

VOL.50, NO.2

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CELEBRATING  
**125**  
YEARS  
OF THE OBLATE  
MISSION IN AUSTRALIA



## Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate FROM THE NEW PROVINCIAL

Dear MAMI Supporters,

**I last wrote to you officially as I was moving from my role as Director of MAMI to something new. Now I write to you as I have moved into another new role as Provincial of the Australian Province.**

At our second Provincial Council meeting in May this year, on the recommendation of Fr John Sherman OMI, we approved the distribution of more than \$400,000 from MAMI funds to projects throughout Asia. This amazingly generous amount for Oblate Mission projects among some of the poorest people in our region would not be possible without your generous support.

As a former MAMI director, and as the new Provincial, my travels take me to places where I witness firsthand the fruits of your generosity. Thank you for this generous continued support of the Oblate missions in Australia and throughout Asia.

Leaders in every era face challenges; there is no such thing as a perfect time in history. As a leader in the Church today, I face the very real challenge of guiding the Province in a post-Royal Commission era, and facing significant personnel questions owing to ageing clergy and few vocations.



Despite these significant challenges, I am excited about the future and the opportunities the Oblates, along with our many supporters, have to continue to be witnesses to the Good News.

The Church has lived through many difficulties and will continue to thrive in the future when it gets back to its basics. I think that would have to be one of the things that Pope Francis constantly reminds us of in his preaching and in his witness: that we must return to the basics.

This year marks the 125th Anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Australia. To celebrate and honour this achievement, we will host a special lay gathering, the De Mazenod Family Gathering, which is an opportunity to get back to our basics.

The 125th anniversary of the Oblates arriving in Australia and the 25th anniversary of the Basilica of St Patrick's offers us a great opportunity to celebrate the many positive things in our Province, and to explore opportunities for the next 125 years.

The De Mazenod Family Gathering has been established to provide a forum to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our Missions; build and strengthen connections between the Oblate communities; create an awareness of the vocational opportunities within our communities and, ultimately, to create a formal Oblate Lay Association.

The event will provide opportunities to share and learn from each other, to explore the vision and mission document from our last Oblate Congress and to address the realities facing the contemporary life and mission of our church communities.

Information about the 125th anniversary will be updated regularly on the Oblate website: [oblates.com.au](http://oblates.com.au).

Please pray for the De Mazenod Gathering, please keep praying for the missions and the Oblates, and – in a special way – please pray for Vocations.

# From the Director

As we reflect on the 125 years of the ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Australia, 1973 must stand out as a significant date. That was when it was decided to undertake our first overseas mission. The mission was in the Diocese of Purwokerto in Central Java, where the Bishop entrusted the impoverished area of Cilacap to the Oblates. The diocese had not ordained a local Priest for many years.

This mission was able to be undertaken only because of the support through prayers and generosity of MAMI benefactors. When the Indonesian Oblates were able to become a



Province, we committed, with the support of MAMI, to help them financially to improve the lives of some of the poorest people. Then, in 1993 our Superior General asked "Having successfully established the Oblate presence in Indonesia, how about taking on responsibility for the China Mission?". Despite having few Oblates available and limited finance, the response was "Yes". The China Mission truly fits into the challenge given by St Eugene de Mazenod: 'Leave nothing un-dared for the Kingdom of God'.

The assistance we give to Indonesia, China and the other Oblate missions we assist in Asia and Africa has been possible only with the support of the MAMI benefactors. For this we say THANKS. This THANKS is best expressed by our daily Masses and prayers for you and your families.

While you continue to support us with your prayers and generosity, I do have one favour to ask. As the Co-ordinator of Vocations, as well as Director of MAMI, I am convinced that there are many people that God is inviting to be his Priests and/or Religious. It just needs someone to suggest 'I think you would make a good Priest and/or Religious. Have you ever thought about it? Why not do something about it?'. If I can be of assistance to anyone you are inviting, just get in touch with me ... that is my challenge for this June MAMI newsletter.

We all come from families. The photo attached is of my sister and a nephew at the presentation of the 'Signum Fidei Award' made to me recently by my old college – St Joseph's College, Nudgee in Queensland.

**Fr John Sherman OMI**

## ANNIVERSARY

### Fr Kevin Davine celebrates 60 years of Oblate Priesthood



I have been asked to share a few thoughts as this surprising anniversary – July 29 – approaches. The first is a sense of shock that it really is 60 years, and a deep gratitude to God for calling and sustaining me as his Priest. Then my memory is full of all the people who have been part of my story and ministry: my parents and family, teachers, good friends and role models, Oblate and otherwise.

It was a great blessing to grow up in a country town, as Warragul in the diocese of Sale was then. I had many relatives in the district and a close-knit parish community, with the Sisters of Sion in the schools and many good and friendly Priests I came to know and admire. Ours was a very Catholic home and my parents, Kevin and Maire, were most faithful and committed, generous and caring. My maternal grandmother became almost completely crippled with arthritis and came to live with us; her faith and acceptance of her suffering, her prayerfulness, and my parents' love of the Mass, all greatly influenced me, as did my dad's acceptance of his final illness and death at only 42.

As we had no Catholic secondary college in Warragul, at 11 I had to go to boarding school in Sale, to St Patrick's College, which is run by the Marist Brothers. Boarding school was fairly spartan in 1947 but there was a great spirit of faith there and the Brothers were friendly and encouraging of any signs of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. We had an annual retreat and daily Mass and Rosary.

Boarding school was probably good training for me because, after a year in the Oblate novitiate in Sorrento, under the stern guidance of Fr O'Shaughnessy and the saintly example of Fr Hayes, we three novices had to make the long sea journey to

Ireland to commence six long years of study. We were blessed with good numbers in the 1950s and that helped greatly. There were 25 in my Oblate ordination class who then were scattered around the Oblate world.

Reaching the jubilee mark, it's strange to remember that I was often the youngest, so much so that I had to receive a dispensation to be ordained before the age of 24. Our provincial, Fr Ned Ryan, obtained permission for me to come home as a deacon and become the first Oblate to be ordained in Australia. I will never forget the joy of seeing family again after six years away and, after a retreat back in Sorrento, driving to Sale to be ordained by Bishop Patrick Lyons in St Mary's Cathedral. We had great crowds then and at my first Masses: family, Oblate Priests and parishioners, students from my old college and Brothers and Sisters who had taught me, and all the priests from the diocese of Sale.

After a brief holiday, I headed for Brisbane and my first appointment at our new college there, Iona College. Fr Tim Long was the Rector and it was in its second year – very pioneering and missionary.

I was later to be involved in the first years of our three colleges and had 27 years as Rector of all three. There were great challenges but eventually, today, great pride and a sense of

# Fr Irek Dampc celebrated 25 years of Oblate Priesthood

On June 18, Irek (Ireneusz) Dampc OMI celebrated 25 years of Priesthood, having been ordained on June 18, 1994, in Obra, Poland. When the

Australian Province was asked by Fr Marcello Zago, the then Superior General, to take over responsibility for the China Mission, he suggested Fr John Sherman, the then Provincial, should go to Poland to see if any Polish seminarians might volunteer to serve in China. Fr Irek was the first to volunteer.



achievement. Oddly, I had not joined the Oblates to be in education, but I soon came to see it as a true mission, service to the Church, our families and youth. Where else could I have met so many young people and their parents and had such an opportunity to share the love of Jesus and His Gospel and support our Catholic teachers?

After 45 years, I moved to parish ministry, which I also loved with its range of ministries and the help, generosity and faith of people of all ages. Their example inspired me or put me to shame.

After 12 years as parish priest, first in Mulgrave, then in Sorrento, the time came to retire. I chose to come back to Mazenod College as chaplain. It's a much quieter and more relaxed life but I enjoy the company and energy of the students and teachers and helping a little in our local parishes. I guess I've come full circle.

One remembers sad times, lost opportunities and mistakes, but it is wonderful to have had these years as an Oblate and Priest. I have known wonderful Priests here and overseas. I am saddened that numbers are so few at present for it is a great and fulfilling life and the mighty men I have known urgently need to be replaced to serve the Lord, like De Mazenod, in these challenging times.

Following his ordination, Fr Irek received his Obedience to the Australian Province – Delegation of China on May 31, 1994. His first task was to improve his English and so he arrived in Australia, where he was attached to St John Vianney's Parish, Mulgrave. From 1997-2011, Fr Irek worked in Hong Kong and learned Cantonese, while also spending time in the Beijing Oblate community. Realising that training as a Counsellor would give him further skills for the China Mission, he returned to study counselling at Monash University while attached to St Mary's Seminary and Mazenod College. He returned to the Beijing community in 2015 and then in 2017 moved to the new community in Guangzhou, where he is today. In 2018 he was appointed to the Council of the Delegation.

In Australia and China, Fr Irek is known for his jovial personality and down-to-earth approach to mission. His personal radar searches out the 'poorest of the poor', together with young adults searching for ways to be partners in mission.

When asked to share a reflection on his ministry, Fr Irek said this:

*"Dear brothers and sisters, MAMI members in Australia. Thank you very much for your prayers and support for so many years.*

*The Oblates serving in Guangzhou have, over the years, become familiar with a small weekday program for pre-school migrant children while their parents are at work. Three years ago, we started a program for elementary and middle school-aged students, to provide them a place to study and complete their homework. Young people from our Oblate Youth China group have been coming to volunteer their services. The mission in Guangzhou has rented a small shop to serve as a study and activity centre for the children of the migrant families. The centre, called 'Angel's love', was officially opened on Christmas Day 2015.*

*This year, during Easter Vigil Celebrations in one of the Catholic Churches in Guangzhou, a member of the Oblate Youth China group*

*was baptised. Before the baptism, she attended Catechism classes and members of the Group helped her to prepare.*

*Below is her sharing:*

*'William Barclay, Scottish theologian said: "There are two important days in life. One is the day we were born, the other is when we discover the meaning of life." I am very grateful that God has chosen me, so I can walk the Christian way to which he has called me. The road to life. "My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me" (J 10:27).*

*I am not a child from a Catholic family. My grandmother is the only Catholic in the family. The first time I came into contact with Catholic faith was on one Christmas Eve, when I was a little girl. My grandma took me to a church. That night we were singing and praying together and, as I remember, everything was so joyful and wonderful. I believe that God loves me very much. He chose me when we met for the first time that very night. God let me fall in love with him.*

*However, at that time, I did not have an opportunity to deepen my understanding of this faith as my mother and father were not supportive. After I moved to Guangzhou, I met many friends who were Catholics. They helped and accompanied me, to know the love of God and how to live according to it in my daily life. I decided to start Catechism classes and, after two years, I was baptised on April 20, 2019.*

*On the night of my baptism, I thought that I would be fearful and even frightened. However, although I was a little nervous, I entered the church ready, with my heart full of hope and calmness. I believe that calmness came from what I learned about baptism, that all our sins are washed away and it gives us strength and determination to follow our Lord Jesus. Our hope is in the Risen Christ. Thank you, God, for choosing me. Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for your prayers. I love you! Mei Ni Therese"*



## THE MISSIONS

# Bangladesh

A grant of \$6000 has helped cover the salaries of 10 teachers and the education expenses of several poor students in two schools, thanks to the work of the students at Iona College.



Students and staff of St John Paul School in Bangladesh

# Indonesia

Fr Charlie reports that rice production in the Kampung Laut area reached 15,406 tonnes five years ago, up from zero, thanks to the assistance of MAMI projects. In the years since, it has reached 25,265 tonnes, while corn has gone from zero to 1001 tonnes; sweet potatoes from 140 to 257 tonnes and soya beans from 22 to 228.6 tonnes. At the time of producing this MAMI newsletter, we are waiting for the list of projects our Indonesian Oblates are seeking assistance with. Fr Charlie's projects will be ongoing from 2019. The new junior seminary is progressing, and the Australian Province recently sent \$50,000 to help.



# China

We continue to support both our Oblate Communities in Mainland China, assisting migrant workers particularly with the education of their children. Fr Giovanni has written asking for help for a special project, which will involve a further outreach of what the community is doing in difficult circumstances.

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.

ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER FOR **TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS** CAN BE MADE TO:  
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**NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK**  
 BSB NO.: **083 347**  
 ACCOUNT NO.: **45500 7380**

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**Oblates of Mary Immaculate (MAMI)**  
**NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK**  
 BSB NO.: **083 347**  
 ACCOUNT NO.: **45489 0669**

Please send an email to: **mami@oblates.com.au** which includes your name, postal address, EFT transfer details and Intention.

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I have enclosed a Cheque/Money Order made payable to MAMI for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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I require a tax deductible receipt.

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

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



## THE MISSIONS

# Sri Lanka

In the past three years, the Oblate Institute of Higher Learning in Sri Lanka (OIHL) has run The Conflict Transformation, Peace and Reconciliation program, which trains people to be instruments to bring peace between communities that are frequently in conflict. MAMI, together with the Oblate Australian Province, have funded this program. Fr Rohan Silva OMI, the assistant director, has asked that we continue to fund the program for a further three years.

As the Australian Province has committed to assisting the Diocese of Jolo, where the tragic bombing took place recently, MAMI might be the only source of financial support for the project in Sri Lanka. The extent of our support will depend on the generosity of our wonderful benefactors.



# Mission Appeals for 2019

**Sorrento/Rye/Portsea**  
— January 12–13

**Burpengary/Deception Bay**  
— June 8-9

**Eagle Vale**  
— July 20–21

**Fremantle**  
— September 14–15

**Tea Tree Gully**  
— October 26–27

# Vietnam

MAMI hopes to continue to support the work of our Vietnamese Oblates in providing educational opportunities for poor children, especially those living in mountainous areas away from schools. Last year the grant did not get through the banking system but we will have another go this year.

Fr Hien writes

*"In 2019 we have 37 children in grade 1. Every month their education expense is \$3.7 million dong (\$225). We have 18 children in grade 2 and their education fee is \$4.5 million dong (\$273). In total, that is \$8.2 million dong (\$500) a month in education fees.*

*There are 10 months of schooling a year, making a total of \$82 million dong (\$4990) per year (I believe this is the correct calculation). Minh, please share our requirements with our Oblates in Australia and let them know any assistance is appreciated.*

*As well as school fees, we have to provide for the children's educational material, daily food, clothing and medical expenses.*

*Thank you to the Oblates in Australia for thinking of us and the children at our house.*

*We wish you all the best."*



Through the good work of the staff and students of Mazenod College in Western Australia, the project of providing good drinking water to villagers continues. A large filtration plant was recently installed in the local hospital.



# Hong Kong Summer Program (July-August)

Winter is well and truly upon us, and Victoria and other states have already experienced some of their coldest weather in years. Luckily some of our Partners in Mission volunteers headed off to Hong Kong to participate in the HK Summer Program and escape these cold days.

The program runs for four weeks during Hong Kong's summer. The children are on vacation and take the opportunity to learn English in our Oblate schools. This year we are fortunate to have three PIMS attend (Mary Graham, Lorraine Kuehn and John Williams).

We look forward to hearing from them on their return. Please keep them in your prayers.



## AROUND THE PROVINCE

### Oblates on the move:

Fr James Jeyachandran OMI has been appointed Parish Priest of Tea Tree Gully in South Australia.



Fr Reg Jayamaha OMI has been also missioned to St David's, Tea Tree Gully, South Australia.



Fr Basti OMI has been missioned to Mary Immaculate Community, Eagle Vale, New South Wales.



May 21 is the feast day of St Eugene, the Founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and May 29 is the feast day of Blessed Joseph Gerard. The week in between is known as OBLATE WEEK. Each Oblate Community celebrates this time in its own way. A special feature at St Mary's Seminary in Melbourne was two 'COME AND SEE' experiences. One was for current year 12s and the other for those who have completed their secondary education.

**Marg (Margaret) Ryan**, 'an Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate', entered Eternal Life on April 9, 2019, at the age of 96. Marg, as she was known, lived and worked in the Parish of St John Vianney, Mulgrave, Victoria for more than 50 years. From the day the parish was established in 1964, she – like so many of those early pioneers – worked generously in its development. As sacristan, the care and reverence she brought to preparing the Eucharist, and indeed any ceremony, was exemplary. The

Priests would often smile when Marg saw something was needed. She'd rush to the altar as fast as her often-painful ankles would permit. She was a faithful servant but left it in no doubt as to Whom she was serving.

Marg received two great honours in gratitude and recognition of her service. The Father General of the Oblates invited her to become an honorary Oblate and, in addition, the Holy Father bestowed on her the papal honour, the Benemerenti Medal.



Marg Ryan welcoming Fr Casimir Arul OMI back to Australia as he moves to Queensland to be Rosies' Chaplain.



August 15-18: Oblates and lay representatives from all our ministries will gather with the parish community of St Patrick's to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Oblates' arrival in Australia and the 25th anniversary of the declaration of Pope St John Paul II of St Patrick's as the first non-cathedral basilica in Australia. This gathering will be a representative group to establish a formal Oblate Lay Association.

As Provincial Fr Christian said in his introduction, "The De Mazenod Family Gathering has been established, to provide a forum to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our Missions; build and strengthen connections between the Oblate communities; create an awareness of the vocational opportunities that exist within our communities and ultimately to create a formal Oblate Lay Association."



## Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

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