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**Letter of the Superior General on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
LJC et MI**

Dear Oblates and members of our charismatic family,

Once again this year, we gather around our Mother on the Solemnity of her Immaculate Conception. I thank God, Mary and all of you for your prayerful company during this year in which all members of the central government have made a pilgrimage, visiting many of the places where we are serving the poorest and trying to live the Good News of the Gospel with them. We can confirm what Father Vincens, OMI, (Secretary General) said in a letter addressed to Fr. Arnaud on February 15, 1860: “Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. We are made for the poor; the heart feels at ease among them; we have a special grace for doing them some good.” It does us much good to serve the poor. It does us much good to be missionaries with them. It does us much good to hear the Gospel from them in a new way (R.8a). It does us much good when we make our communities a home for the poor, and the houses of the poor a home for Jesus, thus bearing witness to his Kingdom.

In these days I have meditated on the discreet presence of Mary in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke’s silence about Mary’s presence during the Passion of Jesus and the appearances of the Risen Lord is striking. In the Acts of the Apostles, Mary appears again when the community is gathered in prayer and hope. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is also the Mother of the new community on whom the Spirit will shower gifts on the day of Pentecost. This mystery seems to be desired by Jesus himself

from the cross in the Gospel of John (Jn 19:26). Pope Francis says: “With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.” (EG 284). And also, “At the foot of the cross, at the supreme hour of the new creation, Christ led us to Mary. He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother, and our people read in this maternal image all the mysteries of the Gospel. The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood. Mary, who brought him into the world with great faith, also accompanies ‘the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’” (Rev 12:17). (EG. 285)

This maternal presence of Mary, this feminine icon that the Lord wants for his Church, has been manifested throughout the synodal process and in the Assembly that was held in Rome last October. In the proposed assembly dynamic, mutual listening and listening to the Spirit are harmonized to discover what God is asking of us so as to collaborate in his mission. This dynamic in itself is good news for the Church and for society that is on pilgrimage in this world that seems to have lost hope.

This synodal process is what we have proposed and we propose once again for our family.

We need to open ourselves to the Spirit to be faithful to our charism and our mission. We need to listen to each other and listen together to the Word of God and the cries of today's poor to understand what the Spirit is whispering to us. In our tradition we speak of "adopting a mode of discernment that favors consensus" (R. 26a). Using the dynamic followed in the Synod can help us fulfill our Founder's dream of being "one heart and one soul", reproducing that missionary communion of the first apostolic communities. "By growing in unity of heart and mind, we bear witness before the world that Jesus lives in our midst and unites us in order to send us out to proclaim God's reign." (C. 37)

Social networks have presented an image of the Synod that I find extremely suggestive: round tables where men and women, clerics and lay people dialogue and pray in a spiritual conversation. I dream that we too can do that in order to discern how to revitalize our life and mission from a creative fidelity to our charism (cf. C.168). I think that Mary has prepared those "round tables" in which the number of participants is gradually expanding. The Oblates can do it in each local community and later expand the spiritual conversation to different levels according to the decisions that need to be made. We must also expand the spaces where the laity and other realities and institutes that participate in the common charism will sit. Later, each one from his/her specific vocation will be able to put into practice what we are discovering. There is room for everyone at Mary's table.

In the letters that I have addressed to you this year to try to launch the animation processes of our last General Chapter, I have proposed this same dynamic to take care of our common home with two tracks: the care of our planet from a comprehensive ecological conversion and the care of our charismatic family by strengthening local communities. Furthermore, with all the members of the central government and the CCRR Committee, we have dared to

dream of a synodal process that would lead us to face the global restructuring of our structures and formation houses proposed by the General Chapter (cf. PCH: J. Initial Formation; K. Restructuring). The CCRR will guide us in following together an evangelical path in the footsteps of our Founder. We dreamed up this same process to seek actions that respond to what was requested in the same Chapter for the laity and lay associations that participate in the common charism (cf. PCH: H. Lay Associations) and for the other proposals of the Chapter. I have received with joy news of people and groups who have set out and who are responding with concrete proposals. Surely many others will join in this common pilgrimage. Thank you so much.

I cannot help but think about the mark of missionary holiness left by our Blessed Joseph Gerard now that I am venerating him at his tomb while on a pilgrimage through the holy land of Lesotho. He was a true missionary pilgrim who spread hope and lived communion. Always faithful to the service of the poorest and sick, to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the love of the Congregation, he did not hesitate to wear out and risk his life for the good of those to whom he had been sent. His love for God, his devotion to the Sacred Heart, his daring to try everything to announce the Gospel make us recognize in him a model of evangelical and missionary life, a model of an Oblate who allowed himself to be guided by the proposal of Saint Eugene in the "Preface" and in our Rules. When we ask ourselves how to be better missionaries today, he answers: "The answer is on every page of the Gospel: we must love them, love them in spite of everything, love them always. The good God has wanted that we do good to a person in loving that person. The world belongs to the person who loves it most and proves it." (From the second reading of the Office of Readings of the Memory of Blessed Joseph Gerard. Notes from the retreat in the summer of 1886).

The Oblates and the Church of Lesotho are the custodians of this treasure and I thank them

and encourage everyone to further promote this legacy of missionary holiness of our religious family.

Joseph Gerard was a devoted lover of Mary Immaculate and knew how to promote her devotion. With him and with all our saints, the blessed and the entire community that lives in heaven, we want to wish each other a happy feast of our Mother and Patroness, asking for

her intercession so that God blesses each and every one of us, as well as all those to whom we have been sent.

With affection, your brother pilgrim of hope in communion.

*Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI
Superior General
Roma, Lesotho, December 8, 2023*

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Major Superiors: A New Phase Begins!

The 2023 Orientation Session for Major Superiors concluded with Mass presided over by the Superior General, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, on Saturday, December 2, 2023.

Prior to the Mass, the Superiors spent time reflecting on their experience and doing an evaluation. Many of them spoke positively of the experience, highlighting some key moments:

the workshop on leadership led by Br. Joseph McKee, FMS, the presentation on animation around the Oblate charism led by Fr. Paolo ARCHIATI, OMI, the visit to St. Peter's Basilica during which they concelebrated in the Mass at the tomb of St. Peter and then the visit to the excavations, the various presentations by members of the General Administration, the visit to the International Roman Scholasticate (IRS), etc. Others spoke appreciatively of the fraternal spirit in the General House, among the Superiors themselves, and with members of the Central Government.

The Superior General began his closing remarks by appealing for missionaries for Cuba, China, Turkmenistan, and Ghana. He pointed out that some of these are difficult missions, but they are missions that require the presence of Oblates.

In his homily during the Mass, among other things, the Superior General reminded the Superiors that,

“Our ministry should lead us to grow in friendship with Jesus and with the poor.” Taking care of one's heart so as not to grow weary by the demands of the ministry should be taken seriously, he said. Quoting from the Bible, he said, “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of the daily life and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.” He further explained: “...I would like to draw your attention to this because we are often tempted to fill our emptiness or seek compensation with seductions and substitutions for the requirement to live our vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We should be able to speak openly about it and allow ourselves to be helped to live our religious vows with joy and generosity.”

The closing Mass was celebrated in the presence of the relic of the heart of St. Eugene. At the end of the Mass, the Superior General blessed the congregation with the relic and invited those present to come forward to venerate it. It is the wish of the Superior General that each of the Major Superiors will carry within them a part of the Founder's heart and will grow in the virtues which fired his heart.

With their faces turned to the statue of the Oblate Madonna, they all sang the Salve Regina, remembering how the early Oblate missionaries would leave the Port of Marseille – the last thing they would see as they sailed off to the missions was the statue of Notre dame de la Garde. With the Mass and closing rituals concluded, they all shared in a fraternal moment of aperitivo and lunch with the General House Community. During the lunch, the community took the opportunity to wish the Superior General a happy 60th birthday (December 4).

The session was intense and filled with a lot of information. There is a lot to be digested. With the close of the session, a new phase has begun in the lives of our brothers. We wish them well and God's abundant blessings in their ministry.

Raymond MWANGALA, OMI

Lesotho: The Superior General in the Footsteps of Blessed Joseph Gerard

The Superior General, Fr. Luis Ignacio ALONSO ROIS, OMI, announces his Pilgrimage to Lesotho, in the footsteps of Blessed Joseph Gerard.

Dear Oblates and Members of our Charismatic Family,

I hope this message finds you well and filled with the grace of our shared mission. I am thrilled to announce my upcoming Pilgrimage of Hope to Lesotho, a sacred land steeped in Oblate history and a spirit of missionary zeal.

This journey holds immense significance for our Congregation as we follow in the footsteps of our dedicated Oblate missionaries, particularly Blessed Joseph Gerard. Lesotho, a land where missionary holiness has thrived, calls us to reaffirm our commitment to serving the most vulnerable and proclaiming the Good News with unwavering devotion.

I am pleased to share that the pilgrimage is scheduled for December 4 – 18, 2023. During this time, I eagerly anticipate engaging with the local community, witnessing the transformative work being done firsthand, and seeking inspiration for the ongoing mission of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

My itinerary will include visiting significant Oblate sites and the holy land of Lesotho, providing a chance for reflection and spiritual renewal. I am excited to meet with our fellow Oblates, the Church in Lesotho, and the wider community. This pilgrimage offers an opportunity to strengthen our connections, share insights, and collectively discern the way forward.

As we stand at the tomb of Blessed Joseph Gerard, a shining example of missionary holiness, let us draw inspiration from his life and commitment to serving the poor. While I embark on this pilgrimage, I invite each of you to join me in spirit through your prayers and intentions. May our collective prayers forge a spiritual bond that transcends physical distance and fortifies our unity in the mission.

Regular updates and reflections from the journey will be shared through our official channels, allowing you to participate in this meaningful pilgrimage in spirit.

As we prepare for this pilgrimage, let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our Patroness and Guide. May her maternal presence accompany us, and may this journey inspire our continued dedication to the Gospel. In communion and missionary hope,

*Luis Ignacio ALONSO ROIS, OMI
Superior General*

The General House Welcomes Oblate Brothers

The General Committee of Oblate Brothers has begun their meetings at the General House in Rome until December 8th.

On December 4th, before his trip to Lesotho, The Superior General presided over the opening Mass and met with the committee to provide them with guidance following the General Chapter. The main focus of this meeting is to work on the mandates and recommendations outlined by the General Chapter (see PHC C. Oblate Brothers).

The second point of this meeting is to listen:
– To understand the experiences of the Oblate Brothers in their respective regions: the five regional delegates will share updates on what is happening in their regions.

– To listen to the voices of the poor: the committee will visit the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome. These refugees have been forced to leave their countries and have a message of hope to share with us.

It is a comprehensive agenda that will lead the committee to define their work plan for the coming years.

*Benoît DOSQUET, OMI
Permanent Secretary*

A New Website for the Oblate Community of Aix

The feast of the Immaculate Conception marks the date for the Foundation House Website

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of Aix-en-Provence new website has finally seen the light! The website aims to reflect the three areas of activity of our missionary community: the Charism, the Mission with young people and the Mission church.

Trying to avoid further delay, we decided to launch the site on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. We are quite aware that the areas

concerning the charism and the De Mazenod Experience should be available in English and Spanish, and we are confident that we will gradually get there. We hope you have a nice experience discovering the site.

Please do not hesitate to let us know your comments or questions. We will try to answer as best we can.

Happy Feast of the Immaculate Conception!
Welcome to oblats-aix.fr

The Oblate Community of Aix

Oblates Celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

The Immaculate Conception holds a special place in the hearts of Oblates, who find unity in their devotion to Mary and her virtues. These days, Social media is abuzz with images of Oblate communities from diverse corners of the globe who have come together to commemorate this significant feast day.

Eugene de Mazenod founded our Congregation to preach the Gospel to the poor, but he saw this goal enhanced by preaching devotion to Mary, a devotion which marked his own spiritual life. In 1826, after we received the name “Oblates of Mary Immaculate”, he wrote to Father Tempier: “May we really understand who and what we are! I hope the Lord will grant us this grace with the help and protection of our holy Mother, Mary Immaculate. In our Congregation we must have great devotion to her. Does it not seem to you a mark of predestination, to bear the name of Oblate of Mary, that is to say, consecrated to God under the patronage of Mary, whose name the Congregation bears like a family name it has in common with the most holy and immaculate Mother of God?”

The Founder gave the first missionaries to Canada their obedience in 1841 with the words: “May the Blessed Virgin conceived without stain be your guide and patroness, devotion to whom, you must bear in mind, is a special duty of our vocation to propagate in every place.” And in his last will and testament he took consolation in the “filial devotion of my whole life and... the desire I have always had to make her known and loved, and to spread her devotion everywhere through the ministry of those whom the Church has given me as children, who have had the same desire as myself.” “Mary Immaculate is patroness of our Congregation... We shall always look on her as our mother... Wherever our ministry takes us, we will strive to instill genuine devotion to the Immaculate Virgin who prefigures God’s final victory over all evil.” (C. 10)

The early Novitiate and Scholasticate directories asked that Mary’s feasts be prepared in recollection and penance and be celebrated joyfully. The major feasts, such as that of the Immaculate Conception, were preceded by a fast day. After the declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, Oblates began preparing for this feast with a novena.

The tradition has continued to our days; across continents and cultures, Oblates celebrate the Immaculate Conception through a rich tapestry of religious observances, communal gatherings, and personal reflections. The diversity of these celebrations reflects the unique contexts in which Oblate communities find themselves while maintaining a shared commitment to the principles embodied by Mary.

In his December 8th Letter, the Superior General, Fr. Chicho writes, “In these days I have meditated on the discreet presence of Mary in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke’s silence about Mary’s presence during the Passion of Jesus and the appearances of the Risen Lord is striking.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Mary appears again when the community is gathered in prayer and hope. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is also the Mother of the new community on whom the Spirit will shower gifts on the day of Pentecost. This mystery seems to be desired by Jesus himself from the cross in the Gospel of John (Jn 19:26)”

May Mary Immaculate, Patroness of our Congregation, continue to intercede for us!

OMIWORLD

“Cor Unum”: The Central Government’s Weekly Blog

In today’s digital world, having an online presence is more important than ever. That’s why we are thrilled to bring you “Cor Unum,” our exciting new weekly blog. A blog dedicated to the activities of the Superior General and the Central Government of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and our way of embracing modern methods to effectively communicate and evangelize.

The name “Cor Unum“ holds great significance for us Oblates. Translating to “One Heart” in Latin, it captures perfectly the key themes of our congregation’s charism and spirituality. It represents our unity of purpose, shared commitment to the Gospel, and the strong sense of community and brotherhood that defines us as Oblates. This phrase was beloved by our founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, who envisioned a holy society with one heart and soul.

“Cor Unum” is not just a resource but an opportunity to see the legacy of St. Eugene de Mazenod and the Oblate charism through the eyes of his successor, the Superior General. Stay connected with the Superior General and stay up to date with his latest whereabouts, messages,

reflections, and more. Join him as he embarks on pilgrimages across the Oblate world, meeting other Oblates and Laity who share the Charism. Be informed of the various initiatives and projects led by the Superior General, spanning from mission activities to social justice endeavors, and witness the profound impact of the Congregation on local and global communities. And most importantly, join in prayer with the Superior General as he shares his experiences, thoughts, and intentions.

Keep abreast of upcoming events, gatherings, and important milestones within the Congregation through the blog. It’s your go-to resource for keeping track of important dates, celebrations, and activities.

Let’s journey together on a path of spiritual growth, shared vision, and renewed commitment to the Oblate charism. Visit the blog today and become part of the vibrant and dynamic online community of the Oblate family.

We sincerely thank you for your continuous support and participation in the mission of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

OMIWORLD

Rome: The General Finance Committee convenes

The General Finance Committee is convening this week in Rome, from December 12th to 16th, 2023.

This biannual gathering serves as a collective effort to support the Superior General and Council in assessing the financial landscape of the Congregation. During this session, the focus will be on evaluating the various budgets within the General Administration, as well as a comprehensive review of the financial standings of both the Oblate Units and the General Administration.

As the Congregation undergoes a rapid demographic shift over the next decade, one of the critical issues to be addressed by the Superior General is the strategic financial preparation for these imminent changes. Effectively navigating this transition will necessitate a closer collaboration within the Congregation to adeptly respond to the swiftly unfolding financial shifts in the years ahead. The call to a greater spirit of ‘collaboration’ is going to be a key process for the future of the Congregation.

The members of the GFC include Fathers Anton GRECIAN, Jozef CZERNECKI, Gerard CONLAN, and the General Treasurer, Charles RENSBERG.

Charles RENSBERG, OMI

General House: OMI-JPIC Assembly

The General House community welcomes the OMI-JPIC Committee who have come to Rome for meetings December 14-18, 2023.

The Superior General and Council have entrusted the OMI-JPIC Committee with the task of serving and animating the Congregation's JPIC initiatives. The OMI-JPIC Committee has focused on: Advocacy, Communion, Peace, and Activities related to Fratelli Tutti, Laudato Si', and the care for our Common Home.

During this assembly, the committee aims to:

- a) Listen to each participant, especially Daquin, as he shares with the committee his experience at Cop 28 and the report to be given to the Central Government.
- b) Complete the OMI-Laudato Si' Action Plan draft for the whole Congregation.
- c) Plan the agenda for the next year (2024).
- d) Discuss dates for the next meetings and General Assembly 2024 and online meetings.
- e) Prepare reports for the January – February 2024 Plenary Session.

Christmas 2023: Message of the Superior General

Merry Christmas: "May your heart be filled with peace, love and joy; let glad tidings be your reason to smile!"

"Dear Brother Oblates, Lay Associates and the entire Charismatic Family,
As we come together in the warmth of this Christmas season, let us contemplate the profound message of peace embodied in the image of the infant child Jesus emerging from the ruins of war-torn lands. Amidst darkness and destruction, the advent of the Christ child signifies hope, resilience, and the promise of renewal. Much like Jesus arose from humble beginnings in Bethlehem, light and love can also emerge from the darkest corners of our world.

In my Christmas card, I've chosen an image of the child Jesus amidst the rubble, symbolizing the enduring power of innocence and the potential for rebirth, even after devastation.

The plenary sessions of May 19, 2023, and October 12, 2023, appointed six members to the GS OMI-JPIC 2023-2026:

- Fr. Jean-Hérick JASMIN, OMI, Director General, GS OMI-JPIC. (Haiti – Colombia).
Fr. Raymond MWANGALA, OMI, Gen Assistant for Mission – liaison with C. Gov. (from Zambia).
Fr. DANIEL LEBLANC, OMI, Representative: ONU – JCOR – VIVAT INT. (US-Canada).
Fr. Daquin Iyan Iyo O.M.I. (Congo- Kenya).
Rev. Fr. Jakkop Robinson SATHEESKUMAR (Ramesh), OMI. (Jaffna – Sri Lanka)
FR. Roberto Carrasco ROJAS, OMI, Superior Delegation General of BOLPER,(Bolper- Peru).

The members of the OMI-JPIC Committee actively contribute their expertise and experience during meetings to assist the Director in developing plans for promoting JPIC within the Congregation. This collaboration is outlined in the JPIC Statutes, section 4.3.1.

Jean-Hérick JASMIN, OMI

It urges us to recognize the sacredness of every life, particularly those ensnared in the crossfire of conflict, prompting solidarity with those unable to celebrate Christmas due to war.

This Christmas, let's not only rejoice in the birth of Christ but also dedicate ourselves to being instruments of peace. May the Christmas spirit motivate us to strive for a world where children no longer witness the horrors of war, and where the message of peace resonates louder than the echoes of conflict. In the tender vulnerability of the infant child Jesus lying amidst the ruins, we discern a call to nurture and protect the sanctity of life. May this image serve as a reminder that, even in the face of adversity, the light of compassion and goodwill can triumph. Wishing you a Christmas filled with the true essence of peace, and may the hope born in Bethlehem be a guiding star for our troubled world."

*Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI
Superior General.*

Lesotho: Magnificat

In recent weeks in Lesotho, I've had multiple opportunities to hear the Gospel narrative of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-56). I resonated with Mary's sense of urgency, akin to rushing to the mountains to serve the Oblates and the charismatic family on pilgrimage in Lesotho.

Like Mary, my mission has been reaffirmed, and my heart is brimming with joy. Alongside those I've visited, we've begun to sing the prophetic song, the Magnificat, celebrating the works the Lord is accomplishing among us. We've reminded each other of the beauty of our charism, emphasizing its worthiness of radical living, transcending anything that might hinder its brilliance or impede the communal proclamation of Jesus.

The presence of Blessed Joseph Gerard has been a source of support, and the conviction that he will one day be canonized fills me with hope. He may be already effecting the most precious miracle, renewing us in our vocation. We fervently pray for the manifestation of God's will through a miracle that the Church can recognize as a sign of God's desire for his canonization.

With the Laity and Oblates of Lesotho, I shared in the joy of the upcoming reopening of the Novitiate House, scheduled for the first days of January. This responsibility extends to all of us, transcending the confines of the formation team. We must collectively pray for the novices, but more significantly, we must bear witness with our lives to our vocation. In doing so, every novice in our congregation has the right to see in each member of our family someone who lives passionately in love with their vocation and faithfully embodies the received charism. Let's actively engage, opening the doors to this new phase, and live our mission with heightened dedication and passion, striving to be bearers of Good News to the most abandoned.

Reconnecting with the Oblates serving the Congregation in Rome, I have felt their companionship as they walked with me through the lands of Lesotho. Joyfully, we've also shared the outcomes of the General Committees of the Brothers, the Finance Committee, and the JPIC Committee meetings. They will report their proposals and initiatives to the Central Government to encourage better pilgrims of hope in communion.

I aspire to celebrate Christmas in the smallest unit of our Congregation: Turkmenistan. God willing, I will be with them from December 22nd to 28th. In this mission, two Oblates are reopening the path of the Church in these lands while representing it through their diplomatic service. It's a small Church, a beautiful mission that serves as a poignant reminder that Jesus chose to be born in fragility, poverty, and under the care of the least among us, allowing himself to be tended to by them.

As I accompany our two missionaries, I am confident that our charismatic family will once again come together on this new pilgrimage to discover the missionary challenges of our time. I also hope some missionaries will be inspired to strengthen this Oblate community. Let us all converge in the Bethlehem of Turkmenistan to be surprised by God, who becomes a pilgrim to us when we embark on a pilgrimage, sowing hope and communion in the world.

*Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI
Superior General.*

Christmas in Turkmenistan

Christmas greetings from Turkmenistan!

Beneath Turkmenistan's star-studded sky, I embraced Christmas alongside the smallest Oblate community in the Congregation. Reflecting on this Christmas celebration with the Oblates and People of Turkmenistan, I contemplate how this journey has left an indelible mark on my heart.

The profound light foretold by Isaiah, destined to liberate a people immersed in darkness, manifested itself in the night as a discreet candle—hidden, noticed only by Mary, Joseph, and a handful of shepherds. Its smallness extends to all, seeking to illuminate our own limitations. Fragile, as it craves the care and shelter of each of us, akin to shielding a delicate candle flame from the wind. Such is Jesus, the light of nations, the prince of peace, aspiring to illuminate the world through our delicate testimony, passing His light from one to another to free us from all violence and bestow upon us genuine peace.

Turkmenistan, a crossroads of paths and cultures, a cradle of religions, now bears witness to the Oblates, sent by the Latin rite Church for a fresh start.

Engaging in dialogue with other religions and the local society, they emerge as architects of peace, fostering diplomatic relations and exploring ecumenical avenues to proclaim Jesus. Just as Jesus did, and in His spirit, they ignite hearts with the radiance of the Gospel, selflessly serving the most destitute for solace, frequently inscribing new chapters in the Acts of the Apostles. A magnificent mission, one for which we express our gratitude to God as pilgrims of hope in communion.

Thus, two Oblates have pioneered novel pathways for the Church in these lands. The unassuming nature of this Church, mirroring the humility of the manger, serves as a poignant reminder of Christmas—Jesus, born vulnerable and among the poor. With the aspiration to inspire additional missionaries to strengthen the Oblate community in Turkmenistan, we extend an invitation to join this unique Bethlehem.

May this reflection post-journey ignite a collective commitment to sow hope and foster communion with unwavering enthusiasm and love. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI
Superior General.*

2023: Te Deum Laudamus

As we approach the end of 2023, the Central Government takes a moment to reflect on the significant moments and achievements throughout the past year. Gratitude is extended to God and the community for all the experiences encountered, marking a year of prosperity, learning, and diligence for us as newly elected members of the Central Government.

In acknowledging the important appointments of the General Treasurer and General Secretary, we express sincere thanks to Fr. Charles RENSBURG, the new General Treasurer, and Bro. Noel GARCIA, the new General Secretary, for their unwavering dedication and readiness to serve the Congregation.

The year 2023 has witnessed a variety of events that have enriched both the Congregation and the Church as a whole, including the Synod on Synodality in Rome, World Youth Day in Lisbon, the Oblate Join Session with the Latin America Region, and the Orientation Session for Major Superiors. The Central Government takes this moment to recognize the outstanding contributions of each Oblate and member of the Oblate Family and to acknowledge their generosity, commitment and willingness to serve.

Despite the blessings and joyous moments, 2023 witnessed numerous global conflicts, wars, and tensions. Our hearts go out to the nations enduring such hardships, with a particular focus on standing in solidarity with the people in the Holy Land, Ukraine, and other conflict-ridden areas.

Gratitude is expressed to our Brother Oblates, who is serving in these regions, offering support and prayers for restoring peace worldwide.

With hope and anticipation, the Central Government eagerly awaits the New Year, 2024. Members of the Central Government commit to remaining active and engaged in various events throughout the coming year, including Joint Sessions with the Africa-Madagascar and Canada-US regions, visits to units preceding these sessions, and Orientation Sessions for Major Superiors in Rome. Sincere thanks are extended to all collaborators for their invaluable assistance.

Pilgrims of Hope in 2024

Looking back at 2023, there are many reasons to feel despondent: the violent wars between Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the number of migrants who continue to die as their attempt to get to a better future, natural disasters, among others.

However, we refuse to succumb to despair. We are pilgrims of hope in communion. What is the source of our hope? (cf. 1Pt. 3:15) The Paschal Mystery.

In the Paschal Mystery, God reveals that life ultimately prevails over death, and good conquers evil. The suffering, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus, and the sending of the Holy Spirit serve as a model for all Christians. Just as Jesus experienced these trials, every Christian throughout history has as well. Though we may currently endure suffering and loss, we understand that these cannot have the final say. No amount of warfare and violence will ever bring true peace. Eventually, new life emerges even from the depths of death.

As we step into the New Year, our hearts are filled with hope that all endeavors will be directed toward God's glory and humanity's well-being. In the New Year of 2024, may God accompany each individual with His blessings, granting the strength, hope, and joy to labor for His Kingdom. May the coming time usher in perpetual peace, providing the conditions for everyone to experience security, joy, and solidarity.

May the Holy Spirit illuminate our path with light, endow us with wisdom, and instill courage within us to align our actions with God's divine will as we strive as Pilgrims of Hope in Communion.

*Antoni BOCHM, OMI
Vicar General*

Something profoundly new will unfurl, for we are moving towards the divine plan for the future. May we tirelessly strive for justice and reconciliation among individuals and nations, so that peace, shalom, may reign.

May we look to Mary, the Mother of Peace, as our guide and model. (C.10) She who is the God-bearer, theotokos, knew in her life what it was to wait for God to act. Standing at the foot of the cross, she witnessed the death of her son. Three days later, she knew him as the Risen One.

May God bless us as we begin the new year. May he shine his face upon us and be gracious to us. And may we continue to walk as pilgrims of hope in communion.

Happy New Year and many blessings for 2024!

*RAYMOND MWANGALA, OMI
Assistant General*

AFRICA-MADAGASCAR

Lesotho : Celebrating the Oblate Legacy

The Superior General's pilgrimage in Lesotho, which started on December 5, is all about fostering unity and shared purpose, reaffirming our commitment to serving the most abandoned and honoring the legacy of the Oblates in that region. These first two days have been a cascade of emotions and profound moments.

On his first day, he visited the Oblate cemetery and prayed for the deceased Oblates. He then joined the Provincial council meeting at Mazenod Conference Center. Fr. General's presence at the Provincial Council meeting affirmed his closeness and support of the province's work despite challenges.

Later on, the Mazenod Conference Centre buzzed with festivity as the Superior General celebrated his birthday, surrounded by his brother Oblates and dedicated center staff. From there, Fr. General visited the Mazenod Monastery Community, the largest in the province, to underline the importance of community and strengthen unity among the Oblates.

This morning, in the company of his Oblate Brothers and several Lay Associates, the Superior General celebrated the Eucharistic at the tomb of Blessed Joseph Gérard in Roma, Lesotho.

Pilgrimage to Lesotho: A Legacy of Inspiration and Hope

The Superior General, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, embarked on a pilgrimage of hope to the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, retracing the steps of Blessed Joseph Gerard.

His arrival in the Lesotho Province on December 5, 2023, was warmly welcomed by the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Paul MATLOSA.

He fervently commended the entire Charismatic Family to the intercessions of the Great Apostle of Lesotho, Ntate Gerard.

Adding to the already enriching experience was a captivating mini-exhibition carefully put together by Lesotho Oblate Provincial archivists Fr. Matekane OMI and Mrs. Mamonaheng. This exhibition took the Superior General on a delightful journey through the Oblate history of Lesotho, emphasizing the urgent need to preserve and pass on this legacy to future generations.

This pilgrimage is proving to be a reminder of the Oblates' tireless commitment and love for the Basotho. Fr. General's presence affirms and encourages their present work as they continue to build the legacy carefully, ensuring a brighter and more hopeful future for the Oblates in Lesotho.

Join us on this uplifting journey as we celebrate unity, purpose, and the enduring spirit of the Oblates in Lesotho!

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During his pilgrimage, Fr. General seized the opportunity to celebrate Mass at the tomb of Blessed Joseph Gerard in Roma Ha Majesu, the first Church erected by Fr. Gerard and his companions.

Imbued with a spirit of prayer, he visited significant locations in Lesotho associated with the Oblates' history since their arrival in 1862, including Mary Land Mission, where Fr. Gerard celebrated his first Mass.

Beyond paying homage to the tomb of Blessed Joseph Gerard, Fr. General engaged with various groups within the Mazenodian family. In his address to the Oblates of the Lesotho Province, Fr. Chicho underscored that his role as the Superior General is to perpetually nurture the Congregation’s Charism and foster its unity by animating religious life and guiding it in its mission (C.133 & 134). He emphasized that this task could not be accomplished in isolation but relied on the collaboration of all members within local communities.

During this pilgrimage, the Superior General issued a letter to all Oblates on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 2023), titled ‘WITH MARY ON THE SYNODAL PATH.’ In this letter, Fr. General emphasized the importance of Oblates opening themselves to the Spirit and remaining faithful to their Charism and Mission. He urged the community to listen attentively to one another, collectively discern the word of God, and respond to the contemporary cry of the poor.

As a pilgrim of hope in the Mountain Kingdom, Fr. General graciously allowed us to touch and venerate the Oblate Cross used by the founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod. This special moment was a blessing for everyone, and we express gratitude to God for the graces bestowed upon us. Fr General concluded His Pilgrimage in Lesotho by Celebrating the Holy Eucharist at Regina Mundi Parish, Mazenod.

Having Fr. General among us was an honor that left everyone feeling renewed and ecstatic. He will forever occupy a special place in our hearts, and we assure him of our continual prayers.

Fr. General bid farewell to Lesotho on December 17, 2023, as he departed for Rome, leaving behind a legacy of inspiration and hope.

Tumisang Paul BOHLOA, OMI

Bridging Borders: Zambian Oblates Ministry in America

Two Zambian Oblates Minister to the Zambian Catholic Women’s League in America!

Fathers Hector KALALULA and Abraham CHIMESE, two Zambian Oblates, recently conducted a retreat for the Zambian Catholic Women’s League in Dallas, Texas, from December 13th to Saturday, December 16th. Women from Zambia residing across the United States and some from the UK gathered to partake in this enriching retreat.

A significant moment during the retreat was a special encounter with Bishop Greg Kelly from the Catholic Diocese of Dallas, Texas.

Bishop Kelly honored the occasion with his presence, offering words of encouragement to the Zambian women.

He urged them to uphold the strength of their faith as members of the Catholic Women’s League in America. This event served not only as a spiritual retreat but also as a unifying force, bringing together Zambian women from diverse corners of the world United by faith and community.

Hector KALALUKA, OMI

 ASIA - OCEANIA

Superior General: Christmas in Turkmenistan

The Oblate community in Ashgabat is eagerly anticipating the visit of the Superior General, Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI. He will be in Turkmenistan from December 22 – 28, 2023.

The Oblate presence in Turkmenistan dates back almost 26 years and began with the arrival of Oblate Fathers Andrzej MADEJ and Radosław ZMITROWICZ —the former still leading the Mission Sui Iuris, while the latter serves as an auxiliary Bishop in Ukraine. Throughout this period, various Oblates have fervently shared the Word of God, leaving an enduring impact on the local community. Despite Turkmenistan's predominantly Muslim population, the people of Turkmenistan have been very welcoming.

Currently, the Oblate community in Turkmenistan comprises two members: Fr. Andrzej MADEJ and Fr. Paweł KUBIAK. They fulfil the roles of missionaries and official representatives of the Holy See, serving as the sole Catholic priests ministering in the country's only Catholic Church. Fr. Paweł, who assumed his position as the community's superior and treasurer in August, brings extensive experience from Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and Crimea.

Despite the initial challenge of acclimating to the country's extreme climate, the warmth of the local people has left a profound impression. Looking forward, the community is eagerly anticipating Father General's visit, especially during this festive Christmas season.

The itinerary includes dedicated time for liturgy, communal prayers, meaningful conversations, and, when time permits, exploring the scenic beauty of the Ashgabat area through community walks.

The excitement for these activities is palpable and met with great joy.

Announcing this visit, Fr. Chicho wrote in his personal Blog, *Cor Unum*,

“I aspire to celebrate Christmas in the smallest unit of our Congregation: Turkmenistan. God willing, I will be with them from December 22nd to 28th.

In this mission, two Oblates are reopening the path of the Church in these lands while representing it through their diplomatic service. It's a small Church, a beautiful mission that serves as a poignant reminder that Jesus chose to be born in fragility, poverty, and under the care of the least among us, allowing himself to be tended to by them.

As I accompany our two missionaries, I am confident that our charismatic family will once again come together on this new pilgrimage to discover the missionary challenges of our time. I also hope some missionaries will be inspired to strengthen this Oblate community. Let us all converge in the Bethlehem of Turkmenistan to be surprised by God, who becomes a pilgrim to us when we embark on a pilgrimage, sowing hope and communion in the world.”

Paweł KUBIAK, OMI

Indonesia: One Family, One Heart, One Mission

In Yogyakarta, forty representatives from thirteen Oblate Lay Associations met, embodying the essence of the Mazenodian Family Indonesia (MFI). Their goal is to foster unity with the theme “One Family, One Heart, One Mission.”

The Oblates of the Indonesian Province have had a long tradition of working alongside the Laity in every church ministry. As the Province began to flourish, so did the number of Lay Associations that embodied the Spirit and Charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod. As a result, the Oblates sought a way to reinforce, encourage, and support the various groups by uniting them under the umbrella of the Mazenodian Family Indonesia (MFI).

The spirit and purpose of the MFI is to foster unity and respect for each association’s unique expression of the Charism. Each group is different while collectively sharing the same charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod. Some groups focus on praying for the Oblates, others partner to support the various Oblate missions with gifts and talents, and others work with Oblates in parish missions. Today, the number of Lay Associations that make up the Mazenodian Family of Indonesia is 13.

The Yogyakarta gathering aimed to unify participants in a communal spirit, beginning with

group introductions and a Holy Mass led by Fr. Ignatius WASONO, the Provincial Council head overseeing Oblate Lay Associations.

After Mass, Fr. Provincial, Eko SAKTIO outlined the gathering’s objectives — to walk together as Pilgrims of Hope in Communion in the spirit of the Last General Chapter.

Fr. Saktio invited all the Lay Associations who share the same charism of Eugene de Mazenod to walk together as one family and towards one mission with the whole Oblate Family. The participants engaged in fraternal discussions about MFI’s vision and mission, concluding with the formulation of a shared Mazenodian Family prayer for future gatherings.

At the conclusion of the program, Fr. Antonius SUSSANTO, the director of MFI, urged all associations to support one another through prayer. He offered valuable advice to sustain this communal pilgrimage, emphasizing unity as one family and fostering the spirit of a shared heart and mission within the larger Oblate Family in Indonesia. This time together has marked a fresh start for MFI’s ongoing journey, celebrating the richness inherent in our Oblate Family.

May Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate be praised through the mission and all the activities of Mazenodian Family Indonesia.

Mazenodian Family Indonesia.

Jaffna: “Carols around the Wards” Brings Christmas Joy to Hospitals

The Jaffna Teaching Hospital and Chavakachcheri Base Hospital were filled with the uplifting spirit of Christmas as the Oblate hospital Chaplaincy, led by Grecian REMOSHAN, organized a heartwarming ‘Carols around the Wards’ event.

I am Fr. Grecian REMOSHAN, OMI, the hospital Chaplain of Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

I’m delighted to share the joyous moments we experienced on December 14th, 15th, and 16th during our heartwarming Carol Service at both Jaffna Teaching Hospital and the Chavakachcheri Base Hospital.

Our ‘Carols around the Wards’ event, organized as part of our Oblate Mission, filled the corridors with the harmonious tunes of dedicated healthcare professionals and Scholastic brothers.

Their beautiful singing created a comforting atmosphere, resonating through the wards and uplifting spirits.

As a special part of the festivities, patients were thrilled to receive Christmas greetings and gifts. These gifts were generously provided by the students of 80 schools in our town. It was truly heartwarming to see children of all faiths – Hindus, Muslims, and Christians – enthusiastically participating in this act of giving and sharing.

The genuine warmth and generosity displayed by these kids were truly encouraging. It showcased the beauty of unity and harmony among different faiths, proving that the holiday season is indeed a time for shared joy and goodwill.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas season filled with love, laughter, and the spirit of sharing!

Grecian REMOSHAN, OMI

CANADA - US

Oblate presence at the International Symposium on Missiology

Oblates from the Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province participated in the International Symposium on Missiology.

This international encounter brought together many national directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, originating from 15 countries of Central America, South America, and North America. This second symposium, which took place at the end of the month of October, was the last phase of the preparation for the 6th Congress of American Missionaries (Cam6), which will take place in Puerto Rico.

The guesthouse of the Manoir d'Youville in Châteauguay, in the province of Quebec, was the site of this symposium. It was an excellent meeting, with much sharing on the manner of "being church" in the Americas, which are facing great religious changes. The missionary experience of each national church was very enriching. Yet, despite the different ecclesial experiences, it was evident that it is time to re-think the missionary identity of the church in the Americas.

Our confrere, Fr. Yolland OUELLET, OMI, national director of the Pontifical Mission Society in French Canada, organized this exceptional meeting. With his magnificent co-workers, he took up a great challenge, making this symposium very enriching, magnificently pleasant, and fraternally ecclesial. All the participants left feeling themselves heard, understood, and valued, thanks to a team of professional translators.

I was invited to share on my missionary experience among the Innu. For the first time, I could discuss my path with other missionaries, who had little knowledge of the Canadian dynamics of the mission with the indigenous peoples.

This was an occasion to take note of the similarities of the missionary experience in indigenous environments, in Canada, as well as in Amazonia, and Brazil. After having heard the witness of a religious sister, working in Brazil, on the place of indigenous spirituality in Brazil, I had the impression of finding myself in the heart of Nitassinan of my Innu friends.

Nnaemeka ALI, OMI

EUROPE

2023: A Year of Challenges, Love, and Hope

As the curtain closes on 2023, what will remain in our memories? Amidst the gloom, there shone a glimmer of hope and love!

As the curtain closes on 2023, what will remain in our memories? It was a year marred by the devastating effects of climate change, and the unexpected eruption of the Gaza-Israeli war overshadowed the prospects of any resolution in Ukraine. Migrants suffered continued tragedies, and global populist and isolationist movements gained momentum. The headlines were filled with darkness, casting a shadow on our hearts.

But amidst the gloom, there shone a glimmer of hope and love! Acts of forgiveness, hidden acts of kindness, and tales of solidarity emerged, often unnoticed. It's these ordinary people and their love that sustain our world. Their stories, untold yet powerful, weave the tapestry of salvation amidst the chaos.

The transition from one year to another may be a mere social convention, but for us, it's a chance to pause and reset with renewed optimism. We have two realizations to embrace. Firstly, time passes swiftly, and we must choose how to spend the precious moments we have left. Let's fill them with love and life, leaving no room for waste.

Secondly, we can begin anew in the present moment, just as we are. It only takes a determined step to start again, starting small and taking concrete actions. We can do so much good, and many possibilities are waiting to be explored. So, let us be grateful and embrace this fresh start! We are all pilgrims on this journey, and there is a destination from which we can view our experiences from a different perspective.

May Mary, the Mother of God and the Queen of Peace be our guiding light as we embark on this journey. Like a bright star, she will lead us when we feel lost, ensuring we reach our destination. With her company, we wish you a Happy New Year! May each day be filled with the joy of living life to the fullest.

Carmin MARRONE, OMI

 LATIN - AMERICA

Brazil: Christ is alive! The Joy of the Youth!

Recently, Christ Redeemer Parish, an Oblate mission in the vibrant city of Recife, the capital of Pernambuco in Brazil, celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Christ is alive! With his mother, Mary Immaculate, they are the joy of the Youth!

2023 will be remembered for focusing on the mission with the youth. A Parish mission was organized for all youth groups to motivate and attract other young individuals to the Church. In July, the Encounter of Youth with Christ, widely known as EJC, took place with the theme: "I Found a Reason Not to Give Up."

Sixty participants lived an extraordinary weekend, assisted by another 150 young attendees to this mission, where the youth dedicated themselves to evangelizing their peers. Every effort was made to ensure participants experienced a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

The event was meticulously organized to allow participants to immerse themselves in the merciful love of Jesus the Savior and appreciate the legacy left by our founding, Saint Eugene de Mazenod.

This initiative was inspired by the recent General Chapters, which prioritized the mission with the youth. The result was a prominent presence of the parish youth, both at the evening mass of the feast and the following day in the procession.

In Recife, December 8th is a festive day, and tradition dictates the celebration of a grand procession to the hill named after the Immaculate Virgin, known as "Morro da Conceição." From the summit of this hill, the Virgin blesses the city of Recife. Once again, the youth actively participated in this devotion, making pilgrimages at different moments to pay homage to the patroness of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate.

On the morning of December 8th, they gathered with the Oblate Missionaries residing in the small community of Saint Eugene to celebrate that brave young woman who, with her immaculate "YES," brought the Savior to humanity.

Let us stay focused on Jesus, living out the Oblate charisma in this land and choosing the mission with and for the youth. May Christ live and guide us with his eternal youth!

Cleber LOPES, OMI

Paraguay: Bishop Wilhelm Guillermo STECKLING, OMI, Resigns

The Holy Father has accepted the resignation from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay) presented by His Excellency Monsignor Heinz Wilhelm STECKLING, OMI, former Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (1998 – 2010)

The Holy Father has appointed Bishop of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay) His Excellency Monsignor Pedro Collar Noguera, transferring him from the see of San Juan Bautista de las Misiones.

We share Monsignor Guillermo Steckling's message of gratitude during the announcement of the new bishop for the Diocese of Ciudad del Este, held this Tuesday, December 19, at the Cathedral Church.

I want to express my thanks to God for my Christian vocation, priesthood, and the call to the episcopate. I accepted all three calls with the desire to serve the Church in its unique mission, existing to save the world and fulfill God’s plan for us.

To the faithful of our diocese, covering Alto Paraná and Canindeyú, I appreciate your warm welcome, openness in dialogue, and, above all, your witness of love for the Lord, the Virgin, and the Church. This was evident in a strong commitment to the transformative power of Christian charity.

While I could thank many individuals and groups specifically, I want to emphasize the Church’s

indebtedness to the priests who have dedicated their lives solely to serving the Lord and their neighbors.

Now, we must prepare for the installation of the new bishop, Monsignor Pedro Collar Noguera, a native of this city. This will take place on the feast of San Blas. Let us begin to pray for our new shepherd so that the holy people of God may grow stronger; may the Church become a great light and blessing for all inhabitants of this vast land.

+ Monsignor Guillermo Steckling
Bishop Emeritus and
Apostolic Administrator
of the Diocese of Ciudad del Este

OMIWORLD

Mexico: “La Guadalupana descended to Tepeyac hill”

“From the heavens on a beautiful morning, La Guadalupana, La Guadalupana, La Guadalupana descended to Tepeyac hill.” This refrain echoes through the streets of Mexico during the festive celebration of Santa María de Guadalupe, a joyous occasion that pays homage to the Brown Virgin or “La Morenita.”

The roots of this celebration trace back to 1531 when the Virgin Mary graced the Mexican people with her presence. She expressed a desire to intimately share in their challenges, triumphs, aspirations, and dreams. With features distinctive of a Mestiza, she appeared as an indigenous woman, delivering a profound request to construct a temple.

This sacred structure would serve as a testament to her boundless compassion for the people of Mexico. Over time, this feast has evolved into a beloved celebration, commemorating the Virgin’s pivotal role in shaping our collective identity, fostering a sense of brotherhood, and endowing us with the capacity, through her contemplation, to reconcile and recognize one another as true

brothers and sisters. It stands out as a unique celebration marked by unparalleled joy.

In neighborhoods across cities, fields, and towns, the novena to the Virgin kicks off every December, accompanied by vibrant displays of fireworks, the aroma of tamales, the warmth of atole, and the comfort of coffee. Communities engage in processions, rosaries, and gatherings, cultivating a sense of extended family in their neighborhoods.

The night of December 11 holds a distinctive flavor as neighborhoods come alive with celebrations of the Word, Eucharistic ceremonies, and rosaries. Altars adorn corners and streets, filled with attendees sharing stories of the Guadalupana’s impact, offering gatherings and hosting dances in her honor.

On December 12, pilgrimages to the Basilica of Guadalupe are ceaseless. The basilica is a bustling hub of pilgrims on bicycles, motorcycles, walking, or running with torches, hailing from different corners of the country, all aspiring to reach the altar of “La Morenita,” as affectionately called by St. John Paul II. In factories and workplaces, it’s likely the only day when employers engage with

their employees, convening for a Mass, a word celebration, and some form of festive gathering.

As Oblates, we actively participate in these activities, immersing ourselves in the expressions of popular piety, joining pilgrimages, and demonstrating our faith.

We stand in solidarity with communities during their faith celebrations in villages and visit altars, factories, and city offices. We listen to the people's cries, being close to them, sharing not just prayers, walks, blessings, but also the essentials of life—bread and salt. Placing at the feet of the Virgin the cries of the people of God who make a pilgrimage in our country,

we consistently remain close to the people, appreciating their annual effort to pray and share.

This Feast is more than an opportunity to pray; it's a transformative experience, inviting us to become and recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters, fostering community, and building fraternity. It's a chance to contribute actively to the construction of a better society.

Santa María de Guadalupe, Queen of Peace, we entrust you with our homeland and seek an increase in our faith.

OMIWORLD

Centenary Celebration: Catholic Presence in the Chaco Region - Paraguay

On December 23, 1925, a group of five German Oblates made their way to the Chaco, a region that was then considered a part of Bolivia.

As we approach the centenary of Catholic presence in the expansive dry forest region of the Gran Chaco, the Oblates are continuing their mission in the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo (AVP) and have kicked off an exciting three-year preparation period. They started things off with a youth mission in one of the three parishes served by the Oblates: the Parish of Saint Eugene de Mazenod in Teniente 1° Irala Fernández, which recently marked its 50th anniversary.

Invitations were extended to the nine Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) of the AVP and the young people from their parishes. Half of the 30 youths who responded to the invitation were indigenous, proudly belonging to the Nivaêle and Guaraní communities. Fathers Víctor ESPÍNOLA and Cristóbal ACOSTA coordinated with fifteen communities within the parish to warmly welcome and accommodate the missionary groups.

Operating in teams of 2 to 5 participants, they visited each home, shared biblical passages, offered brief reflections, prayed with family members, and blessed them and their homes.

In addition to these heartwarming home visits, they organized lively gatherings with children, youth, and adults for four days. For many, this marked their first mission experience, presenting an opportunity to overcome any initial shyness. Despite encountering a few closed doors—some due to homeowners tending to the fields and others simply not hearing the youth's arrival amidst the mid-December heat and the hum of air conditioning—they were warmly received in almost every home.

In the post-mission reflection, conducted after the closing Mass broadcasted by Radio Pa'i Puku, participants quickly highlighted that the warmth of human connections triumphed over even the intense heat of the scorching temperatures. With spirits high, everyone expressed an eagerness to participate in the upcoming youth missions in the other two Oblate parishes of the AVP.

Miguel FRITZ, OMI (Apostolic Administrator)

ANNIVERSARIES FOR JANUARY 2024

60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

19/01/1964	10495	Fr. Paulo Medeiros	Brazil
19/01/1964	10496	Fr. Paul Nourie	United States

50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

27/01/1974	12021	Fr. Venantius Makabanyane	Namibia
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25th Anniversaries of Vows

06/01/1999	14018	Fr. Lebohang Clement Bereng	Lesotho
06/01/1999	14070	Fr. Patrick Khali Khoaele	Lesotho
06/01/1999	14019	Fr. Joseph Matsietse Paoane	Lesotho
06/01/1999	14020	Fr. Sello Michael Terai	Lesotho
11/01/1999	13872	Fr. Ednaldo Tavares Da Silva	Brazil
24/01/1999	14000	Fr. Sergio Rubén Serrano	Cruz del Sur

25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

30/01/1999	13509	Fr. José Ronacio Vieira da Silva	Brazil
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Suffrages for our Deceased - DECEMBER 2023

				No. 64-69
NAME	DATE	DIED AT	BORN	PROV/DEL
Fr. William WOESTMAN	03/12/2023	O'Fallon	14/11/1929	US Province
Fr. Leo ROCHE	08/12/2023	Pretoria	21/10/1940	OMISA
Fr. Desmond O'DONNELL	08/12/2023	Inchicore	09/08/1927	Anglo-Irish
Fr. Terrence MURRAY	08/12/2023	Kilburn	14/06/1962	Anglo-Irish
Fr. John SZKODZINSKI	10/12/2023	Toronto	14/11/1929	Assumption
Fr. William DAVIS	18/12/2023	San Antonio	27/03/1931	US Province

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