

## Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

### From the Director

I hope that you were all able to celebrate a wonderful Christmas surrounded by family and friends. It was wonderful to be able to celebrate Masses with full churches and without any restrictions, even better still to be able to come together to share a meal. Of course, we have since begun a new year and probably have given away our resolutions and resumed our ordinary lives, but then again maybe we have decided to take on new challenges. In any case it is wonderful to have the freedom. Our children are now back at school and in classrooms, we have just begun the Holy season of Lent and life is back to normal. Let us hope it stays that way. What is new is that we are all now more aware of the things that really matter and can prioritise to make the most of the opportunities that come our way. I am sure that we are all better people and able to recognise the needs around us.

I was able to celebrate the Masses on the weekend after the New Year in Sorrento, on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, and took the opportunity to do the annual MAMI appeal. I am very grateful for the welcome I received from Fr John McGinty and Fr Vasanthan and particularly for their work. Fr Austin Cooper made the appeal in the church in Portsea while Fr Vasanthan did the same at the church in Rye.



I thank them for their openness to the task. I'd also like to thank Carmel who helped coordinate the aftermath of the visit. The generosity of the people we were able to serve was very humbling. Thank you all for your gifts and your partnership in our common ministry.

Sandra Dwyer, who I am sure you all know, has finally, after some eighteen years, taken some of her Long Service Leave. I am grateful for the extraordinary work she has done over the years and especially for the time she gave to help train Kartika Hardjosantoso who has now taken over the office. Kartika has come to us after many years working with the Family Law Courts. She has settled in well and goes home smiling each day because she has made a positive contribution to the life of many seen and unseen people. She is enjoying her role as a minister of Hope.

Work continues with the formation of the De Mazenod Family through the ministry of Emma Hoad, Emma Rice and now Eileen White who has recently joined the team. Tony Coghlan continues to work with our Colleges and the various Primary Schools in Oblate Parishes as leader of the Education Charism. After a hiatus of a few years Oblate Youth were finally able to come together for a National Encounter meeting which celebrated the renewal of the ministry with old and new members. You will find an article from Emma in this issue.

*continued...*



De Mazenod Family



### LENT PROGRAM

Join us every Thursday during Lent online at 8pm AEDT

For more info:

[www.demazenodfamily.com.au](http://www.demazenodfamily.com.au)

As Lent is fast approaching the De Mazenod Family Team is excited to share this year's Lenten Program with you! This Lent we will reflect on how various individuals from The Passion of Christ can help us to examine our own conscience. Many of the characters in The Passion display characteristics we can easily identify and relate to personally, and it is these characteristics – some positive and praise-worthy, others less so – that we will explore throughout this program.

We will be running sessions online via our De Mazenod Family Zoom on Thursday evenings beginning at 8.00 pm AEDT.

To see a copy of the program, a breakdown of start times by state, and to find the zoom link to join us – head to our website – [demazenodfamily.com.au/lenten-program-2023](http://demazenodfamily.com.au/lenten-program-2023)

We hope to see you at one or more sessions!

God Bless,  
The De Mazenod Family Team

...continued cover article

Funds raised by MAMI in recent times have gone to help those supporting the needs of the people of Ukraine who are served by Oblates both in Ukraine and in Poland. We have directly funded a Mental Health Clinic based in the basement of St Nicholas' Church assisting those affected by the ongoing war. We have also funded a project to help migrants in Western Sahara. This mission is quite unique as it is an Apostolic (Papal) foundation in a very difficult situation. The article describes the work being done and you may see in the pictures a familiar face; Fr. Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso "Chicho", the newly appointed Superior General of our Congregation, who was in fact called from this very mission to Rome to accept his new role. The timing of our funding is purely coincidental!

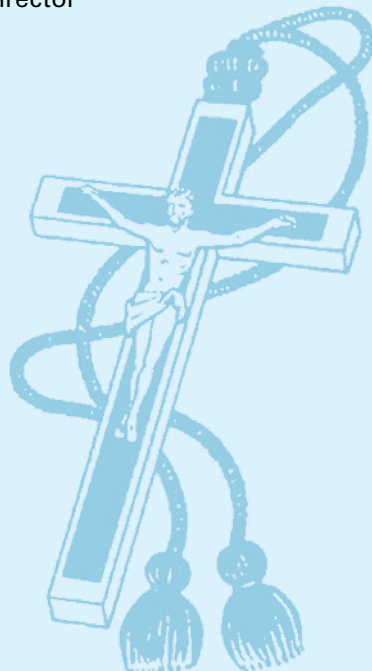
The Christmas Cards which were sold last year have been receipted and the funds are ready to be sent to Indonesia and Africa. I thank you for your continued support of this Fund Raising project. For the second year in a row, we quickly sold out of 'Chooks', and 'Goats' as well. We have new photos from which we will choose new covers for a new set of cards. Hopefully by the time we start selling Christmas cards this year, we will have a system in place that will allow you to purchase them online. We will provide further details when we are certain everything is working. We are still supporting the people of Ukraine as well as projects related to the support of Formation in Southern Africa, India, Nigeria, Kenya and Senegal and in particular our own Seminary here in Australia. Whilst we do not have any 'local' men in formation we help the Asia-Oceania region by supporting other Provinces. We currently have a nearly full Seminary with men from Vietnam, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and India and a possible 'Formator in Training' from Madagascar who is hoped to arrive in the latter part of this year.

We have also been able to help with the continued work of Fr Charlie Burrows in Indonesia with support for education, land reclamation and road building. His latest project, which you will read about, is a continuation of

the works done in land reclamation in the 'River Village' area south of Cilacap. Funding for most of these projects has normally come from Germany which supported 'Food for Work' programs. It would seem that this source is now limited. He is always tirelessly at work seeking other sources but is grateful that he can rely on MAMI Australia. I had the opportunity, many years ago to see what the Oblates have been able to do, and I can assure you that the changes over the years, which through your generosity, have been wrought are truly life changing. As you know, every dollar we send goes to where it can do the most good.

This Newsletter celebrates who we are and what our family has achieved. As MAMI associates you support us and our missions not just with your generous gifts but more particularly with your prayers. As we continue or Lenten Penance where maybe we have taken on Prayer in place of giving up a treat, may we remember those in our families who maybe have no time to pray for themselves. I hope too that your Easter will be a Holy one and that as you crack open an Easter Egg you will recognise the 'Empty Tomb'. As you savour the flavour may receive the blessings of joy. I pray that the energy you have received from this confection will be used to bring a blessing or at least a smile to some you meet. Please know that you are prayed for and with and that we appreciate the unity of your prayers.

**Fr Eric Alleaume OMI**  
Director



Greetings, I am Marco Ratelolahy, a Malagasy from Majung city in Madagascar. I was ordained on June 29th, 2008 in Toamasina city in the parish of Notre Dame de Lourdes, Madagascar. I have been 14 years a priest.

After my priestly ordination, I worked in the bush as a missionary for 5 years. I then worked in the Oblate St Jean Baptiste parish as parish vicar. In 2016, I was appointed pastor of the new Oblate parish of Saint Eugène de Mazenod in Toamasina city for 5 years. At the same time, I was the superior of the residential Oblate community.

I have been a chaplain to Catholic students at the University of Toamasina and was responsible for the youth movement and the movement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Archdiocese of Toamasina for 7 years.

In addition, when I was doing my diaconal internship in 2006–2007, I taught in a secondary Catholic School.

I have come here to the province of Australia as an Oblate missionary because I would like to have this missionary experience. I will help in pastoral ministry.

**Fr Marco Ratelolahy OMI**



## AROUND THE PROVINCE

### From St Mary's Scholasticate

#### New Year's greetings to you all!

First, on behalf of the formation community at St Mary's, I want to express our gratitude for your ongoing support through prayer and finance.

2023 brings exciting news to our community as we welcomed several new members. In addition to Br Luan Ha and Br Jesington Logu who have been with us for the past three years, Br Emmanuel and Br Benjamin, from the mission of Nigeria, and Br Hieu and Br Thai, from the mission of Vietnam, have since joined the community. At the time of writing, we are anticipating the arrival of Br Rupesh Nand, from the Province of India shortly. Br Emmanuel is in Final Vows and all other brothers are in temporary vows.

As you can see, with the arrival of new brothers, the St Mary's community becomes even more



culturally diverse. This is exciting for us as we belong to a missionary congregation. To live inter-culturally is fundamental to the dynamism of an Oblate community.



Bros Emmanuel, Benjamin, and Rupesh will commence their theological studies immediately, while Hieu and Thai need to further improve their English before they can continue their theological lessons.

This semester will be the final semester with us for Br Jesington before he returns to his home Province of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He has completed his Bachelor of Theology degree and is in the process of applying for final Oblation. Both Br Luan and Br Jesington will be ready for diaconate ordination later in the year.

Please keep all these young men in your prayers as they continue to say yes to God's loving call for them to be Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

**Fr Andrew Chen OMI**  
Rector

## AROUND THE MISSIONS

### INDONESIA

We continue our land reclamation in the sub-regency of Kampung Laut, Cilacap. The latest request is from an area, far from the Cimeneng River, that has large deposits of sediment. The Village is Claces which is on "appeared land" adjacent to the prison Island of Nusakambangan. In the 1980's we built a dyke system to keep out saltwater inundation at times of high tides and depositing salt in the fields, stunting rice crops. With rising tides due to global warming, the dykes are too low and need to be heightened and widened and again the villagers ask our help in making the dykes and building the gates to keep out seawater and stop salt contamination of land.

The project will involve hiring an amphibian backhoe as the mud is too deep for a land-based backhoe.



Recently a government project had a land-based backhoe sink into the mud and had to be disassembled and hoisted out in pieces. So far, our projects have not had much difficulty because we have people who know what they are doing and the machine operators are skilled in working in very difficult conditions.

Our previous projects help save the remaining 400 hectares of the sea and 8,000 hectares of mangrove for fish, shrimp etc. spawning grounds that is the nursery of fish stocks for the South Java Sea as sediment is

now channelled into low-lying rice fields. Such a program could be copied by areas of the world that will be flooded by sea rises caused by Climate Change but as this area is difficult to access few come to see the programs.

Again, on behalf of the villagers, we send a SINCERE THANK YOU – in Indonesia "TERIMA KASIH".

God bless for now,

**Fr Charlie Burrows OMI**

# UKRAINE

**"The war did not stop our pastoral work, on the contrary, it increased it".  
February 13, 2023**

We, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate serving in Ukraine, are very grateful to all our benefactors, for all the support of our parishes and those people who come to our monasteries asking for spiritual and material support.

The war did not stop our pastoral work, on the contrary, it increased it, because many people who had not practiced their faith before, are coming to our parishes. We preach the Good News to them in various ways and prepare them for the sacraments. Some of our parishioners, especially mothers with children and the elderly, were forced to leave Ukraine, often saving their lives in this way. Because of the war, many people have lost their jobs and cannot buy enough food, let alone necessary medicines.



As Oblates, we try to help those in need. We feed impoverished people in our parishes. We pay to produce stoves for heating, which we then give to those families whose homes have been destroyed. Many people were also forced to leave their homes and, without enough belongings, flee to safer places within Ukraine. We provide such people with clothes, sleeping bags, or blankets to keep them warm. We help those people whose houses have been damaged by gunfire to buy building materials or replace windows. In our Tivrov monastery, we have been keeping an average of 30-40 refugees from the occupied territories for almost a year.

Unfortunately, due to the longer duration of the war, the material situation is only getting worse. Many people are becoming poorer day by day. Unfortunately, the number of those seeking material support is constantly increasing. For us to continue to support people in need, we still need material support, so we still ask you not to forget about us and, as far as possible, support impoverished people in Ukraine.



Now, what we most need is food that can be bought in Ukraine, but due to the increase in prices, many people simply cannot afford it. The next call is medicine. Medication prices have also skyrocketed, those who don't have the cost are slowly dying or the damage is becoming permanent. Another call is the reconstruction of destroyed flats and houses. Building materials are also available in Ukraine, but the question, as in the previous issues, remains the same.

We very much count on your continued support for the suffering people in Ukraine.

May God reward you a hundredfold.  
Yours faithfully

**Father Vitaly Podolan OMI**  
Superior Delegation in Ukraine

To support the Oblates in Ukraine visit  
[www.oblatesusa.org/donate-ukraine](http://www.oblatesusa.org/donate-ukraine)

**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 might like to use this donation slip.**

**Please complete the donation form on the right and mail to us. Or donate online by following the below steps.**

**Please note that if you tick to receive a tax deductible receipt, your gift can only be used for community development projects and not religious work of the missions.**

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BSB NO.: **083 347**  
ACCOUNT NO.: **45489 0669**

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which includes your name, postal address, EFT transfer details and Intention.

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**or** debit my credit card:  Mastercard  Visa the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Card number

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I would like further information on making a bequest in my will.

Comments/intention: \_\_\_\_\_



## WESTERN SAHARA

### Dear Friends from the Mazenodian family in Australia!

My name is Mario, a missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, and the apostolic prefect of Western Sahara. A large region –not as huge as Australia!!- in south Morocco, on the Atlantic coast of the Sahara Desert. We, Oblates, have been trusted with the pastoral care of this poor and humble church since 1954. So far, we are three Oblates in the land. It is from our land and mission that father Chicho came when he was appointed Superior general of our Congregation.

We, Oblates, are so far the only religious congregation present in the mission. We pray and hope that other Congregations will come and minister to the poor. We have two churches in two different cities: Laayoune and Dakhla, 530 km away.

It is a Muslim region, and Christians are a minority. We are few, humble, and poor. We are all foreigners, migrants, and pilgrims, we could say.

Yet our presence is important. We are the face of the Samaritan Church. We want to be living Gospel where others, especially Muslims, can read the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Our Pastoral Project has 4 axes and principles: Evangelical community Life, witnessing together to the Good News; Ministry to Christians, in need of a faith family where to live and celebrate his/her faith; Ministry with the poor in many faces, yet the main face in our land is that of a sub-Saharan migrant; and Ministry with our Muslim brothers and sisters, trying to make real the message of Pope Francis' Fratelli Tutti.

We have been blessed with many migrants in our mission. They are poor, poor. We think they are more than 30,000 people. Especially vulnerable women. Many of them are pregnant or "single" mothers, with babies. They come to our region looking for a way through the ocean to arrive at the Canary Islands (Spain/Europe), 150 km away from the Sahara Coast. And they believe that if they are pregnant when

they arrive in Spain (the "promised land" for them) they'll be accepted because of the baby. Unfortunately, most of them end up in our region, with babies, with no father to take care of them, no work, no money, and no "promised land". Their life is miserable. We do our best to offer them a better existence, a way forward to dignity. Every year we do more than 5000 interventions through our two Migrant Centers in the two main cities of the region: (Health, Work, Assistance to babies and mothers, and Food...) This year we operate thanks to you, and other donors (OMI Central European Province; CARITAS SPAIN, PRIMA SPES Foundation) while we keep dialogue to get more stable institutional finance from other European CARITAS and the catholic NGO Manos Unidas (Spain).

It is for us (and for our benefactors) a great effort, indeed. But for our poor migrants, brothers, and sisters, it can be the difference between life and death. Indeed, thank you very much. God bless you.

**Fr Mario Dorado OMI**





## NOYE 2023

After a 2-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Oblate Youth Encounter was back this January. Around 50 young people gathered at Mazenod College in Victoria for a 4-day experience of the Oblate charism and community, connecting and sharing their faith. We were blessed to have representatives from Oblate communities in three states. We were joined by staff from our Oblate schools and at least 10 Oblates were present throughout the Encounter, particularly providing spiritual experiences of adoration, reconciliation, and eucharist for our Oblate Youth.

The student leaders who attended from St Eugene's College in Queensland wrote the following reflection:

NOYE was a life-changing experience for the St Eugene leadership team!

Along this journey, we were asked to challenge our initial ways of thinking and delve deeper into our individual beliefs and identities looking through the eyes of God. This camp impacted the leadership team in so many ways. Showing us how creating authentic relationships and establishing supportive networks can give us strength when we feel most vulnerable, especially going into our last year of schooling.

During NOYE we were allowed to experience and understand the different perspectives of Oblate priests, youth group members, and other leadership teams from all over the world. Together we experienced icebreakers, team scavenger challenges, reflection masses, inspiring conversations, and drama skits. Everyone put 110% into participating in these activities, forming stronger connections with one another, and inspiring a shared vision. These workshops helped us to acknowledge that the best outcomes are achieved through cohesive teamwork. The hardest and most challenging part was having to say goodbye to our newfound friends and Oblate community, these memories will be carried forever.

As a leadership team moving forward, we hope to share our experience and faith in tandem with the Charism of St Eugene de Mazenod, and side by side as we dare to grow and reflect as one.

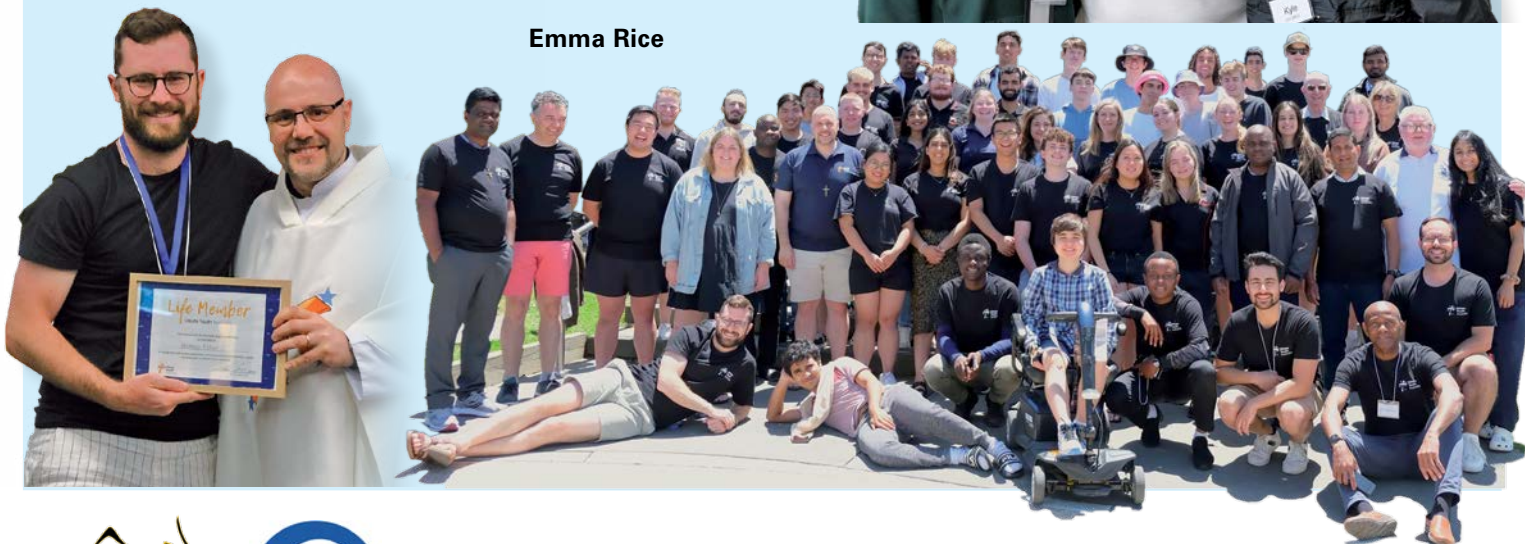
### Year 12 Student Leadership Team

We are grateful to God for blessing this Encounter and we pray for all these young people that they returned to their communities ablaze with the Spirit to share their faith with those around them.

For a closer look at what happened at this year's National Oblate Youth Encounter feel free to check out the Oblate Youth Australia Facebook page or their website.

Thanks,

Emma Rice



## Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

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# MISSIONARY OBLATES

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## Oblate Ministries



Missionary Association of  
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[omi.com.au/mami](http://omi.com.au/mami)



**Oblate Youth Australia**

**Oblate Youth Australia**

[oblateyouth.com.au](http://oblateyouth.com.au)



**De Mazenod Family**

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[demazenodfamily.com.au](http://demazenodfamily.com.au)



**St Mary's Scholasticate**

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[omi.com.au/st-marys-seminary](http://omi.com.au/st-marys-seminary)



**De Mazenod Family Education Network**

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**Oblates China**

[oblateschina.org](http://oblateschina.org)



**OMI World**

[omiworld.org](http://omiworld.org)

## Oblate Schools



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[mazenod.wa.edu.au](http://mazenod.wa.edu.au)



**Mazenod College Victoria**

[mazenod.vic.edu.au](http://mazenod.vic.edu.au)



**IONA College**

[iona.qld.edu.au](http://iona.qld.edu.au)



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