Fr. Natalino Wan Ibung Belingheri	Indonesia
15/09/1963	11716	Fr. Pierre Court	France
15/09/1963	11466	Fr. Piergiovanni Gioppato	Assumption
15/09/1963	11645	Fr. Roland Jacques	France
29/09/1963	11472	Fr. Charles Burrows	Indonesia

60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

13/09/1963	10278	Fr. Alexander Costa	Colombo
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50th Anniversaries of Vows

08/09/1973	12286	Bro. Edgard Francken	Bolivia
08/09/1973	12264	Fr. Roman Krauz	Poland
08/09/1973	12267	Fr. Ryszard Lis	Poland
08/09/1973	12260	Fr. Marian Lis	Poland
08/09/1973	12266	Fr. Roman Majek	Assumption
08/09/1973	12263	Fr. Ryszard Sieranski	Poland
08/09/1973	12261	Fr. Antoni Walisko	Poland
08/09/1973	12265	Fr. Wieslaw Zielonka	Poland
29/09/1973	12283	Fr. Carlo Andolfi	Mediterranea
29/09/1973	12281	Fr. Dino CadonÖ	Mediterranea
29/09/1973	12277	Fr. Peter Clucas	Anglo-Irish
29/09/1973	12280	Fr. Vincenzo Guercini	Mediterranea
29/09/1973	12282	Fr. Agostino Iaderosa	Mediterranea

50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

15/09/1973	12004	Fr. James Bleackley	Lacombe
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25th Anniversaries of Vows

08/09/1998	13874	Fr. Irudayaraj Anthonysamy	Colombo
08/09/1998	13931	Fr. Badde Liyange Don Asanga Viraj	Colombo
08/09/1998	13840	Fr. Wojciech Banaszak	Poland
08/09/1998	13978	Fr. Yvon BÇliard	Haiti
08/09/1998	13844	Fr. Krzysztof Buzikowski	Poland
08/09/1998	13992	Fr. Saveri Jeyarajan Coonghe	Jaffna
08/09/1998	13843	Fr. Piotr Darasz	Poland
08/09/1998	13981	Bro. Jean-Marie Diakanou	Admin Generale
08/09/1998	13939	Fr. Stanislass Diouf	Mediterranea
08/09/1998	13979	Fr. Joli-Coeur Dominique	Haiti
08/09/1998	13973	Fr. Joseph DumÇ	Haiti
08/09/1998	13983	Fr. Nkoa Charles Eko	France
08/09/1998	14075	Fr. Santhiyogu Christy Joy Fernando	Anglo-Irish
08/09/1998	13932	Fr. Joseph Roshan M. Fernando	Colombo
08/09/1998	13930	Fr. Anthony Niroshan P. Fernando	Colombo

08/09/1998	13972	Fr. Wilson Fouquet	Haiti
08/09/1998	13860	Fr. Jagath Premanath Gunapala	Poland
08/09/1998	13944	Fr. Suranga Indrajith Gunasekera	Colombo
08/09/1998	13933	Fr. Dileepa Sampath Jayamaha	Colombo
08/09/1998	13926	Fr. Jude Bernard Jesuratnam	Philippines
08/09/1998	13853	Fr. Krzysztof Jezierski	Poland
08/09/1998	14076	Fr. Rene Beshman John Saminathar	Jaffna
08/09/1998	13993	Fr. Juvanal Kamalananthan Joseph	Jaffna
08/09/1998	13838	Fr. Andrzej Kordek	Poland
08/09/1998	13839	Fr. Jerzy Kotowski	Poland
08/09/1998	14150	Bro. Lawrence Arokiaraj Anthonysamy Kuppala	India
08/09/1998	13988	Fr. Bungulu Faustin Litanda	Lacombe
08/09/1998	13913	Bro. Grzegorz Loska	Assumption
08/09/1998	13847	Fr. Sebastian Luszczki	Poland
08/09/1998	13850	Fr. Tomasz Maniura	Poland
08/09/1998	13976	Fr. Jean-Camille MÇsidor	Haiti
08/09/1998	13863	Fr. Sebamalai Perera Michael	Jaffna
08/09/1998	13852	Fr. Michal Pajak	Assumption
08/09/1998	13971	Fr. Ajith Ruwan P.K. Perera	Colombo
08/09/1998	13955	Fr. Marek Pisarek	Lacombe
08/09/1998	13911	Bro. Slawomir Przywecki	Poland
08/09/1998	13996	Bro. Jean Christian Ramisy	Poland
08/09/1998	13937	Fr. Franáois de Sales Ratovonirina	Poland
08/09/1998	13984	Fr. Christophe Remjemo	Cameroun
08/09/1998	13859	Fr. Diego Saez	Admin Generale
08/09/1998	14151	Fr. Martin Saverimuthu	India
08/09/1998	14074	Fr. Praveen Mahesan Selvadurai	Lacombe
08/09/1998	13974	Fr. Paul-Augustin Sincäre	Haiti
08/09/1998	13940	Fr. Marcel Thiaw	Mediterranea
08/09/1998	13985	Fr. Michael Chukwunenye Uwaezuoke	Namibia
08/09/1998	13846	Fr. Sebastian Wisniewski	Poland
08/09/1998	13849	Fr. Marcin Wrzos	Poland
08/09/1998	13982	Bro. Zemkou Marc Yonou	Cameroun
27/09/1998	13999	Fr. Antonio D'Amore	Mediterranea

Suffrages for our Deceased - August 2023

No. 45-47

NAME	DATE	DIED AT	BORN	PROV/DEL
Fr. José GAGO	16/08/ 2023	San Antonio	21/06/1931	US Province
Fr. José María RIEGA	26/08/2023	Córdoba	24/07/1934	Cruz del Sur
Fr. Marcel ANNEQUIN	30/08/2023	Lyon	11/12/1939	France

“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 the Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)

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via Aurelia 290, 00165 Roma, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail: information@omigen.org
www.omeworld.org
Editor & Webmaster: Bonga MAJOLA