

Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate



Two hundred years of **Transformation** of pieces of wood and dead cats

It has been said that a violin or a guitar are nothing more than a piece of wood and a dead cat – yet once that wood and the gut are carefully worked on, they can produce powerful music at the hands of a player. A person could remain a useless “piece of wood and a dead cat” unless given the opportunity to be made into something useful like a musical instrument. This is the image that comes to mind as we celebrate 200 years of the existence of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate – 200 years of preaching the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ to those whom society regards as useless and pushes to the outer edges.

It all began with the transformation of Eugene de Mazenod himself – at the sight of the Cross. This directionless and “useless” young man allowed Jesus the Saviour to transform him into a focused and “useful” musical instrument. For the next 55 years as the Saviour’s instrument, the music that was played through his life was exactly what Jesus is shown to be doing in the Gospel: He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to bring new sight to the blind, to set captives free, and to proclaim God’s time of grace and favour. In other words, to accompany people to discover their dignity in God’s eyes and allow themselves to be transformed by the Saviour. (Luke chapter 4).

On 25 January 1816, five priests brought the musical instruments of their lives to the former Carmelite convent in Aix en Provence and joined Eugene in forming the orchestra of Missionaries to the most abandoned.

Their purpose? To journey with those whom society regarded as useless “pieces of wood and dead cats” and, through the power of the Word of God and the sacraments, to help them to become players of God’s music themselves.

Our bicentenary is an opportunity to give thanks for the transforming music of Jesus the Saviour. Over fourteen thousand men have brought the instruments of their lives to join the Oblate orchestra as brothers and priests since then. Hundreds of thousands of people’s lives have been transformed through their ministry in 67 countries.

Mission, however, does not fall out of the clouds! If Saint Eugene had not had benefactors who made it possible for him to start and maintain the orchestra, none of this could possibly have happened. Without the generous support of time and talents, donations

and prayers on the part of associates and friends, there would never have been this 200 year-old missionary orchestra today! Our bicentenary is thus the opportunity to recognize and give thanks for all the Oblate missionaries and for those who make it possible for them to minister.

All this has happened under the maternal inspiration and protection of Mary Immaculate, whom Caryl Houselander described as the “Reed of God.” What a beautiful image of a simple reed that God made into a musical instrument – and through her He breathed the music of the Incarnation: the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. As our Oblate Rule of Life expresses: “Open to the Spirit, she consecrated herself totally as lowly handmaid to the person and work of the Saviour. She received Christ in order to share him with all the world, whose hope he is. In her, we recognize the model of the Church’s faith and of our own.”

With Mary and Saint Eugene we give thanks for 200 years of transforming music – and for all those who have made it possible.

Fr. Frank Santucci OMI

New Provincial and Council

On 1st February 2016 in the chapel of the Oblate Provincial House Fr Peter Daly OMI PROVINCIAL was installed as Provincial for a three year term. Fr Peter is assisted by Oblate Frs. Christian Fini, John McGinty, Michael Twigg and Andrew Chen who with him make up the Provincial Council.



Director's Report

December was indeed a busy time in the MAMI office. Your special intentions were included in the Christmas Novena and, of course, each day in our Oblate communities we pray for our associates..

Sandra Dwyer, who is known to so many associates, maintains through the phone, emails and those who drop in, that special warm and caring way that St Eugene wanted to be a characteristic of his Oblates. The same can be said of Luisa Amati who looks after PIMs (Partners in Mission).

2015 MAMI appeals were held in Sorrento, Sefton, Tea Tree Gully, Burpengary and Fremantle. It was just wonderful to meet so many parishioners who support our Oblate missions. This year I hope to visit St John Vianney's, Moe/Newborough, Eagle Vale and Dernancourt. Sorrento has an annual appeal during the holiday season where support so generously comes not only from the local parish community but also from holiday makers from throughout Victoria and beyond. Members of our Oblate Family come from all parts of Australia. We Oblates are, indeed, grateful for such prayerful and material support.



A special word of thanks to the students and staff of our three Oblate Colleges who give magnificent support to our missions. I have discovered since becoming MAMI Director that most of the primary schools in the parishes entrusted to our pastoral care have teachers and students who have a real Oblate missionary spirit. Again a BIG THANKS.

Many of you may have noticed that mail seems to be taking longer to be delivered these days. Please be aware of this, especially if you are requiring Remembrance Certificates for the deceased.

In this 200th year of our Oblate Family may we are grow in our MISSIONARY SPIRIT.

**Fr John Sherman OMI
MAMI Director**

Report from Fr. Sholto OMI in Zimbabwe

The below picture is from our parish in Sauerstown which is a suburb of Bulawayo. We were able to build a bore hole and tank. Since the rainfall is usually low and there is only one rainy season in Bulawayo, a bore hole provides much needed water for the locals. It is not possible to have a garden without a bore hole. The cost of water from the Bulawayo City Council is very high. The cost of bore hole water is free after it is constructed. Currently, the garden is flourishing.

The wet season goes from October to April. Mainly corn is being grown.

We have about 20 parishioners who benefit from the garden. It helps supplement their diet and they sell some produce and make a little money.

About 10% of people are working and being paid. Some people who work are only paid a small amount of their wage eg. \$50 for the month instead of \$200 or they are paid for a months work every 3 months.

Bye
Fr Sholto



CELEBRATIONS

Death of Fr George Ryan OMI

One of God's gifts to Fr George was that he died conscious, ready and in full knowledge that his allotted days had been filled. Above all, he died in his full Oblate identity, surrounded by those he loved and whom, he knew, loved him. He was supported to the end by the love of his immediate family, the brothers and sisters, who meant so much to him, and by his Oblate family, both in Australia and in Ireland.

Afflicted by blindness, the great English poet John Milton, was heartbroken that he could no longer serve God through poetry. It was then, however, that he composed the magnificent sonnet, "On His Blindness", ending with the profound insight, "They also serve who only stand and wait". The sense of being unable to serve God in his final years changed to one of triumph.

Accepting the limitations of age and sickness, and waiting patiently the coming of the Lord is often our finest service and ministry, and the most difficult service that God asks from us. It was no different for George. In his final illness, his lifelong characteristics of gentleness, courtesy and appreciation never left him. He continued to serve his Lord as he awaited the fulfilment of God's plan for his life.

In 1958, George was the youngest of his class of 24 novices; his classmates realized much later that he came with a distinguished Oblate pedigree dating back to an uncle who died in South Africa early last century. George himself was a vital member of the Australian Province, arriving here in 1965 with three other young Oblates, the largest group ever to arrive in the Province. He spent almost all of his active priesthood in Australia, serving in Oblate parishes all over the country. He also served for a time in New Zealand and, for a short time, on the Province's Mission Band. He had an amazing ability to inspire love and friendship among his parishioners wherever he was; that affection lived on long after his departure.



His most recent appointment, due to ill health, was to Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Sefton, Sydney, where he had served so well as Parish Priest in the 1990s. Parishioners were delighted to welcome him back. He was renowned for his gentleness, compassion and approachability. They remember his quiet fidelity and faithful service, his visitation of the elderly and the sick, his sense of humour and his determination to involve as many as possible in the life of the parish. They also remember his love of sport, particularly golf. His Oblate brothers will remember his kindness, fidelity, hospitality, generosity and readiness to join them for a game of golf.

George never lost his sense of wonder nor his appreciation of God's creation. A keen gardener, he loved to tend the flowers and shrubs that he planted wherever he was stationed. As Parish Priest of Sefton in the 1990s, he transformed the church and grounds with hedges and flowers. When he returned, now semi-retired, he took up where he had left off and delighted in the results of his earlier work. People see the grounds and flowers as a memorial to his vision and his love of nature.

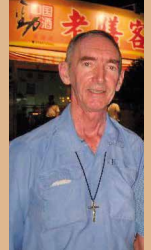
It was a huge disappointment for George and the people of Sefton that illness would prevent his return to the parish. It was certainly George's desire to lay his bones where he had spent his life labouring. I don't think, despite the love and care of his family and brother Oblates in Ireland, he would have undertaken the journey home if he had any idea that he would not be returning to his beloved Australia and its people. He found not only a ministry among the people and Oblates of Australia, but a home. Judging from the love and concern generated by his absence, it is easy to understand why he wished to be back among his people.

Fr Pat Moroney OMI

MISSIONS

Message from Fr John Wotherspoon OMI

Message from Fr John Wotherspoon OMI based in the Oblate China Mission in Hong Kong and among his many ministries is visiting the goals.



"I spent nearly a month in Kenya and Uganda, meeting with the families of 40 inmates in HK prisons, helping the families to form into support groups. Also campaigning to spread awareness about the danger of drug trafficking to Asia and lobbying for a prisoner transfer agreement between Kenya and HK. In Kenya I stayed with the Oblates, a youthful group giving energy to Fr Mario and Fr Gerry from Australia. In Uganda I stayed four nights at the Ugandan Martyrs Shrine recently visited by Pope Francis. In Africa the Christian faith is deep and alive. A great privilege for me to have been in Africa."

Youth

Peter Ball was captain of Mazenod College in 2014 and did an immersion experience in India. He spent most of this Christmas break from university last December/January in Beijing

'A giant leap of faith and an undeniable fear, but two months later I couldn't be any more appreciative to the Oblates for providing me with the opportunity to work with them in Beijing, China. After meeting so many amazing people, experiencing the work of the Oblates and helping those less fortunate I truly learnt what it is to be grateful – to know that in giving, we are in fact the receivers.'



National Oblate Youth Encounter

January 2016, 65 young people from Oblate parishes and colleges throughout Australia gathered for the National Oblate Youth Encounter (NOYE). The national leadership team continues to grow in the missionary spirit of St Eugene. They provide an opportunity for those who gather for NOYE to

grow in a missionary faith – 'Leave nothing undared for the kingdom of God' is our Oblate motto.

If you know any young adult who you feel would appreciate such an experience do contact Fr Christian Fini OMI. cfini@oblates.com.au



MISSIONS

Beijing



Having grown up and lived in China for 20 years and subsequently lived in Australia for another 17 years, I can say that I have both my feet firmly in both cultures. Having many years of living in both countries gives me a unique appreciation of my time with the Oblate community in Beijing, China. As many appreciate that relationships are really important for Chinese. I see our Oblate presence in Beijing is building up and strengthening a lot of relationships with various groups working here and with many locals. Naturally, building up a relationship takes time and to forge quality and solid relationships requires more effort. In my three months of being with the Oblates in Beijing, I witnessed the ongoing

relationship with the China Little Flower, and in particular with the foster families. The relationship with many volunteers, both local and international, the relationship with the Good Shepherd Sisters who provide refuge for pregnant ladies, the relationship with some Sisters of St Paul. More importantly, I believe, the many relationships with various local Chinese: such as, many middle-class Chinese families who send their children to our English centre; many poor Chinese migrants from other parts of the country coming to the national capital to find work who have their children come to our study centre after school to do their homework and for some free English lessons; some local schools and kindergartens where we provide free English teachers; and many ordinary residents with whom we share much of the daily life, such as security guards, owners of the apartments we rent. I truly believe that our presence here has a transformative effect on the lives of many, who begin to broaden their life-vision a bit more. But we need to be very patient, and with faith, because transformation only happens gradually, and without much notice at times.

Fr Andrew Chen OMI

If you wish to make a donation to MAMI apart from the Annual August appeal, your gift is always happily received. To assist our administration and avoid confusion you may like to use this donation slip. Thank you for kind and generous support.

Name _____
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 I have enclosed a Cheque/Money Order made payable to MAMI for \$ _____
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Send to: **MAMI Office**
PO Box 384
Camberwell Vic 3124



Fr Christian visits the missions of Indonesia especially Kalimantan



The Indonesian Province as we know it today was originally founded on May 21, 1993, with the unification of 29 Oblates in three regional "delegations": seven Australians in Java, eight Italians in East Kalimantan and seven Frenchmen in West Kalimantan, with eight Indonesian Oblates serving among the three delegations.



Fr. Natalino in Pulau Sapi Parish, one of the original 7 Italian Oblates to come to Indonesia in 1977. Pulau Sapi has a Parish Church, Hall and Boarding School with 30 children in it. There are some 16 mission stations or villages. The Punan people were the most primitive so the Protestants were not interested but they were the most marginalised and an appropriate mission for the Oblates.

The first delegation of Australian Oblates arrived in the Diocese of Purwokerto, Central Java, on 25 October 1971. Frs. Patrick MORONEY, David SHELTON, Patrick SLATTERY and John Kevin CASEY started working in the Diocese of Purwokerto in 1972, then in the Archdiocese of Jakarta in 1975. Seeing the chance of developing Oblate vocations among Indonesian youth, in 1982 the Oblates opened a seminary; in 1985, they opened a novitiate. Both formation houses are located in Yogyakarta.

The first delegation of French Oblates arrived in the Diocese of Sintang, West Kalimantan (Borneo), on 25 January 1977. Frs. Andre HEBTING, Jean-Pierre MEICHEL, Rene COLIN, Bernard KERADEC, Jacques CHAPUIS, Jean SUBRA and Lucien BOUCHARD were missionaries expelled from Laos when the country fell to the Communists. On 30 August 1977, these Oblates began their work at the Diocese of Sintang, West Kalimantan, breaking through forests and traveling down the rivers to find souls who longed to meet our Lord.

The first Delegation of Italian Oblates reached the Diocese of Samarinda,

East Kalimantan (Borneo), on 25 April 1977. Frs. Giuseppe REBUSSI, the Superior of the Delegation, Fr. Pietro Maria BONOMETTI, Natalino BELINGHERI, Antonio BOCCHI, Angelo ALBINI, Mario BERTOLI and Pancrazio DI GRAZIA also missionaries expelled from Laos. They were entrusted with the development of the northern part of the Diocese of Samarinda. On 09 January 2002, the Holy See announced the establishment of a new diocese, the Diocese of Tanjung Selor. This was a great grace from God to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Oblates' work in East Kalimantan.

During the Mass to mark the unification Fr. Marcello Zargo OMI, Superior General, in his homily said among others things: "The main reason for which the Oblates came to Indonesia is the same: to preach God's love to the people of Indonesia and to save those who need salvation. Today, by the formation of the Province of Indonesia, we declare our permanent commitment to preach to the poor in Indonesia and from Indonesia, as an expression of sharing God's love with His people. God the Father so loved the world that He sent His Son to save the people. We are sent to do the same mission: to share the compassion and love of God with the people who needs salvation."

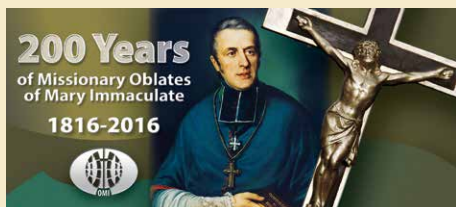
In my last visit to Indonesia, just before finishing as Director of MAMI, I had the privilege of visiting the entire Province with Fr. Damianus Yohanes OMI, currently the Provincial Bursar. I arrived in Jakarta and travelled to Kaliiori, Cilacap and Yogyakarta (Central Java) places I had been privileged of visiting before. Then Fr. Damianus took me to Borneo and I had the privilege of visiting the Oblate Community and people in Tarakan, Malinau, and Pulau Sapi (North Kalimantan/ Borneo), Balikpapan and Penajam (East Kalimantan/ Borneo) and Pontianak, Sintang, Dangkan and Sepauk (West Kalimantan/ Borneo). Almost all the Parishes I visited and multiple outstations and communities of which many were accessible only by bike in the wet seasons. While a whirlwind visit it was indeed an amazing opportunity to witness firsthand the Oblate Commitment to preach to the poor in Indonesia and witness first hand your prayers and support in action.



Newly opened Parish Church of St. Mary of Fatima, Penajam, approximately a 40 minute ferry ride from Balikpapan, Fr. Wiyono OMI, the Parish Priest Ministers to 50 families in Penajam and 12 outstations.

Fr Christian Fini OMI

Events we are celebrating in 2016



The 200th anniversary of the founding of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate is being celebrated by our communities during the year throughout Australia. Already in South Australia the parishes of St Pius X at Dernancourt and St David's at Tea Tree Gully combined for a Mass on 25th January.

9th August the Queensland Oblates will celebrate with a Mass in St Stephan's Cathedral.

30th Sept all the Oblates in Australia will gather at the conclusion of their annual retreat for Mass in the Basilica of St Patrick in Fremantle. St Patrick's in Fremantle, was where our first Australian community was established in 1894.

2016 is the 50th anniversary of the founding by the Philippine's Province of the China Mission. The responsibility for the mission was transferred to the Australian Province in 1992 when it became the China Delegation.



2016 is the 50th anniversary of the founding of Mazenod College in Western Australia. Among the events for this celebration is a formal dinner on 19th March. More details are available on the college's website www.mazenod.wa.edu.au



Vocations

January 2016 – was a time for the Oblates to celebrate. Fr Sayanne Xayavong OMI was ordained to the priesthood in Laos.

Bro Casmir Arul made his Final Vows in Chennai in India. Fr. John Sebastian Ramesh OMI was on holidays and able to be present.

Joshua Nash reports regularly on life in the novitiate in Godfrey, USA that this spiritual year is going well. We welcome a young man from Sefton NSW to the prenovitiate.

Do remember that the comment to a person you feel might have a vocation to the priesthood/religious life 'Have you ever thought of being a Priest/Religious,' might be just what is needed to help a person to discover a vocation.



Fr Sayanne with his family approaching the church for his priestly ordination in Laos.



Bro Casmir Arul and Fr. John Sebastian Ramesh

MAMI Pilgrimage

It is with regret that unfortunately the 2016 MAMI Pilgrimage scheduled for July 2016 has had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers.

This difficult decision was made as soon as possible to ensure that people who have expressed interest have the opportunity to make alternative arrangements.

Missionary Immersion experience

Applications are now Open!

China Immersion tour is on again! The tour will run from 16th – 28th May, 2016. This is a great opportunity to experience the work we do within our China Mission and undertake in some sightseeing also. Expression of interest are now open and places fill quickly. Please send me an email at pims@oblates.com.au to reserve your seat or for further information.

Partners in Mission

The missions both Beijing and Hong Kong need people prepared to assist in the English teaching programs. Current or retired teachers or those able to assist the language program are needed. PIMs (Partners in Mission) are an important help in our missionary work. My contact details are list in the Oblate Personnel.

Luisa Amati – coordinator



Mazenod College in Western Australia



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