



**208 of Community Life: Homily of the Superior General  
LJC et MI**

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the conversion of St. Paul and we remember the beginning of our community and missionary life 208 years ago. These two events are linked by one word: conversion. St. Paul's conversion caused him to change his vision of faith, his missionary activity and his membership in a religious community. We can say the same of St. Eugene's conversion which led him to become a lover of Jesus Christ, a missionary to the poor and the founder of a Congregation in the Church. With Paul and Eugene I invite you to think about our own conversion.

1. Both Paul and Eugene change the direction of their lives after encounter Jesus. Both live in a critical time like ours, a change of epoch. To Paul, Jesus appears so luminous that he blinds him to all his religious and social convictions. The Pharisee ideology conditioned his religious and social vision, but the encounter with Jesus made him change radically: he went from being a persecutor to being a follower of Jesus. He said "it is not I who live in me, it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Eugene, too, encountering Jesus crucified, changes the direction of his life: the noble De Mazenod stop seeking his social and family success to put himself at the service of an abandoned Church and to be the priest of the poor. Today too, we are tempted to live our faith as an ideology that justifies our political, social and even religious convictions. What do Paul and Eugene teach us today?

Paul and Eugene teach us that Christ must be at the center of our lives, of our thoughts, of our feelings, etc. With strong emotion I ask myself and I ask you: Is Christ really at the center of our lives? Is he at the center of our way of thinking, of feeling, of acting? Is he at the center of our religion? If so, we would fulfil the dream of Paul and the Founder to be another Christ on earth, knowing him more deeply, reproducing him in our lives, letting him live in us. Once again, is Christ really at the center of my life?

2. For Paul and Eugene meeting Christ also meant receiving a mission. Paul was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, always travelling, always trying to reach the ends of the earth to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. Eugene, while wanting to embrace the whole earth, will dedicate himself to the most abandoned in his native region. As a bishop he teaches us that we must always seek out those whom the proclamation of the Gospel has not yet reached and who may be living close to us. Paul and Eugene teach us that our mission is to be always on the move, seeking out the most abandoned, trying everything to proclaim the Gospel to the poorest. They teach us to listen to the cries of the poor and the cries of the Church, the cries also of our Mother Earth. We say that we are missionaries and that everything we do is mission-oriented. I ask myself and I ask you: are the needs of salvation and liberation of the poor really at the center of our activities, of our present and future plans? I ask myself and I ask you: Are the poor really at the center of our mission?

3. In meeting Christ, Paul discovers his presence in the community of his followers: even at the risk of losing his life, he will be the creator of new communities. Eugene, out of love for Christ and his Church, also feels the call to be the father of a new religious community which in turn will engender new Christian communities. In Paul's community and in that of St. Eugene, Christ is at the center, generating a missionary communion that makes the Gospel lived and proclaimed. Paul and Eugene know that charity is the expression of missionary communion where the Trinitarian life itself is present.

As we recall the beginnings of the first community in Aix, we remember its first steps, lived in humility and poverty. How was it possible for this small group to survive so many difficulties? The secret is that they learned to love one another. The desire to be another Christ made them learn to love the other as Christ loves them. That is why they helped each other to become more and more holy. We repeat many times the words of what we consider the testament of St. Eugene: charity and zeal, missionary communion among yourselves. It is said in our Constitutions that to persevere we must help the other to attain joy and fulfilment in his vocation and mission.

### **Celebrating 208 Years of Community!**

Greetings from the Central Government as we commemorate the 208 years of the First Community of the Congregation.

On January 25, 1816, the day the Church celebrates the conversion of Saint Paul, marks the beginning of our missionary family in Aix. As our history narrates, Eugene de Mazenod and his small group of missionaries officially move into the old Carmel Convent of Aix and experience community life. From day one, they strove to practice religious and communal life virtues within their small group, engaging in mission preaching and working with the youth. For our missionary family, it has been 208 years of faithfulness to this received gift, walking with the

I ask myself and I ask you: Am I striving to help my brothers in community to find joy and fulfilment in their vocation and mission?

Are the brothers in community at the center of my human relationships? Dear Brothers and Sisters. We go on pilgrimage with hope in communion in these times that present us with shocking challenges: wars, injustices, the degradation of the planet, divisions, abuses of all kinds, etc. do not leave us indifferent. Difficult times, a change of epoch. Today the liturgy and our family memories invite us to open ourselves to conversion as a response to these challenges. Let us allow the Spirit of Jesus to transform us and teach us to respond with audacity and with our lives: is Christ really at the center of our lives?

are the poor at the center of our mission? are the brothers and sisters in community at the center of my relationships? May Mary Immaculate, St. Eugene and our Blessed Oblates intercede for us so that we may give a response similar to theirs and help us to continue our pilgrimage until we meet them in heaven. Amen.

*Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI  
Superior General*

people, serving the poor and most abandoned, especially the youth. The approach chosen by Eugene de Mazenod and his first companions in the mission was to work together as a community.

Recently, the central government and members of the Aix Community gathered at the General House in Rome. It was a profound encounter to share our lives, vocation stories, community life, and current mission. It was a moment to live the essentials, to unite in our following of Jesus, and to view our personal history through the eyes of the Crucified Savior, reviving the spirit of the first Oblate community. As Pope Francis stated, "Being a neighbor is an everyday task because selfishness pulls you down, being a neighbor is going out." (PEC Discourse by Pope Francis)

As the central government, we are in the middle of our fourth Plenary Session. The Superior General reminded us that we have visited over half of the Congregation in the past year, putting faces to many names and places. We have shared the joys and difficulties of each unit and fraternally connected with many of you.

One of the most recurring themes in our meetings is the Restructuring of the Congregation's Houses of Formation, Units, and Communities. We are undertaking this journey synodally, expressing gratitude to each one for participating and sharing reflections. In the Joint Session with Latin America in 2023, we highlighted some responses to the question: Why restructure?

- Revitalize the religious life of Members of the Congregation.
- Renew the governance and economic structures of the units.
- Optimize resources for initial and ongoing formation.
- Improve the quality of communal life for members.

This year, we are preparing for the Joint Session with Africa-Madagascar and CROCUS (Canada-USA).

These are significant moments for the life of the Region, visiting each unit, getting to know the Oblates, the laity within our Charismatic family, and the places where we are present. These are God's times, where we seek to know each other more, discern, and dream together the gift St. Eugene and his first companions received, "The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to evangelize the poor." In this same Spirit, we wish you a joyful celebration. May Mary Immaculate guide each community in fidelity to the received gift, renewing our consecration and mission.

*Jorge ALBERGATI, OMI*  
*General Councilor for Latin America*

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## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

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### Pilgrims of Hope in 2024

Hope is not mere optimism. Sometimes things must worsen before true transformation occurs. Yet, placing our trust in God, we know that the coming year will not be a repetition of the past.

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 gaze into the horizon of the new year, 2024, may hope spring forth in our hearts. Hope is not mere optimism. Sometimes things must worsen before true transformation occurs. Yet, placing our trust in God, we know that the coming year will not be a repetition of the past.

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 her son die. Three days later, she knew him as the resurrected one.

### Central Government Gathers for 2024 Plenary Session

The members of the Central Government are returning to Rome for the first Plenary Session of 2024, set to commence on January 8 and concluding on February 9.

The period between the last session and the upcoming one has been notably active, with members diligently visiting units for consultations and retreats to show support for each unit's missionary endeavors.

In the past three months in Rome, numerous meetings have transpired, including the orientation for Major Superiors, the General Finance Committee, the Permanent Committee for Brothers, and the JPIC Committee, among others. As preparations intensify for the Plenary Session, set to commence on January 8 with a Mass to the Holy Spirit and concluding on February 9, attention is focused on the arrangements led by the recently appointed General Treasurer, Charles RENSBRUG, and Secretary General, Noel GARCIA.

Expectations for this session are heightened, given that more than a year has passed since the General Chapter. The Internal Committees will play a pivotal role in formulating concrete actions based on the Chapter's recommendations, necessitating collaboration with members of the

May God bless us as we begin the new year. May he let his face shine 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 for Mission*

Central Government, the Aix community, and other Oblates and laity.

Key topics for the upcoming Plenary Session include the appointment of three provincials, discussions on two Joint Sessions scheduled with the Africa-Madagascar and Canada-US regions, and conversations on possible formation sessions proposed by the Central Government in Rome and Aix. Budget discussions for communities under the Central Government and proposals from different committees will also take center stage.

Special events during the session encompass a visit from Cardinal Luis Tagle, (Pro-Prefect of the Section for the First Evangelization) a two-day visit from the members of the Aix community, a meeting with the sisters of the Holy Family de Bordeaux, a retreat day led by Jean-Herick JASMIN, (JPIC Director) and other scheduled meetings.

For the members of the Central Government, the Plenary Session is not merely a time for work but also a period of joy and an opportunity to strengthen community bonds. Prayer, sharing, and recreation contribute to the growth of this community as one family. In the words of Pope Francis, we would like to express: remember to pray for us, especially in this moment of the Plenary Session.

*Antoni BOCHM, OMI  
Vicar General*

### **Rome: IRS Scholastics Share their Experiences**

Twice a year the International Roman Scholasticate community publishes a Newsletter. This latest semi-annual publication provides an insider's view into the transformative journey of these young Oblates. The newsletter informs, inspires, and instills hope that the flame of the Oblate charism is burning fervently in the hearts of these young Oblates in formation.

The International Roman Scholasticate (IRS) is home to 22 Oblates (4 formators and 18 scholastics in formation). The community represents 16 nationalities, from Sri Lanka to Congo and even Italy. The IRS community publishes a biannual newsletter committed to fostering community, interculturality, and spiritual growth journeys. Spanning 20 pages, the newsletter delves into a myriad of topics, offering reflections on experiences ranging from pastoral work in Pescara, Italy, to linguistic immersion in global cities such as Madrid, Dublin, and Paris.

### **Epiphany: Discernment, Pilgrimage, and Adoration**

On January 6, 2024, the Superior General, Fr. Chicho, presided over the Eucharistic celebration at the General House and delivered a profound homily that delved into the mystery of God's salvation manifested in Jesus Christ for all of humanity.

In his homily, Fr. Chicho highlighted the intrinsic missionary dimension embedded in our charism, echoing Pope Francis' message that passionately calls for a dedicated commitment to proclaiming the Gospel. Expanding on the meaning of "Epiphany," he illuminated missionaries as living embodiments of Christ's redemptive grace. He further urged a revival of the missionary vocation by centering it around Jesus, echoing the Pope's emphasis on love and fidelity.

A highlight is the Superior's message, which underscores the imperative for "evangelical, ecological, and intercultural conversion" within Oblate formation.

The content varies from profound theological insights discussing the impending 200th anniversary of the Oblate Constitutions and Rules in 2026 to more lighthearted anecdotes about communal sporting events. This semi-annual publication provides an insider's view into the transformative journey of these young Oblates.

As they navigate the path of spiritual growth, they prepare to serve the poor and abandoned across the globe. The newsletter informs, inspires, and instills hope that the flame of the Oblate charism is burning fervently in the hearts of these young Oblates in formation.

*Bonaventure IKYOHIA, OMI*

Deriving inspiration from the Gospel, Fr. Chicho underscored the indispensable elements of discernment, pilgrimage, and adoration for the charismatic family's mission renewal. He drew a parallel between modern-day discernment and the journey of the wise men, advocating for communal discernment aligned with the evolving needs of the Church.

Fr. Chicho presented the call to pilgrimage as a courageous exploration beyond comfort zones, guided by the grace of the Spirit. Finally, he emphasized adoration as a transformative encounter with Jesus, akin to the offerings of the wise men, proposing daily adoration as an essential practice for the renewal of missionary life.

The Superior General concluded his homily with a call to follow the guiding star to Bethlehem, engaging in communal discernment, venturing into the unknown with synodal unity, and adoring Jesus as the source of liberating salvation.

### **Superior General: Our Living Bond of Unity**

On the Feast of the Epiphany, the entire General House community gathered to be inspired by Father General's recent pilgrimages of hope.

Since his election, Fr. Chicho has diligently embraced his role in the Congregation, our shared home, inspired by the Constitutions and Rules: "The Superior General is the Congregation's living bond of unity, and through his example, apostolic zeal, and affection for all Oblates, he catalyzes communities to respond to the Church's needs with unwavering faith and charity. As the successor of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the Superior General will continue to kindle our missionary zeal, forging new pathways for evangelization." (C. 133)

In his capacity as a pilgrim of hope, Father General embarked on a pilgrimage to encounter his Oblate brothers across the globe, each destination brimming with love, compassion, and zeal:

**Ukraine:** Despite the challenging and risky circumstances wrought by war, the Oblates stand resiliently with the people, offering steadfast support to this nation in its time of suffering.

**West Sahara:** In this locale, the Oblates forge friendships and engage in meaningful dialogue with the local population. Their benevolent outreach extends to migrants seeking a better life, carrying the flame of hope in their hearts.

**India:** Within the vast expanse of this nation, the Oblates tirelessly devote themselves to serving the poorest of the poor. Father General, in a testament to their shared commitment, visited one of their challenging missions in the North East, personally witnessing the impact of their dedicated work.

**Belgium & Netherlands:** In this aging unit, where many Oblates were once zealous missionaries across continents, Father General's visit was a poignant acknowledgment and sincere gratitude for their lifelong service and unwavering commitment to the Church and the Congregation.

**Bangladesh:** Within this growing unit, the Oblates serve indigenous people in remote areas,

embodying the true spirit of missionaries as they share the Good News with the less fortunate.

**WYD Portugal:** Father General engaged with young people brimming with faith and love. The youth demonstrated their desire for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ to seek community and hope, and Father General's presence further ignited their spiritual flame.

**Cuba:** Despite facing numerous challenges, the Oblates persistently and faithfully serve the population, showcasing an admirable dedication and commitment to their mission.

**Mexico:** Father General convened with the Latin America Region for a joint session and led an annual retreat for all members of the Central Government, fostering a sense of unity and purpose.

**Canada:** Fr. General's time with the Innu communities, the parishes we serve, our historic homes for aging or ill Oblate missionaries, the Saint-Paul University community celebrating 175 years of existence with a symposium, and meeting with all the Oblate missionaries and lay people has at every moment reaffirmed that shared Charism that unites us. The Superior General is also grateful to the Oblate missionaries from our three provinces in the Ottawa region of Canada who joined with their three Provincials for a fraternal gathering that filled him with hope.

**Lesotho:** In this land of joy and peace, the Oblates continue to follow in the footsteps of Ttate Joseph Gerard, serving the people with an enduring commitment that spans generations.

**Turkmenistan:** Two Oblates dedicatedly serve a small Christian community in this Central Asian country. Father General's Christmas celebration with them provided a firsthand experience of the vibrant joy emanating from an authentic Christian community.

As we enter the New Year, we extend our deepest gratitude to Father General for serving as the living bond of unity for all Oblates and the Charismatic Family, embodying hope and communion for our shared mission.

*Henricus ASODO, OMI  
Assistant General*

### **The Plenary Session Ploughs on to the Second Week**

The Central Government completed the first week of their first Plenary Session in 2024.

Fr. General presided over the opening Mass to the Holy Spirit at the International Roman Scholasticate Chapel. In his homily, inspired by the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the calling of his first disciples, Fr. Chicho underscored the Central Government's vocation to serve the Congregation, emphasizing that their roles stem from a personal invitation and call from Jesus.

Throughout the week, members of the Central Government shared personal reports regarding their visits to various Units of the Congregation and participation in meetings since the last Plenary Session in October 2023.

### **Aix-en-Provence community Meets with the Central Government**

On January 17 and 18, 2024, the Aix-en-Provence community gathered with the Central Government, an annual event outlined in their statutes. Due to the recent challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this opportunity had been delayed in previous years.

Out of the six community members, only Brother Benoît DOSQUET was unable to attend. While the agenda covered administrative matters, the primary focus was on personal connections and mutual understanding.

Despite the limited official business conducted, the primary focus was on building relationships. The members shared personal stories, reflecting on vocational journeys, family situations, and impactful life events. Engaging conversations filled the day and a half, fostering connections among members. The reflections on life journeys reinforced the idea that "God writes straight with crooked lines." Participants recognized how God has shaped their lives.

The concluding days were dedicated to meetings of the Internal Committees focusing on leadership, mission, formation, and finances.

The session also discussed the future of the Belgium Netherlands Province and the Mission of Puerto Rico.

The week concluded with a Friday evening community meeting, marking a productive and fruitful first week of the Plenary Session. In a gesture of solidarity, the Central Government reserved a moment of silence in memory of Scholastic Bro. Collins Masinde, OMI, who tragically passed away in a drowning accident in South Africa.

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The fraternity extended beyond formal sessions, creating moments of joy during meals, festive encounters, and coffee breaks. Daily gatherings included Eucharistic celebrations and liturgical observances, creating a spiritual dimension to the meeting. The participants also had the opportunity to visit restored buildings, ongoing construction, the Roman International Scholasticate, and the newly relocated archives.

Notably, the meeting delved into pertinent issues such as the Mazenod Experiences, challenges in finding animators proficient in all three languages of the Congregation, and visa procedures for foreigners entering France.

The warm and welcoming atmosphere provided by the Central Government was acknowledged with gratitude. A special thanks to all and a warm gratitude to the Hospitality of the General House.

*Jo BOIS, OMI*

### **Central Government gathered with the Oblate Studium**

On January 29, 2024, the Central Government gathered with the Oblate Studium, a community of seven Oblates currently studying at various Pontifical Universities in Rome.

Despite the students being amid final exams, they welcomed the Central Government's initiative for a brief informal check-in. Each member shared insights into their studies and experiences living in the General House and Rome.

Father General, expressing gratitude and encouragement, emphasized that pursuing higher studies is a commitment aligned with the congregation's mission and, ultimately, in service to the poor.

The Central Government urged each Oblate to make the most of this opportunity for personal development and a deeper understanding of the Church and the Congregation.

The Oblate Studium extends heartfelt thanks to the Central Government for carving out time during this Plenary Session for a moment of fraternity and encouragement. As Studium members navigate final exams and thesis writing, this brief exchange propels them in their scholarly pursuits with a sense of mission, service, and love for the congregation.

Your continued prayers for the Oblate Studium members, preparing to serve the congregation's needs, and for the Central Government as they enter their third week of Plenary Sessions are deeply appreciated.

*Antonio ORTIZ, OMI*

## **AFRICA-MADAGASCAR**

### **Zambia: Following Christ the First Pilgrim and Missionary**

Zambia celebrates 40 years of Oblate presence (1984 -2024). The delegation gathered for their annual Delegation Assembly and the launching of the Ruby anniversary.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate arrived in Zambia on January 6, 1984, with a community of four pioneers from Texas, USA: Fr. Pat Gitzen, Bishop Paul DUFFY, Fr. Jack JOYCE, and Bro. Joseph KAPLINGER. Among these visionaries, Fr. Pat GITZEN is the sole surviving member, now serving as a Formator at De Mazenod House of Formation in Makeni, Lusaka.

As of January 6, 2024, the delegation celebrated 40 years of presence in Zambia. Since its beginnings, the Oblate community has flourished, currently numbering 72 Oblates (2 Bishops, 54 priests, 2 brothers, and 16 scholastics). Additionally, there are 3 Novices and 28 pre-novices. In honor of this milestone, marking the Ruby Anniversary

of the Oblates' enduring presence in Zambia, a special event is scheduled for August 24, 2024, at Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate began their mission in Lukulu, later extending to Kalabo, Mongu, Limulunga, Lusaka, Shangombo, Kabwe, Livingstone, Chongwe, Kasama, Mazabuka, and Magoye. Over the past 40 years, the Oblate mission has left an indelible mark on various aspects of life in Zambia, encompassing healthcare, human rights, agriculture, food security, employment, education, catechism, and worship.

During the recent delegation assembly, Fr. Chishimba CHIBESA, OMI, the delegation Superior, and the attending members introduced a prayer and theme for the Ruby anniversary. The theme, "Pilgrims of Hope in Communion: Following Christ the First Pilgrim and Missionary," underscores our unwavering commitment to serving and fostering hope within the community.

*Pius MUSILIZO, OMI*



### **Building Dreams: Sacré-Cœur Catholic School in Léré, Chad**

The history of Sacré-Cœur Catholic School in Léré, Chad, is a testament to faith, hope, and charity; a journey from sadness to joy.

I am Father Emmanuel CHIGOZIE UKAIGWE, OMI, Principal of Sacré-Coeur Catholic School in Léré, Chad, since September 2022, a responsibility entrusted to me by Father Abraham HAMAN, OMI, the parish priest of Sacré-Coeur Parish in Léré, where I also serve as the curate.

The evolution of this Catholic School in Léré is a journey from sadness to joy. Nestled in the west Mayo Kebi of Chad, Sacré Cœur Catholic School in Léré was established in January 2017 by the parish community of Léré and legally recognized on October 16 of the same year. Upon my arrival at Sacré-Cœur Catholic School in Léré, the stark reality shocked me. Students occupied classrooms seated on bricks amidst unfinished floors, and the buildings wore an abandoned look, devoid of doors, windows, or desks.

The learning environment at this Catholic School in Léré was far from conducive. Providentially, in December 2022, Father Ferdinand OWONO NDHI, Provincial Superior of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Province of Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria, visited Léré and personally witnessed the challenging conditions faced by the students attending this Catholic School. Motivated by what he saw, the Oblates united, marking the initiation of a “new era” for this institution.

In a collaborative effort with the Bishop of the Diocese of Pala, Mgr DOMINIQUE TINOUDJI, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate assumed leadership of Sacré-Coeur Catholic School in Léré, breathing new life, possibilities, and enthusiasm into the educational establishment. Today, it is one of the best schools in Léré and a beacon of educational excellence. The buildings have been restored to their former glory, classrooms exude a pleasant atmosphere, and students can study efficiently.

Thanks to the efforts of the young members of our parish, who diligently worked every day to revive the school, we express our gratitude. Although there is still much to do, we take pride in all the efforts and sacrifices made thus far.

Renovated building of Sacré-Cœur Catholic School in Léré, Chad

Our success is attributed to love, determination, and especially faith in God. Always ready to contribute to the well-being of humanity and the glorification of God, we remain steadfast in our commitment.

*Emmanuel CHIGOZIE UKAIGWE, OMI*

**RIP: Scholastic, Bro. Collins MASINDE, OMI**

Dear Oblates and Oblate Associates,

With a heavy heart, we convey the tragic news that unfolded today, January 12, at the start of the annual retreat for the Oblate Scholastics at the Capuchin Convent in Melville, South Africa.

In the quiet morning hours, Bro. Collins MASINDE, OMI, a scholastic brother from the Kenya Mission studying at St. Joseph's Oblate Scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa, was at the beach near the retreat house. At approximately 11:00 am, a strong wave swept Bro. Masinde off a rock, leading to his untimely death at sea.

Immediate responses from the police and sea rescue were set in motion. Despite exhaustive searches along the southern shores of Melville, Collins' body has yet to be discovered, and the search continues.

Born on February 21, 1995, in Kenya – Lugari Sub County, Collins Wetosi Masinde was an outgoing yet reflective and joyful young man. He is the sixth of ten children of Eliud Masinde Mwangale and Florance Khakali.

Collins completed his postulancy in Meru Town in 2017 and entered the Pre-Novitiate in 2018 in Karen, Nairobi. He was due to begin his second year of studies at St. Joseph's Oblate Scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa, and was to make his first renewal of vows later this month. In this somber moment, we humbly ask for your prayers for Bro. Collins, his grieving family, the Oblate Scholasticate community in South Africa, and all the members of the Kenya Mission.

May perpetual light shine upon Collins, and in the mercy of God, may he rest in peace!

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

*Ken THORSON, OMI  
Provincial Superior, Lacombe*

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**ASIA - OCEANIA**


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**Colombo: Recognizing Excellence in Education**

The Oblate Institute of Higher Learning (OIHL) held its annual certificate awarding ceremony in Dev Arana, Minuwangoda, Sri Lanka.

OIHL 2023 Annual Certificate Awarding Ceremony: Recognizing Excellence in Education  
The Oblate Institute of Higher Learning held its annual certificate awarding ceremony in Dev Arana, Minuwangoda, Sri Lanka. This prestigious event which took place on November 25th, 2023, was attended by Rt Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Colombo, and Rev. Fr. Dilan Perera OMI, the delegate of the Provincial.

In his speech, Bishop Maxwell Silva emphasized the Oblates' dedication to serving the most abandoned. He commended the Oblate Institute of Higher Learning for providing educational opportunities to those at the margins of society. The ceremony acknowledged students who successfully completed programs in Psychological Counseling, Teacher Formation, and English for Entrepreneurs, as well as English Immersion Courses for Post OL and Post AL students.

The celebration included Oblates, priests, nuns from neighboring parishes, benefactors, well-wishers, and proud parents of the accomplished students.

*Asanga VIRAJ, OMI*

### **Australia: National Oblate Youth Meeting Shines a Light on Faith and Community**

National Oblate Youth Encounter 2024 was a smashing success with 75 participants from 8 different Oblate communities around Australia gathering together for a four 4-day experience at Mazenod College, Mulgrave.

The National Oblate Youth Meeting is an annual event that unites young people from across Australia who wish to share their Catholic faith and the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod. This year's meeting is underway in Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia, under the theme, "You are the light of the World."

Since its inception in 2000, this gathering has provided a platform for young Australians to deepen their relationship with God, build lasting friendships, and catch up with old friends. The annual meeting is a blend of prayer, workshops, open forums, liturgy, and community-building activities.

### **Sharing Experiences: St. Joseph's OMI Juniorate opens its doors**

In the heart of Columbuthurai, Jaffna, St. Joseph's OMI Juniorate recently welcomed a group of 35 young men for a "Come and see" experience from December 8 -9, 2023.

Fr. Jude CAROWF OMI welcomed the participants to experience firsthand seminary life. The goal was to demystify the spiritual, communal, and daily routines of seminary life, aiming to demystify the spiritual, communal, and daily routines integral to this unique journey.

The participants engaged with current seminarians, gaining insights into the reality of seminary life.

The National Oblate Youth Meeting is more than a mere annual event; it's an immersive experience that nurtures personal and communal growth, offering participants a unique amalgamation of spiritual sustenance, intellectual enrichment, and a profound sense of community. As we come together in Mulgrave this year, the lively spirit of community, faith, and love for the Oblate Charism set the stage for a transformative and uplifting journey for all those in attendance. And that's the essence of the National Oblate Youth Meeting.

May we all continue to let our lights shine for all to see!

A big thank you to all the Oblates who were present amongst our youth and to the National Coordinators and Hosting Community for their tireless efforts in making this such a successful encounter. May we all continue to let our lights shine for all to see!

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Following the "Come and See," St. Joseph's OMI Juniorate hosted their annual Parent's Day and celebrated Christmas on Dec 10, 2023.

The Eucharist was celebrated with the seminarians and their parents present, underscoring the important role parents play in the formation journey of the young candidates to religious life.

This special day gives parents a glimpse of their son's daily routine as seminarians, creating an uplifting and inspiring experience for the seminarians, their parents, and the formation staff.

Let us continue to pray for an increase in vocations to Religious Life and the Priesthood.

*Raj CLAIER, OMI*

### **Oblate Lunar Joy: Youth Celebrate New Year in Vietnam**

The Delegation of Vietnam's Oblate Youth concluded the year with a gathering on January 21, 2024, at Mazenod Scholasticate in Lai Thieu, Vietnam.

The event was attended by 6 Oblate priests, 16 Oblate scholastics, and a group of 170 young people from various parts of the delegation. Together, they displayed the Oblate Charism's spirit of diversity and unity.

Father Fx Minh HIEU, the head of the Oblate Youth for the Delegation of Vietnam, set the tone by actively engaging with the youth, offering insights into exciting prospects on the horizon.

The festivities began with a cook-off and included a special Eucharistic Celebration of thanksgiving presided over by Father Philippe, the Superior of the Scholasticate. This special Eucharist was to give thanks for the past year and celebrate the New Year.

After Mass, a youth representative expressed gratitude to the Congregation and extended best wishes to the fathers and brothers of the Delegation. Representatives of the Congregation conveyed spring blessings and distributed "lucky money" envelopes to the young participants. The event concluded with a party, resonating with a spirit of solidarity and love, creating lasting memories for all involved.

*Khai TÂM, OMI*

## **CANADA - US**

### **Fr. Louis STUDER, OMI, Named Oblate School of Theology's 20th President**

SAN ANTONIO, TX: Fr. Louis STUDER, OMI, former Provincial for the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, has been named president of Oblate School of Theology.

The Board of Trustees unanimously recommended Fr. STUDER's appointment following a nationwide search conducted by a presidential search committee comprised of members of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate United States Province (OMIUSA), trustees, faculty, and administration. His appointment was approved by the Members of the Corporation of Oblate School of Theology. Fr. STUDER will begin his role as president on July 1, 2024.

A humble and inspirational leader with a track record for building innovation through faithful excellence, a former pastor, and having served in a number of leadership roles in OMIUSA since the 1980s, Fr. Louis STUDER will steward Oblate School of Theology as its 20th president since its establishment in 1903.

A humble and inspirational leader with a track record for building innovation through faithful excellence, a former pastor, and having served in a number of leadership roles in OMIUSA since the 1980s, Fr. Louis STUDER will steward Oblate School of Theology as its 20th president since its establishment in 1903.

"We knew that leading Oblate School of Theology would present a compelling opportunity to the right candidate, and we are confident Fr. Louis STUDER embodies the formidable set of qualities embedded in the presidential job prospectus at the beginning of the search," said Scott Woodward, DMin, current president of Oblate School of Theology.

"Fr. Lou knows OST well and embodies the Oblate Charism that drives all work at the school. Anyone who meets him will find a welcoming heart that exudes mission and concern for the poor, the very heart of our institutional mission."

*OMIWORLD*

### **R.I.P: The Oblate Community in Heaven Welcomes Fr. Clarence ZACHMAN, OMI**

On January 19, 2024, Oblates bade farewell to Fr. Clarence ZACHMAN, OMI, the oldest Oblate in the world.

Celebrating his 103rd birthday on November 2, 2023, at the Benedictine Living Center in Belleville, IL, Fr. Clarence peacefully answered the divine call to join Jesus Christ on a new pilgrimage.

Reflecting on the passing of the first four Oblates in 1828, St. Eugene de Mazenod wrote: “Now we have four in Heaven; this is already a nice community... We are attached to them by the bonds of a particular charity; they are still our

brothers, and we are theirs; their prayers, the love which they keep for us, will draw us one day to them.”

Fr. Clarence, ordained in 1948, left an unforgettable mark in ministerial positions, from treasurer and teacher to a 19-year stint as a military chaplain in the United States Air Force. His pilgrimage of dedication and service concluded at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

To all he encountered, Fr. Clarence offered a simple yet profound message: “God loves you, and so do I.” Today, as we honor his legacy, let us remember a life lived in devotion, spreading love and kindness.

*Jim ALLEN, OMI*

### **Franciscan Friars Select Oblate School of Theology For Seminarian Formation**

SAN ANTONIO, TX: Franciscan Friars of the New Unified Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe Select Oblate School of Theology For Seminarian Formation.

In 2018, the six Franciscan Provinces of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in the United States voted to unite into one province in October 2023. In anticipation of this union, the Secretary of Formation and Studies for the OFM provinces commissioned a study in November 2022. The study focused on evaluating three theologate institutions to identify which would best serve the needs of the friars in initial formation.

After a thorough review by the US-6 Secretariat of Formation and Studies, the Provincial Council of the newly formed province of Our Lady of Guadalupe unanimously endorsed the study’s recommendation. Accordingly, starting with the fall semester of 2024, the new province will send friars to the Oblate School of Theology (OST) for their theological education. Offering Franciscan-centered academic programs, a commitment to preparing students for effective ministry, a diverse campus experience, and accessibility for high-quality education made OST the advantageous option for the future of Franciscan formation.

“Having the Order of Friars Minor join OST for formation brings another religious community to the campus that shares a common concern for the poor and vulnerable of our world and dedication for mission,” said Scott Woodward, DMin, president of Oblate School of Theology. “It’s an exciting development for us. We’re pleased to have them join the other religious communities, diocesan seminarians, and lay women and men as we work to effectively prepare ministers to serve the Church of the 21st century.”

While the move to OST will require time and thorough planning, the Council is committed to the preservation of the rich Franciscan traditions and heritage, as well as ensuring the integration of specific Franciscan needs into the OST curriculum.

About Oblate School of Theology: Inspired by the charism of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Oblate School of Theology educates, forms, and renews men and women “to preach the Gospel to the most abandoned.” OST is a community of scholars and students who respect and celebrate global cultural diversity through various languages, traditions, and backgrounds firmly rooted in Christ.

*OMIWORLD*

### OST Public Lecture 2024: Understanding Our Shared Charism

The Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies is delighted to welcome Fr. Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, Superior General, for a Public Lecture, “Understanding Our Shared Charism,” on February 17, 2024.

The US Mazenodian Family is a diverse community of people who love the Oblates, support them, and serve with them in many ways. Across the many groups that form the Oblate community, we are called to identify and live out what it means to be an Oblate.

Collaborating with Christ, we fulfill our shared mission amidst contemporary challenges. The 2024 Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies Public Lecture explores the evolution of the charism in St. Eugene de Mazenod’s life. It examines strategies for engaging our charism in response to contemporary challenges, fostering creative fidelity, and exploring expanded collaboration possibilities within our charismatic family.

The lecture will be live-streamed. For information or to register contact Associate Registrar Victoria Rodriguez at vrodriguez@ost.edu.

OMIWORLD

## EUROPE

### A Celebration of Commitment: Friends of Saint Eugene Commitment & Renewal Mass

Anglo-Irish: The end of 2023 marked a series of Commitment Masses for the Friends of Saint Eugene (FoSE) in Crewe, Birmingham, and London. These sacred occasions brought together members who shared their profound experiences and reflections on the significance of their commitments.

#### FoSE Crewe

The commitments and renewals started off in Crewe at Wistaston Hall Retreat Centre.

The special occasion began with Mass in the chapel led by Provincial Fr Oliver Barry OMI. Local parish priest Fr Nick Kern and Wistaston Hall Director Fr Lorcan O’Reilly OMI came to witness the group take on their commitment.

#### *We asked the group to describe the commitment in their own words;*

“On the 16th November 2023, myself and two other Friends.. made a commitment to FoSE (Friends of St. Eugene). This was a very special occasion made more special by the attendance of Fr. Nick.” – Gwen Tapley

“I felt the joy of spirituality and comradeship. I was pleased that Fr. Oliver Barry OMI came to be there when the three of us made our commitment in the Chapel at Wistaston Hall. We enjoyed a shared table in the lounge afterwards.” – Terry O’Malley

“Ten years after I first made my commitment to the FoSE, on 16th November 2023, I renewed my commitment. It was a very special event for me, sharing it with four members of the FoSE, three of which were making their commitment for the first time. We remembered in our prayers Angela Walker who formed the FoSE group here in Crewe. May she rest in peace” – Anne Walker

#### FoSE Birmingham

The Birmingham Commitment Mass was once again celebrated by Fr Oliver. For this FoSE group it was a joyful and heartfelt occasion that instilled a great sense of belonging. The group gathered after the Mass to share food with one another.

#### *We asked the group to share what it means to be part of FoSE;*

“My FoSE commitment gave me a joy in my heart and a deep sense of belonging and a smile that Our Lady prays for us and Saint Eugene prays for us”. – Mary Leonard

“The Friends... At St. Anne’s are the yeast in the parish, and yes they do eat together but also pray and celebrate together.” – John Curtin

“Being a member of a group of Friends who care about each other and the wider community especially the poor or less fortunate. Praying with and for each other and giving encouragement to help wherever I can.” – Kathleen Mullin

“As a Friend of St. Eugene, I feel part of an Oblate family. I have been able to look at things differently like being more aware of homeless people and poverty. I got lots of satisfaction from all the projects we have done as a group for homeless people. We as a group think of each other outside church and we care about each other.” -Peggy Dryhurst

“The reason why I’m part of the Friends of St. Eugene (FoSE) is that having being part of a former Oblate church and since 2011, I have been discerning and learning more of St. Eugene and the life of vowed Oblates. I felt drawn more and more to live out my baptismal and confirmational vows and live at least some of the charisma of the Founder. Our FoSE group is based on friendship, prayer and service, and I try to do my best with everyone in the group to demonstrate this in every possible way – with each other, our church community and reaching out to others who need our help. I do this in church gatherings and celebrations. I support by coordinating appeals at church for homeless groups, helping out in charities like Dementia, Refugee and Asylum Seekers, and by visiting elderly parishioners and others in my community and friends who need our friendship, care and love.” – Marilyn Bissondial

### **FoSE London**

Lastly, the renewal celebrations made their way to London, where FOSE Kilburn and FoSE Peckham gathered once again with Fr Oliver OMI and Fr Johnson OMI. During these celebrations the groups expressed a deep satisfaction found in the FoSE group’s connection with Oblate work, especially for those from vulnerable backgrounds.

*We asked members to describe what the commitment meant to them;*

“The Friends of St. Eugene for me is a renewal and rejuvenation of my Faith” – Mark Cullen, Peckham.

“For me as a Friend of St. Eugene, I feel that it’s a gathering of likeminded people from vulnerable backgrounds who find the contact with Oblate work within the group deeply satisfying”. – Hanora Morrin, Peckham.

“I feel we are a fantastic group of friends from Quex Road (Kilburn) Friends of St. Eugene (FoSE). I am always longing for our monthly meeting.” – Albino Maggioni, Kilburn.

“My Friends of St. Eugene renewal of my commitment gave me more courage to pray... and to serve.” – Nilda Panambo, Kilburn.

“For me, Friends of St. Eugene is about love, friendship, caring, sharing and a deep commitment to God. What I love most about our FoSE group is that St. Eugene prays for us.” – Evelyn Mensa Bonsu, Kilburn.

“I decided to renew my commitment as a Friend of Saint Eugene because I feel I belong! Being away from home I consider FoSE as a family away from home. I enjoy the sharing, bondings and learnings.” – Meriam Cadaweng, Kilburn.

“Being a Friend of St. Eugene (FoSE) entails understanding the love of prayer and also in learning what St. Eugene did by helping others and making wonderful friends.” – Marina Kehoe, Kilburn.

“By just seeing others have a laugh and share a smile which is a blessing are important for me being a Friend of St. Eugene.” – Georgina Tagumigwa, Kilburn.

“Being a Friend of St. Eugene does teach me how to grow in faith, hope and love and serve our God and serve people. It is also a lesson to see Jesus Christ in every person.” – Stefan Fukas, Kilburn.

“Committing myself to being a Friends of St. Eugene (FoSE), I’ve found it a blessed joyful, loving family where we can come & meet up & share all we have, spiritual and temporal. It gives me joy serving in the community and especially in the eyes of the needy.” – Sylvia Mubiru, Kilburn.

“For me as a FOSE group, St. Eugene is important and I love the sharing.” – Carlota Rondolos, Kilburn.

“For me, as a Friend of St. Eugene, it’s a beautiful commitment of my faith. I felt invigorated & inspired to live my life along the Christian path and follow the Oblate charism.” – Martina Cooley, Peckham.

These heartfelt reflections from Friends of Saint Eugene across different regions paint a beautiful picture of faith, friendship, and commitment. The commitment masses in December served as a tapestry of shared experiences, enriching the lives of FOSE members and reinforcing their dedication to St. Eugene’s teachings and Oblate charism.

If you are interested in joining the Friends of Saint Eugene, or would like information on how to get involved, please contact Kirk Jacob at [k.jacob@oblates.co.uk](mailto:k.jacob@oblates.co.uk)

*OMIWORLD*

## LATIN AMERICA

### **“BOLPER: Suppression of the Oblate Mission in Puerto Rico**

On January 9, 2024, the Superior General Father Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, with the consent of his Council, officially suppressed the Mission of Puerto Rico from the BOLPER Delegation.

The Oblate Mission in Puerto Rico, started by the former US Eastern Province, Our Lady of Hope, ends its presence on the island. Figures like Fathers Jack KING, Tom COUGHLIN, Paul HUGHES and other American Oblates gave a powerful testimony through their missionary work on the island, “getting their feet muddy” by serving parishes and mission chapels that catered to the poorest of the poor.

In 1999, the Mission of Puerto Rico was transferred to the General Delegation of Peru as part of the restructuring. Initially led by Canadian missionaries, such as Father Neil John MACAULAY MORRINSON, the mission had the support of other Oblates, including Fathers

Mariano MARTÍNEZ and Víctor TORRES.

However, over the years, the Oblate presence in Puerto Rico gradually diminished. By 2006, only two missionaries remained: Father Mariano MARTÍNEZ at the Parish of Mary Queen of the World and Father Neil Macaulay at the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 2008, it was agreed, with the approval of the Archbishop of San Juan, that two Oblates would take on both parishes “ad personam.”

With the departure of the last missionary, Father Neil MACAULAY, on January 13, 2023, and the passing of Father Mariano MARTÍNEZ in March 2021, the presence of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate comes to an end in Puerto Rico.

On September 12, 2023, Father Roberto CARRASCO ROJAS, OMI, Superior of the General Delegation BOLPER, informed Archbishop Roberto Octavio González Nieves of San Juan about Father Neil MACAULAY’s return to Canada.



In response, the archbishop expressed gratitude for the effective presence of the members of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate over the years in the Archdiocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

On January 9, 2024, Superior General Father Luis Ignacio ROIS ALONSO, OMI, with the consent of his Council, officially suppressed the Mission of Puerto Rico from the BOLPER Delegation.

*Roberto CARRASCO, OMI*  
*Superior of the General Delegation BOLPER*

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## ANNIVERSARIES FOR FEBRUARY 2024

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### 70th Anniversaries of Vows

27/02/1954	09690	Fr. Kevin Bugler	Southern Africa
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### 65th Anniversaries of Ordinations

15/02/1959	09394	Fr. Romualdo Lopardo	Mediterranea
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### 60th Anniversaries of Ordinations

08/02/1964	10394	Fr. Richard Doll	Lacombe
15/02/1964	10571	Fr. Pietro Reginato	Mediterranea
15/02/1964	10574	Fr. Vincenzo Sgambato	Mediterranea
22/02/1964	10370	Fr. Jean-Pierre Caloz	France
23/02/1964	10385	Fr. Vincent Mulligan	Anglo-Irish
23/02/1964	10586	Fr. Michael Phelan	Anglo-Irish

### 50th Anniversaries of Ordinations

16/02/1974	11963	Fr. Patrick McGrath	Anglo-Irish
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### 25th Anniversaries of Vows

01/02/1999	13949	Fr. Chishimba Peter Chibesa	United States
01/02/1999	13891	Fr. Siyabonga Christopher Dube	Southern Africa
01/02/1999	13887	Fr. Lukas Mosemedi	Namibia
17/02/1999	13821	Fr. Gerard Reuben Conlan	Lacombe

### 25th Anniversaries of Ordinations

15/02/1999	13535	Fr. Alphonse Philiber Rakotondravelo	Pologne
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**Suffrages for our Deceased - JANUARY 2024**


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NAME	DATE	DIED AT	BORN	No. 0 - 7 PROV/DEL
Fr. Duhamel, Joao Bernardo	27/01/2024	Richelieu	17/05/1926	N-D-du-Cap
Fr. Zachman, Clarence	19/01/2024	Belleville	02/11/1920	US Province
Fr. Cueff, François	18/01/2024	Lyon	24/03/1932	France
Fr. Holsen, Norbert	18/01/2024	Strasbourg	11/09/1943	France
Sc. Masinde, Collins Wetosi	12/01/2024	Melville	21/02/1995	Kenya
Fr. LaPlante, Vincent	12/01/2024	Vancouver	13/06/1924	Lacombe
Bro. Blackburn, Jerome	08/01/2024	Edmonton	05/02/1934	Lacombe



“They are before God, bearing the sign, the kind of character proper to our Institute, the vows common to all its members, the firm habit of the same virtues. We are linked to them by the bonds of a special charity. They are still our brothers and we are theirs. They now live in our mother-house, our main residence. The prayers and the love they retain for us will one day draw us to them and we shall live in our place of rest together with them.”

*(Letter of Founder to Fr. Courtès, 22 July 1828)*

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