

## Message of Pope Francis for World Day of Creation 1 September 2023

Dear brothers and sisters!

“Let Justice and Peace Flow” is the theme of this year’s ecumenical Season of Creation, inspired by the words of the prophet Amos: “Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (5:24).

The evocative image used by Amos speaks to us of what God desires. God wants justice to reign; it is as essential to our life as God’s children made in his likeness as water is essential for our physical survival. This justice must flow forth wherever it is needed, neither remaining hidden deep beneath the ground nor vanishing like water that evaporates before it can bring sustenance. God wants everyone to strive to be just in every situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish. When we “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33), maintaining a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, then justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures.

On a beautiful summer day in July 2022, during my pilgrimage to Canada, I reflected on this on the shores of Lac Ste. Anne in Alberta. That lake has been a place of pilgrimage for many generations of indigenous people. Surrounded by the beating of drums, I thought: “How many hearts have come here with anxious longing, weighed down by life’s burdens, and found by these waters consolation and strength to carry on! Here, immersed in creation, we can also sense another beating: the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people,

we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life”.

During this Season of Creation, let us dwell on those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the heartbeat of God. Today they do not beat in harmony; they are not harmonized in justice and peace. Too many of our brothers and sisters are prevented from drinking from that mighty river. Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.

The effects of this war can be seen in the many rivers that are drying up. Benedict XVI once observed that: “the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”. Consumerist greed, fuelled by selfish hearts, is disrupting the planet’s water cycle. The unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests are pushing temperatures higher and leading to massive droughts.

Alarming water shortages increasingly affect both small rural communities and large metropolises. Moreover, predatory industries are depleting and polluting our freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects, and intensive animal farming. “Sister Water”, in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, is pillaged and turned into “a commodity subject to the laws of the market” (Laudato Si’, 30).

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that acting now with greater urgency means that we will not miss our chance to create a more sustainable and just world. We can and we must prevent the worst from happening. “Truly, much can be done” (ibid., 180), provided we come together like so many streams, brooks and rivulets, merging finally in a mighty river to irrigate the life of our marvellous planet and our human family for generations to come. So let us join hands and take bold steps to “Let Justice and Peace Flow” throughout our world.

How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation? What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.

First, let us join the mighty river by transforming our hearts. This is essential for any other transformation to occur; it is that “ecological conversion” which Saint John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator. Furthermore, we should realize that an integral approach to respect for the environment involves four relationships: with God, with our brothers and sisters of today and tomorrow, with all of nature, and with ourselves.

As to the first of these relationships, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the urgent need to recognize that creation and redemption are inseparably linked: “The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur – as Creator and as Redeemer – we also diminish the value of the redemption”. Creation refers both to God’s mysterious, magnificent act of creating this majestic, beautiful planet and universe out of nothing and to the continuing result of that act, which we experience as an inexhaustible gift.

During the liturgy and personal prayer in “the great cathedral of creation”, let us recall the great Artist who creates such beauty,

and reflect on the mystery of that loving decision to create the cosmos.

Second, let us add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our lifestyles. Starting from grateful wonder at the Creator and his creation, let us repent of our “ecological sins”, as my brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has urged. These sins harm the world of nature and our fellow men and women. With the help of God’s grace, let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable. Let us be as mindful as we can about our habits and economic decisions so that all can thrive – our fellow men and women wherever they may be, and future generations as well. Let us cooperate in God’s ongoing creation through positive choices: using resources with moderation and a joyful sobriety, disposing and recycling waste, and making greater use of available products and services that are environmentally and socially responsible.

Lastly, for the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the public policies that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice. It is clear that the richer nations have contracted an “ecological debt” that must be paid (cf. *Laudato Si’*, 51).

The world leaders who will gather for the COP28 summit in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December must listen to science and institute a rapid and equitable transition to end the era of fossil fuels. According to the commitments undertaken in the Paris Agreement to restrain global warming, it is absurd to permit the continued exploration and expansion of fossil fuel infrastructures. Let us raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate change.

I appeal to all people of good will to act in conformity with these perspectives on society and nature.

Another parallel perspective has to do with the Catholic Church's commitment to synodality. This year, the closing of the Season of Creation on 4 October, the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, will coincide with the opening of the Synod on Synodality. Like rivers in nature, fed by myriad tiny brooks and larger streams and rivulets, the synodal process that began in October 2021 invites all those who take part on a personal or community level, to coalesce in a majestic river of reflection and renewal. The entire People of God is being invited to an immersive journey of synodal dialogue and conversion.

So too, like a river basin with its many tiny and larger tributaries, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw from the same shared waters. Each source adds its unique and irreplaceable contribution, until all flow together into the vast ocean of God's loving mercy. In the same way that a river is a source of life for its surroundings, our synodal Church must be a source of life for our common home

and all its inhabitants. In the same way that a river gives life to all kinds of animal and plant life, a synodal Church must give life by sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches.

In Canada, in July 2022, I spoke of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus brought healing and consolation to many people and proclaimed "a revolution of love". Lac Ste. Anne, I learned, is also a place of healing, consolation and love, a place that "reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, [and] that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey".

In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to "renew the face of the earth" (cf. Ps 104:30).

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 13 May 2023

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## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

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### **Season of Creation 2023 : "Let Justice and Peace Flow"**

Every year from September 1st to October 4th, the Laudato Sí Action Plan team invites us to celebrate as a community and throughout the world the "Season of Creation."

The Season of Creation "is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home. It is also the time for Christians to pray and respond together to the cry of Creation: the ecumenical family around the world unites to listen and care for our common home, the Oikos of God", said Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda.

As Oblates, this recalls our 37th General Chapter. The Chapter recommended that "the Central Government develop and sustain a Congregational Plan of Action along the inspiration of Pope Francis' Laudato Sí in collaboration with other groups and organizations, particularly the Laudato Sí Action Platform." Our Superior General and his Council have set in motion the foundations to respond to this mandate of the 37th General Chapter.

With the support of the entire General Administration, Fr. General is launching throughout the Congregation a movement in favor of Laudato Sí as a concrete expression of the will of all Oblates to contribute to the care of our Common Home.

Therefore, we encourage all our OMI-JPIC Animators from all Oblate Units to join in local communities with the laity to celebrate a time of prayer for Creation during the month of September. It is also appropriate to unite in prayer with the whole church and to continue working for the well-being of all.

“Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden; we must not leave a desert for our children” (Pope Francis).

So, let us deepen our Season of Creation experience by taking advantage of these free resources. Our Season of Creation event will have a more significant impact if the community is engaged and inspired.

### **Season of Creation: Via Aurelia Pilgrims**

Rome: “Via Aurelia Pilgrims” gather at the General house of the Missionaries of Africa to celebrate the Season of Creation

As annually, from September 1st to October 4th, the religious communities of Via Aurelia, commonly referred to as “Via Aurelia Pilgrims,” united once again in the spirit of “Journeying together,” on Saturday, September 9th, to commemorate a day of prayer for the Earth within the framework of the “Season of Creation.”

This time, it was the Community of the Missionaries of Africa who organized this prayer meeting, which was attended by all the communities of the General House of the Oblates, including the Central Government,

We invite you to use these resources to share the word with your local church communities, invite people to join the celebration, and even take the word to audiences outside your church by reaching local news outlets.

Finally, it was announced a few weeks ago that Pope Francis is writing a letter of update on the encyclical *Laudato Si'* concerning the current climate crises. Once this document is officially published, we will send it to you for further prayers.

Wishing you a good celebration of the Season of Creation, and let's take action!

*Jean-Herick Jasmin, OMI  
Director JPIC*

the IRS Scholasticate, the General Services, and the Student Fathers. Furthermore, neighbouring communities from several parts of Rome attended the prayer service, as well as members of Vivat and secretaries of UISG-JPIC of Rome.

The theme that guided our reflection was: “Let Justice and Peace Flow like a Mighty River”. During this prayer, we all raised to the Lord of Creation prayers to help raise awareness and Care of our Common Home, Mother Earth.

“Let's take Action now!”

*Jean-Hérick Jasmin, OMI-JPIC Director*

### OMIChat-Live with the Superior General

On Monday, September 11, OMIChat-Live had the great pleasure of hosting Fr. Chicho, who answered our questions without reservation.

On Monday OMIChat-Live had the great pleasure of hosting Fr. Chicho, who answered our questions without reservation. Fr. Chicho shared his feelings, thoughts, and hopes during his first year in office and for the next six years. We relived with him the moment of his election and asked him what those images provoked in him. Without hesitation, his feelings were of gratitude for being able to say 'YES' to God and the Congregation.

And what's with the Superior General's name? Is it Chicho or Luis Ignacio Alonso Rois? Fr. Chicho was named after his paternal and maternal grandfathers, but from childhood, his mother called him Chicho, so the name stuck with him. And so he is known everywhere as Fr. Chicho, our Superior General.

When asked about his radically and profound approach to religious life, which has been known to cause a stir in some circles, Fr. Chicho, with a jovial smile, replied, "My goal as an Oblate is to live the Gospel...we have to live the Gospel." Thus, he points out that one of the challenges for any Religious is to live an "Evangelical Life." It is a call of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the General Chapter to renew Community life and work for an Ecological Conversion, caring for our Common Home. It is difficult, but he is filled with hope, after all, we are Pilgrims of Hope in Communion.

### The Constitutions and Rules Permanent Committee meets

The Permanent Committee on the Constitutions and Rules met by Zoom for the third time on Friday, September 15.

The group discussed, amended, and approved the Committee's three objectives presented at their previous meeting in June. comments and suggestions.

Fr. Chicho is particularly impressed by the hope that Young People bring to the Oblates. "I fully believe that the young people are giving us a lot of energy... I gave the young people a mission: to help us get enthusiastic in our missionary oblation and to help us renew the Congregation. I fully believe that from the young people will come a new era for the Congregation. They will help us live our Oblate Charism!"

Fr. Chicho shared his decision to begin his mandate with a visit to the Oblates in Ukraine to show that "Father General" is close to his brother Oblates. As Superior General, he consciously makes an effort to visit those Oblates who are in challenging and often forgotten missions. When visiting the various Oblate communities, Fr. Chicho asks the local Superior to take him to the most remote areas to meet the people and the Oblates, "to those places where people may say, Father General is here, but he has no time to visit us here, I want to go there and visit them!" In closing, Fr. Chicho left us with these words, "Our charism is taking care of the poor and the most abandoned, so please do it!"

We have to try to learn from them how to live out the Gospel and how to be missionaries. I think we are learning from the poor to be missionaries. Whenever I consider anything, I ask: Is it good for the poor? Is it good for our Mazonodian family? If I can answer yes to both questions, it comes from the Holy Spirit!"

Let us keep praying for Fr. Chicho, our Superior General!

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Finally, the Committee prepared an initial work plan for their November 9-12 meeting at the General House in Rome. This gathering will be the first meeting of the Committee in person.

*Warren BROWN, OMI*

### Central Government: Plenary session

The Central Government of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate is currently in the Plenary Session, which began last Wednesday, September 13, 2023, with a Mass of the Holy Spirit.

The Oblate Central Government is back in Rome! They wrapped up their visit to the Oblates of the Latin America-Caribe Region and the Joint Session in Tepoztlán, Mexico, with their annual retreat preached by Fr. Gilberto Piñon. It was a fitting way to conclude a fruitful time in this part of the Oblate world. But Rome was waiting for them!

On their return to Rome, the Central Government quickly mobilized for a month long Plenary Session, which began last Wednesday, September 13, 2023, with a Mass of the Holy Spirit. This Plenary Session is unique because two essential positions will be appointed in addition to a full agenda: General Treasurer and General Secretary.

The Plenary Session will also appoint new Provincials and Councils, discuss the implementation of Chapter mandates and the addition of new services to the General Administration, not to mention the discussions and preparations for the upcoming meetings hosted by the General Administration. It will be an intense time for the various internal

### Aix: The 2023 de Mazenod Experience in English is taking place!

For the following nine weeks, Oblates from Zimbabwe, South Africa, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, England, and Canada are forming a community in our Foundation House in Aix-en-Provence.

These Oblates will experience oblate life in a unique setting. By following in our founder's footsteps, they will walk as pilgrims in his footsteps. By sharing Eugene's life and reflecting on their own personal stories, they will encourage each other in hope. By living their daily oblation as a community,

committees to discuss leadership, mission, formation, and finances.

The Plenary Session has a lot to accomplish. In addition to the appointments and reports, the Plenary Session will discuss preparations for their next Joint Session with the Africa-Madagascar region next March in Senegal. They will also review and approve applications for the Solidarity and Dontenville Grants. The upcoming workshop for Major Superiors in November, the meeting of the Committee of Brothers, and other workshops are high on the Agenda. It is good that they had the opportunity to have their annual retreat before a busy Plenary Session.

The weekends during the Plenary Session will be devoted mainly to the community dynamics of the Central Government. The Central Government will evaluate their community life and work during their first year in office. The Plenary Sessions are a unique opportunity for the Central Government to work together to strengthen the quality of their community through prayer, fellowship building, and recreation.

Let us continue to pray for the Central Government as they may remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they take steps to animate and motivate the whole Congregation.

*Antoni BOCHM, OMI  
Vicar General*

they will grow in communion with each other and with the Lord. The De Mazenod Experience is a renewal program, open to all Oblates who have spent several years in missionary life. It aims, especially, at enabling the participants to look back over their experience of the Oblate charism in the everyday life of their mission and ministry. They do so in an atmosphere of prayer, reflection and fraternal sharing.

Three Oblates from different regions make up the animation team: Pat McGEE (USA), Jun MATAS (Philippines) and Hipólito OLEA (Aix). May the Spirit of the Lord help them during this time of grace.

*Hipólito OLEA, OMI*

**WYD: The First Assistant General weighs in**

After our pilgrimage, I find myself reflecting on the experience with utmost gratitude. Nevertheless, I am left wondering how this experience will be carried forward by the young people and by us Oblates so that it becomes an ongoing living reality in our lives.

The Superior General, Luis Ignacio ALONSO ROIS, the General Councillor for Africa-Madagascar, Kapena SHIMBOME, and I joined more than a million young people from around the world for the 2023 World Youth Day celebrations in Lisbon, Portugal, from August 1-6, 2023. After completing our pilgrimage, I find myself reflecting on the experience with utmost gratitude. Nevertheless, I am left wondering how this experience will be carried forward by the young people and by us Oblates so that it becomes an ongoing living reality in our lives.

We began our pilgrimage in Pozuelo, Spain, where we gathered with a group of about 270 young people from Spain and Italy who share the Oblate charism. Hosted by the Oblates of the Mediterranean Province, we gathered at the Spanish Martyrs' House for a time of fraternity and prayer. Fr. Gennaro Rossato, OMI, Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, joined us for this part of the journey. The time we spent together was an important part of the preparation for the Lisbon experience. It included moments of prayer and feasting, a pilgrimage to the cemetery of the Spanish Martyrs, a via crucis and Mass, a conversation with the Superior General, and several catechetical workshops. The experience helped the groups from the 2 countries to get to know each other. Personally, it allowed me to experience first-hand the joys and hopes of the young people.

On August 1, we took a nine-hour trip to Lisbon, aboard five buses. There was a lot of excitement and a bit of apprehension in the group. We were leaving familiar territory, heading into the unknown, where we could easily get swept into the massive crowd. When we finally arrived at

our destination and while we waited to be taken to our accommodation facilities, the leader of the Spanish group, Fr. Javier Montero INFANTES, reminded us of four important things we should keep in mind in the coming days. He asked us to practice patience, flexibility, gratitude, and a spirit of joy. We were privileged to be part of this experience! Many people wanted to be with us, but they couldn't. We had to consider ourselves as representing them as well.

Our accommodation facilities were basic: a school in which classrooms had been converted into dormitories. Each one of us was allocated a portion of the floor to lay our sleeping bags. This included the Superior General! He had a small portion on the floor in a room with about 30 or 40 others. This was a humbling experience for many of us. The nights brought their unique experience of the great symphony of voices as we rested in the Lord. It didn't take long for many of us to get used to the sounds.

On the morning of August 2, we convened at the Parques de Jogos for a gathering of Oblate youth from various parts of the globe. More than 1000 young people and Oblates attended the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Bishop Beto Huaman Camayo, OMI, of Peru. We not only prayed together, but we also got to listen to the Superior General and interact with him. More importantly, it was an important opportunity for the Oblates working with youth to meet and network. During this meeting, several young people expressed their desire to be closely connected in some form of a global network. This is a challenge that we will have to reflect on as we go forward: how do we build communion among the many and varied groups of young people who are accompanied by Oblates across the world?

The opening Mass, the welcoming of the Holy Father, the Stations of the Cross, and the closing vigil and Mass were high points of the experience. With each experience, the young people were given something to reflect on as they continued their journey.

The opening Mass, on August 1, presided over by D. Manuel Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon, was beautifully celebrated. The prayerful and solemn atmosphere created by the estimated one million young people in attendance was remarkable. The young people really wanted to pray, and pray they did! The welcoming ceremony of the Holy Father was an emotional experience for many of the young people. One could see the tears rolling down their faces as he spoke to them.

The highlight of the experience was the Saturday night vigil. More than a million people gathered to pray in the open space that was transformed into a sanctuary. Then there was the festival of music and the millions of young people who slept out in the open. The closing Eucharistic Celebration brought our week of encounter to a close.

### **Stefano addresses the Plenary Session**

Stefano Dominici, the Coordinator of Lay Associates and Associations, presented his vision and program as coordinator of lay people sharing the Oblate charism.

Father General appointed Mr. Stefano Dominici, a lay associate from Italy, as the first Coordinator of Lay Associates and Association, effective 1 June, 2023. Stefano 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 two grown-up children, Greta and Diego.

In his first address to the Central Government he highlighted the following three points as essential to his program for coordinating Lay Associates and Associations:

1. Listening to oblate laypeople from around the world, emphasizing the importance of communication.
2. Studying and implementing recommendations

As I look back, I hope that we can keep moving forward. The challenge is how to tap into the energy and the experience of Lisboa 2023. As Oblates, how are we going to continue accompanying young people in their pilgrimage as they celebrate life and search for meaning? Fr. Chicho has shown us one way of doing this – being close to the young people. By walking closely with them, we can, together, begin to discern the movements of the Holy Spirit among us and, with courage, respond to the call.

I am deeply grateful to the many Oblates who accompanied groups associated with the Oblates or their dioceses, for the units that made resources available, for the Church and the nation of Portugal that made it possible for us to make Lisbon our home during WYD 2023! To all, many thanks, obrigado! Let this be the beginning of something new!

*Raymond MWANGALA, OMI*

from the 2nd Oblate Lay Associations Congress and the 37th General Chapter.

3. Developing a common identity for lay Oblates over a 5-year plan.

Stefano aims to involve lay representatives from different regions to foster communion and dialogue. After Stefano's presentation, which was well received, participants in the plenary session asked questions and engaged in constructive dialogue with him. It's noted that the role of the coordinator of the laity is new and requires skills such as listening, dialogue, creativeness, patience, and attention to navigate this new path.

At the end of his presentation, Stefano expressed gratitude to the Superior General and his Council for trusting him with this task and for their attention to the laity and the entire Oblate family. The participants in the plenary session, in a spirit of fraternity and communion, thanked Stefano for his presentation, offered their support, and wished him success in his service.

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**AFRICA-MADAGASCAR**


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**Namibia: Oblates and Youth respond to the call to care for our common home**

More than 100 young people gathered together with Oblates in Namibia for the cleaning campaign in response to Pope Francis' call to pray for our common home, Mother Earth and the Superior General's August 15th Letter.

Pope Francis' call to care for our common home needs practical implementation in many small ways. It is true that ecological holiness is a call to ecological conversion. It is a call to revisit the fundamental stewardship that God entrusted to humanity from the beginning of creation.

The call of our Superior General, Fr. Chicho, is simple but speaks volumes. His message to the OMI family on 15 August 2023 encouraged us to do something within everyone's reach that could have a significant impact. He further urged young people to help us get down to work with concrete commitments to care for our common home.

We, the Oblates of Namibia province, have heeded this call starting with our Mother House in Döbra. The Oblate Youth of Namibia (OMIYON) under Windhoek district has implemented this.

**WYD: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"**

Fr. Bafana, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate from South Africa, participated in the World Youth Day activities in Lisbon with young people from his parish. This was his first World Youth Day experience. He shares with us how this Experience quenched his spiritual thirst.

"Indeed, how good it has been to share this experience with Jesus, with one another, and to pray together with joyful hearts," said Pope Francis. World Youth Day is one of the most incredible experiences I have experienced so far in my faith

More than 100 young people gathered for the cleaning campaign around the Döbra premises, collecting about 100 bags of paper, bottles, tins, plastic, etc. We also watered trees and plants around the premises.

We began and ended with a prayer showing that spirituality is at the heart of the exercise. There were also a few snacks and something to drink to cool the heat of the day. I am in awe at the commitment of the young people, and I urge all Oblates to walk with them under the inspiration of our charism. I saw how together we can walk the talk.

Hence, I thank the OMI provincial administration of Namibia Province under Fr. Rufus NEKONDO OMI, Missionary Associates of Mary Immaculate (MAMI) Windhoek district, St. Mary's Cathedral Men's group, OMI Prenovitate Community and St. Joseph's RC High School hostel and school management for their generous support. I also thank the many young people who demonstrated their zeal in caring for our common home.

The cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. May we all let justice and peace flow during this Season of Creation!

*Olaf KANDJIMI, OMI*

journey. It was my first WYD. I was amazed to see thousands, mostly young people, coming to see the Holy Father and meet other young people from all over the world. The experience was filled with love, joy, mutual faith experience, and unity; indeed, the church is one foundation, and Jesus Christ is her Lord. It satisfied a spiritual quench that brought God into our daily lives.

Meeting the Holy Father brings hope for answers to our daily struggles, crossroads of life, and faith, as life is troubled by a thirst for answers to our daily struggles.

In the Pope, I saw the ancient church that continues to be alive. He is the link between us and the Apostles, from whom Jesus chose a leader to build the church. The Pope is the same person who sits in that leader's chair as Jesus' successor. It felt like my faith was shaken to its core. I was lucky to be so close to him on the barricades when the Popemobile passed by me. I was recording the event, but I was so caught up in watching him that my phone missed some parts.

It was even more faith-enriching to have concelebrated at the Mass presided by him. My Mass intention at the final mass, of course, was for the people of God that I serve in North Riding, Johannesburg (Populo Dei). These people made it possible for me and other young people from my parish to have this wonderful experience.

In his speech on Wednesday at the welcoming ceremony, the Pope urged young people to integrate with the Church through their youthful life experiences. He expects the Church to be welcoming and understanding to the youth. He said that the Church is for everyone: "todos, todos, todos!" He then asked everyone to repeat after him. In a nutshell, the young ought to live their youthfulness and express it freely, but guided by the values of the Gospel.

We also visited Fatima, the Holy place where the

three kids, Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia, had an experience with Our Lady who appeared to them. Though this was short-lived with the group, I had an opportunity to go back and stay for a weekend. It was the weekend dedicated to praying for immigrants. Visiting their houses was a spiritual uplifting experience. One must visit Portugal and experience Fatima. Indeed, one senses holiness as they set foot on those grounds.

The next youth gathering will be two-fold:

- 1) Rome for the World Youth Day Jubilee celebration in 2025 and
- 2) Seoul, South Korea, for World Youth Day 2027.

I highly advise anyone to take part in this wonderful faith-enriching experience. It involves a lot of walking and partaking in many activities which we walk miles to, but joyfully say that this is very spiritually fulfilling.

May God continue to inspire faith in the young to protect the future of the Church and its teachings. May he call within them those who will lead his people in different ministries but mainly in a holy way of life that expresses the richness and depth of his love for us.

*Fr. Bafana is a Parish Priest of St. John's North Riding, Johannesburg, South Africa.*

*Bafana NDLOVU, OMI*

### **Cedara: Scholastics attune with the Earth's Maternal Heartbeat**

Scholastics at Cedara recently organized a Facebook Live event, Green Chat, to celebrate the Season of Creation. Sch. Siphon MUKOBOLA, one of the organizers and guest speaker writes about the idea behind this initiative.

Ever since my Novitiate year, I have had a deep passion for ecological issues, especially after having learned that the ecological crisis greatly affects the poor. When the Season of creation slowly approached, the idea to incorporate the theme into our liturgy was shared with our community, and it was welcomed.

But we thought it wouldn't be enough to pray with the theme in our liturgy on September 1st. Still, instead, as the article suggested, we raise awareness and educate our Mazenodian family and friends on the invitation of the season of creation. And so, going live on our Facebook page seemed like a great idea to achieve the said goal.

Over the past few months, temperatures in the North Atlantic have set new records, creating problems for marine life and an increase in temperatures worldwide. Global warming has weakened trade winds from the Sahara Desert, causing less dust to be deposited on the ocean's surface.

About 170 people have died in Northern India and Mexico, respectively, in a scorching heat wave. The Congo Basin rainforest, which contains more than 12,000 different species and provides food, fuel, and shelter for more than 75 million people, has seen a considerable increase in deforestation rates. The reduction of snow caps in Antarctica has resulted in the deaths of an estimated 10,000 emperor penguin chicks. A climate change-fuelled drought has caused severe food shortages in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, which has caused migrations. This is what is happening to our Common Home.

However, not all hope is lost. The season of creation provides an opportunity to make things right. It is an annual ecumenical celebration of prayer and action for our Common Home. It runs from September 1st through October 4th, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. Pope Francis made this celebration official for the Roman Catholic Church in 2015. The theme for 2023 is “Let Justice and Peace Flow”, with the symbol of a mighty river. The Prophet Amos (5:24) cries out, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream!” Accordingly, we are called to join the river of justice and peace, to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice.

In his message for the 2023 Season of Creation, Pope Francis observes that immersed in creation, we can sense the maternal heartbeat of the earth...harmonizing our own rhythms of life with those of creation. We are further invited to transform our hearts, lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies. To let our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with creation around us. How can we hate our brothers and sisters yet claim to love God, whom we do not see?

We must adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, recycling waste, leading clean-up projects, and using environmentally friendly products and services.

Fr. Chicho OMI, on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, dedicated it to the theme of caring for our Common Home. He reiterated the call for ecological conversion. The Mazenodian family was reminded that “We must not forget that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor, to whom we give our preference.” The care for our Common Home offers an opportunity to meet the poor. The young people should equally heed the call to environmental protection because the decisions made today concerning environmental issues will significantly affect our future.

All young people of the Mazenodian family, including us in initial formation, are invited to take a leading role in the care of our Common Home through concrete commitments. The onus is on us, and as Cynthia Houniuhui put it, “this is an opportunity to do something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our fears, something important for our future.”

*Bro. Siphon Blessings MUKOBOLA Jr. is an Oblate Scholastic, originally from Zambia. He is currently doing his first year Theology at Cedara, South Africa.*

*Siphon B. MUKOBOLA, OMI*

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**ASIA-OCEANIA**


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**Hong Kong: Pilgrimage to the General House**

The General House community joyfully received young pilgrims from Hong Kong accompanied by Oblate Frs. Willie and Ronnie. The young pilgrims are currently on an educational tour in Italy, they are from four Oblate schools.

Since 2014, the OMI Delegation of China has been conducting Study Tours in an effort to bring together the four schools supervised by the Oblates. Currently, the Oblates of the China Delegation manage four schools: Notre Dame College, Oblate Primary School St. Eugene de Mazenod, Oblate Primary School, and Po Yan Oblate Primary School.

These study tours are held every two years. Their main objective is to bring cooperation and collaboration within the four schools and introduce the participants to the places where Oblates are working so that they may better appreciate the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod. Their Roman pilgrimage began at the General

House; they were joyfully welcomed by the house Superior Rathokoa MOKONE and the members of the General House community and the International Scholasticate community.

They visited the house Chapel, and Fabio CIARDI guided the pilgrims and helped them to discover the three treasures held in this beautiful Chapel: the statue of the Oblate Madonna, the Altar of the First Vows, and the Chapel where the relic of the heart of the Founder is preserved and revered. The young pilgrims spent time praying before these symbolic elements of our charism.

They later visited the Museum of the General House, where Diego SAEZ guided their visit. They then had an opportunity to visit the panoramic view from the 5th floor, where they took beautiful photos of St. Peter's Dome and the City of Rome.

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**CANADA-US**


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**WYD 2023: The Roar of Oblate Youth**

Fr. Felix BWALYA was one of the four Oblate priests who accompanied the Youth from the US and Mexico to the World Youth Day in Lisbon. He shares with us his convictions concerning the Oblate Youth.

“The youth want to talk, they want to be heard, and the roar of the Oblate Youth and other youth from around the world at WYD was loud enough for the Church not to listen”, says Fr. Felix.

The passionate and energetic young people are transformers; they create waves of change. They have the power and potential to impact change.

“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,” stated Fr. Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI, Superior General. Young people remind us that they have a prophetic voice in the church and society. They have the power to make a difference in the Church and society. They made a great impact in Lisbon.

The young people want to be participants, not observers. They want active participation in the Church and society. They want to be accepted as they are, that we are all equal in the eyes of God.

They want to feel that they belong, that there is a place for them in the church. Pope told the youth, “In the Church, there is room for everyone.” The Church is the mother that should welcome everyone.

World Youth Day reminded us that as we journey with the young people, we should not leave anyone behind in matters that concern all of us. To build up the kingdom of God, everyone matters. We do not walk alone on our journey of faith.

The Church should continue to nurture the faith of our young people as they continue to look for a profound encounter with God, the Church, and others, while also looking for answers to their daily problems.

Young people lack a sense of identity in the Church. They need the support of the Church. We all have hopes, fears, disappointments, setbacks, concerns, struggles, anxieties, and joys. But God’s faithfulness never fails us. We all strive for perfection but in our humanity, we still fall.

### **Season of Creation: an Oblate community celebrates**

On September 1st, the 25 Oblates of Immaculate Heart of Mary Residence in Tewksbury MA USA began the Season of Creation with a Mass for Peace and Justice celebrated by Fr. Dan NASSANEY.

The Eucharist highlighted the theme of this year’s Laudato Si’ Season of Creation: “Let Justice and Peace Flow!”

The August 15th letter of the Superior General, which was printed out for the entire IHM community by Fr. Charlie BEAUSOLEIL, inspired Dan’s homily at the Eucharist. Dan spoke of the need for us to be instruments of peace in the deepest sense of that word, which is fullness of life for all of God’s creatures. He called us to commit ourselves to care for our common home at the personal and communal level.

Pope Francis encouraged the youth that, “If you fall, get up and help others to get up as well.” The Pope further said, “Do not stop and give up, indeed, we need to bring those struggles and tears to the Lord. Always be ready to start again.”

With renewed faith and hope, we pray for our young people that they may believe in their gifts, that they matter, that they are needed and loved. God is love and loves everyone. “We are loved as we are” God’s heart beats uniquely for you” Pope Francis told the young people.

The Church should continue to journey with the young people patiently, give them a listening ear, and offer them guidance. As Pope Francis stated, “Let’s rediscover our roots and keep moving forward without fear.” May the Church continue to encourage the young people to empower themselves, and as agents of transformation, they may empower others.

*Felix BWALYA, OMI*

Dan also showed how the values of our consecration, namely, living community and each of the vows, are intimately connected to the love and respect for creation, both in caring for the poor and for our common home.

As part of this commitment to care for our common home, the IHM community has a garden under the attention of Bro. Charlie GILBERT and Bro.

Emmanuel MELONCOURT which provides vegetables for the meals. The Season of Creation will unfold with other reflections and initiatives in response to Father Chicho Rois’ important letter to the Congregation.

*Louie LOUGEN, OMI*

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**EUROPE**


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**WYD: The Oblate Charism leads us to the Church**

The pilgrimage to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, with young people from his parish, renewed his conviction that the Oblate Charism leads us to the Church.

Our founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, teaches us that all human growth is gradual. We have lived this experience during WYD 2023. The first stage of the pilgrimage for the Youth of the Parish of Mary Immaculate of Aosta took place at the Mother House of the Oblates in Aix-en-Provence, where we were received by the Oblate community and Fathers Mario BRANDI and Paolo ARCHIATI. In Aix we deepened our understanding of the history and charism of the congregation and then went to Pozuelo, Madrid.

In the house of the Oblate Martyrs of Spain, together with Father General, Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI, the Provincial of the Mediterranean Province, Gennaro Rosato, OMI, and the almost 300 young people from the Oblate communities, we continued our study of Oblate history, following in the footsteps of the Oblate Martyrs and strengthening our unity.

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Enriched by this experience, we went to Lisbon where, together as Oblate community, we let ourselves be guided first by the words of Father General and then by those of Pope Francis.

In this way, progressively, our hearts and our horizons expanded. It was as if we had heard the voice of Saint Eugene who, from our Oblate parish surrounded by the Alps, invited us to go out and go further and further and more numerous to join a million and a half pilgrims in prayer at the vigil on the esplanade of Campo da Graçia in Lisbon.

Our commitment is to not let go the enthusiasm we received from Father General and from the witnesses we met: zeal that, once again, has been given to us by Saint Eugene de Mazenod.

*Grzegorz GLABAS, OMI  
is an Oblate originally from Poland,  
missionary in Aosta, northwestern Italy*

**France: The Pope visits the city of St. Eugene**

On September 22–23, 2023, the Holy Father, Pope Francis will visit Marseille, the city whose bishop was St. Eugene de Mazenod, “a city rich in peoples, called to be a port of hope.”

On the first day, the Pope will pray at the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Garde, whose construction was started by the Oblate Founder. At Notre Dame de la Garde the Pope will be joined in prayer by the clergy of the local diocese, and then with a group of professionals from

various organizations dedicated to the pastoral care of seafarers, migrants, and refugees. On Saturday, the Holy Father will meet with people experiencing economic hardship. The event will occur at the archbishop’s residence near the cathedral that Bishop de Mazenod erected, which houses the sarcophagus with his body.

He will then participate in the Mediterranean Meetings’ final session, which brings together bishops and young people from North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe.

Eugene de Mazenod was bishop of the Diocese of Marseille from 1837 to 1861. “Here am I, the shepherd, the first shepherd of a diocese that, no matter what is said, is not inhabited by saints. This diocese was assigned to me; I did not choose it for myself. Therefore, I must cling to these people like a father to his children. It is necessary that my entire existence, my life, and my entire being be dedicated to these people; that I think only of them; that I fear nothing but that I have not done everything for their happiness and for their sanctification; that I have no other concern than that I must sacrifice for them all my spiritual strength and even, in a certain sense, my material goods. In a word, I must burn myself for them, ready to sacrifice my joys, my tastes, my leisure, and even my life for them,” St. Eugene wrote in his retreat notes shortly after his appointment as Bishop of Marseilles.

As bishop of Marseille, France’s second-largest city, he knew well that he would need zealous collaborators to revitalize religious life in the diocese. He, therefore, sought new priestly vocations and the formation of the clergy. It was mainly thanks to him that the diocese, which had 171 priests in 1823, had 378 in 1860, which enabled him to create more parishes, build new churches, and renovate old ones.

In the diocese, he also strengthened existing institutions and pastoral works, such as schools, associations, or confraternities; he was eager to establish new ones. As the founder of a religious congregation, he could appreciate the role of consecrated individuals in the life of the local Church. Between 1837 and 1861, ten male and at least 16 female congregations enriched the Diocese of Marseille.

On the other hand, he also wants to reach out to his dioceses through occasional sermons and pastoral letters, which often had formative overtones and encouraged the faithful to take responsibility for both the local and universal Church. “This responsibility is expressed above all in love, tantamount to love for Christ. Would it be possible to separate our love for Jesus Christ from our love for His church? These two loves intermingle: to love the church means to love Jesus Christ, and vice versa,” St. Eugene wrote in one of his pastoral letters.

Among Bishop de Mazenod’s accomplishments was the building of a new cathedral, which now houses his tomb, and Notre Dame de la Garde Basilica; he laid their foundation stones in 1853.

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## LATIN AMERICA

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### **Joint Session: Pilgrims of hope in communion**

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

In Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico, 51 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from the Latin America and Caribbean Region, along with members of the General Administration,

met to share the status of implementing the mandates of the 37th General Chapter and to discern how to respond to the challenges of our world today.

To reaffirm our belonging to the family of St. Eugene de Mazenod, we began our session by sharing our life and vocation stories. The day was guided by our Superior General, Rev. Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI, who was present among us.

In our session, we looked wholeheartedly at how the mandates of the 37th General Chapter are being implemented and its opportunities and challenges. Then, we identified the transversal axes and discerned the call of the Spirit.

In the middle of the session, we had the grace of making a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There, we celebrated the Eucharist in thanksgiving to conclude the Jubilee-vocational year of our Oblate presence in Mexico for the past 80 years. We asked Mary of Guadalupe for her intercession during our joint session and to intercede on behalf of our charismatic family.

The Superior General, in his homily at the Basilica of Guadalupe, said the following: “Our Lady of Guadalupe, in your figure imprinted on the tilma that we venerate today, we want to consecrate to you 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, 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 at their service. We entrust to you our missionary sufferings and joys, knowing that you will turn them into joyful proclamation of the Gospel.”

With this consecration, we have returned to our meeting place to continue the work, knowing that our good Mother continues to smile on our religious family, as she did on St. Eugene de Mazenod, our founder. We want to be her envoys, like St. Juan Diego, to continue to proclaim the Good News and to be bearers of Hope in our world, especially with the poorest and most vulnerable.

We thank all the Oblates who have participated in this joint session. Furthermore, we place ourselves under the merciful eyes of Our Lady of Guadalupe to continue to be pilgrims of hope in communion.

*Ariel Martínez MORALES, OMI  
(President of CIAL)*

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## ANNIVERSARIES FOR OCTOBER 2023

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### 70th Anniversaries of Vows

15/10/1953	09617	Fr. Michel Oger	France
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### 65th Anniversaries of Vows

05/10/1958	10586	Fr. Michael Phelan	Anglo-Irish
15/10/1958	11029	Fr. Guy Midy	France

### 50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

07/10/1973	11854	Fr. Norman Comtois	United States
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### 25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

10/10/1998	13280	Fr. Constantinus Lekhotla Nthethe	Lesotho
21/10/1998	13553	Fr. Soosaiappu Anthony Poncian	Jaffna



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**Suffrages for our Deceased - September 2023**


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No. 48-55

NAME	DATE	DIED AT	BORN	PROV/DEL
Msgr. Adam EXNER	05/09/2023	Grayson	24/12/1928	Lacombe
Fr. Rino PREVEDONI	07/09/2023	Lezzeno	26/03/1956	Mediterranean
Fr. Ronald ZIMMER	07/09/2023	Saskatoon	03/09/1935	Lacombe
Fr. Gaston RIOUX	19/09/2023	Richelieu	15/03/1931	Notre-Dame-du-Cap
Fr. Eugene CAÑAS	21/09/2023	San Antonio	22/10/1938	U.S. Province
Fr. Jerry ORSINO	24/09/2023	Tewksbury	12/03/1937	U.S. Province
Fr. William MacDONALD	28/09/2023	Vancouver	25/03/1939	Lacombe
Fr. Roger GAUTHIER	29/09/2023	Richelieu	04/09/1920	Notre-Dame-du-Cap



“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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