

FERNAND JETTÉ, O. M. I.  
*Superior General*

**LETTERS  
TO THE OBLATES  
OF MARY IMMACULATE**

General House  
ROME  
1984



FERNAND JETTÉ, O. M. I.  
*Superior General*

**LETTERS  
TO THE OBLATES  
OF MARY IMMACULATE**

General House  
ROME  
1984



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	7
-----------------	---

### PART I: LETTERS TO ALL OBLATES.

1. The direction of the years ahead . . . . .	11
2. The Beatification of Bishop de Mazenod . . . . .	21
3. Our incarnation in the world . . . . .	27
4. The Oblate: a man of the Church . . . . .	34
5. Our response to the needs of men . . . . .	39
6. Apostolic love . . . . .	46
7. Catechesis and Evangelization . . . . .	52
8. Variety of ministries and love for the Pope . . . . .	59
9. The Congregation's priorities . . . . .	69
10. Receiving and forming candidates . . . . .	78
11. The General Chapter . . . . .	83
12. Interiorizing the New Constitutions . . . . .	89
13. The vocation apostolate . . . . .	98
14. Zaire: a rapidly growing Province . . . . .	105
15. The official approbation of our New Constitutions . . . . .	112
16. The Oblate: Servant of God's People . . . . .	122
17. The Oblate and the poor . . . . .	131
18. The Oblate and reconciliation . . . . .	137
19. The Oblates in Latin America . . . . .	144
20. Oblates and the formation of priests . . . . .	150

PART II: LETTERS AND MESSAGES TO THE OBLATES IN  
DIFFERENT WORLD REGIONS.

21. To the members of the Oblate Conference of Europe . . . . .	161
22. To the Oblates of Europe . . . . .	168
23. To the Oblates of Canada . . . . .	174
24. To the Oblates of the United States . . . . .	181
25. To the members of the Provincial Councils in the United States . . . . .	190
26. To the members of the Oblate Conference of Latin America . . . . .	196
27. To the Oblates of Latin America . . . . .	202
28. To the members of the Oblate Conference of Asia- Oceania . . . . .	207
29. To the Oblates of Asia-Oceania . . . . .	213
30. To the Oblates of Southern Africa . . . . .	218
<i>Index of names of persons and places</i> . . . . .	225
<i>Subject index</i> . . . . .	233

## FOREWORD

*In today's religious life, fraternal visits and various forms of communication are privileged means of spiritual and missionary animation. The letters which follow, as well as the few addresses and homilies accompanying them, belong to this current practice.*

*Most of them were published in the newsletter OMI Information or in the Acta Administrationis Generalis OMI. They are addressed primarily to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and have proven useful in giving them information, in encouraging, supporting and guiding them.*

*These documents cover a period of nine years. Among the principal events of this time the following deserve to be mentioned: the General Chapter of November-December 1974; the beatification of Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles and Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, on October 19, 1975; the General Chapter of November-December 1980; and the official approbation of the new Oblate Constitutions on July 3, 1982.*

*The first twenty letters were composed for all the members of the Congregation, an apostolic corps of about 5600 men, 4400 of whom are priests working in over fifty countries. The last ten were written to each of the six Oblate Regions in the world, namely, to that of Europe which comprises 1900 members, to that of Canada which has 1350, to that of the United States with 775 members, to that of Latin America with 325 members, to that of Asia-Oceania with 500 members, and to that of Africa with 750 members.*

*Father James F. Fitzpatrick, O. M. I., of the Oblate Province of Australia, has already published an English text of the first ten letters. Acceding to the wishes expressed by a number of people, the General Administration's Information Service has undertaken to publish this collection of letters already made public elsewhere.*

*Father Aloysius Kedl, O. M. I., has prepared this present English edition.*

*To meet certain publishing needs and to avoid repetition, some few slight changes have been made in the original text, with the author's permission. The previously published English translations have also been revised.*

PART ONE  
LETTERS TO ALL THE OBLATES



## 1. THE DIRECTION OF THE YEARS AHEAD

The Congregation's roots. - Father de Mazenod. - The Oblate ideal today. - Our friends among the Laity

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Aix-en-Provence, January 12, 1975.*

In this my first letter I wish to greet you and to assure you of my affection and desire to be of help to you during the next six years. I would also like to say how I envisage my role in serving the Congregation.

*« Father and brother to all, (the Superior General) will imbue them with a love of the Gospel lived in an apostolic community in the midst of men » (1966 Constitutions, art. 137).*

When I accepted the responsibility of Superior General last November, my mind turned fore-

most to that thought, to that « love of the Gospel » which is love of Jesus Christ, to be lived completely and without reservation « in the midst of men », especially the poorest, and in an « apostolic community », that is to say, like the Twelve who had left everything to be with Jesus and to go preach (cf. *Mark* 3:14). These were my thoughts, then, at that moment; and I thought, too, of our Founder and Father who, as the First Oblate, lived fully according to this ideal.

To accept becoming Superior General was to accept putting myself at the service of my brothers, of all my fellow Oblates, and to do so according to the particular charism of our Institute.

### *The Congregation's roots*

I am purposely writing this letter in Aix-en-Provence, in the former Carmel where we were born. Why? Certainly, because 1975 is the year of Father de Mazenod's beatification; but there is a deeper reason. We have our roots in the Church of God: there is a « spirit », a « grace » which gives life to the Congregation and which was first received here, in this house, with the

installation of the first community and the taking of the first vows in 1816.

At the time there were still no well-defined structures nor definite constitutions, but there was a spirit, a love and a zeal much stronger than all structures.

« *When our Lord wants to help his Church, he uses the following means: he calls forth a man to whom he gives a special grace and strength to serve him in a special way* ». This grace is « *an efficacious grace wherefrom this man personally benefits and helps others to share in it* ». In a way this grace becomes that of the entire Institute: « *When these men group themselves together, a body is formed, a congregation with this particular grace as its very own* » (Fr. JEROME NADAL, SJ, quoted by J.-F. GILMONT, *Paternité et Médiation du Fondateur d'Ordre*, in R.A.M., 1964, pp. 404-405).

As Oblates, it was Father de Mazenod who « *by means of the Gospel engendered us in Christ Jesus* » (Aelred de Rievaulx, quoted *ibid.*, p. 396). We have here a basic reality, the grace bestowed upon the Founder which we must constantly renew if we want to live and grow. Such was Paul's

advice to Timothy: to fan into flame the gift that God had given him by the Apostle's hand (cf. *2 Timothy* 1:6). It is a renewal to be undertaken with faith and love. This does not stop us from having our feet firmly planted on the ground and in today's world! Later on I shall return to this question of incarnation in the present world. Suffice it to say for the moment that in Marseilles, which I also visited recently, I was able to see Oblates who were well incarnated amongst today's poor: the derelicts, the black migrants, the labourers who work in metro construction, the young blind people... These Oblates are present to their people through love of Christ and the poor, and they are there because of a given mission. My purpose today, however, is not to speak to you on this topic. I simply want to say a few words on the grace of the Founder and on what I personally intend to do as Superior General.

### *Father de Mazenod*

Father de Mazenod was first and foremost a man who had encountered Christ in his own life and who knew him as Saviour (cf. E. LAMI-

RANDE, *Le sang du Sauveur, un thème central de la doctrine spirituelle de Mgr de Mazenod*, in *Etudes Oblates*, 1959, pp. 363-381). It was Good Friday in the year 1807. Eugène de Mazenod was 25 years old. He was profoundly struck on this occasion by the realization that he himself was redeemed by the blood of Christ, and this realization left a deep mark on his life. Moved to the point of tears, he wanted to respond to Christ's love by a complete gift of self. That is what led him first to the priesthood, then to missionary life, and finally to religious consecration. And the Church that he so passionately loved, he loved in Jesus Christ. « The Church », he was to write at the end of his life, « is the prize gained by the blood of Jesus Christ... To love the Church is to love Christ, and vice versa » (*Pastoral Letter* of February 16, 1860).

As a young priest, he soon felt the need to go to the very poor, the most abandoned, those to whom others would not go, and to go to them in order to teach them in their own tongue « who Christ is » and what their dignity is in the eyes of faith. Very early his priesthood became a missionary priesthood, sensitive to the appeals of

those who are far away, and desirous of answering them with all his soul.

It was also very early that, as a young priest and young missionary, he felt the need to have companions, to live in community with them, and finally to commit himself by the vows of religion. There are other conceptions possible of what constitutes an apostolic man, but that is how Father de Mazenod conceived him to be. In so doing, he still remained open to other forms of cooperation, especially to that of associates who could join with the Fathers and live with them as brothers, without necessarily committing themselves to the priesthood or to directly apostolic works.

### *The Oblate ideal today*

Is such an ideal still valid today? With all my soul I personally believe that it is. Were it otherwise, I would not have accepted the office that was entrusted to me.

In speaking to the Capitulars, and particularly to the Provincials, I stated how I thought I should fulfill my office:

1. By a serious search for answers to the questions raised in the report on the state of the Congregation.
2. By persevering and planned action to try and have these answers become a lived reality.
3. By a greater insistence on the interior elements of our vocation and life. On this third point, I was more specific.

Concerning Oblate personnel, for instance, efforts must be made to help each one more to face Jesus Christ and to face the poor to whom he has chosen to give his life so as to aid them to discover Jesus Christ. That must be the core of first and ongoing formation, the centre of spiritual discernment in matters of vocations, of the re-orientation of one's vocation, or of a commitment which sees itself as more avant-garde.

Concerning Oblate mission, we must continue to go forward in the line of our missionary thrust and outlook, with the following characteristics: a greater insistence on explicitly proclaiming Jesus Christ whenever possible; the development of a concerned awareness of the poor in every Obla-

te work, no matter what it may be, providing that work stems from a given mission; the development of a greater sense of the Church and of being rooted in the Church's life, if we want our missionary activity to be authentic; a special insistence on mission *ad gentes*, not necessarily to start new missions but at least to help and sustain those already in our care; finally, a clear encouragement to new, original missionary commitments, providing these take into account the above orientations: love of Jesus Christ, concerned awareness of the poor, and the sense of the Church.

Concerning our religious life, we have to work at self-evangelization. We need to discover anew that Jesus Christ is at the heart of our lives, and that our deep commitment goes far beyond structures. It is a matter of building without any reservation an apostolic friendship with Christ. The meaning of the vows and of prayer, the meaning of community and of mission can only be strengthened and developed if we succeed in re-evangelizing ourselves. In this area, I am confident that the beatification of our Founder will help us.

When reading this letter, you should not think that everything is clear and simple in the writer's mind! Some things are, others are not. We are all seeking — and I myself first of all — how we are to adapt our religious apostolic lives to the world of today. It is therefore with much gratitude that I shall receive whatever suggestions and comments you may wish to send me. Such sharing could prove to be extremely useful for the Congregation.

### *Our friends among the Laity*

Before closing, I want to pay tribute to our lay associates: to honorary Oblates, to M.A.M.I. members and to all apostolic labourers with whom we work the world over. They are for us, and through us for the entire Church, helpmates and supporters of incalculable devotedness. It is due to their friendship, prayers and generosity that many of our missionary works saw the light of day and have continued to prosper. I ask you to greet them and thank them on my behalf; tell them how I wish that the ties binding them to the Oblates be strengthened and help them

to grow in the joy and full development of their christian lives.

I wish you all a happy feastday on February 17<sup>1</sup>. Some Provinces have made of this day the starting point of an Oblate Year, one that will see the beatification of our Founder and will conclude with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval granted to our Constitutions. An excellent initiative! For us all may this be a year of reflection, of prayer and renewal in our vocation as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate!

---

<sup>1</sup> February 17 is the anniversary of the official approval, in 1826, of the Oblate Congregation by Pope Leo XII.

## **2. THE BEATIFICATION OF BISHOP DE MAZENOD**

The grace of the beatification. - Preparing for this grace. - Province visits. - Be strong in faith.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, June 6, 1975.*

Our Father and Founder will be proclaimed « Blessed » next October 19. The members of the General Council reflected on this coming event during their latest plenary session held in May. It is in their name that I am sending you this second letter.

### *The grace of the beatification*

For us this beatification is both a grace and a challenge. It is a grace which confirms and in-

vites us to joy... a challenge which tests our fidelity: fidelity to the mission among the poor; fidelity to that quality of being which the Founder wanted for the Oblates.

In today's world are we still the kind of missionaries to the poor envisaged by Father de Mazenod? Do we still go to the poor with the same preference, the same zeal, the same boldness, the same spirit of solidarity, the same love of the Church...? Do we still have the same deep attachment to Jesus Christ, the same concern for self-denial, the same inner thirst for holiness, the same conviction that the quality of our being is as important for the welfare of people as is the intensity of our activity...?

The beatification ceremony will be over quickly. And what will remain? Will there be the grace of conversion... new strength... a renewed thrust toward the poor?

### *Preparing for this grace*

In order that Bishop de Mazenod's beatification may bear such fruits we must prepare for it. Most Provinces are doing so already, doing so

admirably in prayer and joint reflection on our Founder's life and charism. It is an excellent occasion to re-read his life or writings, to meditate before God on our Constitutions or on the documents of the last Chapters.

But the Holy Year, in which this beatification is taking place, invites us to do even more. It calls us to do penance, to share, to rise above broken relations, to reconciliation.

It is in such a spirit, I believe, that we must prepare for the beatification: we too need reconciliation and pardon. We need it because of our discouragement, the times we have lacked fervour, and the divisions among us; we need it, likewise, because of the instances of our bad example and of our fearfulness in the apostolic service.

In this universal context of reconciliation and sharing I should like to ask two things of the Congregation.

First, that Friday, October 17 — or another day if the 17<sup>th</sup> is not suitable — be for all Oblates a day of prayer, fasting and penance. The Lord invites us to such a practice in the Gospel, and the Church exhorts us to do this during the Holy

Year. It would, moreover, be a gesture of solidarity with the world's poor and hungry people.

Secondly, that the gift which we will be offering to the Holy Father for Papal Charities on the occasion of the beatification truly come from our personal privations and voluntary renouncement rather than from our surpluses. We ourselves should be able to do what we sometimes ask of other Christians. Thus, from now until October 19 I will gratefully and joyfully receive any offering, no matter how small, from such sources.

### *Province visits*

Last March and April I made my first visit of the Congregation, a visit that allowed me to come into contact with almost 900 Oblates in Ireland, England, Haiti, the eastern United States and eastern Canada. I can truly say that everywhere I found great generosity in apostolic service toward people who in some instances are extremely poor. I likewise sensed a deep love for the Congregation, with renewed confidence in its

future, despite present difficulties, and, in some places, a real renewal of prayer.

The Lord who has always guided the Congregation from the beginning is still at work within it. Examples of fidelity and even of heroism are no less present among us today than in the past. I think of our Oblates in Laos, in Zaire, in Bolivia and in other provinces — Oblates who love Jesus Christ and the people he confided to them enough to accept suffering with them and for them so as to build a better world. The Oblate « will, therefore », as the Constitutions state, « bear about in his own body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be operative in all men » (1966, art. 14). These are all realities which we must have at heart when reflecting on the Congregation and on the trials it undergoes. Otherwise our view remains incomplete and possibly distorted.

*Be strong in faith*

To all of you I repeat what I told the 1974 Chapter: In the name of God be strong! Be strong in faith and in obedience to the mission you have

received. Be strong in your love. Be capable of holding on and going ahead, out of love for the poor and fidelity to Jesus Christ — to Jesus Christ in his poor!

Through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, « who is victorious over all evil » (1966 *Constitutions*, art. 6) and « the perfect model of our response to God » (1966 *Constitutions*, art. 61), may Bishop de Mazenod's beatification be for us the occasion of an authentic inner renewal!

### 3. OUR INCARNATION IN THE WORLD

The visit in Spain. - The Incarnation of Christ. - Our incarnation in the world.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, December 8, 1975.*

It will soon be Christmas, a feast of hope for all men, especially the poorest, the most humble — those who are capable of welcoming Christ with the heart of a child.

For us Oblates this feast follows quite closely another celebration which was a great joy and remains a sign of hope for the Institute: the beatification of Bishop de Mazenod. On that occasion I was able to see how much the Oblates are loved by those whom they serve and how much the simple people, the ordinary people,

appreciate our proximity to them. They love the Oblates because they feel loved by them and they feel that the Oblates are very close to them. They came to Rome as forming to some extent a part of the Oblate family.

### *The visit in Spain*

This past November I visited the Province of Spain, each of its communities. Their apostolic zeal, their desire to work for the poor and with the poor is strong and solid. At the same time, as in other Oblate provinces and in several sectors of the Church today, questions are being asked, concrete questions concerning formation, community life, and various forms of apostolic commitment. Such questions concerning the essential elements of our life are always a source of suffering. I returned from my trip with deep admiration for the work of our Spanish confreres and with great affection for them.

With all this in mind, I am writing to you today to initiate, together with you, some reflection on the mystery of Christ's Incarnation and on the meaning of that mystery in our lives as missionaries to the poor.

## *The Incarnation of Christ*

In order to bring salvation to men, Christ wanted to become incarnate, to take on a body like theirs and to live their life like them and with them. He made himself like unto men, says St. Paul, in all things except sin.

When our Founder set out to evangelize the poor of Provence, he chose a similar way: to become poor with the poor, to speak their language and to go to them in order to tell them who Christ is. And when he sent his missionaries out into the world he told them: Go to the poorest, the most abandoned; love them, learn their language...

The same obligation holds for us today. It is at the root of our vocation as Oblates: to make ourselves poor with the poor and to go to them and live with them in order to reveal to them Jesus Christ through our love and our goodness, through the witness of our works and the proclamation of the Gospel message.

This obligation holds for all Oblates. It is, I believe, perceived by everyone of us, yet each Oblate understands and interprets it very differ-

ently according to his milieu, temperament and grace.

When considering the form of Christ's incarnation, we notice this first of all: not only did he make himself man, he also freely willed to live the life of man in a situation that was poor. He could, while possessing wealth, have lived the life of a virtuous man. He did not want to do so. As Oblates we have made a similar option. To what extent do we live it? Complaints are often heard on this score. People will say that our life-style, our leisure hours, our manners, our behaviour, all correspond far more to those of the rich, the « rich who are good », the virtuous rich who are friends of the poor, than to those of the poor themselves.

Christ could just as well have lived his life as a man within the married state. He did not want to do so. The transcendence of his mission, it would seem, prompted him to witness by the free choice of celibacy that his kingdom was not of this world. Similarly also, while being well incarnated in a particular people, the Jews, and at a definite period of history, he did not want his love to be confined within these bounds. By

virtue of the mission received from his Father, he was truly the universal Brother, the Saviour and Redeemer of all men.

All his life he burned interiorly with a dual love: love for the Father who had sent him into the world — he was passionately imbued with his Father's will — and love for all people whom he loved with an infinite tenderness to the point of giving his life for their salvation.

### *Our incarnation in the world*

As Oblates we must take the model of our incarnation in the world from Jesus Christ. And we must all feel ourselves challenged by his mystery. Some still remain too far removed from their people, especially from the poor; they welcome the poor when they come to church, but they live at too great a distance from them and in a manner too different from theirs. Moreover, they don't go to them enough, particularly those who don't practise their faith or who have only a distorted image of Jesus Christ. Is it lack of zeal, or lack of élan, or lack of inner freedom stemming from routine generated by established ways...?

Others don't merit such a reproach. No matter what their concrete commitment may be, they live like the poor and close to the poor; they have succeeded in maintaining and developing a missionary spirit and a sensitivity to the poor. They spontaneously go forth in search of the « lost sheep », to those who are farthest away, to those who are the most marginal to the Church's life. Some of these Oblates, however, possibly due to a lack of discernment or of sufficient spiritual maturity, run the risk of committing themselves to dead-end courses of action. Far from being the presence of Jesus Christ and a way of evangelization, their manner of identifying with the life of the poor, of the working people, rather leads them to a progressive loss of the meaning of Jesus Christ, of the universality of his mission, and of the urgent requirements of his kingdom. What began in the beauty of hope ends in disillusionment.

For the Oblate, incarnation in today's world remains the normal way of evangelization. We must, therefore, proceed along this path with confidence and courage, but do so all the while having Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, in

mind. What saves the poor is not the presence of one more poor person among them; rather it is the presence of Christ who is poor in their midst.

To all I wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Holy New Year! Next February 17 will mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approbation of our Institute. May the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the Incarnate Word and Mother of the Oblates, help us understand more and more what we are and help us live this faithfully in the world of today.

#### **4. THE OBLATE: A MAN OF THE CHURCH**

The Oblate and the Church. - A Rule of life. - Interior Renewal.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, February 1, 1976.*

February 17<sup>th</sup> reminds us all, as Oblates, of the two vital facts that are at the origins of our existence: we were conceived in the mind and heart of a priest who knew Jesus Christ and was able to recognize him in the poor; and we were born of the Church who was able to discern this priest's divine calling and to confirm his work as authentic.

We would not be Oblates today if it had not been for Father de Mazenod; nor could we be so unless the Church, 150 years ago, had accepted his work and approved it.

*The Oblate and the Church*

How much store our Founder set by this approbation we can gauge from reading what he wrote at that period.

Since 1826, it is clear enough, mentalities have changed; people are now less concerned about the institutional side of things, they seek less after official approbations and for detailed rules of life. All the same, for us, celebrating February 17<sup>th</sup> recalls to mind certain basic truths which would, if overlooked, endanger our very being as Oblates. It is on this that I would like to dwell briefly today.

The first of these truths is that we stem fundamentally from within the Church; cut off from her we are nothing. The Church it was that gave us birth, and it is in communion with the Church and our being rooted in her that we have grown and borne fruit; and still today, it is only within the Church and in her alone that we can grow and develop.

It was, to be sure, in this sense that our Founder wanted us to be men of the Church and the Pope's men, as well as men of the poor and of God's people.

*A Rule of life*

The second of these truths is that, as an Oblate apostolic corps, we need some kind of structure or rule of life — workable, not too burdensome, yet effective nevertheless — which we accept and become truly imbued with so that we may be transformed in Jesus Christ, and our existence be given genuine consistency.

Many are the Oblates who were enabled to grow and develop personally and to bear marvellous fruits of holiness and apostolic labours, thanks to the Rule of life which they fully lived! Left to their own resources they probably would never have risen above a certain human and spiritual mediocrity.

It is good to reflect on this during this anniversary of the approbation of our Rules. We should ask the Lord Jesus to make us capable of perceiving always, through and beyond the external structures and the rules, however imperfect they may be, the inner law of love and enable us thereon to build our lives.

*Interior renewal*

Finally, a third and last truth that this feast recalls for us is our real need of continual inner renewal.

Our becoming imbued with a life-ideal and with a rule of life is the work of a lifetime. In years past, Cardinal Villeneuve used to say jestingly: « There are no true virtues before the age of forty! ». Today perhaps some would say fifty or sixty!

On February 18, 1826, the day after the approbation of our Institute, the Founder wrote thus to Father Tempier: « The conclusion we ought to draw (from this approbation) is that we should strive, with fresh zeal and the utmost dedication, to seek all the glory of God we possibly can and the salvation of our poor fellow-creatures by every possible means... In the name of God, let us be saints! ».

That approbation, far from turning us in upon ourselves, ought rather to make us more open to God and to the world of the poor. « We must spare no effort to extend the empire of Christ! » — remembering always, though, that the effec-

tiveness of any apostolic enterprise relies, next to God, on the spiritual strength of the apostolic man.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Patroness and Mother, help us to be the kind of « inwardly strong and truly apostolic man » desired by Blessed Eugène de Mazenod!

## 5. OUR RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF MEN

The visit of some Provinces. - Commitment of the laity. - Choosing our apostolic works. - Oblates exist for Christ and his mission. - Tribute to the Oblates of Laos.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, October 19, 1976.*

God so loved the world that He gave up his only begotten Son, not to reject the world but so that the world might find salvation through him. The Oblate will ever be mindful that it is this same love which consecrates him and gives him his mission (1966 *Constitutions*, art. 9).

The feast of Christmas once again gives me the opportunity to come and greet you, to share with you.

### *The visit of some Provinces*

This year also I have been able to visit several provinces of the Congregation: Belgium-North, Germany and Poland, in Europe; all the provinces of Southern Africa, of Western and North-western Canada up to the Arctic Ocean.

I can truly say that Oblates everywhere are continuing the mission of Jesus Christ. Like him and in his steps they are striving to liberate man, to evangelize him by revealing through their work and word the mystery of God who is love, justice, life and peace. And they do so with wonderful dedication in conditions that are in some instances most trying, whether it be apartheid in South Africa, the conflict against the faith in Poland, or the lack of reinforcements and the ageing of personnel in the missions of the Far North.

Their eyes are open to the needs of people, especially the poorest, to their strong desire for

a more just and fraternal life. These Oblates are asking themselves the same crucial question the Church herself is asking: How can the Gospel message be effectively transmitted in today's world, a world increasingly seeking to develop itself without God and without believing in its own need of redemption? (cf. *Evangelica testificatio*, 52).

Concrete evangelizing activities differ according to local circumstances and perceived needs. Some Oblates are searching for new ways to be closer to the poor and to be more committed to their struggle; Gospel concern urges them to be wherever the future of the poor is at stake. Such searching is essential to the life and progress of our Institute.

### *Commitment of the laity*

An instance in point: it is especially important to involve the laity more and more in our missionary work. One of my finest memories of this year is my participation, last January 14<sup>th</sup>, in a prayer meeting at a West Transvaal mining compound.

Some twenty Catholics were gathered in a barrack, with one of the miners presiding. The meeting — simple, sincere and really beautiful — lasted an hour. When it was over, I was asked to say a few words. I could only tell them how happy my colleagues (Fathers Motte, Hogan and Ligtoet) and I were to have been able to pray with them, that we all belonged to the same great family of God and that we would continue to pray for them. I also invited them to pray for the Oblates.

Once a week these people get together in this way. Thanks to the Father who looks after them, they have taken in hand their own Christian life. This is really marvellous; it is something we should aim at increasingly, that the laity in our care come to take upon themselves their Christian responsibilities in every field — social and political as well as economic and religious.

### *Choosing our apostolic works*

Some there are who would like Rome and the General Council to hand down, in matters of apostolic commitment, well-defined decisions and

absolute judgments: « This activity is Oblate; that one is not! ».

Ordinarily, this is asking too much. Allow me here to refer to something Pope Paul VI wrote on May 14, 1971, in an apostolic letter to Cardinal Roy. After describing how diverse were the situations of Christians in the world, he added: « Faced with such varying situations it is difficult for us to make one single statement proposing a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our purpose, nor is it our mission » (no. 4).

This attitude, *servatis servandis*, equally applies to the General Council in regard to the Congregation's missionary activity. It is up to each Region and to each Province to analyse objectively the needs and appeals of the poor in its area; and to see by the light of the Gospel, the Oblate Constitutions and the Founder's spirit, how the Congregation can effectively answer those needs while remaining true to itself. In this matter, each and every Province has a duty to reflect and discern as a community. Such reflection must lead to concrete resolutions: a determining of apostolic priorities within the Province, a revising of existing works in the light of those

priorities, and the promotion of new forms of commitment.

The General Council can, and should, be of help in this endeavour, but it cannot take the place of the Provinces. Its help will consist in encouraging, stimulating and offering discernment norms or criteria that will allow us to go forward in faithfulness to our common vocation and in union with the Church and the entire Institute.

### *Oblates exist for Christ and his mission*

Oblates do not exist for themselves. They live for the glory of God and the salvation of men. « Their purpose », the Founder wrote, « is the same that the Son of God had in mind when coming on earth »... especially, « to evangelize the poor » (*Administrative Circulars*, I, p. 122).

There is only one way of properly fulfilling that aim: « To try to become other Christs » (1818 *Constitutions and Rules*, Part. 2, Ch. 1). The essential is all there. The more an Oblate centers his life on Christ and becomes a man with a deep inner life, the more he will be a good

missionary — able and willing to go anywhere, to the very limits of the world and to the most difficult places, without peril to himself and with all the chances of effectively doing God's work.

### *Tribute to the Oblates of Laos*

Before closing, I would like to pay tribute to our former missionaries in Laos<sup>2</sup>. I want to thank them for the many fine examples of courage, confidence and zeal they have given to the Congregation. The latter has lived with them the drama that was their lot during this last year.

To all Oblates I say: Merry Christmas! A Happy and Holy New Year! May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour, help us all reanimate the missionary grace that is within us!

---

<sup>2</sup> Consequent to the political changes that have occurred in Laos, the Oblates were expelled from that country.

## 6. APOSTOLIC LOVE

The visit in Asia-Oceania. - Love for people. - Defense of human rights.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Rome, February 17, 1977.

### *The Visit in Asia-Oceania*

I returned to Rome from Asia on January 10 after a long trip of nearly two months, which helped me to know another area of the Congregation: Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia. I will not write to you about every one of these countries, but I would like to share with you a few facts and attitudes that struck me more forcibly during this visit and helped me understand better our missionary vocation.

*Love for people*

Love for people, especially for the poorest, is at the heart of this vocation: a love that is simple, based on the Gospel, creative. It consists of being present, of respect, kindness and dedication. If we want the Gospel to be accepted, we must begin by loving as Christ loved, and know how to make ourselves loved.

Everywhere I went, it seemed to me that the Oblates are close to the people, sincerely love them and are loved by them in return. In one of the countries I visited I heard a foreigner who is a government employee confess: « I am personally incapable of loving these people! ». Had he been an Oblate, I would have been deeply shocked.

The Oblates' love finds many expressions that vary according to circumstances: teaching English and setting up kindergartens (in Japan), university responsibilities and housing projects (in the Philippines), marriage encounter apostolate and specialized retreats (in Australia), sharing the life of squatters (in Bagong Barrio, the Philippines), promoting the raising of goats and ducks (in Indonesia)... not to mention Oblate presence in the

communications media, among prisoners, in parishes and colleges as well as in ordinary ministry. There is a great variety here, and no one gives up, even when conversions are few, as in Japan, or when dangers threaten, as in the southern Philippines. After the earthquakes and the civil war, there was no discouragement — one simply went back to work and started building all over again.

In some of these missions you can sense a remarkable vitality which strikes you like a breath of fresh air. Sometimes I felt like saying: In some of the older Provinces those who lack hope would benefit from seeing these things and realize there are still young men here who are interested in us and in our work.

Apostolic love in its many expressions is supple and very free. It answers a specific need, a concrete call that makes itself heard today. It finds its source in Jesus Christ — it is Christ's outlook on the world and his love for the world. And it leads to Jesus Christ — to make him known and loved by the witness of work and life, and it proceeds to the explicit proclaiming of salvation in Jesus Christ, through man's liberation, as Christ himself proclaimed and achieved it.

I have also noticed that what can hinder this love the most is division among us. That is how, if we are not careful, a mission can be paralyzed and all mission enthusiasm shattered. The final words of our Founder: « Among yourselves charity, charity, charity, and in the world, zeal for the salvation of souls », still apply today. One doesn't go without the other. The charity among us that would not be open to the world of the poor would not be Oblate charity, and zeal that is not based on real acceptance and mutual love between Oblates would remain empty. Its witnessing would be powerless.

### *Defense of human rights*

On the eve of my departure, this is what I witnessed in Jakarta. Some forty refugees from Vietnam had just arrived in port, after 15 to 17 days of sailing aboard small craft in the most miserable conditions of extreme deprivation. Indonesia would not allow them to land and refused to receive them. A Maryknoll Father and others tried to bring them supplies and to find them havens in several countries. It seems that Australia and the United States were willing to accept

them. The fate of these people is presently shared by several thousands on the China Sea, and that is only one illustration of what is happening to hundreds of thousands of human beings in various parts of the world.

In several countries where Oblates work, serious problems of social justice are coming to the fore. The General Council in plenary session has started to study this question. What priority should promoting social justice have in our vocation? It is clear that no Oblate today can remain indifferent to this problem. Concern for a more just world must constantly be present in our ministry as in our lives.

In promoting justice some Oblates give more of themselves through direct commitments. At times these Oblates may have the impression that they are seen as « marginal » or « special cases »... They are nothing of the sort; all to the contrary, but — as they themselves well know — to work directly in promoting justice is a difficult and sensitive task. It publicly affects persons and institutions, often annoys many people, and calls for both prudence and courage. This I notice: much more is usually demanded of the apostle

for justice than of any other; people want him to be perfectly balanced and exemplary in all things! Because his action is undoubtedly more progressive and disturbs them more, people show themselves to be more severe toward him, even too severe. That may well be a safeguard but it is also a cross, the cross of the « prophet » which always implies a measure of solitude. Whoever is called thereto by the Lord must accept to carry it, but others must also avoid as much as possible making it heavier for no good reason.

Later on, as our reflection develops, I will have occasion to return to this subject. Let us remember meanwhile that it is impossible to have evangelization of the poor as our aim unless we are concerned with the problem of justice.

We shall soon start on the road to Easter. Our Constitutions remind us that we are « the co-operators of Christ the Saviour in his paschal mystery » (1966, art. 7) and they ask us to « bear in our own body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be operative in all men » (1966, art. 14).

In wishing you a Happy Easter, I add: May you wholly live this mystery and be its faithful witnesses everywhere!

## 7. CATECHESIS AND EVANGELIZATION

Evangelizing today. - Examining ourselves. - The authenticity of our lives. - The anonymous Oblate.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, October 30, 1977.*

Yesterday marked the ending in Rome of the Bishops' Synod on catechesis, following by three years the Synod on evangelization. For us Oblates who have the mission to tell people « who Christ is », this reflection of the Church on catechesis and evangelization takes on a major importance. I would like to speak to you about this today, in the light of what I experience when visiting the Congregation.

### *Evangelizing today*

A first observation: it has become impossible today to evangelize without taking into account

man's social dimension and the economic and political situation in which he lives. A few days ago, while I was visiting the Province of Italy, a laborer helped me put on the chasuble. A passer-by made the remark: « That's a communist! ». Whereupon my helper looked at me with a smile: « Yes, a communist... just slightly pink... one must live! ».

To teach people who Christ is! Today we can no longer separate the individual person from the social being who is committed to this or that group or party, who is moulded by this labor union or that kind of society. He is the man who less and less goes to church and whom we must try to reach where he is — at home, at work, in the union hall...

Another observation, which Fr. Arrupe, S. J., made at the Synod, is this: the classical « loci » used in catechesis have become radically inadequate. « We fall back too much on these traditional means. The problem is to reach people wherever they are, to form apostles and to draw up catechisms particularly designed to evangelize the most estranged from the Church. The Church must be present on the scene of secular schools,

of professional work and spare time activities ».

A third observation: there have been great changes in the language of people, changes more rapid and profound than in the language of the Church: language of gestures, of words, of the image and of sign. I remember boarding a bus one day in Ottawa and giving the required fare to a young girl who had no money. I thought I had performed a good deed. She simply told me: « You're rich, you priests! ».

For a Congregation whose purpose is to evangelize the poor, we find here a terrible and fascinating challenge, one that invites us to re-examine our missionary pastoral activity as well as the formation of our members.

I well know how, in all the Provinces, certain Oblates are striving to take up that challenge! I have seen this in the compounds of South Africa; I have seen it in the laborers' quarters of Spain and France; I have seen it at the Centre Saint-Pierre-Apôtre in Montreal and in the renewed apostolate of the National Shrine at Cap-de-la-Madeleine. I know the marvellous work being done to renew the language of faith by the AVEX sessions in Lyons and by the Novalis

Center in Ottawa, and I am aware that commitments are being made pretty well everywhere in the Congregation to promote justice in the world... These are only a few examples. They invite us all to deep reflection.

### *Examining ourselves*

As Oblates, as an apostolic group, is our spiritual sensitivity sufficiently developed to hear the new appeals of man today? Do we have enough creativity and boldness? Are we interiorly free enough to find new ways of evangelizing? Are we adequately initiated in spiritual discernment to pass truly evangelical judgments on situations? Do we have the courage to submit our apostolic commitments to our community for a real evaluation? Do we have enough doctrinal consistency and interior strength not to let ourselves be carried away by the groups we contact, but rather to evangelize them truly and to remain faithful to the Christ we proclaim?

All these questions come to mind when I think of apartheid in South Africa, of leftist gains in Europe and the selfishness of wealthy nations,

of totalitarian regimes under which we labor in Latin America and Asia as well as in the socialist countries. At times, letters I receive from certain Oblates make me dwell on these problems all the more. These words, for instance, of a confrere who left after many years of spending himself with us for the poor: « You have been waiting for this letter for a long time... I write it after several years of searching, of study and struggle... My present situation: I am a member of a marxist-leninist group. Our principal concern is to prepare the revolution... That is what is basic for us... I therefore ask to be laicized in order to normalize my juridical status ».

What was lacking in the life of this Oblate? Could the Congregation, that is to say, you, I, his close confreres, have helped him more?

### *The authenticity of our lives*

Proclaiming Jesus Christ to the people of today remains our primary mission in the Church. To proclaim by word, yes, but still more so — and that is my final observation — by deed and life.

It is impossible to preach charity, dialogue,

peace between men if there is no fraternal community and love between us. On this score today's youth especially remain adamant. There is no way we can preach sharing, unworldliness, poverty, if the witness we give remains that of the rich man, even of the rich with a generous heart.

At the present time in South Africa, several of our brothers have to suffer because of their sense of justice and their faithfulness to the Gospel. I want to assure them of the Congregation's support. We want to extend this fraternal support in a very special way to our Oblate Bishops for their stand, which is both so evangelical and courageous.

The spirit of total dedication to souls to the point of giving one's life is still very much alive in the Institute. One year ago, on December 23, an Oblate, Father Raynald Beauregard was killed by thieves in an isolated mountain mission of Lesotho. A few weeks later, another Father who lives in a quite similar isolated situation, wrote to me: « I'm always happy here... This death did not make me afraid. Should God ask me the same sacrifice, let him give me the same courage! ». When I read these lines, the words of St. Paul

came to mind: « You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear... » (*Romans* 8, 15).

### *The anonymous Oblate*

Such a witnessing appears to me to be that of the anonymous Oblate of whom no one ever speaks but who silently devotes himself among the poor, for twenty, thirty, forty and fifty years, as long as he possibly can. We meet him on all continents and in all ministries. I have seen several this past summer in the Canadian North and I find some everywhere in ministries that are ordinary, without glamour, like parish work, teaching and the great variety of chaplaincies that are ours. The vast majority of the Congregation is made up of such men. They too are prophets, and they are so by their silence, their humble dedication, their unswerving faithfulness. They are the backbone of the Institute.

## 8. VARIETY OF MINISTRIES AND LOVE FOR THE POPE

The visit of some Provinces in Europe. - The visit in the United States. - Our attitude towards the Pope.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, November 16, 1978.*

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! The yuletide season once again provides me with the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you. The theme of these reflections is suggested by my recent visits to various Provinces of the Congregation and by the election of Pope John Paul II.

*The visit of some Provinces in Europe*

I returned to Rome yesterday after visiting the Provinces of Austria and Belgium-South, as

well as the Vice-Province of France-Benelux. The Oblates there are doing wonderful work.

Only twenty-four in Austria, they take care of an important Marian shrine, Maria Taferl, and serve two parishes; they are also involved in preaching and in pastoral activity among workers, and have a most generous and flourishing Missionary Association.

Belgium-South numbers 120 members, half of whom are former missionaries in Zaire. Many work in parishes, others are hospital or prison chaplains, and some teach. Two retreat centers, Velaines and Barvaux, receive various groups. Evangelizing the inner city and working-class milieux by new approaches is the major pre-occupation of a certain number of Oblates. The Province moreover has given birth to a unique and durable experience in community living, that of La Poudrière, which has become a source of inspiration for men of good will from all orientations. Real artists can be found among the Brothers. The Missionary Association is vigorous and active.

The Polish Vice-Province has 47 Oblates dedicated to serving immigrants of Polish origin.

These men work under difficult conditions, especially so because these immigrants are dispersed and are being progressively integrated into their adopted country. The Vice-Province has 26 houses, residences or stations, including a boarding-school at Vaudricourt and a vacation center for Polish families at Stella Plage. The election of Pope John Paul II, who in the past has visited their house in Brussels where he celebrated the Eucharist, was an occasion of great rejoicing for them.

These three Provinces face a common challenge, that of vocations. There are neither novices nor scholastics in training — a major problem for the future! Another question was raised at some of the meetings: the diversity of apostolic commitments and the feeling sometimes experienced of being marginal because of one's own commitment, judged by some as too traditional or, on the contrary, too progressive to be Oblate. Exterior works are certainly important — we are missionaries and missionaries to the poor — but still greater importance must be given to interior dispositions and to the mission received. We are Oblates first of all by what we have in

our hearts: the total gift of self to Jesus Christ, a deep love for the poor and the most abandoned, a sense of community and the disposition to obey. When we are animated by such sentiments and have received a mission from the Institute for the work we are doing, we do not have to question ourselves on our identity.

### *The visit in the United States*

From July 17 to September 14 I was in the United States visiting four of the five American Provinces: Central, Saint John the Baptist, Southern and Western. I had already spent a few weeks in the Eastern Province in 1975. From this visit I retain the impression of a group of Oblates deeply attached to the Congregation and proud of being Oblates, well-rooted in the American milieu and close to people of all conditions, at the same time bound to the classic forms of ministry and open to new calls.

In these Provinces, as in the three preceding, I was able to observe that the desire to reach the poor, the most abandoned groups, is present. It is expressed in various ways: apostolate with mi-

grants, especially the Spanish-speaking (Puerto Ricans and Mexicans), also but to a lesser degree with blacks and Indians; apostolate with rural, isolated populations (Rio Grande Valley, various places in Maine); apostolate with the poverty-stricken, as in a suburb of St. Louis; apostolate with prisoners: some twenty of our Fathers are prison chaplains...

I also witnessed some initiatives that are really characteristic of the Oblate spirit. At the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, for instance, a radio station has been established to reach the blind, to read for them the main newspaper articles that appear, and to proclaim Jesus Christ to them. There too help has been extended to the sick by giving a missionary dimension to their sufferings, and to this end was created the Association of Victim Missionaries. How many more examples could be given!

The Chicano Film Festival, created and developed by the Oblate College of the Southwest in San Antonio; the HOME Co-op, a people's training center for handicraft (East Orland) and Community Life (Portland), a residence for problem youth (St. John the Baptist Province); ad-

aptation of retreat houses — there are fifteen of them — to answer present needs; Marriage Encounter groups, mutual aid groups for people in difficult situations (Alcoholics Anonymous, Emotional Anonymous, Overeaters...); the Center for Pastoral Renewal and Spiritual Growth at Mount Mary Immaculate (Western Province); the Center for Prayer at Sarita (Southern Province)... To enumerate them all would be impossible. From the whole there emerges an impression of vitality, a will to respond to the needs of today that can only be full of promise for the future.

The American Provinces have some forty scholastics. To answer the Church's needs, that is very little. Here as in Europe there exists the challenge of vocations and, in relation to that challenge, the need for a more intensive cooperation between Provinces. This would lead to a greater awareness of the apostolic strength represented in a group of 850 Oblates within the same country and would help to define better the Oblate image in the American Church.

The General Council will have the opportuni-

ty to discuss these questions with the Provincials next year at the joint meeting in San Antonio.

### *Our attitude toward the Pope*

As final theme of this letter I would like to reflect a moment with you on our special attitude toward the Church and, in a more special way, toward the Holy Father.

After the death of Pope John Paul I, an article in *Le Monde* (October 10, 1978) brutally asked the question: « Who killed John Paul I? ». Its author, André Mandouze, answered: « We did... we Catholics... because we demand too much of him ». He then proceeded to insist on the need for a revision of pontifical responsibilities and of our own demands as regards the Pope. At the time of St. Peter, the burden in some aspects must have been less heavy to bear!

The question that was posed made me think. It made me reflect at a more personal level on my responsibility, on yours and on that of the Congregation. Very rarely, moreover, do I visit a Province without having one Oblate or other speak to me of this problem. Do we always give

to the Pope, within as without the Congregation, the support, confidence and devotedness he has a right to expect of us?

Oblates, as a whole, — I see this when visiting Provinces — remain faithful to the Pope and are perfectly loyal to him. Some however may be lacking on this point. Internal stress when faced with certain changes or, on the contrary, impatience in wanting more radical changes, partly explains this weakness. The events of recent months provide an occasion for us all to renew ourselves in our love for the Pope and in our faithfulness to his teachings.

There is no question here of a simplistic love but rather of a manly devotedness and an enlightened fidelity. The Oblate's spontaneous disposition toward the Pope and his teachings must be one of openness, of confidence and of acceptance. The Founder held to that very strongly. He reminded the scholastics at Billens, on September 11, 1832, that it was necessary to « adhere with one's mind and heart » to the teaching of the Pope « without having to wait for solemn promulgations »; and he added: « I repeat this to you so that you will make of this principle

the customary rule of your conduct and so that you will transmit it to those who will come after you, as you receive it from me ».

Faithfulness to this rule will not prevent some from experiencing difficulties when confronted with a given orientation or directive, but it will help them to bear this suffering with discretion, respect and faith. In such a situation, as Father Arrupe wrote to the Jesuits, « it is necessary to reflect before God and to take the advice that is called for in order to decide if a ' respectful silence ' is not, concretely, a greater service... Pressure by means of public opinion and personal criticism is not the proper means of manifesting ideas or opinions to the Holy Father » (1/25/72).

The Church is a mystery of faith. Joyous and confident acceptance of authority in the Church — and of the grace that we receive from her — rests finally on faith. The acceptance belongs to the same world as does that of the Saviour-God who comes to us in the form of a child. To reach him, to be able to communicate with him, we have to approach him with the soul of a child, without interior resistance, ready to welcome salvation, and then we are saved! (cfr. R. VOIL-

LAUME, *Lettres aux Fraternités*, t. 2, pp. 127-128).

May the Virgin Mary, who knew how to receive Christ with faith and love in order to share him with the world, obtain for you the grace of a Holy Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## 9. THE CONGREGATION'S PRIORITIES

New categories of poor people. - Involving the laity in our activities. - Personal conversion. - Apostles of certainty.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*San Antonio, Texas, October 12, 1979.*

This time I am sending you my Christmas greeting from San Antonio, Texas. Here we have just concluded the sixth joint meeting (a meeting with the Provincials and the members of a Region), the last before the Chapter. This session brought together some sixty Oblates. The warmth of a Texas welcome is proverbial. We all experienced one, and for this I say a heartfelt thanks to the Southern Province which is this year celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation.

From these plenary sessions held in the dif-

ferent Regions, certain common elements and overall orientations are emerging more and more. These express both the unity of the Congregation and its determination to work in a given direction. I would like to comment on three of them.

### *New categories of poor people*

First, there is the deep concern for the poor, especially for those referred to as « the new poor ». More and more the Congregation is taking note of the fact that our world today is creating poor people, new categories of poor people. This is a major challenge for us to accept. Often these poor people are national minorities, migrants, and refugees — not only the « boat-people » from South-East Asia, but also all the others we meet in different countries: Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the United States, Portuguese, Spaniards and Italians, Arabs and Africans in the more industrialized countries of Europe...

A few weeks ago, at Cayenne in French Guiana, I was crossing a large square when I noticed

several blacks standing as though waiting for something. I heard Father Charrier, a missionary to the Hmong, make this sad remark: « Here, Father, is the new slave market! ». These were people from Haiti who came each day to offer their labor at very cheap rates... against the law. And I thought of all the Haitians who are looking for work in Surinam, in Miami, in Montreal...

The Oblates of Haiti are doing good work in Haiti. What are the Oblates of the other Provinces doing to help the Haitians who are living in their territory? And what knowledge of their situation do they have? It is questions such as these that many Oblates have been asking for some years now in regard to many other migrants.

In France, for example, the miners, especially the Poles, used to be the workers who were the most poor, whose life was the hardest. We have done much for them. Today, it is the North Africans, the Turks... What are we doing for them? The same is true for England: the new poor among the migrants are no longer the Irish but often the blacks from the British Antilles and the Indians... How interested are we in them?

In posing these questions, I am not forgetting the enormous complexity and newness of the problem such as it exists today; but neither can I forget the Founder's cry directed to Father Semeria in Ceylon: « When will you begin to win the unbelievers? Are you only on your island as parish priests of old Christians? » (*Letter of February 21, 1849*).

The youth, too, belong to the new poor. In many countries of the West, they are lost in a world that has become foreign to them, a world that has no time for them, a world that has no work to offer them, a world which confronts them with many questions without ever having an answer for them. In several countries we Oblates have lost contact with the youth. We are feeling this more and more, we suffer from this, and we are trying to re-establish this contact... Some Provinces, like Italy, are succeeding admirably; others are not.

Among the new poor are also the unemployed, those unjustly exploited, the peasants being deprived of their land, as we see happening in Latin America; and, on a different level, the atheists and the people who are indifferent to

religion. Their number is constantly growing in Europe, in the United States, in Canada, in Australia.

The Congregation is alert to all these appeals. She knows that she cannot respond to all of them. But she is also aware that she would be unfaithful if, after having taken into account her present condition, she did nothing to respond to them, either through lack of daring or because she is too established in comfortable ministries.

### *Involving the laity in our activities*

A second major concern that is noticeable throughout the whole Institute is the determination to associate lay people to the Church's activity and to our own work. Two considerations impel us in this direction. One is of the theological order: we understand better the role of lay people in the Church, their ministerial responsibility, and the necessity of apostolic commitment if they wish to live fully the grace of their baptism. The other, often more effective, is of the practical order: unless the laity fully assume the role that belongs to them, the Church, due

to the lack of priests, will not be able to assure even the most indispensable ministry in many places and fields of Christian life.

Already we have achieved marvellous things: lay people leading Christian communities in Hudson Bay, the ministry of catechists among Laotians and in Mexico, the laity presiding over prayer sessions in the compounds of South Africa, sessions for the formation of Christian leaders at Saint Paul University in Ottawa... To these accomplishments we must add all the work expended by Oblates to develop ecclesial base communities in Latin America and elsewhere, as well as the support Oblates are giving to Christian lay movements like Marriage Encounter.

The need to promote the ministries of the laity is considered so urgent that, in certain localities, an Oblate who is not willing to associate lay people with his work will not be named pastor or be put in charge of an important work.

In return, we discover among many of these laity the desire for a more intense spiritual life, and even, among some, that of sharing our own religious life more closely. The Holy Spirit is

certainly present in these different currents that are sweeping across the Church. It is up to us to discern this, and to cooperate with his action as much as possible.

### *Personal conversion*

Finally, here is a third strong concern which is expressed from plenary session to plenary session: the need for personal and community conversion, and for a greater authenticity in our religious life. How can we evangelize today if we no longer have credibility? And how can we have credibility if we only half-live the Gospel values we preach? For instance, if prayer is absent from our lives, how can we be a presence of God among men? And if our option in favour of the poor does not include a greater sharing and the choice of a life-style that is more poor, what fruit can it yield?

Several years ago now, the regretted Father Maurice Lefebvre, killed in the service of the poor in Bolivia, remarked in this regard: « Because we live a lie, the truths we bring make no headway ». If the Congregation is to bear wit-

ness, indeed, if it is to survive, it needs men of prayer, men completely given to Jesus Christ, men who are really poor.

In regard to poverty — to mention but this one point — it is essential that there be among us some who are truly poor, that there be more and more of them (for there are some already!), and that they be so voluntarily and simply, joyful, because they have heard the call of Jesus, thanks to their contact with the world of the poor. These fellow brothers we ought to support and assist.

More and more the Congregation is hearing this call to conversion and to the reform of its life. Some efforts are being made to respond to it, but they remain somewhat modest and limited, and the road to be taken is not always sufficiently clear for us to set out upon it. It is my fervent hope that the next Chapter will bring us a little more light in this matter and give us new impetus. We must pray very much for this intention.

It will soon be Christmas. Christ will come into our midst. He will again invite us to follow him with joy, in truth, in love, in service to our

brothers. May he help us enter fully into the mainstreams that are flowing across the Congregation, namely, concern for the poor, openness to the ministries of the laity, reform of our lives!

*Apostles of certainty*

As a last word and as a New Year's greeting, may I repeat the wish that Archbishop Frank Hurley of Anchorage (Alaska) addressed to the Oblates at the joint meeting: In a changing world filled with uncertainty and doubt, be the apostles of certainty, of the certainty founded on Jesus Christ and on the depth of your faith in Jesus Christ!

## 10. RECEIVING AND FORMING CANDIDATES

Will anyone succeed us? - The shortage of formators. -  
What people expect of a priest.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, May 21, 1980.*

We are now only a few months away from the General Chapter. Its preparation is already quite well advanced, thanks to the work of the Precapitular Commission and to the excellent cooperation of the Provinces. For this, a heartfelt thanks. I invite you one last time to intensify yours prayers for the success of this Chapter. The Oblates as a whole expect a lot from it.

*Will anyone succeed us?*

A missionary who has been devoting himself for over forty years to the Eskimos of the Far

North wrote to me on April 17: « We are thinking of the Chapter almost as much as you and the Capitulars are. May God and also Mary Immaculate help you! Thank you, thank you for the new Constitutions and Rules... I pray that they will be quickly approved by the Chapter. They are filled with substantial nourishment for many young Oblates! ». With a certain touch of sadness he added: « Will anyone succeed us? You have seen us... you know the condition of our people and our affairs: think of us, should there be some volunteers for the North. »

I hear this appeal coming from pretty well everywhere in the Congregation. It comes from Oblates; and it also comes from bishops and churches we serve in our work.

From April 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, I visited our fellow Oblates in Scandinavia: 3 Scandinavians, 1 Belgian, 7 Poles, 20 Americans. They are doing splendid work. They are a true presence of the Church, a missionary presence recognized and appreciated in a milieu where secularism and religious indifference prevail. The Bishop of Oslo came to tell me and the Provincial of Poland how much he needed priests and missionaries.

*The shortage of formators*

Earlier, in February and March, I visited one Province (Sri Lanka) and several Delegations of Asia (Thailand, India, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan). Thanks be to God, there are vocations in most of these countries. The Province of Sri Lanka, which is responsible for four of these Delegations, has shown great zeal for serving and evangelizing the poor and, at the same time, a noteworthy concern for furthering and fostering local vocations. There are already ten scholastics in India, three of whom are young Fathers; eight scholastics or students in Bangladesh, one of whom is a priest in temporary vows; and some aspirants in Pakistan. These are admirable results, filled with hope for the future. But everywhere the Scholastics as well as the Fathers said to me: « We absolutely must have formators, and formators with experience! Alone, we are not able to carry on ».

I will be relaying this appeal to the Chapter, but I want the whole Congregation to hear it now. There was a time, not so long ago, when we had many formators in our novitiates and scholasticates. Today, many of those Oblates are in-

volved in pastoral ministry. Would some of them who are English-speaking and — if at all possible — members of the British Commonwealth, be willing to give several years of their life to the service of these young Oblates in Madras, Dacca, or Karachi? They will suffer and be deprived of much, but they will also experience in these places a warm welcome and a deep joy, the joy of working to establish the Congregation in young Churches that are filled with promise. I will gratefully receive the names of those who would be ready to answer this call.

### *What people expect of a priest*

What do people in these countries expect of a priest, of the candidate we are to guide during the entire time of formation? In Asia, the priest is « the man of God ». This is how people see him. In the Catholic religious and priest they expect to find what they see in the Buddhist or Hindu monk or in the imam of Islam.

In Dacca one evening, the Archbishop, summing up for us the conclusions reached during an exchange about the priest in Asia, told us that the

people expected three things of a priest: that he have a true experience of God, that he be interiorly free and detached from all things, and that exteriorly he lead a mortified life. The Preface to our Constitutions and Rules does not ask anything else of us: it only adds apostolic zeal and daring.

I make the same appeal for Oblate formators in favour of the scholasticate of Zaire. In Kinshasa we have 18 French-speaking scholastics and practically no one steadily to accompany and guide them. Furthermore, there are 9 novices in training at Ifwanzondo. Would there be one or two French-speaking competent Oblates who are willing to offer themselves as a help to these scholastics?

Today, May 21, is the one hundred and nineteenth anniversary of our holy Founder's death. I presided at the giving of the first obedience to the five finishing Fathers of the Province of Italy. Ceremonies like this are a source of hope and joy. May Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, whose spirit is ever alive among us, renew in each of us the grace of our vocation!

## 11. THE 1980 GENERAL CHAPTER

Vocations. - Our response to the poor. - The challenge of the new Constitutions. - A Chapter of hope.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, December 8, 1980.*

We are at the end of the Chapter. Yesterday evening, in the presence of all the Capitulars, I received the perpetual profession of six scholastics: three from Italy, one from South Africa, one from Spain and one from Poland.

My heart was filled with the experience we had just lived. I had in mind the whole Congregation, all its members, those who feel completely at home in it, those who suffer, those who little by little are moving away from it. I also thought very much about the Congregation's future.

### *Vocations*

The ceremony reminded us that vocations must always remain a priority if, as a Congregation, we want to stay young, creative, daring, acting with the dynamic power of faith in a style unceasingly renewed.

The Congregation's future will be that of the young, of the novices and scholastics of today, of all the young men whom the Lord will send us. This future, however, is also in your hands, in the hands of all the Oblates of today, whatever their age or their ministry may be. Our task is to transmit to future generations, in all its purity and with a great spirit of openness and welcome, the heritage we have received from those who went before us.

### *Our response to the poor*

Present-day Oblates hear the appeals of the poor in our day, of those who are far away, of the most abandoned, and they want to respond to them. As we have experienced it throughout the entire Chapter, in every region of the world their

eyes are wide open to the needs of people. There is no lack in generosity. But we do lack numbers: our ranks are becoming thinner each year. We also lack unity to some degree; likewise, on the part of some, the firmness and assurance that come from faith. Like Peter on the waters of the lake, they look too much at the wind and the waves and not enough at Christ; they are losing their foothold and are afraid.

### *The challenge of the new Constitutions*

The new Constitutions were at the very heart of this Chapter. They were discussed and again debated: each read the articles in the light of his personal experience and in view of the needs, opportunities and appeals of his own milieu. There are differences of mentality, religious sensitivity and theological outlook among us. As long as they do not contradict the Oblate ideal but rather serve to enrich it and make it universal, we must know how to recognize and accept these differences.

In an atmosphere of work and peace, of frankness and freedom, of cooperation and prayer, the Capitulars voted, with near unanimity, the new

text of the *Constitutions and Rules*. In a few months, I hope, after the approval of the Holy See, you will receive this text. It is a challenge to all of us, the challenge of the future.

Are we able to live together and help each other mutually to live better and deeper the apostolic ideal which the Founder bequeathed to us?

Are we able mutually to support and encourage each other to respond with greater zeal to the appeal of today's poor, to answer as the Founder would, with faith, daring, and an ardent love for Christ and for the Church?

Are we able to accept our differences and to put them at the service of the Gospel, after having submitted them to community discernment made in the light of the *Constitutions and Rules*?

Will the radical character of the Gospel, the prophetic quality of religious life, living the life of the poor, fidelity unto death of the commitments made, the proclamation to modern man of Jesus Christ and the salvation and full liberation he brings... will all these things be mere words for us, or a living reality which daily grows still more alive and real?

By taking up this challenge, by answering all these questions personally and in community, we will together be building the future.

### *A Chapter of hope*

The Chapter of 1980 was a Chapter of hope. The years ahead will translate this hope into life. The Constitutions need to be assimilated, interiorized. Only then will they be a source and a way of life. May 1981 be for us the year of interiorizing the Constitutions!

The spirit which animates them is that of the Founder: « to identify with Christ » (C. 2), « to cooperate with him » (C. 2), « to follow Jesus in a radical way » (C. 12), « to proclaim Christ to the most abandoned » (C. 5), « to bear witness to God's holiness and justice » (C. 9), « to listen attentively for the Father's voice so that we may spend ourselves without reserve to accomplish his plan of salvation » (C. 24), « to be pilgrims, walking with Jesus in faith, hope and love » (C. 30).

Young men are, and will always be, interested

in a life-ideal like this. But they demand that it be genuinely lived by those who profess it, and not that it be merely written down in their Rule Book. While we may not all be directly involved in vocation work, we are, all of us, by the witness we bear, partly responsible for young men coming to us or avoiding us. Different factors are relevant in this matter; nevertheless, a Congregation which ceases to attract vocations must always question itself about its manner of life and about the quality and dynamism of its missionary action.

You have all prayed very much for the success of the Chapter; from my heart, I thank you. Let me assure you again of my deep affection and availability, of my desire to help you and be helped by you better to live the Oblate ideal.

Today we celebrate the feast of our Mother, the Immaculate Virgin Mary. In thanking her for the love she bears us, I want to reaffirm the Congregation's attachment and fidelity to her. May she obtain for us the grace to live the coming feast of the Saviour's birth with joy, and to make the coming year a real year of renewal!

In the General Council's name, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## 12. INTERIORIZING THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

What are we going to do with this gift? - The importance of the present moment. - Knowing the text well. - Interiorizing the Constitutions. - A second conversion.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, February 17, 1981.*

February 17 reminds us of the approval of our first *Constitutions* in 1826. I want to take advantage of this feast and reflect, together with you, on the spirit in which we ought to welcome and receive the *Constitutions and Rules* which the 1980 General Chapter has given us. On December 3, after the voting had taken place, the Capitulars wrote to you: « This is an intensely moving moment. There is an awareness of a gift, a special grace from the Lord... ».

*What are we going to do with this gift?*

We are now in possession of this gift. What are we going to do with it? For it is a gift which challenges and puts us to the test.

The members of the General Council have been the first, I believe, to hear this challenge. It completely colours their present working session. How are we to live the *Constitutions and Rules* today? and how can we further their being lived?

I remember a reflection made by Father Deschâtelets when he recalled the beginnings of his term as Superior General in 1947. « At that time », he wrote in his *Mémoires*, « we had so many solutions to give to so many problems. We never felt that our decisions were not being received or that they were accepted with regret: quite the contrary. There were no problems of authority or obedience at that time. *The Rule decided everything: we had only to refer to it on each occasion...* » (*Mémoires*, ch. V, p. 33).

Even if we were to indulge in day-dreaming, even if we consider the quasi-unanimous vote of the Chapter, I am not at all sure that the situation is that simple today. But I am sure of one thing:

for us and for those who come after us, the *Constitutions and Rules* are already — and will be even more clearly so once they have been approved by the Church — the concrete road of the Gospel, the Oblate way of living the Gospel today.

It is in them and through them that we will discover Jesus Christ and learn to love people, especially the poor, as our Founder has asked us to.

There is a challenge here that no Oblate can escape if he wants « to save his life », if he wants to live it fully and not « lose it » (cf. *Mark* 8: 35). As far back as 1821 — and thus prior to the approval of February 17, 1826 — the Founder wrote to Father Bourrelier: « Remember that we no longer belong to ourselves...; we belong to the Rule which ought to govern us; we can belong to God only through it... » (*Letter to Bourrelier*, August 27, 1821).

### *The importance of the present moment*

« The Congregation is at a turning point in its history », we said at the Chapter. « It shows signs of renewal but also of great fatigue. To enter re-

newal fully and to regain the clear vision and missionary thrust of the Founder, it must decide to go beyond itself and its internal difficulties, and to take a step forward. It has to kindle afresh the gift that God has given it, a gift which is not a spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power and love and mastery of self (cf. *2 Timothy* 1:6-7). It has to renew its radical choice of Jesus Christ and its mission of evangelizing the world. To this end, the sincere and unanimous acceptance of the new Constitutions would be a grace for the Institute as was the beatification of its Founder » (*Report of the Superior General to the 1980 General Chapter*, no. 54).

As a matter of fact, we are experiencing the beginnings of this grace. Through the voice of the Capitulars, the Congregation has accepted the new *Constitutions and Rules*. It has accepted them sincerely, in thanksgiving and with joy, well aware that a future filled with promise for all Oblates is in them.

The Chapter experience strikes me as being, on the level of the Institute, the equivalent to the first profession in the life of a novice. A novice is happy to make vows, has been preparing

himself at length for it, and pronounces them with generosity and joy; but he has not yet experienced the full import of the gift he is making, and he does not yet know all that being faithful to the commitments he is undertaking will cost him.

It is only with time, with the passing of years, that this gift will completely pervade his being, transform him and make him the religious he has chosen to be.

It is the same for the new *Constitutions*. A long period of time is beginning which, in a sense, is even more important than the Chapter. It has been called « the period of interiorization », a space of time during which the *Constitutions and Rules* are progressively to become an integral part of our lives.

### *Knowing the text well*

First of all, we must know them well: we must read them, re-read them and meditate their content. We must not allow ourselves to be put off by this word or that literary expression which we may not like: rather, beyond the word or

expression, we must try to grasp the meaning and hear the call of God addressed to us through the medium of these words.

I know that different aids and various means of facilitating this knowledge are being prepared within the Congregation: commentaries, retreats, prayer and meditation guides... This is excellent and I wholeheartedly encourage it. We will never know too well this text which is to inspire and guide our lives.

This reading of the *Constitutions* must be done with love, with the intent of allowing ourselves to be imbued and nourished by them. We must also read them with perseverance, not hesitating to return to this or that passage which may relate more to us or to read them again in order to stress certain topics: what do they say to me about Jesus Christ, the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, about the world of the poor, the life of prayer, preaching the Word of God, poverty in my life, about love for my brothers...?

It is in this way that, little by little, we will come to know the Constitutions. At the same time — and this is essential if we wish really to know them — we must make the effort of

putting them into practice. Only when we have given ourselves to him do we really know Jesus Christ. If the *Constitutions* are to become a book of life, we have to live them. Otherwise they will remain only a dead letter.

### *Interiorizing the Constitutions*

The intellect may very well accept them, the will may indeed accept them, but the heart, too, must accept them. They must penetrate to the sensitive and instinctive levels of our life. Only then can we truthfully say that we have « interiorized » the *Constitutions*.

As long as the most intimate part of our being has not been touched by them, has not been transformed by the love of Jesus Christ, by a concerned awareness for the poor and a sense of justice, by an authentic devotion to the Blessed Virgin, by the spirit of prayer and of community, by the integration of the vows into our very selves... we will not have reached the goal, we will be only on the road towards it. The objective of the *Constitutions* as a book of life is to create a new life in us, a new being, an evangelical and

Oblate being, the apostolic man of whom the Founder speaks and who spontaneously acts and reacts in an Oblate way according to the Founder's spirit.

### *A second conversion*

In this task we are not starting from absolute zero. We have been living the Oblate life for ten, twenty, thirty or forty years. Nevertheless, it is precisely in our Oblate life that we are today being called to a second conversion. A second conversion is often more painful than the first because it penetrates to greater depths, draws us out of attitudes and habits that are more firmly rooted, and reveals to us an attachment to our own self and will that we may never have suspected. If we want to put the *Constitutions and Rules* into serious practice, we will be called to make choices, difficult choices, not only in regard to our works but, first of all, in regard to our way of seeing things and manner of living.

On this February 17, we thank God for our 155 years of official existence in the Church.

We can also thank him for the graces received at the last General Chapter.

May the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of the Oblates, give us all the courage to accomplish and complete the work she knew how to begin so well during the course of the Chapter!

### **13. THE VOCATION APOSTOLATE**

God continues to call. - Each one of us has a responsibility. - Have faith in our vocation. - Openness to new ministries.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, May 21, 1981.*

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, I had the good fortune of taking part in the International Congress on Vocations. This Congress had been organized by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and brought together representatives from nearly all countries. It dealt with the pastoral effort for vocations in the various local Churches; its purpose was to take stock of the situation over the last ten years, and to promote a new thrust into the future.

As I took part in this Congress, I had in mind

the entire Church, what the world expects from her in terms of ministries at the service of people and of witness to consecrated life. At the same time, thoughts of the Congregation, of the many appeals being addressed to us and of our vocation situation were constantly with me.

*God continues to call*

The spirit of the Congress was one of optimism. It manifested a great awareness of the major challenges that today's world presents to us. More than ever this same world needs mediators and witnesses. God continues calling men and women to follow him. Our world, and especially the youth, though often disposed to welcome Christ, experiences greater difficulty in relating itself to the Church and her institutions. It dreams of a Church that would exclusively be a service of love, mercy, sharing, and communion. Its faith crisis is often a credibility crisis, and we ourselves are in large part responsible for it because of our infidelities and the weakness of our witness.

In places where the Church has made a clear option for the poor and for a life-style of poverty,

where she suffers for justice, where she prays and gives an example of unity in faith, of missionary commitment and community sharing, vocations are generally more numerous.

The attempt on the Holy Father's life, which took place two days after the opening of the Congress and only a few steps away from our meeting room, made the power of witnessing all the more eloquent. « United with Christ, Priest and Victim, I offer my sufferings for the Church and for the world » (*Message of May 17, 1981*). We are looking for witnesses who are willing to give their life for their faith and out of love for their brothers.

It seems to me that the spirit of the Congress illustrated our own outlook very well. In general, we are more optimistic than we were eight or ten years ago. In some Provinces, as in Poland, Zaire, Italy, vocations are relatively numerous; in several others, a slight increase is evident. Everywhere, however, — and this is the most important element — interest as well as confidence has resumed, and there now exists a real determination to do something. We are « bestirring » ourselves more, as the Founder had urged a Father in Ire-

land in 1856 (*Letter to Father G. Richard*, April 17, 1856).

Our new *Constitutions* give us excellent orientations in this area (CC. 51-53 and RR. 46-48). I invite you to re-read them, and also to read the Congress conclusions when these have been published. Here, I will limit myself only to three or four observations.

*Each one of us has a responsibility*

And first of all, pastoral efforts for vocations is a ministry addressed as a challenge to all of us. « The problem of vocations is the fundamental problem of the Church », the Pope said at the opening of the Congress. It concerns us all; and we can affirm, without any fear of being mistaken, that the vocation dimension ought to be present in all the ministries of the Church. « Life generates life » (*ibid.*).

A first attitude to be cultivated is this: we must be open to all the vocations of ministry and consecrated life in the Church: priesthood and permanent diaconate, contemplative life and missionary commitment, secular institute and religious

congregation. We must be disposed to promote all of them, according to our means. What matters is that each person who contacts us will through us be able to hear the call God is addressing to him/her and be helped in discerning it and in responding to it.

*Have faith in our vocation*

The second attitude deals with Oblate vocations. We must have a deep faith and a great fidelity to the charism that is proper to us. The charism of evangelizing the poor in the Oblate manner remains currently valid. It is not by covering up this charism or by watering it down that we will have vocations; rather, it will be by living this charism fully and openly with its Gospel totality and Marian spirit, its community life and fidelity to the Church, its complete commitment to serving the poor and the most abandoned. It will also be by proposing it to people, especially to the young, discreetly, to be sure, but nevertheless without being afraid to invite them to « Come and see! ». As it has been said, they may be too young for a commitment, but they

are not too young to think about it. Some need only a clear invitation from us to begin seriously thinking about it.

### *Openness to new ministries*

A third attitude is that of openness to the new ministries in the Church. During the Congress, I often entertained the following question: « How can we assure the Christian life and sacramental practice among small and isolated ethnic groups who, after more than one hundred years of missionary activity and in spite of repeated efforts, have not succeeded in giving themselves a local clergy? ». I was thinking especially of the Indian peoples and Inuit of Northern Canada.

In a number of places the option has been taken of promoting the ministries of the laity: catechists, community leaders, prayer leaders, ministers for Holy Communion, and permanent deacons. I want wholeheartedly to encourage this line of action, and not only for the Canadian North. Without delay, we must do all we can within the scope of today's possibilities. Future solutions will flow from the initiatives we take

at the present time, no matter how limited these may appear to be.

Before concluding, I would like to greet in a special way the scholastics, the novices, and those aspiring to Oblate life. The future of the Congregation is in their hands; moreover, their influence is considerable in the pastoral effort for vocations. Not only do they bear within themselves the aspirations of today's world, but they have also discovered a reply to these aspirations in the values of the Oblate life. Not having experienced the changes and tensions that their elders have known, they are internally more free. They approach the future with a new outlook and with « great desires », just as the Founder did before them. May they find the understanding, the missionary daring and the religious fervour they have come to seek in our midst!

## 14. ZAIRE: A RAPIDLY GROWING PROVINCE

African vocations. - Letting our mission form us. - Believing in people. - Believing in God's grace.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, October 1, 1981.*

Today, as I offer you my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I would like to tell you about my recent visit to Zaire and the impressions it made on me.

Last September 8 the Vice-Province celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oblates' arrival. Former missionaries came to take part in these celebrations. Others were also there to represent the Provinces of Belgium-North, Belgium-South, Holland and Lesotho, as well as the Delegation of West Transvaal. Father Thomas Manyeli, General Councillor for Africa, was also present; and so

was Father Yvon Beaudoin, a specialist on Bishop de Mazenod, who preached the retreat to the novices and scholastics.

### *African vocations*

In the evening of September 7, fifteen young men — five of them from Cameroon-Chad — began their novitiate; and on September 8, thirty-seven made their vows, two of whom made perpetual vows. A very open and friendly 3-day Provincial Congress followed. It brought together pretty well all the members of the Vice-Province, of whom more than half today are novices or scholastics.

It was a marvellous celebration. It was especially the spectacle of an Oblate Province being born anew and waxing strong, giving new sons — native sons — to the Congregation, a Province that is getting younger as it grows in years. Something like this is as beautiful as hope! Events like these help us to understand the mystery of Christmas better. Christ came, dwelt incarnate in our midst, experienced suffering and death; and then he rose and gave life to many.

*Letting our mission form us*

On the plane, returning to Rome, I pondered all these things and what they mean for us Oblates. We are often wanting in our faith. We lack faith in people and we lack faith in the efficacy of God's grace. If we were really willing to allow ourselves to be shaped by our mission, to be evangelized by the people to whom we are sent, we would be amazed. God's grace isn't any the less powerful, nor is there a lesser generosity in the heart of a Zairian or a Bolivian than there is in that of a Frenchman or a Ceylonese.

Between two meeting-sessions, a mission veteran who is still on the job confided to me: « At the outset of my life here, I would never have believed I would see what I am seeing today. I am overwhelmed with admiration! ».

In the beginning, the Vice-Province of Zaire experienced quite a rapid expansion. Thereafter, it lived through a period of great suffering: three of its Fathers were killed, most of its missions were pillaged and destroyed... During this time of trial, the missionaries and their few Zairian confreres held firm. They did not lose courage, and the faithful supported them. Little by little

everything began again, humbly, in poverty, and in faith.

A Christian from Idiofa, seeing Bishop Tous-saint again after eleven years, was struck by his tall stature and remarked, « You have become like three men! ». I don't know if this is true in the physical domain; in the spiritual and Oblate realm, however, I can vouch that it is true for many missionaries everywhere in the world. The mission makes Oblates more simple and it brings them closer to God.

Marie of the Incarnation already noted this in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as she observed grace at work in a Jesuit in Canada. « God's action », she wrote, « has completely transformed him... He has become quite simple, fully renounced and happy at heart... He is not attached to anything in this world ». And she added, « This is, in my humble opinion, a reward the Lord wants to give those who have served him in their neighbour, a service which entails great fatigue and in which a person is nearly always outside of himself... » (*Letter of September 27, 1644*). This is still happening today.

*Believing in people*

To succeed in our missionary work, we need to believe strongly in the people whom we are evangelizing. They are our brothers, and they bear within themselves all the potential for good which is in ourselves, perhaps even more. Only trust and love can make this potential grow. We build someone up in the measure that we love him and have confidence in him.

This is, after all, the first gift that a person expects from his brother. To doubt someone is the beginning of that person's destruction. This does not mean that we ignore a person's limitations. We know there will be setbacks and deceptions. Jesus experienced a good many among the Twelve, and he experiences the same with us. All the Provinces experience them. This fact, however, must never hinder us from trusting people. Furthermore, placing our confidence in people also means trusting God who is at work in them.

It was good to hear young men of Zaire say so simply, « Continue giving us your confidence. You must not think that we are joining the Oblates out of a desire for social promotion or to

further our studies. We are joining because we believe that God is calling us and because we want, as you do, to consecrate our lives to evangelizing the poor. Just like you do, we are counting on God's grace to persevere in chastity, poverty and obedience ».

### *Believing in God's grace*

Being a missionary is impossible if we do not believe that God is at work in the world. He is at work everywhere, but perhaps more manifestly so among the poor who experience hunger, injustice, misery and oppression.

When Jesus came for the first time, those who recognized and welcomed him were first of all poor people, people with a simple heart not hardened by attachment to riches and to power. These men and women were waiting for a Saviour. Grace is often more operative in them: it meets with less opposition in them. When children play the flute, they are able to dance; and when they intone a dirge, they are not afraid to weep (cf. *Luke 7:31-33*). The Scribes and Pharisees could not do this.

Why is the Christian faith today experiencing a resurgence of life in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia when it is weakening in many countries of Europe and in North America? We can offer sociological and psychological explanations for this, but there are also other reasons of another order which only a man of faith can understand.

It will soon be Christmas. My wish for all is: Hope and Faith. Have within yourselves the certainty that faith gives, and openly live, in love and simplicity, the things in which you believe. With St. Paul I say to you: « You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Of these I myself am the worst » (*1 Timothy* 1:15).

Have faith in Jesus Christ, be aware of your own limitations, and you will have the capacity to trust people enough to be able to cooperate effectively in their salvation.

## 15. THE OFFICIAL APPROBATION OF OUR NEW CONSTITUTIONS

Modifications that were made. - Our attitude in receiving the new Constitutions. - The Church's approval. - Time to act.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, June 27, 1982.*

When you read this letter, we shall likely have received the official decree approving our new Constitutions. On June 17, in fact, Father Michael O'Reilly, Procurator to the Holy See, after his last consultation with Archbishop Mayer, O. S. B., Secretary of the Congregation for Religious, was invited to send the revised and amended text to the Congregation for its final approbation. The text was sent yesterday.

The English, Spanish and French versions will

be printed at the Oblate press in Richelieu, Canada. The versions in other languages will be produced in Europe. It is my hope that you will receive the book in early 1983.

At this point I would like to consider with you what it means for our Institute to have its Constitutions approved by the Holy See and what our attitude should be on receiving this grace. But first, on behalf of the Congregation, let me thank Fathers Michael O'Reilly and Paul Sion: since the Chapter and under the General Council's direction they have been unremittingly studying and revising the text to make it comply with the requirements of the Holy See, while staying faithful to the Chapter's decisions. They have succeeded with wonderful competence and patience. Our thanks to them both.

### *Modifications that were made*

Later on, *OMI Documentation* will spell out in detail the changes requested by Holy See. Here and now, let me give you just an outline.

In regard to the content of the text, « the *Congresso* of the S. C. for Religious and Secular

Institutes appreciated the quality of the work accomplished, careful to emphasize the basic elements of religious life » (*Letter of Cardinal Pironio to Father Jetté, March 25, 1982*). No substantial changes were called for. On the other hand, some modifications were requested and a certain number of Rules have been inserted in the Constitutions, with the final result: 125 articles in the Constitutions instead of 110, and 154 Rules instead of 171.

Several of the changes improve the text, particularly when clarifying articles that had remained too vague; the changes are often closely dependent on norms of the new Code of Canon Law.

The most important points underscored by the Congregation — it proceeds in the same way with the other Institutes — are the following:

1. Our Congregation's special character as a clerical institute of pontifical right.
2. The communitarian character of the Congregation as an apostolic body and its strong bonds with the Church: whence the need to discern and to receive a mission for all activity which commits the Congregation and the Church.

3. The necessary stability for a certain number of spiritual exercises that characterize an Institute: whence the transfer of these exercises from the Rules to the Constitutions.
4. The essential exactness needed in government and formation structures, this to conform with the norms of universal law.

### *Our attitude in receiving the new Constitutions*

Prior to writing this letter, I re-read Bishop de Mazenod's Circular of August 2, 1853. The first Constitutions had been modified by the Chapter of 1850. They had received Roman approval and the Founder was sending the new text to the Oblates.

In this Circular we do not perceive the Founder's enthusiasm of 1826; rather, we sense his spirit of faith and the will for renewal both characteristic of a mature person. « All I hope for », he wrote, « is that this second promulgation of our laws will kindle in the heart of each one of you new fervour, that it bring about a kind of renewal of your youth... ».

May this also be our attitude: a sincere ac-

ceptance in faith, with a firm will to renew ourselves and to face the future with a new thrust.

Outwardly such approbation may seem something very human, something like obtaining an indult: in a particular instance a desired objective may be reached more easily by means of one consultant than by another at another time.

This is one aspect. The Church is incarnated in persons, as are all religious families. We must go beyond this aspect. Faith assures us that Providence is at work through all these human mediations.

### *The Church's approval*

It is essential for a religious family to be recognized by the Church, for it is the Church who « constitutes » us, as the Founder put it; it is the Church who gives us our « mission », who sends us as an apostolic corps to evangelize the world.

Father de Mazenod's diary and letters reveal that he greatly valued this Roman approbation. He prized it highly, to be sure, for whatever freedom it would give him in his dealings with diocesan

bishops; but more so for a deeper reason: to have some sort of divine guarantee for the work undertaken and the form of life he was offering his confreres.

For a religious family the issues at stake are substantial; it invites men to leave everything, to give up establishing themselves in this world in order to commit themselves in a radical way and within a group to the following of Christ. In such a project, each one stakes his own life. Who will guarantee the Gospel authenticity of the way that is proposed? Furthermore, if new formulations and important changes occur within the Institute in the course of history, who will guarantee the authenticity of these changes?

Before one can offer men a particular way of evangelical life, it is necessary that there be signs from God, discernment and the Church's official confirmation.

Among these signs of God we can mention the success and development of an Institute over a sufficiently long period of time. That is the sign Gamaliel refers to in the Acts of the Apostles: « If their purpose or activity is human in its origins, it will destroy itself. If, on the other hand,

it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them... » (*Acts* 5:38-39).

Another sign is the virtue and holiness of the members. On various occasions the Founder came back to this point; for instance, after Father Arnoux' death: « We now have four in heaven, that's already a fine community...; we shall receive our share of this fullness if we make ourselves worthy of them by our faithfulness in constantly practising this Rule that helped them to arrive where they are. I believe their saintly death to be a great confirmation of these Rules, which have thereby received the new seal of divine approval » (*Letters to Father Courtès, July 22, 1828; to the Bishop of Grenoble, July 21, 1828; to Father Courtès, November 15, 1841*).

On this score the beatification of an Institute's Founder is important, as well as the public acknowledgment of the holiness of certain of its members in various ministries: the foreign missions, preaching, commitment to justice, the life and activities of Brothers, etc.

Still another positive sign is unanimity in approving and receiving a text of the Constitutions,

studied and voted on in an atmosphere of peace, prayer and freedom.

All these signs are conducive to discernment; they prompt us to recognize the hand of God in a foundation or in a text of the Constitutions; by themselves, however, they do not suffice for « constituting » a religious family or for giving official worth to its Constitutions. Still needed is the official confirming or approval from the Church by responsible authorities.

A religious Institute is more than a private affair. Within the Church, it is a public school of charity, a school wherein members employ themselves — by specific means such as the vows, common life, prayer and missionary activity — in the practice of evangelical love. A charism is incarnated in an institution, it commits the Church, its Constitutions commit the Church; that is why they must be approved by the Church.

A personal charism already benefits from receiving external verification from someone qualified and competent; all the more so do the charism of an Institute and its formulation in the Constitutions stand to gain from being verified and confirmed by the Church.

That is what prompted the Founder to write on the day after the first approbation, February 18, 1826: « No mere trifles, these are no longer simple regulations, no ordinary pious directions; they are Rules that have been approved by the Church after the most minute scrutiny. They have been judged holy and eminently capable of leading those who embraced them to their destination. They have become the property of the Church that adopted them... We are thus constituted... Be aware of your dignity... In the name of God let us be saints » (*Letter to Father Tempier, February 18, 1826*).

It is the Church therefore that « constitutes » us what we are. She vouches to the faithful for the Gospel authenticity of the life-project we offer them.

### *Time to act*

With this approbation, one more step is taken in committing ourselves to a new phase and moving resolutely toward the future. The time of discussing the letter of the law is over; it is now time to act, « the time to apply calmly and per-

severingly the revised and approved Constitutions is at hand » (*John Paul II to the Religious of France, June 2, 1980*).

Strengthened by this approbation, let us all renew ourselves in the spirit of our vocation, « a spirit of total dedication for the glory of God, the service of the Church and the salvation of souls » (*Letter to Father Tempier, August 22, 1817*). Let us head into the future filled with great desires, with unshakable hope and courage, eyes fixed on the vastness of the apostolic field opening up before us.

May Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, our Founder and Father, obtain this grace for us!

## 16. THE OBLATE: SERVANT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Servants of God's People. - Fidelity. - Availability. -  
Simplicity. - The Pope's encouragement.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Rome, October 19, 1982.

Last August 6, when he was ending his second term, Father Jean-Paul Aubry, Provincial of Manitoba-Keewatin, wrote to me as follows:

*I am grateful to God for having given me strength and light for the task which I fulfilled in the Congregation's name and out of love for her and her mission. It is God, it is Jesus Christ whom I wanted to serve in all this. Servi inutiles sumus reminds us not to forget the Master of the vineyard. Besides, he has allowed my illness and prolonged convalescence as a constant reminder of*

*this. I am not bothering myself overly much with wondering what I shall be doing afterwards. God has his calendar, and in his own time he will show his will to me.*

Father died suddenly on August 13. I received his letter in Rome four days later. It is a letter that has made me reflect a great deal.

### *Servants of God's People*

It reminded me of several texts of the Founder. « Oh! How beautiful is St. Paul's statement: *Nos autem servos vestros per Iesum!* If meditated a little, these words forestall all complaining. We will never be tempted to say, 'That is enough!' and even less, 'That is too much!'... » (*Letter to Father Vincens, June 2, 1859*). « Let us not forget those beautiful words of St. Paul: *Nos autem servos vestros per Iesum*. With such an attitude, we can put up with every nuisance and endure all difficulties » (*Diary, September 8, 1838*). « Whoever we may be, we are useless servants in the Father's family household. Our activity, our services have value only inasmuch

as we do what the Master asks of us » (*Letter to Father Mille, May 30, 1832*).

It especially reminded me of our vocation in the Church. We are the servants of Jesus Christ; in Jesus and through Jesus, we are servants of God's People.

The many celebrations this year of the second centenary of Eugene de Mazenod's birth, the study sessions held in Ottawa and in Rome on this occasion, the official approval of our Constitutions last July 3 — all so many events which fix our attention on the richness and requirements of this mission!

What does the Church, what does the world expect from the Oblate who is a servant of the Gospel?

### *Fidelity*

First of all, they expect fidelity. In a sense, our mission is greater than we are. The salvation we preach does not originate with us: it comes from God.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, when the appointed*

*time came, was sent by the Father and filled with the Spirit « to bring the good news to the poor... ». He called men to become disciples to share in his mission... Blessed Eugene de Mazenod heard that call. Burning with love for Jesus and his Church..., he chose to become « the servant and priest of the poor... » (Foreword to the Constitutions).*

In us the people see Jesus Christ and they see the Church. They are not looking for a teaching we invent but for that of the Gospel which the Church hands down. St. Paul says that the only thing required of a servant of Christ, of a steward of God's mysteries « is that he be found trustworthy » (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). He especially insists on this in his letters to Timothy. We know how much Bishop de Mazenod pondered these two letters.

Fidelity in regard to doctrine: « To seek out new ways for the Word of God to reach their hearts often calls for daring; to present Gospel demands in all clarity should never intimidate us » (C. 8). Let us do this « in communion with the pastors whom the Lord has given to his people », accepting « loyally, with an enlight-

ened faith, the guidance and teachings of the successors of Peter and the Apostles » (C. 6).

Equal fidelity in regard to our life: « to fight, even unto death, for the greater glory of the most holy and sublime Name » (*Preface of the Constitutions*). The good servant does not abandon the field of combat. He knows in whom he has placed his trust. His perseverance has a prophetic role: it is a « sign of Christ's fidelity to the Father » (C. 29) and an inspiration to faithfulness for those who have their own « struggles and difficulties » to face (R. 13).

### *Availability*

The good servant does not live for himself; he is a man for others. Availability is an essential value in his life. It is usually by a person's availability that we measure the depth of his gift of self. Availability is indispensable for the survival and growth of an apostolic corps such as ours.

At the last Chapter I recalled how necessary this virtue is in regard to accepting the responsibility of authority within the Congregation. This is just as true in regard to the apostolic

mission of the Institute. In the Church's eyes, it is first of all the Congregation who commits herself. When the issue concerns works of definite importance, the Bishops ask — and rightly so — that the Congregation make a commitment. « We fulfill our mission in and through the community to which we belong » (C. 37; also C. 11 and R. 1).

This supposes the consultation and participation of all concerning the orientation of our apostolic activities (CC. 26, 72; RR. 1, 18, 19, 83); and afterwards, once the decisions have been made, that all support them loyally (CC. 26, 72), and are completely available to cooperate in implementing them (C. 26; R. 83).

At times I wonder whether, in this area, some who hold positions of responsibility do not underestimate their confreres' capacity for service and availability. They are afraid to ask for a service that is demanding when, in fact, their colleagues were hoping for just such a challenge. There are Oblates who will never give their full measure because the Congregation will never have asked enough of them. We all need to be challenged in order to surpass ourselves. Availability is

present, but we need a definite challenge and we need to have confidence placed in us.

### *Simplicity*

Our service would not be Oblate if it were unaccompanied by simplicity. I have often heard the remark made in non-Oblate circles, in a monastery of contemplatives, for example, after a fellow Oblate from the Canadian Far North had spoken about his work: « What he has done is really marvellous; and yet he talks about it as if it were nothing special, as though anyone could have done the same! ».

I then spontaneously think of the Gospel text: « When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, ' We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty ' » (*Luke* 17:10). Then I also think of Blaise Pascal's advice: « Do small things as though they were great because of the majesty of Jesus Christ who does them in us and who lives our life; and do great things as though they were small and easy because of his omnipotence » (*Pensées*, ed. Kaplan, no. 1386).

Many Oblates live their apostolic service in this way. They see their vocation as a call to cooperate totally in the work of Jesus Christ, « in continuing the great task of redeeming mankind » (*Letter to Father Tempier, August 22, 1817*). That is why « we strive to reproduce in ourselves the pattern of his life..., to let him live in us...; we give ourselves to the Father in obedience even unto death and dedicate ourselves to God's people in unselfish love » (C. 2).

These qualities of the good servant are all present in the new Constitutions and Rules. May they also be present, more and more, in each one of us!

### *The Pope's encouragement*

In concluding, let me sum up Pope John Paul II's message of last September 8 to the Oblates.

It was the Church's gratitude to the Congregation. « I know », the Pope said, « the daring and fruitful work your brothers have accomplished... For this, the Church thanks you ».

It was also the Church's encouragement. « I encourage you to carry on, with the zeal of your

blessed Founder, Bishop de Mazenod, born two hundred years ago, the evangelization that our times need ».

It was finally a prayer and a desire: « Through you, may God's Word reach the farthest ends of the earth and penetrate hearts and minds to their very depths! ».

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Holy New Year 1983. Everywhere be true witnesses and servants of the Gospel according to the example of Blessed Eugene de Mazenod!

## 17. THE OBLATE AND THE POOR

« I have no father! ». - What the poor expect from us. - Witness of the Oblates in Asia-Oceania.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Cotabato, Philippines, December 10, 1982.*

Before leaving the Philippines, I very much want to pay tribute to all the Oblates of the Asia-Oceania Region. I also want to share my impressions with you.

For me, these impressions are like a prolonged meditation, the theme of which was given me in two statements I heard the day after my arrival in Manila. It was November 18. A Father had taken me on a visit to a very poor school. Thanks to the generosity of benefactors, he is covering the expenses of several students who would otherwise receive no schooling.

« *I have no father!* »

At the end of the visit, I was introduced to a young teacher in her early twenties who lived in the area. She wanted me to greet and bless a member of her family who was paralysed due to an accident. This was in a zone occupied by squatters. She led me between houses, over wet ground, and sometimes we stepped from stone to stone so as not to sink into the mud.

Thinking the paralyzed man to be her father, I asked her, « How long has your father been paralyzed? ». « No », she replied, « Not my father. It's my young brother. I have no father! ». I then learned that her father had abandoned the family several years earlier, leaving her mother, with eight young children. As we were coming close to their place, she felt the need to tell me, « You know, Father, we live in a hovel! ». It was true.

These two statements, « *I have no father!* » and, « *We live in a hovel!* » have been with me constantly these last three weeks. I feel the full force inherent in them. In Asia, just as in other parts of the world, thousands upon thousands of people are daily experiencing the misery of

extreme material poverty and all the moral suffering that springs therefrom.

*What the poor expect from us*

What do these poor people expect from the priest and the Oblates?

They certainly expect us to show them much esteem, respect and love. They must feel that they have value in our eyes and merit our full attention. This is the starting point if we are to help them gain confidence in themselves and become aware of their dignity. The attitude of Father de Mazenod speaking to the poor of Aix-en-Provence was the same: « My brothers, my dear brothers, my worthy brothers... ».

They also expect the priest and the Oblate to bring God to them, to reveal to them their own greatness in the light of faith. « Come and learn from us », the Founder said further, « who you are in the eyes of faith... You are God's children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, you are gods in a certain sense... ». And if they are Christians, they expect the priest to give them Jesus Christ by bringing them the Eucharist.

They have a right to the sacraments of the Church.

They also expect us to help them break out from their misery, and this by every means, by « all the works of zeal which priestly charity can inspire » (*Preface of the Constitutions*). This means good works of charity, of education, of medical assistance, of development; this also means the promotion of justice, giving them help and support, as priests and religious, in their efforts to achieve more human living conditions.

They also expect fidelity to our vocation. The reason for the trust they place in us, for their attachment to us, is, first of all, our priesthood, our religious life, and the witness of goodness and virtue given by our predecessors. In us they see something greater than we are. It is always a deep inner tragedy for them when they notice that we are no longer faithful to the grace that was in us and which formed a part of their own wealth.

*The witness of the Oblates in Asia-Oceania*

Our confreres of Asia-Oceania are giving us admirable examples in all these areas, often in very difficult living conditions. This is true of the Philippines, where we spent three wonderful weeks; and it is equally true of the other countries of the Region which we had the joy of visiting.

Let us also remember the most isolated Oblate in Asia, the only one who remains in Laos and whom, unfortunately, we were not able to visit. Last year this Oblate wrote to me:

*Let these few lines be the sign of our deep union in the Lord and his Immaculate Mother, she who has done so much for our Congregation and for me, her poor child.*

*Thank you, to you and to all my Oblate Fathers and Brothers for your affectionate support: it remains like a buoy of help to a little Oblate who is trying to keep his balance at the end of his perch. May Mary keep you and guide you, and may she be my Star and my Joy too!* (December 8, 1981).

In spite of the precarious situation of some of them, the Provinces and Delegations of Asia-

Oceania are a source of joy and great hope for the Congregation. They give testimony to the Gospel. The Spirit, in return, is instilling in some young people of these lands the desire to join us. I thank the Lord for this, and I pray him to strengthen these Oblate communities, to give them growth, to keep them in their attitude of serenity, love for the poor, and confidence.

Through their witness, may they strengthen all of us in our missionary vocation!

## 18. THE OBLATE AND RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation within oneself. - Reconciliation with those around us. - Allow ourselves to be reconciled with God.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, June 29, 1983.*

The Synod of Bishops will again be in session next September 29. It will be the seventh time since the Council. The last four sessions dealt with « Justice in the World » and « The Ministerial Priesthood » (1971), « Evangelization in the Modern World » (1974), « Catechesis in our Time » (1977) and « The Christian Family in Today's World » (1980).

Oblates cannot be indifferent to meetings such as these. They manifest the Church's life in all its diversity and its determination to find new, more effective ways of evangelizing today's world.

The Superiors General met at Villa Cavalletti near Rome from May 25 to May 28 to prepare for this Synod. They came to reflect together on this event, to consider how religious life is challenged by the Synod's theme — « Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church » — and what religious life can contribute thereto.

In point of fact, several rather positive elements emerged from this meeting. I would like to share with you the thoughts this gathering suggested to me.

### *Reconciliation within oneself*

During the years that followed the Council, a good number of religious were shaken in their personal life and deep convictions. The questioning and the many changes seriously affected their practice of prayer, their striving for personal discipline, their relationships to the world. In most cases, after the inevitable searching and groping, the proposed changes proved justified, even necessary for an appropriate renewal of religious life.

Unfortunately, however, because of a certain weariness and lack of dialogue, many religious have remained at a standstill. The first phase of renewal led them to abandon some of their former attitudes; today they feel too exhausted to embark on the second phase, that of integrating new attitudes into their life. Thus, for example, because a definitive edition of the new breviary did not materialize soon enough, they began to omit the recitation of the divine office altogether; today, when the breviary reform is accomplished, they no longer manage to recite it regularly and completely. The same is true for mental prayer, the practice of obedience, and sacramental confession.

We Oblates have not escaped this phenomenon. To break out of it, a first step is essential: we need to be reconciled with our own selves and with today's Church. In the light of the new Constitutions and Rules and of Vatican II as interpreted by the Church's authentic magisterium, we need to face and work the truth within ourselves. This is the starting point, the only starting point, for true spiritual and missionary renewal.

In this field there is a very important element

to be borne in mind: we must not saddle the young men who join us with the burden of a trial they themselves have not experienced. Yes, they too need reconciliation and conversion, but in quite a different line: they need to be converted to Jesus Christ with all the enthusiastic thrust of their youth; they do not need to be reconciled to the new world whose sons they are, nor with today's Church for whose presence they have been longing.

### *Reconciliation with those around us*

Being a religious also means being a promoter of unity and reconciliation among those with whom we live. Daily, if we are alert, we will perceive particular calls in this sphere: the need for reconciliation between the different generations; between persons of differing mentalities, of varying apostolic or political positions; between persons of different social classes, beliefs, color and race; between persons possessing different charisms as, for instance, a group of religious and their bishop in a given diocese.

These conciliation needs exist as much within

religious life as they do outside it. Sometimes a hardening of positions has arisen between religious or apostolic groups which make all dialogue and true collaboration very difficult, if not impossible. This is a scandal for those who observe our way of life.

As the Congregation becomes more universal and open to non-Western people, it needs to free itself from certain attitudes of narrow-mindedness and bias. An African Oblate, engaged in formation ministry, recently made some comments in this regard. He said:

*Some think they own the Congregation. Others, to the contrary, always feel they are 'staying with others'. We cannot open our doors to young people from Africa if they are made to feel like strangers in our midst.*

*The young people who come to us are neophytes, and so we need to have some understanding. No one is helped if all we do is criticize. And if setbacks do occur, all of us should bear them together. Criticism cannot foster a real vocation...*

*Something we often hear is this: 'As for him we'll see!'. This is destructive. We are content*

*simply to watch what another does, instead of coming to support and encourage him.*

*Each of us comes with a different outlook on reality. For Africans, relationships are important; for Europeans, it is work and the job at hand. We can spend our time criticizing each other: each one becomes more closed to the other and no progress is made. We need to be mutually converted.*

*Dialogue needs to be achieved between us, Europeans and Africans. Until now you were the only ones, and there has only been monologue. As we accept young Africans, we must achieve dialogue. If religious cannot come together, who can? Setting up separate communities (some for Africans, whites in others) would be a very grave step.*

*We need to be mutually converted and achieve communities that are signs of love... Very often we make mistakes, without there being any malice. Good will is not enough. Often we remain in the state of monologue, closed within one's culture and attitudes. We do not open up to the other person. (Excerpt from the Cameroon-Chad newsletter, *Entre Nous*, May 1983).*

*Allow ourselves to be reconciled with God*

As we can see, conversion, repentance, reconciliation are issues that directly and closely concern us. In the final analysis, all human reconciliations, within our own selves as well as with others around us, are possible and lasting only if each one of us admits, before God, to being but an ordinary creature and a sinner with limitations and weaknesses. Reconciliation is inseparably linked to humility.

Sin is stamped on this or that unjust social structure. The Church has been increasingly aware of this, an awareness that is both a gift of light and a new missionary appeal. But if sin is present there, it is because it is first of all present in the hearts of people. « We implore you, in Christ's name: be reconciled to God! » St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 *Corinthians* 5:20).

Pope John Paul II addresses this same invitation to us in this Jubilee Holy Year of the Redemption. Taking my cue from him, I, in turn, also address it to you.

## 19. THE OBLATES IN LATIN AMERICA

The commitment of the Oblates in Latin America. - A rich value for the Congregation. - The needed complementarity. - Regions in the Congregation. - Our greatest challenge.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*São Paulo, Brazil, September 29, 1983.*

I am writing you this letter from São Paulo in Latin America. The General Council has been here for three weeks, spending that of September 12-17 with the Provincials and delegates from the various territories of this region.

*The commitment of the Oblates in Latin America*

On the whole, the commitment of the Oblates in Latin America is very strong. Though their

number is small — there are about 330 in 12 different countries — their influence is considerable. This is certainly due to the clarity and radical character of their option, an option for the poor and for the life of the poor. It is due to their being close to the people: they have learned to listen to the people, to respect their inner values and aspirations, and to accompany them in their just struggle for a more human way of life. It is also due to the one major inspiration animating them, an inspiration which in great part finds its source in liberation theology.

During this week I had the pleasure of seeing Oblates from different countries who are well integrated into the milieu in which they are working. I was especially happy to see young Latin American Oblates involved with us in the evangelization of their people. What was only a hope a few years ago is becoming a marvellous reality: in Latin America, God is sending us vocations. I was most glad to hear the testimony of Christian laity who are working with us and place great confidence in us: persons who are simple and sincere, filled with hope and faith, who want to and actually do accomplish things for the complete liberation of their people.

*A rich value for the Congregation*

The apostolic commitment and simplicity of life lived by our fellow Oblates in Latin America bring a special enrichment to the Congregation. I rejoice at this and, as Superior General, strongly encourage them to continue their work and their search.

Among their number we find some specialists in economics and in certain socio-political issues. This is a privileged possession. I am convinced however — and this applies to each and every Region — that the Oblates must invest more in serious reflection. The challenges of today's mission require that we have in our ranks some men of thought, men of research oriented toward missionary action, and this in different fields: missiology, Sacred Scripture, dogmatic and moral theology, sociology and anthropology, economics.

*The needed complementarity*

Dialogue and complementarity in the dialogue between these men of thought and the men in the field is absolutely necessary if we are to achieve

a view that is more complete and true to reality. This is all the more important because our missionary options to a great extent are based on such a foundation.

I think now, among other things, of the socio-political analysis that could be made of concrete situations or of the theological outlook that animates our activity. For example, I very much realize what a source of strength for missionary action liberation theology is, and what a potent force it can be for a Congregation like ours dedicated to the evangelization of the poor. At the same time, I am also aware that this theology has its limitations, that it considers revealed mysteries from a particular viewpoint and needs to be completed if we do not want to deprive people of the full mystery of God and of themselves. For that matter, this is true of all systems of thought: dialogue with others is indispensable for all of them.

### *Regions in the Congregation*

During this session I reflected a great deal on the Congregation, its future, the development of the Regions.

More and more the Regions will be different from each other, will take on their own character and personality. Such a development is normal: it promotes the growth of the Institute as a whole and of each of its parts. To achieve this, dialogue between Regions must intensify and deepen in the measure that regional identities emerge. Otherwise, « regionalization » may lead to isolationism and becoming closed in on oneself.

A universal and international character is a great source of strength for an apostolic corps such as we are. The Congregation, therefore, no matter how incarnated she may be in a given region or country or culture, must remain open to the world at large, and her members must remain capable of sharing, in communion and in dialogue, our common values, common spirit and common spirituality.

This is one of the challenges the Congregation will have to take up in the years ahead.

### *Our greatest challenge*

That, however, is not our greatest challenge. Evangelization remains the greatest challenge for

each one of us and for all the Oblates as a whole, the full liberation of the poorest and the most abandoned: to help these people discover who Jesus Christ is and to possess fully the salvation and life he brings to mankind.

I conclude with a reflection made by a fellow Oblate on the General Council. Seeing the great misery and deep distress of the poor in Latin America he remarked: « To expect heaven on earth is an illusion; but to tolerate hell on earth is not Christian. We are called to work with the poor to make this world much less like hell and a little more like heaven ».

The Oblates in Latin America are working towards this goal. Their fellow Oblates in other parts of the world, also engaged in the same work, support and encourage them.

## 20. OBLATES AND THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS

Inauguration of the inter-diocesan Major Seminary. - Oblates and the formation of priests. - What kind of priests? - A ministry we must not neglect.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Papeete, Tahiti, October 20, 1983.*

I spent October 12-20 visiting the Oblates in Tahiti. They are a small team of four Fathers and one Brother. One, formerly a missionary in Laos, is French; the others are American. All are members of St. John the Baptist Province to which the Delegation is attached.

Tahiti is a very isolated island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is eight hours flying time from Los Angeles and eight from Sydney, Australia. French Polynesia has a population of some

160,000; 52% of these belong to the Evangelical Church and 35% are Catholic. The first Catholic missionaries on the island were the Sacred Heart Fathers of Picpus who came in 1834.

The Oblates are there since 1977. They are in charge of a parish, St. Joseph of Faaa, near the airport, with a population of 22,000, 10,000 of whom are Catholic. They also provide pastoral services to neighboring islands, and they are especially involved in the formation of the local clergy.

### *Inauguration of the inter-diocesan Major Seminary*

The Oblates' motive for going to Tahiti was to contribute to the greater stability and growth of its local Church. With this perspective in mind, they expressed to Archbishop Michel Coppenrath of Papeete their readiness to open a Theology School which would also be a major seminary for the islands of French Polynesia. This was certainly a bold proposition, one which corresponded to a real need and which was enthusiastically received by the Archbishop and his main collaborators. Up to now, the seminarians had to be

sent to the English-speaking seminary in Suva.

The official inauguration was yesterday, October 19. Its celebration led me to reflect on the formation of priests as part of the Congregation's tradition and apostolate. I want to share my my reflections with you.

### *Oblates and the formation of priests*

Eugene de Mazenod chose the priesthood because he had witnessed the miserable condition of the Church and the clergy of his day. « I have committed myself to serving the Church », he wrote to his father on December 7, 1814, « because she is suffering persecution, because she is abandoned... ». In such a Church he wanted to be « the priest of the poor ».

His aim, when he founded the Oblates in 1816, was clear: to establish a society of missionaries, of folk preachers who would go into villages, rural areas and the most isolated places to teach people — especially the most abandoned — who Jesus Christ is and bring them the Good News of their salvation in Jesus Christ.

At the same time however — and it is im-

portant to note this — he asked the Oblates to be a spiritual help to priests, and even to undertake the formation of priests. We would work in vain at evangelizing the people, he explained, if there were no holy priests, men of doctrine and virtue who, after we had left, would stay with the people to continue and strengthen the work already begun (cf. 1853 *Constitutions and Rules*, ch. 3).

Thus, once established in Marseilles, he accepted that the Oblates take charge of the major seminary there (1827). Next came the major seminary of Ajaccio (1834), of Ottawa (1848) and of Fréjus (1851). Today the Oblates are still in charge of the University Seminary in Ottawa, and of the seminaries in Roma, Lesotho, and of Maroua in northern Cameroon. At Grouard in the Canadian Northwest we also have Kisemanito Centre, a school forming pastoral workers from whose ranks, it is hoped, Indian priests will come one day, if God so wills it.

What did our Founder ask of the Oblates committed to this ministry? He wrote in 1853: « They will labor without ceasing to form Christ in the clerics, doing so with the assistance of

his Immaculate Mother, the Virgin Mary, to whose patronage they will teach their pupils to fly with confidence in their needs » (*loc. cit.*).

### *What kind of priests?*

What kind of priests do Oblates want to form? Are there any distinctive marks which characterize their formation? I personally do think so.

Oblates want to form priests who are, first of all, men of Jesus Christ: men who have really opted for Christ and who have gradually made him the centre of their life; men who daily strive to know him more intimately, to identify with him, to let him live in them; men who have a burning desire to make him known to others.

Secondly, they want to form priests who deeply love the Church; for, as Bishop de Mazenod said, « To love the Church is to love Jesus Christ and vice versa » (*Pastoral Letter of February 16, 1860*). After the seminary, this love for the Church will normally lead them to carry out their ministry in close communion with the Pope and the bishops and in close collaboration with other Gospel workers.

Thirdly, they want to form priests who are filled with respect and affection for the people with whom and for whom they work, especially the poor; priests who are close to the people and constantly sensitive to the values they bear; priests who really want to involve the people as much as possible in the Church's ministries, and to support them in their effort to build a world that is better, more just and in line with the dignity of the human person.

Finally, they want to form priests who have a true and genuine devotion to the Virgin Mary; for the Oblate who is a formator of priests remains a son of the Immaculate Virgin.

### *A ministry we must not neglect*

I was glad to see the Oblates in Tahiti, in spite of their small number, providing such a service to the Church. To undertake this ministry, much faith and courage as well as competence is needed. But what greater service can we render to a new Church?

The Congregation herself, moreover, benefits from Oblates who are devoted to the formation

of priests. Their knowledge of ecclesiastical sciences, their experience of the interior life and of the working of grace in human hearts are a source of wisdom and a blessing for the entire Institute.

By this letter I want to thank those among us who are engaged in this ministry. And I also want to add that if some of our scholastics have the required aptitude and interest for this type of apostolate, I strongly encourage them to persevere in this desire and make their interest known at the time of their first obedience. The Congregation greatly needs qualified formators, as much for her own formation houses as for the seminaries entrusted to her.

I also want to thank in a special way those Oblates who, pretty well in all our houses, dedicate themselves to giving spiritual direction and to the ministry of confessing priests. This is a hidden and difficult apostolate, but one that is completely in line with the spirit of our vocation, one that is extremely important for the Church's life.

It will soon be Christmas, a special Christmas at the heart of the Holy Year. May Jesus, the

Redeemer of Mankind, abundantly grant each of us the graces of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace that we need! And may each Oblate be to each person he meets a sign of God's forgiveness, love and peace!



PART TWO

LETTERS AND MESSAGES  
TO THE OBLATES  
IN THE DIFFERENT WORLD REGIONS



## 21. TO THE MEMBERS OF THE OBLATE CONFERENCE OF EUROPE

The influence of Oblate Europe. - A Europe that believes. A Europe that brings hope. - A Europe of love.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Hünfeld, Germany, May 5, 1979.*

Our meeting is drawing to a close. At its opening, your President, Father Vanpetegem, said, « Our Congregation certainly has its roots in Europe, in the Church of Europe... As it had in the Founder's time, so it surely still has its place in the present day Europe of our time ». That statement was an act of faith.

In this morning's Gospel (*John 6:60-69*), St. John has also just spoken to us about faith: about faith being put to the test, about faith which is a gift from the Father; he mentions the question

of Jesus, « Do you want to leave me too? », and the amazing reply of Peter, « Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life ».

The situation of the Christian world is the same as that of the disciples and of the Twelve. Some find present-day conditions intolerable, and so they give up and leave; others, through God's grace, grow stronger in their faith and continue to forge ahead.

Our life is built on faith. And the faith of so many other people is shored up by the solidity of our own faith.

Within the Congregation we are experiencing the same thing in regard to our religious commitment. In terms of vocation, each Oblate is either a source of strength or an occasion of scandal for his brother Oblate. This holds true also for one Province *vis-à-vis* another, for one Region *vis-à-vis* another.

### *The influence of Oblate Europe*

Within the Congregation, Oblate Europe has always been, and still is today, a reality of the first importance, a reality to which no one can

ever be indifferent. There are about 2.000 Oblates in Europe. Europe gave birth to the Congregation. Most of the Oblates who established the Institute in other countries have come from Europe; and even today, nearly 1.000 Oblates of European origin are at work on the different continents.

During the course of this week we have spent together I have often reflected on the reality of this Oblate Europe.

It is true that there are great differences from one Province to another. If viewed from the outside, however, in the measure that the notion of « Region » takes hold in the Institute, Oblate Europe, just like political Europe, will be more and more perceived as a single whole. The Congregation expects a great deal from this Oblate Europe.

### *A Europe that believes*

The Congregation needs an Oblate Europe which firmly believes and is not afraid to give an open public witness to its faith: to its faith in God, its faith in Jesus Christ, its faith in the

Church, its faith in its own vocation of evangelizing the poor.

We evangelize through our lives, by the very quality of our being. This is certain, this is classic. To be useful to others, we must first of all work unceasingly at our own conversion.

We evangelize through our works. Jesus healed the sick and brought comfort to human misery; he took up the defense of the weak and the oppressed; he even gave his life for them. The Oblate must do this too: this is essential.

But the Oblate is called to do more than this. He is also called to evangelize by word. He must still have the courage to speak of Jesus Christ. « We cannot help speaking of what we have heard and seen! » Peter and John asserted before the Sanhedrin (*Acts* 4:20). And this, even though, as Paul VI admits in *Evangelii nuntiandi* (no. 42), « modern man is sated by talk » and « tired of listening » and « impervious to words ».

As Oblates, we have to look for new ways, we have to try to discover what are the most effective means of telling modern man « who Jesus Christ is » and what man's own dignity is in Jesus Christ. As long as we have not accomplish-

ed this, our work of evangelization will remain incomplete, unfinished.

### *A Europe that brings hope*

Secondly, the Congregation needs an Oblate Europe that is a source of hope.

I remember the reaction of an Oblate in Asia who one day told me how he was affected by the defeatism expressed by certain Oblate confreres in Europe. These are hard times for certain Provinces, as is obvious. Within, we have an aging personnel and very few vocations; and, as we have seen these last days, from without there come appeals that are new, that are becoming more and more urgent and demand new ways and creativity.

Does this mean that we have to give up and withdraw into ourselves? Certainly not! It is hard times that are also « par excellence » the times for hope. « He hoped against all hope », St. Paul says about Abraham. « And God made him the father of a great people ».

For us, too, this is a time for hope. The renewal in the religious life and in the Oblate life which

is evident here and there can also happen among us, if we are capable of believing in it and paying the price for it.

### *A Europe of love*

Finally, the Congregation needs an Oblate Europe of love which nurtures dialogue and welcomes what others say; an Oblate Europe which is successful in overcoming divisions to become more and more united within itself, and in working together for vocations, for formation, for a more intense religious life; an Oblate Europe which is also successful to commit itself externally, fully and as a unit, to the service of the new poor. Like the Church, we must look upon our world « with great sympathy and with an immense desire to offer to people of today the message of love, of salvation and of hope which Christ has brought them » (PAUL VI, *Address at the opening of the second session of Vatican Council II*, September 29, 1963).

Even if we cannot do everything, we must still do something, and, as much as possible, we must do it together.

The present meeting was a step in this direction. I thank God for it, and I thank you.

To help the Congregation, Oblate Europe needs to live faith, hope, and love intensely, and to give an open testimony of this fact.

What is expected of us in helping the emerging political Europe is not all that different. A month ago, Pope John Paul II told the members of the Presidency Office of the European Parliament, « Institutions alone will never make Europe, it is men who will make it » (*L'Osservatore Romano*, April 6, 1979). I am certain that among these men, Religious can exert a great influence, if they are capable of an open and radical life of faith, hope and love.

## 22. TO THE OBLATES OF EUROPE

Being alert to present-day problems. - Concern for vocations. - Cooperation between Provinces.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Hünfeld, Germany, May 16, 1979.*

The Joint Meeting of the Provincials of Europe, along with the delegates representing the mission and formation, and the members of the General Council, ended a few days ago at Hünfeld. It was a week of praying together, of sharing, and of reflecting on the Oblate reality in a Europe that is reshaping itself.

Preceded by Council members visiting several Provinces, these days were the occasion of real enrichment for us.

In spite of unavoidable limitations, this meeting greatly met our expectations. In this letter I

would like to continue reflecting with you on three points raised during the meeting, points which especially struck me.

*Being alert to present-day problems*

First, we must be alert and attentive to the problems of Europe today. A new Europe is gradually being built, new economically, new politically, a Europe that considers itself more integrally human. The resultant major problems are only too obvious: the problem of unbelief and of indifference, the problem of the migrants and unemployment, the problem of relationships with the Third World, the problem of the young who feel more and more adrift... The Europe that is being built is filled with a multitude of the new poor. Do we hear their appeal, and what response have we to give them?

A certain number of Oblates are a prey to a grave danger, that of becoming closed in on themselves, of lacking interest in the new world that is being born. They see themselves as too old, and, not seeing any young Oblates coming after them, they tend to become discouraged. And yet,

Paul VI, a few years ago, invited Religious « to have their eyes wide open to the needs of men, to their problems, to their searching..., to try to understand deeply the current trends and the modern world's request... » and to make an attempt at responding to them in a Gospel manner (cf. *Evangelica testificatio*, nos. 51-52).

That invitation is addressed to each one of us. Even if only a small number of us can actively commit ourselves to these new ministries, all of us should keep our eyes open to the present-day needs of man; and most of us can, in our usual parish ministry, in our teaching, in our preaching, in our ministry to the working class, make other people aware of the pleas coming from the new poor. In doing this, we are already missionaries and helping to build Europe.

### *Concern for vocations*

Secondly, we must have faith in our vocation and not be afraid to invite others to follow us. As Father Vanpetegem, the President of the European Conference of Provincials, reminded us, Religious and Oblates have their place in the

Europe that is in the making. And for his part, Pope John Paul II, last April 6, insisted: « Institutions alone will never make Europe, it is men who will make it » (*Address to the members of the Presidency Office of the European Parliament*). I am convinced that religious can have great influence on these men, if Religious are capable of frankly and radically living their religious consecration in their midst.

Allow me here a recollection from the past. It happened during the war. I was then a Scholastic. Cardinal Villeneuve, O.M.I., had come to visit us in Ottawa. Prior to this, he had met with Mr. Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister of Canada, who was not a Catholic. While they were talking together about peace and the conditions needed to bring it about, a Capuchin monk walked past them. Mr. King remarked, « We politicians can do something for peace; but, if there were more men like that in the world, perhaps peace would be deeper and more lasting! ». We are often unaware of how much real influence we do have.

*Cooperation between Provinces*

Thirdly, we must continue to work together more and more. How much the Oblate community is the place « par excellence » for discerning the challenges of today's world was strongly reasserted during the course of the Joint Meeting. This working together in community would gain if it were at times extended beyond provincial boundaries. I have in mind, for example, certain works considered very important for evangelization which one Province alone cannot sustain. In such a case, for the good of the Gospel, could not other Provinces provide a few men who would assure the survival and development of that work? This, too, is a way of being missionary and of contributing to the spiritual building of Europe.

In concluding, I want to thank, in a very special way, the community of Hünfeld for the brotherly hospitality it has shown during these three weeks to the members of the General Council. Equal thanks to the Brothers who directly looked after our needs. Through them, I greet all the Brothers of Europe: once again, I want to tell them how much the Congregation counts

on them, on the fervour of their consecrated life, and on their devoted service in favour of the mission.

## **23. TO THE OBLATES OF CANADA**

The Oblates' role in the past. - Promotion of justice. - Formation of Christian leaders. - Cooperation between Provinces. - Witnessing to Christian values. - Concern for vocations.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Saint-Norbert, Manitoba, June 10, 1977.*

Following the Joint Session in Saint-Norbert with your Provincials and province delegates, and following also our visits to some of your works and communities, the members of the General Council reflected together on the Oblate Canadian reality. They asked me to share with you some of their impressions, before my return to Rome. I do it willingly, and with some assurance, since the text was reviewed and approved by them.

Everywhere and in a special way at Villa Maria, the welcome given us was warm, brotherly, very open. The members of the Council thank you sincerely. It is as brothers that we have come to you, to listen to you, to challenge you and be challenged by you, to affirm you in your commitment of service to the Church and to the poor, convinced as we are that your work and your life, if successful, can be a source of inspiration and of confidence for the whole Institute.

### *The Oblates' role in the past*

In the past Oblates played a role of primary importance within the Church of Canada, *a mari usque ad mare*. Here they proclaimed the Gospel to the poor, they carried the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ to the most remote corners of the Far North, they became the apostles and support of immigrants, Germans, Poles, Italians..., and they spread devotion to the Virgin Mary. Moreover, in answer to the Founder's vision of Montreal as « the gateway leading the family to the conquest of souls in several countries » (*Letter to Honorat, October 9, 1841*), they left from Can-

ada to be missionaries, not only in the United States and Mexico, but also in Africa, Asia and South America.

« The more you are holy », Bishop de Mazenod said to them, « the more will good abound » (*Ibid.*). Among them were authentic saints. Be it sufficient to mention the three Oblates whose cause of beatification is in progress: Bishop Grandin, Bishop Charlebois and Brother Anthony Kowalczyk.

Today still, despite aging personnel, despite a decrease in vocation, the 1.600 Oblates constitute an important apostolic force. They are called to respond to new challenges, which are becoming more urgent day by day. The Congress focused on three of these challenges. We too wish to underline them.

### *Promotion of justice*

In the Canadian society, the promotion of justice. Serious problems exist, « burning issues », as it was said, which call for a Gospel perspective: the right to life, native rights, the rights of immigrants, the new social order, the very

future of Canada. No Oblate can remain indifferent in the face of such questions. The promotion of justice, especially in today's world, is an integral part of evangelization. It is the duty of every Oblate to be well informed on these issues, to remind the faithful often of their responsibility in such matters, and to support and help his Oblate brothers who are involved directly in this difficult apostolate.

### *Formation of Christian leaders*

In the Church, the formation of Christian leaders. This too should be a constant preoccupation of every Oblate today: in view of forming living Christian communities, native or white, promoting the involvement of laity in the ministries and responsibilities of the Church. The future of the Church is to be found here, and an Oblate can never be too active in this area.

### *Cooperation between Provinces*

Between Oblate Provinces, cooperation. As early as October 9, 1841, the Founder wrote to Father Honorat: « We are all members of one

body, let each one strive by every means and by making sacrifices, if he must, for the well-being and growth of all its potentialities ». The Oblates of Canada will be strong and effective in spreading the Gospel inasmuch as they are united and capable of working together, of sharing. Considerable progress has been made in this field since the founding of the Oblate Conference of Canada, in financial help, in personnel, in services. The redistribution of the territories of the North-east (James Bay and Labrador) between the Provinces of Saint-Joseph, Notre-Dame du Rosaire and Saint Peter's is also an eloquent example. We can only encourage strongly such an orientation while assuring you that no Province will be weighed down by a burden too heavy for its shoulders.

What more can I say to you, what advice can I give as I prepare to leave you?

### *Witnessing to Christian values*

In a world of wealth, be witnesses to the poverty of Jesus Christ and to his interior freedom. Make every effort to live as people who are poor,

to love the poor, to serve them, those in this land, without forgetting those in the Third World.

In a world ever more materialistic, to the point that moral values lose all meaning, do not fear to proclaim Jesus Christ explicitly, and to be a reminder « in season and out of season » of Gospel values and of the demands of faith. In sending the first Oblate priests to Canada, the Founder wanted « men capable of proclaiming the Word of God » (*Letter to Courtès, August 11, 1841*).

In a world willing to crush its prophets, be strong. « Take comfort in the Lord and in the might of his power », recommended Bishop de Mazenod. « Hold yourselves erect, loins girded with truth... Be united in the same spirit, working together for the faith of the Gospel » (*Letter to Honorat and the first Oblates of Canada, September 29, 1841*).

### *Concern for vocations*

Finally, be concerned with Oblate vocations. In order to promote justice, form Christian leaders, cooperate among Provinces... we must first

of all exist! In all the Provinces where this is possible, I know that great efforts are being made in this sense. I compliment you and can but encourage you to persevere in your effort with much confidence. Surely the Lord will answer you.

In concluding, I wish to thank our Oblate Bishops for their brotherly presence during the Congress, and to greet in a special way our Oblate Brothers, who are so numerous and active in several Provinces of Canada. You are a great wealth for the Congregation and the Church. To the Oblates of the most remote missions, whom no member of the General Council was able to visit, and to the Oblates who are ill and offer up their suffering for the Congregation, I wish to express our deep affection and assure you of our prayers. To our novices and scholastics, finally, I say: Welcome among us! May you find happiness with us in the total gift of yourselves to Jesus Christ! You are the Congregation of tomorrow!

## 24. TO THE OBLATES OF THE UNITED STATES

Why we came. - Serving minorities. - Promoting the Christian laity. - Spiritual renewal. - Cooperation between Provinces. - Evaluating apostolic works. - Vocations. - Tribute to the Southern Province of the United States.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*San Antonio, Texas, October 12, 1979.*

Tomorrow, most of the General Council members leave the United States to return to their usual work. Before leaving, they have asked me to express their joy and their gratitude to you. Everywhere we were received as brothers. For three weeks the San José Retreat House has been our home where we have experienced an extraordinary hospitality. For all this, I say a heartfelt thanks in the name of the General Council.

*Why we came*

As in the other Regions, we had come, first of all, to listen to you, to try to understand a little better the American reality as it unfolds at the present time, with all the implications it has for your apostolate. What role should be played, what influence should be exercised, in the United States and within the Congregation, by the group that you are: more than 800 Oblates who, while differing in works and activities, are animated by the same spirit of love for Jesus Christ and by the same zeal for the salvation of people, especially the most abandoned. Your « American » experience is, in a way, a unique challenge: how to be missionaries of the poor in one of the most affluent and technologically developed countries?

We had also come to support and encourage you, as well as to be stimulated and encouraged by you. What you are accomplishing in terms of mutual cooperation, of renewal in pastoral and missionary endeavours, of adaptation in religious life; the importance you give to lay Christians and your desire to associate them more closely with your work and your life; your concern for

vocations and training Oblate personnel: all that must be continued and developed, and can become a source of inspiration for Oblates everywhere.

Finally, we had come to reaffirm our faith in the Congregation and in the mission confided to her by the Church. Pope Paul VI said to the members of the 1974 General Chapter: « Our world more than ever needs... missionaries who are totally available ». Everywhere I have met such men, and I meet them regularly as I visit the Congregation. I think of the Oblates I have just visited in Mexico, Surinam, French Guiana, Puerto Rico... I think of what you are doing here in the United States, and of all those pioneers who have preceded you, like the members of the « Calvalry of Christ » in the Rio Grande Valley... I think of all the Oblates who, in your Region, sincerely and seriously seek new ways to evangelize the poor. All that is a source of hope, and will not fail to bear fruit.

You know to what the Spirit summons us today. These summons were expressed clearly in the San Antonio meeting. The manner in which your Provincials and representatives perceived them, and responded to them, reminded me very much of the Founder's own attitude.

*Serving minorities*

The title given to our session could have oriented us in a rather different direction, much more intellectual: « Evangelization in the United States' Technological Culture ». Very quickly the « technological culture » disappeared from view to give way to people and, among these, to the most neglected, most abandoned, the poorest in this culture. This led your Provincials and representatives to choose, as a first priority, ministry among minorities, especially Hispanics. I was thinking of Father de Mazenod choosing in Southern France the people who spoke Provençal. As Oblates, we are more at ease with people than with ideas, and among people, with the poor and simple folk rather than with the rich.

That is significant and coincides with our charism in the Church. But, on the other hand, we must be on our guard, for this characteristic attitude can also delude us and weaken our ministry. In order to evangelize the poor, the Congregation also needs men of thought, men who are intellectually specialized, men capable of sociological analysis and theological reflection, men who, because of their competence, are cred-

ible in the different milieux where the future of the world of the poor is at stake.

### *Promoting the Christian laity*

Like de Mazenod also, they know that they must not work alone and have felt the need to group men together in order to accomplish their missionary work. In his time, these men were priests, for the ministry was reserved to them; today the field is open to lay people, and therefore your Provincials and representatives have opted, as a second choice, for the development of lay leadership and ministries.

### *Spiritual renewal*

Finally, like the Founder again, they have spontaneously felt the necessity, for someone who wants to be a missionary to the poor, of reform and renewal of life. In a country like the United States, where freedom is a fundamental value, Oblate living should be able to form men who are completely free in regard to consumer goods and fully open to sharing with the poor.

Personally, I am most happy with the orientation taken by the meeting and with the conclusions to which it has come. These conclusions are a source of great hope for the future. The important thing now is that they be put into practice, even though this will mean a little more work for each one!

Does the General Council expect even more from the American Region? I would reply, « Yes! ». It is not a matter of taking on anything new, but rather of further developing a number of attitudes that are already present. I would especially indicate three.

### *Cooperation between Provinces*

First, to promote unceasingly cooperation and unity among yourselves, so that the Oblate identity is even more clearly evident within the American Church. Eight hundred men of good will, who share the same ideals, who work together and for the same cause, who mutually support and encourage one another — that constitutes a considerable force within a country. You must be aware of this and go forward with faith and courage.

Beyond the boundaries of Provinces, the identity of the Oblate as a man of the poor, as someone easily approachable and always available to them, as a man who is an incarnation of the love of Christ and of the Church, must become more and more apparent. It is by way of common choice, like those which have come out of this meeting, and by way of the authenticity of your life as religious missionaries to the poor that this identity will become manifest.

### *Evaluating apostolic works*

Secondly, do not be afraid to re-evaluate your apostolic commitments and even certain existing structures in the light of actual needs and of our vocation in the Church. I was happy to see some of your Provinces making options, establishing priorities. To be sure, this entails abandoning certain works, but also means maintaining and developing others that are more in keeping with our missionary charism. This is the proper line to take: it gives evidence of fidelity to the Founder and of inner freedom. It will lead you, in due course, also to review, prudently and in

dialogue, certain structures which perhaps no longer quite correspond to the reality of today.

### *Vocations*

Thirdly, pursue with confidence and tenacity the work undertaken to promote vocations and to assure the quality of first and ongoing formation. For us, this is vital. If there are no new candidates to join us and persevere with us, there is no future for our Congregation. In his day the Founder invited the Fathers and Brothers to pray to the Blessed Virgin for this intention. This we still have to do today; but we have to do more than that: just like the Founder did, we have to work hard for vocations and not be afraid to invite and call. « Come and see! ». - « Come and follow me! ». Each Oblate should be able to say this. Your Region has already done much to promote vocations and to provide personnel for the foreign missions: Mexico, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Sandinavia, Haiti, Tahiti, Japan, Philippines, South Africa. I can only thank you and encourage you to continue this effort.

*Tribute to the Southern Province of the United States*

Before closing, allow me to pay tribute to the U.S. Southern Province on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. Its past is legendary, with its valorous pioneers and its great Oblates; its present is no less admirable with the growth of its works and its missionary endeavours, especially in Mexico. To Father Augustine Petru, the Provincial, and to all the members of the Province, our warmest congratulations and our best wishes!

## **25. TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCILS IN THE UNITED STATES**

A step forward. - Unity and collaboration. - Vocations. -  
Men of faith and hope.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Homily

*Belleville, Illinois, December 4, 1981.*

We have come to the end of our regional Congress. We are concluding it together in God's presence, around the altar. During this Mass, we pray for all our brothers in the United States, as well as for those men and women who are working with us. We pray, furthermore, that God will strengthen us in our commitments and bring to fruition the priorities the Region has chosen.

Participating in this Congress was a joy-filled

and enriching experience for me. Thank you very much.

### *A step forward*

The liturgical texts that we have just heard speak of faith and hope: « But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard... a forest » (*Isaiab* 29:17). « ' Are you confident I can do this? '... ' Because of your faith, it shall be done to you ' » (*Matthew* 9:28-29).

In our Constitutions we read: « We are pilgrims, walking with Jesus in faith, hope and love » (1980 *Constitutions*, art. 30).

This gathering was another step forward into the future. Since the 1979 Congress of San Antonio, you have already done a great deal in applying your regional priorities. This, today, is like a fresh start. We must continue going forward in the same direction with a great deal of confidence, courage and faith.

Growth within a Province is a slow process; this is even more true for a Region. We might compare it to a tree. If we were to watch it, day in and day out, we would see no real growth and we might become quite impatient. If, on the

other hand, we were to see this same tree after five or ten years, we would notice its remarkable growth.

Since 1972, since 1979, your Region has grown very much as a Region. It is more united, it engages in more dialogue, works together more, is becoming stronger and more able to make common commitments.

Furthermore, your brother Oblates in other countries see you more and more as a Region, as a single group from whom they expect very much.

The Congregation needs your enthusiasm and love of life; your concern for justice and peace, your spirit of freedom and progress, your generosity, your willingness to share and your self-confidence. But even more than all this, the Congregation needs the solidity of your faith and the strength of your hope.

As I look to the future of your Region, I see three attitudes that will be especially helpful in its growth.

### *Unity and collaboration*

First, to continue promoting collaboration and unity among yourselves. Eight hundred men of

good will, who share the same ideals, who work together for the same cause, who mutually support and encourage one another — that constitutes a considerable force within a country. You must be aware of this. Beyond the boundaries of Provinces, the identity of the Oblate as a man of the poor, as someone easily approachable and always available, as a man who witnesses to Gospel detachment and to a simple style of life, as someone who is an incarnation of Christ's love, must become more and more apparent.

### *Vocations*

Secondly, to pursue with confidence and tenacity the work undertaken to promote vocations. You already have a good number of novices. You will have more and more if you persevere in your effort. My own deep conviction in this matter is this: as long as the Christian spirit will exist among people, some of them will hear the call of Jesus Christ to follow him in a radical way by committing themselves to the evangelical counsels and by the total gift of their lives to serving the poor. If the Oblates stay vigorous enough and

holy enough to answer the needs of these people, they will have disciples and novices. As Paul VI told us in 1974: « Our world more than ever needs preachers, qualified spiritual animators and missionaries who are totally available ».

If we can produce today the kind of men we did in the past, we have nothing to fear, we can look ahead to the future with confidence.

### *Men of faith and hope*

Thirdly — and this is my conclusion — to be always witnesses to the faith by your life and works, and also by your word. As the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* asserts: « Preaching, the verbal proclamation of a message, is indeed always indispensable » (n. 42). This goes to the very root of our Oblate vocation.

As Oblates, we must look for new ways, search out the most effective personal and community means of teaching modern men and women who Christ is.

« The future », — I am quoting Bishop Poupart, the former Rector of the Institut catholique de Paris — « is in the hands of those who can give

to tomorrow's generations a reason to live and to hope; for what is the value of travelling to the moon, what is the value of progress, if it is to end in suicide? » (*Le Devoir*, October 24, 1981)

To my mind, our present mission in the world remains quite clear: we must give to the generations of today and tomorrow sufficient reasons to live by leading them to know who Jesus Christ is.

May our Immaculate Mother and her great Servant, Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, help us carry out this mission!

## 26. TO THE MEMBERS OF THE OBLATE CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICA

Unique character of Latin America. - Option for the Poor. - Option for fidelity. - Option for hope and in favour of smiling.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Address

*Paramaribo, Surinam, September 15, 1979.*

First of all, I want to express my great happiness in meeting with all of you together at this session of CIAL. Father Guilmette, your General Councillor, has his share of responsibility for my being here. He never misses a chance to get us « involved » in Latin America!

*Unique character of Latin America*

When coming here, I recalled the Joint Session with the General Council at Asunción in 1974; I also thought of Puebla, of its impact on

the Church, and of the very special and unique character of Latin America.

After the Puebla event, Henri Fesquet, *Le Monde's* special correspondent at the Conference, wrote of this uniqueness, and not without a bit of disappointment:

*We must resign ourselves. Latin America is not France. Here, affective and intellectual behavior differs from theirs. Here, logic and reasoning are indispensable; negative criticism is spontaneous; scepticism is frequent, even voiced protests. In Latin America, on the contrary, one proceeds by impulse and tries to find the good side of things. It's not by mere chance that a smile is a means of privileged communication. Credit is more willingly given to people than to ideas. Hope is hard to kill... (Le Monde, February 14, 1979).*

I have the impression that this is also true of the Oblates at work in Latin America. As they gradually let themselves be permeated by the Latin American reality, they change, they are transformed, they finally reach the point where they constitute a distinctive group that is unique in the Congregation. Another result is that they can

bring to our Institute something special and unique. Having themselves been « evangelized » by the South American, they can in turn « evangelize » their brother Oblates and do so not so much by their words as by their example and the witness of their lives.

In what sense? I have given this a lot of thought recently and, as a result, there remain uppermost in my mind three thoughts which I simply share with you. Here is what the Congregation most expects of you missionaries in Latin America.

### *Option for the poor*

This option already exists among you and is a testimony to all Oblates. You go everywhere to the poor and you work for and with them. « Your brothers, your dear brothers, your worthy brothers », as the Founder once said, are the Indians, the *campesinos*, the miners, the sub-proletarians of shantytowns, the Hmong refugees of French Guiana... You live with them, you give witness to God's love among them, you are Christ's presence to them, you are — it is often repeated — their voice, « the voice

of the voiceless », and you help them — with your limitations, sufferings and difficulties — in their efforts to achieve full liberation.

From the bottom of my heart I congratulate and thank you for all this.

### *Option for fidelity*

The option for faithfulness to the Gospel, to the whole Gospel; for faithfulness to the Church, for faithfulness to man, for faithfulness to your vocation as Oblates. In this I think I express an idea of capital importance found in the various messages of the Pope during his visit to Puebla. It is the Gospel in its entirety than can save man. One cannot single out one page and let fall the other.

The Gospel is love for man to the point of giving one's life for him, but it is also the love for God, the Creator and Father of all men.

The Gospel is the People of God, but it is also the ecclesial institution and its magisterium.

Man needs food and suffers from injustice: but he also thirsts for God, hungers for his Word

and his Body, and awaits the salvation which surpasses the limits of this world.

The Oblate vocation is to proclaim the Gospel to the poor, but it is also to consecrate oneself totally to God in the community of one's brothers, in the joyous acceptance of poverty, chastity and obedience.

This option to faithfulness, to an integral faithfulness, is everywhere difficult, and perhaps more so in Latin America. You are here in a state of constant challenge. The human environment, the social and political conditions which prevail here do not facilitate — far from it — the harmonious integration of these differing elements. Your struggles and your successes, the efforts you make to maintain a dynamic equilibrium of this sort are not without influence on your Oblate brothers throughout the world.

### *Option for hope and in favour of smiling*

The hope of a South American, we have said, is « hard to kill ». As Christians and missionaries you must have hearts filled with hope, even sometimes at the risk of being taken for fools. This

is the folly of the Gospel. « I know him in whom I have believed » (2 *Timothy* 1:12); « In him who is the source of my strength, I have strength for everything » (*Philippians* 4:13).

Your task is enormous, the obstacles are numerous, your means remain poor ones, but God's grace is with you and certainly his Spirit is at work with faith and courage, the work of forming basic communities and preparing Christian leaders, the ministry of priestly, religious and Oblate vocations! All the while, keep smiling and be relaxed. You are the ones who plant and water, but it is the Lord who makes the plant grow.

In conclusion and in the names of Father George, Father Guilmette and all the members of the Central Team, I wish to reiterate the confidence, admiration and friendship of the General Administration. May our Blessed Founder help us all to live in authenticity our vocation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate, missionaries to the poor!

## **27. TO THE OBLATES OF LATIN AMERICA**

At the service of the poor. - Vocations. - Sharing the peoples' joys and sufferings. - The prophetic quality of your religious life.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Rome, January 2, 1980.*

After two months spent with you, I would feel remiss if I did not write you a word of thanks, friendship and encouragement. Father Lorenzo Roy, my faithful travelling companion, joins me in expressing his gratitude and in sending you his best wishes.

*At the service of the poor*

We were received everywhere like brothers and were able to see with our own eyes the won-

derful work of evangelization you are accomplishing among the poor. In nearly all the countries of Latin America, if a person wants to find the Oblates, he will have to go to the poor in the *favelas* or in the interior of the country where the Indians live. « The Lord has sent me to evangelize the poor ». Without any doubt you live this *motto* of our Congregation. All the Bishops I met — some twenty of them — gave witness on that score. In Recife Archbishop Helder Camara told me: « The Oblates are wherever you find the poor with all their troubles and problems. I thank the Oblates... The poor know Don Helder, but Father Larry (Rosebaugh) knows the poor! ». The Bishops' only regret is that you are not more numerous in their dioceses!

### *Vocations*

On that subject the past few years have seen new hopes arise — vocations now seem to thrive on the South American continent. With all my heart I encourage you in your efforts in favour of vocations. Go forward with faith and perseverance. The Lord can only bless your efforts.

Set your hearts on forming men like our Blessed Founder wanted them: « interior men, truly apostolic men », firm in their faith and filled with zeal for the poorest and the most abandoned.

### *Sharing the peoples' joys and sufferings*

Living in Latin America as you are, you necessarily live also the sufferings, anguish, difficulties and joys of the Latin American Church. As Oblates, do you have something special to offer this Church? Yes, you undoubtedly have. Surely your love and your generosity in the service of the poor, your closeness to them. Surely also your availability and your missionary daring. But there are two other values as well, both at the core of our Oblate vocation, which could be increasingly developed to great advantage by incarnating them in your cultural milieu: I mean the very prophetic quality of our religious consecration and the witness of our prayer life.

### *The prophetic quality of your religious life*

Your primary prophecy is that of your life. The authenticity of your being poor, chaste, obe-

dient, the authenticity of fraternal communion among yourselves and with other apostolic laborers, is more effective in the long run to proclaim the Kingdom and to bring salvation in Jesus Christ to people than is exterior activity. The two are essential to an Oblate. He must develop the one and the other, while taking care however to base the second on the first.

The witness of your prayer life takes on a similar value. In your region as elsewhere certain Oblates pray much and others very little. The Latin American Church is searching for new ways of prayer, more incarnated, more engaged in life: to experience God at the very heart of life and of liberating action, to meet there the Virgin Mary through the deep and very simple faith of the people. That is good, very good, but there is also the need for people to become aware that we are truly seeking God and that he is eminently our Friend. On this score, certain exercises of community and private prayer, and also the value we give to the celebration of the Eucharist, retain and will always retain a special importance.

In closing I recommend that you make a serious study of the Puebla document and of CLAR's

publication (no. 42), *Experiencia Latinoamericana de Vida Religiosa 1959-1979*.

May the Virgin of Guadalupe, under whose patronage I began my visit in Latin America, be for you all a source of light, strength and joy!

## 28. TO THE MEMBERS OF THE OBLATE CONFERENCE OF ASIA-OCEANIA

Some impressions. - Some problems. - Go into the future without fear.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Address

*Itami, Japan, November 26, 1976.*

First of all, I want to tell you how happy I was to participate in your meeting and to thank you for your brotherly hospitality.

You yourselves have presented to the Conference members the situation in your Provinces and Delegations. I am on my first visit in Asia as Superior General. Consequently, my knowledge remains limited. However, I do wish to mention certain impressions and then I would be happy to share with you on some particular problems.

*Some impressions*

An initial fact is easily noted: the Oblates in Asia are still a small group in a vast region of millions and millions of people. That reminds me of the first years of the Congregation in France and in America: small groups of five, ten, fifteen Oblates who progressively exerted a strong influence on many people. It is more by the quality of your presence and of your action, than by your number, that you will succeed in the work of evangelizing. You must look to the future with confidence, insisting on the quality of your men and on the solidarity which binds them together.

A second impression: as a Region, as a group of Provinces and Delegations, one notes a great variety: the variety of numbers, v. g. Sri Lanka with nearly 300 members and Thailand with a dozen; the variety of cultures, v. g. if we compare Japan, the Philippines and Australia. There are challenges to face here. This variety in addition to the distances can provoke an attitude of individualism, of isolationism, and make more difficult the development of the Region as such. In this matter, I was happy to see the cordiality and facility of relationships among yourselves. You

must believe firmly in the possibilities of your regional Conference and do all you can to assure its development.

Finally, one last impression. In some aspects, you are ahead of other Regions. You have the advantage of an excellent guide, namely, the « Oblate Missionary Strategy in Asia ». I reread this document before coming to Asia. It is, at the same time, inspirational and practical. I encourage you to read these few pages often and to use them as a guide for your activity. At the end of the document it is said: « We face our missionary task in Asia with confidence, enthusiasm and optimism ». I hope it is true! In point of fact, it should be true, even if you have, as others do in other places, some problems to face. I will mention three of them, on which, as I said, I would be glad to share.

### *Some problems*

First, there is the matter of some missionaries asking to return to their home Province, mostly because of feelings of personal insecurity. Surely you have to help these men and, as much as

possible, reduce the causes of this insecurity. However, the future of your Provinces will be in the local Oblates, and so you have to promote, as much as you can, the local vocations and take special care of these vocations. It is also necessary to promote the ministries of the Christian laity.

A second difficulty concerns your relationships with the Bishops. This is not a general problem but one which seems to exist more particularly in two places. For me, two things are clear: we are men of the Bishops because we are men of the Church, but, on the other hand, we have, as Oblates, a particular vocation or mission in the Church — we are not diocesan priests. The tension sometimes is inevitable and the only practical solution is either to accept a certain compromise or to leave a diocese. The decision of leaving a diocese is rarely the best, especially when we consider the future and when the place is an important and central one.

On this issue, I think we should try to maintain the dialogue, and a cordial one, with the Bishops. Then we must make clear and satisfactory contracts with the Bishops — and in this

matter the General Administration is disposed to help. After that, what we need is mutual collaboration for the good of the people and of the Church. Recently, Pope Paul VI invited the Superiors General of Europe to cooperate in this way with the Bishops, because of the decrease in diocesan clergy manpower; but he also asked the Bishops to respect as much as possible the charism of each Institute.

A last question concerns the future of the Oblate Brothers in your Provinces. What will be their role? And is it your intention to promote this vocation among your local people? Generally speaking, Oblate Brothers have been a great help and their presence a grace of God in the Congregation. If we are decided to continue to invite Christian men to join us in the Institute as Brothers, we have to determine better their role and to assure them the professional and spiritual formation they need.

*Go into the future without fear*

Before concluding, I want to thank you for accepting to serve the Congregation and your

Oblate brothers as Provincials. It is not an easy function in today's religious life, but it is a necessary one. Be assured of the confidence, help, and support of the General Administration. I know how dedicated to the Region your General Concillor, Father Dalston Forbes, is. The other Council members are also disposed to help you in any way they can.

I often recall the words the Holy Father addressed to our Chapter: « Our world more than ever needs missionaries who are totally available... Christ will certainly be your support... Go forward without fear ». This is what we must do with the help of God's grace and Mary's patronage.

## 29. TO THE OBLATES OF ASIA-OCEANIA

Expression of thanks. - Cooperation between Provinces. - Making Christ present in Asia, Oceania. - The Congregation needs saints.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Homily

*Cotabato, Philippines, November 28, 1982.*

We are at the end of our session, a session that finishes in hope, on this first Sunday of Advent.

*Expression of thanks*

I could say to you, in beginning this homily, the words which St. Paul one day wrote to the Corinthians: « I thank my God for you, because of the favor he has bestowed on you in Christ Jesus » (1 *Corinthians* 1:4). In fact, it is with

hearts full of gratitude for what they have seen and heard that the members of the General Administration will leave Asia, in a few weeks, to return to Rome or to their Regions.

Your session has all the appearances of a new departure, a step forward into the future. And, for this new departure, I would like to offer you two thoughts from today's liturgy.

### *Cooperation between Provinces*

The first I take from the prophet Jeremiah: « The days are coming when I will fulfill the promise » (*Jeremiah 33:14*), because the Lord is near, because the time has come. Yes, the Lord is near, he is already with us. But in a more down to earth sense, I would also say to you: the days are coming, the days of greater cooperation between your Provinces, Delegations and missions, the days of a deepening and strengthening of your Region as a Region. This too can be a way for a new coming of the Lord among you.

I know the difficulties you are encountering: difficulties of geographical distances and of lan-

guages, difficulties of the extreme variety of countries which you are evangelizing — Australia is not Pakistan and Bangladesh is not Japan! — difficulties also of the diversity of temperaments and of missionary methods. All that is true, but the time has come to take a step forward, to establish certain realistic structures, however simple they may be, which can assure the continuity of your cooperation and your growing regional unity.

I am happy to see that the present meeting has helped you make progress on this point. And I am sure that your General Councillor, Father Desmond O'Donnell, is disposed to do all he can to help you in this regard. I want to thank him for his dedication to your Region.

### *Making Christ present in Asia-Oceania*

My second thought is one of hope and of faith which I borrow from the letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians: « May the Lord increase you and make you overflow with love for one another and for all... may he strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before our God and Father » (1 *Thessalonians* 3:12-13).

You must move toward the future with great hope, because Christ is with you and he is your strength. As Oblates, you are committed to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in working to evangelize the poor. « The call of Jesus Christ... draws us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Christ thus invites us to follow him and to share in his mission through word and work » (C. 1). « We are men ' set apart for the Gospel » (*Romans* 1:1), men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to cooperate with him draws us to know him more deeply, to identify with him, to let him live in us » (C. 2).

These articles of our Constitutions are the foundation of our life and of our mission. It is good to think of this at the end of our session. We are present in Asia and in Oceania to make Christ's presence more visible and more effective in the countries where we work, and to do so in our own Oblate way, however modest that might be. Our style of life, the different activities of our ministry, our apostolic initiatives and experiments must be judged and discerned in the light of this fundamental criterion. « Growing

in faith, hope and love, we commit ourselves to be a leaven of the Beatitudes at the heart of the world » (C. 11).

If we remain faithful to this vocation we have nothing to fear. The Lord is with us, and will remain with us, and will make our work bear fruit, whatever might be the appearances.

Therein lies, I am sure, the source of your serenity and of your peace, in the midst of the struggles and difficulties of your ministry.

### *The Congregation needs saints*

A way of salvation for people, this vocation is also a way of holiness for the Oblates. The Congregation needs saints, holy men, in each of its Regions; and, I suppose, these saints will be rather different from Region to Region. Those produced by Asia or Oceania will not necessarily be altogether similar to those given us in Africa or Latin America.

May Mary Immaculate, who received Christ in order to give him to the world, help you grow in faith, hope and love!

### **30. TO THE OBLATES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The Oblates' work in the past. - New needs. - Daring. - Sharing. - Hope.

L.J.C. et M.I.

*Roma, Lesotho, January 31, 1976.*

During the past few weeks the members of the General Council and I have had the pleasure of visiting with you. We were warmly received everywhere. We came as brothers, with a two-fold desire: to bring you signs of our confidence and support, and to get to know you better — in a sense, to let ourselves be evangelized by you.

During the course of this visit, we took part in your Interprovincial Conference from January 21 to 28, during which our brothers, the Oblate Bishops of Southern Africa, also joined us for one day.

Our stay is now coming to an end. Before leaving, however, I wish to thank you in the name of the General Council for your brotherly welcome. Special thanks, also, to the Province of Lesotho for allowing us to hold our plenary session in their Provincial House.

### *The Oblates' work in the past*

The Oblates have accomplished, and continue doing, marvellous work in Southern Africa. They implanted the Church here by the witness of holy men like Father Gérard, by preaching God's Word, by organizing divine worship and the many works of human development, education especially. You should be proud of the past and continue its work.

### *New needs*

But now new needs are making themselves felt. For several days the Central Team listened to the Provincials and delegates of the Region as they attempted to formulate resolutions in

response to what they see as the most urgent needs. We took part in their deliberations. Wholeheartedly we approve the resolutions adopted. Together with the ongoing formation program planned to begin this year, and the perennial concern about local vocations, those resolutions are essentially related to the priorities reached by the Interprovincial Conference in April 1975. They provide some clear orientations of Oblate policy in Southern Africa.

The present session along with our own visits in the Provinces have helped to pinpoint some of the needs which we as Oblates must answer. There is the need for greater energy in working to promote social justice, a need for greater commitment to serving an emerging working class, a need further to develop and diversify the ministries of the Christian laity, a need for greater inter-Oblate sharing and for better dialogue with the Bishops, a need for Christian communities that are more deeply evangelical and better inserted into their milieu... You must answer all these needs courageously and boldly, according to the spirit our Founder has given us.

It is to the poor, above all, that you must go,

more and more so all the time — more and more confident of your brothers' backing and in communion with them. The Church must evangelize. « It is the Church who has the task of evangelizing » (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 16). The more united you are among yourselves in genuine communities, and united with those responsible for the Church, the more our apostolate of evangelization will bear lasting fruit.

During the present visit we heard a triple call: a call for more boldness, a call for greater sharing and, finally, a call to deeper hope.

### *Daring*

A call for more boldness, for greater willingness to leave the beaten path in order to answer the new needs of the poor. Today the Christian conscience has become much more sensitive to our collective sins — sins such as exploitation, social injustice, contempt for the rights of man. It is a sign of the times, and for us Oblates it becomes a call from God to new forms of evangelization. It is up to us to respond thereto, not as political leaders but as missionaries of the poor, in the name of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### *Sharing*

A call for greater sharing at all levels: at the prayer level, at the level of financial support, on the plane of apostolic action. Nowhere in any of your Provinces must a single Oblate feel alone or abandoned by his brothers. Progressively the point must be reached where all gifts received are put in common so that equitable sharing becomes a reality. Among yourselves you must arrive at genuinely evangelized communities which, in turn, become evangelizing communities (cf. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 13).

### *Hope*

Finally, a call to deeper hope. Even if, humanly speaking, the future may seem bleak at times and difficulties painful, especially difficulties of change and profound evolution, you cannot allow yourselves to despair. You must keep pushing ahead, remaining strong in your faith, as did the first Oblates who came to Southern Africa. They persisted despite the worst obstacles. All of us are members of that same family, we are animated by the same spirit. May Blessed Eugene de Mazenod always be your guide and your support!

## INDEXES



## INDEX OF PERSONS AND PLACES

- Abraham: 165.  
Africa: 8, 111, 141, 176, 217.  
Aix-en-Provence: 11, 12, 133.  
Ajaccio: 153.  
Alaska: 77.  
America: 208.  
America, North...: 111.  
America, South...: 176.  
Anchorage: 77.  
Arctic Ocean: 40.  
Arnoux, O. M. I., Father: 118.  
Arrupe, S. J., Father: 53, 67.  
Asia: 80, 81, 111, 217.  
Asia-Oceania: 8, 46, 131-136, 207-217.  
Asunción: 196.  
Aubry, O. M. I., Jean-Paul: 122.  
Australia: 8, 46, 47, 49-50, 73, 208, 215.  
Austria: 59, 60.
- Bagong Barrio: 47.  
Bangladesh: 80, 215.  
Barvaux: 60.  
Beaudoin, O. M. I., Yvon: 106.  
Beauregard, O. M. I., Raynald: 57.  
Belgium-North: 40, 105.

- Belgium-South: 59, 60, 105.  
Belleville: 190.  
Billens: 66.  
Bolivia: 25, 75.  
Bourrelier, O. M. I., Father: 91.  
Brazil: 188.  
Brussels: 61.
- Camara, Bishop Helder: 203.  
Cameroon, North...: 153.  
Cameroon Chad: 106, 142.  
Canada: 8, 24, 73, 113, 174-180.  
Canadian North: 40, 79, 103.  
Canadian North-East: 178.  
Canadian North-West: 40.  
Canadian West: 40.  
Cap-de-la-Madeleine: 54.  
Cayenne: 70.  
Central (Province, USA): 62.  
Centre Saint-Pierre Apôtre: 54.  
Charlebois, O. M. I., S. D. Bishop Ovide: 176.  
Charrier, O. M. I., René: 71.  
China Sea: 50  
Coppenrath, Bishop Michel: 151.  
Cotabato: 131, 213.  
Courtès, O. M. I., Hippolyte: 118, 179.
- Dacca: 81.  
Deschâtelets, O. M. I., Léo: 90.
- East Orland: 63.  
Eastern (Province, USA): 62.  
England: 24.  
Europe: 8, 40, 55, 59, 70, 73, 111, 113, 161-173.

- Fesquet, Henri: 197.  
Fitzpatrick, O. M. I., James: 8.  
Forbes, O. M. I., Dalston: 212.  
France: 54, 71, 121, 184, 197, 208.  
France-Benelux: 60.  
Fréjus: 153.  
Fremantle: 47.  
French Guiana: 70, 183, 198.  
French Polynesia: 150, 151.
- Gamaliel: 117.  
George, O. M. I., Francis: 201.  
Gérard, O. M. I., Ven. Joseph: 219.  
Germany: 40, 161, 168.  
Gilmont, J. F.: 13.  
Grandin, O. M. I., Ven. Bishop Vital: 176.  
Grenoble: 118.  
Grouard: 153.  
Guadalupe: 206.  
Guilmette, O. M. I., Leo: 196, 201.
- Haiti: 24, 71, 188.  
Hogan, O. M. I., Patrick: 42.  
Holland: 105.  
Hong Kong: 46.  
Honorat, O. M. I., Jean-Baptiste: 175, 177, 179.  
Hudson Bay: 74.  
Hünfeld: 161, 168, 172.  
Hurley, Bishop Frank: 77.
- Idiofa: 108.  
Ifwanzondo: 82.  
Illinois: 190.  
India: 80.

Indonesia: 46, 47, 49.

Ireland: 24.

Italy: 53, 72, 82, 83, 100.

Itami: 207.

Jakarta: 49.

James Bay: 178.

Japan: 46, 47, 48, 188, 207, 208, 215.

Jesus Christ: **See subject index.**

Jetté, O. M. I., Fernand: 114.

John Paul I: 65.

John Paul II: 59, 61, 121, 129, 143, 167, 171.

Karachi: 81.

Kedl, O. M. I., Aloysius: 8.

King, Mackenzie: 171.

Kinshasa: 82.

Kisemanito Centre: 153.

Kowalczyk, O. M. I., S. D. Anthony: 176.

Labrador: 178.

Lamirande, Emilien: 14-15.

Laos: 25, 39, 45.

Latin America: 8, 56, 72, 111, 144-149, 196-206, 217.

Lebanon: 191.

Lefebvre, O. M. I., Maurice: 75.

Lesotho: 57, 105, 153, 218, 219.

Ligtvoet, O. M. I., Egeid: 42.

Los Angeles: 150.

Lyons: 54.

Madras: 81.

Maine: 63.

Malaysia: 80.

- Mandouze, André: 65.  
Manila: 131.  
Manitoba-Keewatin: 122.  
Manyeli, O. M. I., Thomas: 105.  
Maria Taferl: 60.  
Maroua: 153.  
Marseilles: 7, 14, 153.  
Mary: **See subject index.**  
Mary of the Incarnation: 108.  
Maryknoll: 49.  
Mayer, O. S. B., Archbishop: 112.  
Mazenod, Blessed Eugene de: 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20,  
21, 22, 26, 27, 34, 38, 82, 106, 115, 116, 120, 121, 124,  
125, 130, 133, 152-153, 176, 179, 185, 195, 222.  
Mexico: 74, 176, 183, 188, 189.  
Miami: 71.  
Mille, O. M. I., Father: 124.  
Montreal: 54, 71, 175.  
Motte, O. M. I., René: 42.  
Mount Mary Immaculate: 64.
- Nadal, S. J., Jérôme: 13.  
New Zealand: 46.  
N.-D.-du-Rosaire (Province): 178.  
Novalis Centre: 54.
- Oceania: 213, 216, 217.  
O'Donnell, O. M. I., Desmond: 215.  
O'Reilly, O. M. I., Michael: 112, 113.  
Oslo: 79.  
Ottawa: 54, 74, 124, 153, 171.  
Our Lady of the Snows: 63.
- Pacific Ocean: 150.  
Pakistan: 80, 215.

- Papeete: 150, 151.  
Paramaribo: 196.  
Pascal, Blaise: 128.  
Paul, Saint: 13, 29, 111, 123, 125, 143, 165, 213, 215.  
Paul VI: 43, 164, 166, 170, 183, 194, 211.  
Peter, Saint: 85, 126.  
Petru, O. M. I., Augustine: 189.  
Philippines: 46, 47, 48, 131, 135, 188, 208, 213.  
Pironio, Cardinal Eduardo: 114.  
Poland: 40, 79, 83, 100.  
Portland: 63.  
Poudrière, La: 60.  
Poupard, Bishop: 194.  
Puebla: 196, 205.  
Puerto Rico: 183, 188.
- Recife: 203.  
Richard, O. M. I., Gustave: 101.  
Richelieu: 113.  
Rievaulx, Aelred de: 13.  
Rio Grande Valley: 63.  
Roma (Lesotho): 153, 218.  
Rome: 21, 27, 34, 39, 42, 46, 52, 59, 105, 107, 112,  
122, 123, 137, 202, 214.  
Rosebaugh, O. M. I., Larry: 203.  
Roy, Cardinal Maurice: 43.  
Roy, O. M. I., Laurent: 202.
- St. John the Baptist (Province, USA): 62, 63, 150.  
St. Joseph (Province): 178.  
St. Joseph, Faaa: 151.  
St. Louis: 63.  
Saint-Norbert: 174.  
St. Peter's (Province): 178.

- San Antonio: 63, 64, 69, 181, 191.  
San José: 181.  
São Paulo: 144.  
Scandinavia: 79, 188.  
Semeria, O. M. I., Father: 72.  
Sion, O. M. I., Paul: 113.  
South(ern) Africa: 40, 54, 55, 57, 83, 188, 218-222.  
Southern (Province, USA): 62, 64, 69, 181, 189.  
Spain: 27, 28, 54, 83.  
Sri Lanka: 80, 208.  
Stella Plage: 61.  
Surinam: 71, 183, 196.  
Suva: 152.  
Sydney: 150.
- Tahiti: 150, 151, 155.  
Tempier, O. M. I., Father: 37, 120, 121, 129.  
Texas: 69, 181.  
Thailand: 46, 80, 208.  
Timothy, Saint: 14, 125.  
Toussaint, O. M. I., Bishop René: 108.
- United States (USA): 8, 24, 49, 59, 62, 70, 73, 176, 181-195.  
United States Oblate Provinces: **See Central, Eastern, Western, St. John the Baptist, Southern.**  
University of Saint Paul: 74.  
University Seminary, Ottawa: 153.
- Vanpetegem, O. M. I., Lucien: 161, 170.  
Vaudricourt: 61.  
Velaines: 60.  
Vietnam: 49.  
Villa Cavalletti: 138.

Villa Maria: 175.

Villeneuve, O. M. I., Cardinal Rodrigue: 37, 171.

Vincens, O. M. I., Ambroise: 123.

Voillaume, R.: 67.

West Transvaal: 41, 105.

Western (Province, USA): 62, 64.

Zaire: 25, 60, 82, 100, 105-111.

## SUBJECT INDEX

- Act (time to...): 120-121.  
Adaptation: 19, 139-141.  
Announcing the Word of God: 15, 17, 29, 48, 56-57, 86, 94, 130, 152, 164, 179, 195, 219.  
Apartheid: 40, 57. Cfr. **Human rights and justice.**  
Apostles (the Twelve): 12, 109, 162.  
Apostles of certainty: 77.  
Apostolic men: 16, 38, 96.  
Apostolic priorities: 43, 69-77, 187, 190, 220.  
Apostolic zeal: 49, 204.  
Approval of Constitutions: 34-36, 91, 112-121.  
Atheists: 72, 169.  
Authenticity of our life: 21-22, 44, 56-58, 75-77, 87-88, 138, 164, 167, 171, 187, 200-201, 204-205, 208.  
Availability: 126-127, 183, 204.
- Basic Church communities: 74, 201.  
Beatification of Eugene de Mazenod: 12, 18, 21-24, 26, 27, 118.  
Bishops: 127, 154, 180, 203, 210-211, 218, 220.  
Boldness (daring): 36, 41, 55, 103, 204, 216, 220.  
Brothers: 16, 118, 172, 180, 211.

- Carmel, Aix-en-Provence: 12.  
Catechesis: 52-58.  
Celibacy: 30.  
Church: 15, 18, 35-38, 65, 94, 114, 116-120, 125, 129, 137, 139, 152, 154, 199, 204, 221.  
Closeness to the people: 27, 47, 53, 62, 145, 155, 204.  
Community: 11, 13, 125-126, 135, 140-141, 148, 172, 185, 221, 222.  
Confession: 139, 156.  
Confidence (trust): 107-108, 126.  
Congregation: 12-13, 23-24, 92, 140-142, 146, 161.  
Constancy (fidelity): 25, 47, 107-108, 124-125, 222.  
Constitutions and Rules: 35-37, 79, 85-87, 89-97, 112-121.  
Contracts: 210.  
Conversion: 75-77, 95-96, 137-139, 142, 164, 185.  
Cooperation: 145, 171, 177-178, 193, 200.  
Courage (daring): 57, 121, 155, 201, 221.  
Creativity (searching for new ways): 41, 55, 60, 164, 165, 205.
- Defeatism: 165, 169.  
Desires (having great...): 104, 121.  
Development: cfr. **Oblate works**.  
Dialogue: 146-148, 182, 210, 219.  
Difference of mentality: 85.  
Dignity of the poor: 15, 47, 133, 155, 164.  
Discernment: 17, 32, 43-44, 55, 107, 117, 125, 172, 216-217.  
Discipline (personal): 138.  
Divine office: 139.  
Doctrine (teaching): 55, 66, 125.
- Eucharist: 133, 205.  
Evaluation of commitments: 43, 55, 187-188.  
Evangelization, self...: 18, 107, 198, 218.

- Evangelization, world...: 52-58, 137, 147, 164, 203-204, 208, 216, 221.
- Faith: 25, 67, 77, 85, 100, 107, 110-111, 116, 133, 155, 161-162, 163-164, 194, 200-201, 215.
- Fidelity: 22, 66-67, 86, 93, 124-126, 134, 199-200.
- Formation: 17-18, 54, 150-157, 188, 220.
- Formators need for...: 80-81, 152-156.
- Foundation of Oblates: 12-13, 20.
- Founder: 87, 96. Cfr. **Mazenod, Blessed Eugene, de.**
- Fraternal charity: 49, 57, 140-141.
- Friendship with Jesus Christ: 18. Cfr. **Jesus Christ.**
- General Administration(Council): 43-44.
- General Chapter: 78, 83-88, 92-93.
- God: 110-111, 133, 199-200, 205.
- Gospel: 11-12, 125, 136, 199.
- Gospel radicalism (totality): 86, 102, 171.
- Heaven: 149.
- Hell: 149.
- Heroism: 25, 57-58.
- Holiness: 118, 176, 193-194, 217, 219.
- Holy Year: 23.
- Hope: 82, 87-88, 106, 111, 121, 165, 192, 195, 200, 209, 211-212 215-216, 222.
- Human rights: 49-51, 149, 176-177, 221.
- Immigrants: 62-63, 70-72, 169, 175.
- Incarnation in the world: 14, 31-33, 148.
- Incarnation of Christ: 29-31.
- Inculturation: 141-142, 145, 220.
- Illness: 122, 180.
- Inner freedom: 31, 92, 178, 185, 187, 192.
- Insecurity: 209.

- Interior life: 44, 204. Cfr. **Oblate**.  
Interiorization of Constitutions: 87-88, 89-97.  
Internationalism: 141-142, 145.
- Jesus Christ: 12, 17-18, 28-32, 44, 48, 77, 87, 91, 94, 95, 125, 128, 133-134, 153-154, 195, 216.  
Justice: 49-51, 55, 134, 145, 155, 176-177, 199, 220, 221.
- Laity: 19, 41-42, 73-75, 103, 145, 177, 182, 186, 210, 220.  
Language (tongue): 15, 29, 54.  
Liberation: 40, 48, 86, 145, 149, 199.  
Liberation theology: 145, 147.  
Love of people: 25-26, 46, 51, 109-110, 133, 155, 166-167, 199.
- Mary: 26, 33, 38, 45, 68, 88, 94, 97, 154, 155, 188, 195, 205, 206, 212, 217.  
Marxist-Leninist: 56.  
Men of thought: 146, 184.  
Men of today: 52-53, 200-201.  
Ministries, new...: 103, 177, 185, 210.  
Minorities: 184-185.  
Mission **ad gentes**: 18, 152, 175-176, 188.  
Mission received: 17-18, 25, 114.  
Mission which shapes us: 108-109.  
Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate: 19, 60.
- Needs of men: 37, 133. Cfr. **Needs of the poor**.  
Needs of the poor: 40, 70-71, 169-170, 220, 221.  
Novices: 84, 104, 180, 193.
- Obedience: 25, 31, 122, 129, 139.  
Oblate charism: 12-13, 87, 102, 118, 184, 210.  
Oblate, honorary...: 19.

- Oblate identity: 61-62, 64, 102, 187, 193.  
Oblate Regions: 8, 43, 147-148, 163, 172, 182-183, 191-192, 196-197, 208-209, 214-215.  
Oblate spirit: 121.  
Oblate (what he is): 44, 58, 61-62, 95-96, 124-125, 152-153, 187, 204.  
Oblate works: 42-43, 47, 164, 219.  
Oblate Year: 20.  
Offering to the Holy Father: 24.  
Orientations for the future: 17-19.
- Pardon: 23, 157.  
Politics: 52-53, 146-147, 221.  
Poor: 14, 15, 17, 29, 31-32, 62-63, 70-73, 84, 91, 110-111, 131-136, 145, 149, 166, 169, 179, 184, 198-199, 202-203, 221.  
Pope: 24, 65-68, 100, 129-130, 199.  
Poverty: 30, 57, 76, 86, 94, 145, 178, 185-186.  
Prayer: 18, 23, 76, 94, 138-139, 204-206, 221.  
Preaching: Cfr. **Announcing the Word of God**.  
Priest: 81-82, 133-134, 152-157.  
Prophets (prophetic): 51, 58, 126, 179, 204-205.  
Provinces: 43-44, 172, 186-187, 191.  
Provincials: 211-212.
- Refugees: 49-50. Cfr. **Immigrants**.  
Reconciliation: 23, 137-144, 157.  
Regions: Cfr. **Oblate**.  
Religious life: 16, 18, 138-139, 167, 171, 200, 204-205.  
Respect for the poor: Cfr. **Dignity of the poor**.  
Rules: Cfr. **Constitutions and Rules**.
- Sacraments: 134, 139.  
Scholastics: 83, 84, 104, 180, 203-204.  
Seminaries: 151-154.

- Servant of the People of God: 122-130.  
Sharing: 19, 24, 75, 178.  
Simplicity: 67, 128-129.  
Sin (personal and social): 143, 221.  
Smile: 197, 201.  
Solidity of faith: 77, 85, 108, 162, 192, 222.  
Specialists, need for Oblate...: 146, 184-185.  
Spirit: 136, 183, 201.  
Spiritual renewal: 26, 37-38, 138-139, 165, 185-186.  
Strength of spirit: 25, 55.  
Suffering: 25, 47, 57-58, 67, 81, 107-108, 199.  
Superior General: 11-12.  
Synod of Bishops: 137.
- Unity among Oblates: 49, 56-57, 85, 86, 135, 141-142,  
147-148, 166, 178, 179, 186-187, 192-193, 208, 215, 221.  
Universality: Cfr. **Internationalism**.
- Vatican Council II: 138-139.  
Vitality of Provinces: 48, 64.  
Vocations: 17, 61, 64, 78-82, 84, 88, 98-104, 106-107, 136,  
145, 165, 170, 179-180, 188, 193-194, 201, 203-204,  
210, 220.
- Weariness: 139.  
Witness of life: 29, 49, 57-58, 99, 100, 135-136, 163, 167,  
171, 178, 198, 204-205.  
World of today: 41.
- Young people: 72, 81, 102, 140, 141, 169.



