

Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

From the Director



Life has had many surprises for us during the last three months. In the February edition of the MAMI newsletter, I, as the departing Director, said goodbye to all the wonderful supporters of our Oblate Missions and thanked you for your prayers and financial support. But things have changed rapidly. Fr. David Francis, OMI, the new MAMI Director is stranded in Queensland, while I am prevented from returning to my home state of Queensland because the borders are closed. So, here I am still holding the fort as MAMI Director.

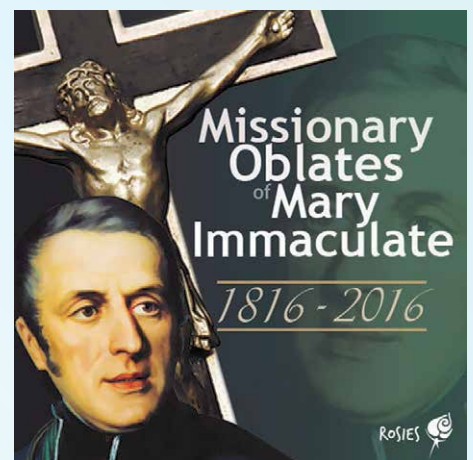
It has been a very busy time but the lockdown has not been too hard for us to bear because thanks to your generosity, I have been able to provide assistance to our missions in Asia and Africa. However, desperate appeals are still coming in, including a number of South American countries seeking help. It is amazing how many countries do not have a social welfare system like we do in Australia, and yet even in Australia, we have people who still need our help and care. The list of assistance given so far is provided in AROUND THE MISSIONS section of this newsletter.

Please allow me, in this the last of my MAMI newsletters, to share a few reflections.

Our Lady Help of Christians is Patroness of Australia:

On the 24th May 2020, the Bishops of Australia rededicated Australia to Our Blessed Mother under the title she has as our Patroness, "OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS." Although public Masses have not been permitted during the COVID-19 lockdown, one of the positive aspects of the current situation is family prayer gatherings. I have shared the faith journey on Zoom with a number of the Year 12s from Victoria's Mazenod College, to which I am attached. Many have shared that their family home is a place where they now pray. However, the experience of many of us really leads to the question – "Is Australia in any way a Christian country?"

I invite you and your family to dedicate yourselves to our Blessed Mother under the title of OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS.



This prayer may help you in this dedication:

Almighty God, deepen in our hearts our love of Mary Help of Christians.

Through her prayers and under her protection,

may the light of Christ shine over our land.

May Australia be granted harmony, justice and peace.

Grant wisdom to our leaders and integrity to our citizens.

Bless especially those who care for the poor and who seek to promote justice and peace for all who call Australia home.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

continued...



The De Mazenod Family:

St Eugene de Mazenod was a missionary for the world with a passionate love for the poorest of the poor. He formed a community of Priests and Brothers to share his missionary spirit. Since he was named a saint by St John Paul II, Eugene's Charism belongs to the Church. Today he calls all people of goodwill and with the Face of Christ before them, to be missionaries in their personal lives, families and society. In February 2020, representatives from the Oblate parishes and colleges, Rosies in Victoria and Queensland, St Patrick's Community Care Centre, the Oblate Youth Encounter and members of MAMI, gathered to celebrate the planting of the De Mazenod Charism 125 years ago in the Australian Church with the coming of the first Oblate community to Fremantle.



Let us pause in my reflections for a challenge:

This newsletter has multiple references to websites and YouTube footage providing the Oblates' community with information. For most of you this is no challenge. Even though I am 84, I still take up the challenges presented every time I want to work on the computer. Today I was challenged by using shapes and sizes in planning this newsletter. However, the challenge is good for me. If you are afraid of this technology, I invite you 'not to be afraid' and give it a go. To grow in the De Mazenod Family there is so much to learn about the Charism of St Eugene from both the website of the Australian Oblates www.oblates.com.au and even more in the General Administration website of the Oblates www.omiworld.org

I will introduce both websites later in this newsletter.

There are many interesting links attached to the online version of the MAMI newsletter. We will provide a link to 'Life in St Mary's Seminary' and 'An Immersion Experience' by students of Mazenod College Western Australia. For the members of MAMI and all our other donors, you will find

For all of us to grow in the De Mazenod Charism of 'leaving nothing undared for the Kingdom of God,' we need help. Two people are working part-time at the De Mazenod Centre in Camberwell, Victoria, to help us to grow spiritually and deepen our understanding of St Eugene's Charism. Recently, there have been up to 25 people from different parishes and communities who connect on Wednesday nights for the De Mazenod Family May Program: a scripture and prayer meeting. At this meeting, hosts share resources and videos including the De Mazenod Family website (<https://sites.google.com/view/demazenodfamily/home>) and its YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/c/DeMazenodFamilyAustralia).



A fortnightly newsletter sent to members of the De Mazenod family gives spiritual reflections and shows ways in which you can connect. In the future, there are plans to provide more ways for members of the family to connect to people across different ministries around the country. You can sign up for the newsletter on the De Mazenod Family website (<https://sites.google.com/view/demazenodfamily/family-chat-catalogue>)



many accounts of the work of Oblate Missionaries in overseas countries. Another example of useful online resources is the curriculum vitae of Bishop Mark Edwards, who takes up his new ministry as Bishop of Wagga Wagga, NSW. So, while congratulating Bishop Mark, our Oblate brother, I invite you to read about him on both websites which provide all you need to know about the Bishop.

It is not easy today in our Australian society, whatever our role in the church community is, to actively witness for Christ.

While we appreciate the wonderful idea of people coming to Australia from overseas to minister in our Church as Priests and Religious, there is more we can do locally. It's not a good sign that we, who call Australia our land of birth or adoption, are not answering the CALL to serve in our Catholic Community as Priests and Religious.

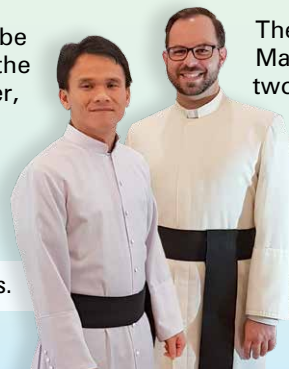
As the Oblate Coordinator of Vocations, I am more than happy to assist anyone wanting to talk about vocations. For the time being I will continue this role wherever I am posted. My contact details are jsherman@oblates.com.au and mobile 0418 825 701. You may also contact your local Oblate.



My last reflection to share is about VOCATIONS.

Recently, I came across a YouTube video on Vocations from one of the Australian dioceses. The presenter, apparently a lay person, took a very direct approach saying "The Church needs Priests and Religious. Have you ever thought of taking up the challenge?"

Brothers Josh and Luan renew their vows.



The Feast of St Eugene de Mazenod on 21 May saw two of our Oblate students renew their vows for a year. After completing the novitiate these men will renew their vows annually for three years or more before making a life commitment.

WE REMEMBER

Fr. John Chai OMI

Fr. John Chai entered Eternal Life in May while at the Tai Po Hospital, Hong Kong. By his side were two Sisters of the Little Sisters of the Poor from the Home for the Elderly where Fr. John has been a resident for the last 14 years, together with Fr. Slawek Kalisz, OMI, the superior of the China delegation and the chaplain for the home.

Fr. John wrote about himself in 2004:

"I was born on 18th of July 1922 in Chang Yuan (Central China) in a family of nine. In 1937, I entered the minor seminary in Tai Ming (Central China). But the seminary was closed in 1949, so I left China and spent three months in Hong Kong before proceeding to the Philippines where I continued my studies. I was ordained as a diocesan priest in Manila in 1951. A few years later, I joined the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and worked with them in the Philippines for twenty years, particularly in Manila and Cotabato.

In 1971, I was asked to come to Hong Kong where I worked as Assistant Parish Priest in Notre Dame Parish in Ma Tau Wai in the first two years.



In 1973, I became a supervisor of Notre Dame College and held this post until 1990. Currently, I am living in the Oblate Primary School in To Kwa Wan.

In spite of my age, I continue to help out in Notre Dame Parish and regularly go to China to conduct retreats and visit relatives and friends."

When the Australian Province took responsibility for the China Mission in 1992 Fathers John Chai and Stan Sun were the only Chinese Priests in the Mission. At the time I was the Australian Provincial. These two Oblates are among the heroes in my life. Both had a great passion for the Church in Mainland China. Fr. John, with permission from the Church,

would disappear into China regularly where he visited his family and many Chinese Catholic communities. Fr. John and Fr. Stan did much to support the local clergy. The good that these two wonderful Priests did is known to God alone.

Their love and passion for the Church of China I will never forget.

Fr. John's seminary was closed with the advance of the Communist armies. His determination to be a Priest led him to the Philippines and eventually back to China. Fr. John was born 18 July 1922. He took first vows on the 8th December 1959, final vows on 8th December 1962 and was ordained on 29th April 1951.

May Fr. John Chai, OMI, rest in the Peace of the Lord.

Fr John Sherman, OMI



Blast from the past...



Fr. Gaetano Nanni's Volkswagen Beetle

Fr. Gaetano Nanni was the first Oblate in Australia to purchase a Volkswagen Beetle. The car he inherited was a Ford Zephr Six which Fr. Nanni said was too big and used too much petrol. Due to the fact that



he travelled extensively around the Fremantle parish by car, he wanted something less expensive to run so he traded in the Zephr Six and then paid 100 pounds cash to buy the Volkswagen Beetle.

Photo of Fr. Joseph Birch (Assistant General of the Oblates) blessing Fr. Nanni's new Volkswagen Beetle at the back of St Patrick's Church, Fremantle in 1956. The old St Patrick's Memorial Hall is in the background.

AROUND THE MISSIONS

This is the time of the year when various missionary projects are submitted and MAMI decides what we can assist with depending on available funds. Unlike Australia, most countries in which our missionaries operate do not have programs to assist the unemployed. Covid-19 and its consequent health and unemployment issues have dominated requests for help. At the same time, the Oblates in Australia, together with our brother Oblates in Europe, USA, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Canada, depend on our wonderful supporters to provide assistance.

In addition, donations made through the generosity of our Oblate Communities, have allowed the Province to set up a Solidarity and Apostolic Fund to assist specific Covid-19 requests, while at the same time MAMI continues to strive to respond to requests for help as the funds allow. We continue to be grateful for your on-going generosity.

So far this year MAMI has made the following grants:

- **Australia:** MAMI provided \$50,000 to the Australian Province Solidarity and Apostolic Fund to enable it to respond quickly to missions in difficulty. Flowing from the Covid-19 virus, it has so far this year provided: grants to Bangladesh – \$20,000, India – \$20,000, Indonesia – \$20,000 and Thailand – \$10,000.
- **China:** \$18,000 for two projects associated with the Oblate Community in mainland China to help migrant children with education, and \$11,000 for another program run by the Oblate Community also for assisting migrant children.
- **Indonesia:** \$92,000 for Fr. Charlie Burrows' continued works including salaries for workers while also contributing to ongoing development in land reclamation, reforestation and education. The Christmas card projects of the ducks and chickens, the goats and tools has provided \$23,168 for these projects.
- **Vietnam:** \$15,000 for ongoing work to help educate children from poor families.
- **Kenya:** \$19,000 to assist covering the wages of people whose livelihoods are effected by Covid-19, plus supporting local Oblates to survive.
- **India:** \$5,300 to assist two struggling missions.
- **Zimbabwe:** \$13,000 to build another bore to provide a community with drinkable water.
- **Australia/India:** \$135,000 to assist with the cost of educating young Oblates for the Priesthood in Australia and India, made from the MAMI 'non tax-deductible fund'.



Stories behind the grants continued...

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:
Oblate Missions Developing Countries Fund (OMDC)
NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK
 BSB NO.: **083 347**
 ACCOUNT NO.: **45500 7380**

ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER FOR **THE RELIGIOUS WORK OF THE MISSION** CAN BE MADE TO:
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.

Send to: **MAMI Office**
PO Box 384
Camberwell Vic 3124

Name			
Address			
City	State	Postcode	
Phone			
Email			

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

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

One off payment Monthly payment

Card number

Credit card expiry date / CCV number (final 3 digits printed on card back)

Card holder's name (as appears on the card) _____

Card holder's signature _____ Date _____

I require a tax deductible receipt.

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

Comments/intention: _____



...Stories behind the grants...

Indonesia

Fr. Charlie Burrows, OMI:

I need help to pay salaries of teachers, staff and workers to get through this crisis. The development work and the farms will help a very large population move towards self-sufficiency.



INDONESIA – FR CHARLIE NEEDS TO BUILD STONE WALL TO PREVENT EROSION INTO THE CANAL

Bangladesh and India

Fr. Agit, OMI, of Bangladesh and Fr. Varam, OMI of India:

Both the missions in Bangladesh and India need help, not only because of the COVID-19 virus situation but because of one of the worst cyclones to hit these regions in many years.



CYCLONE AMBAN RAVAGES AREAS WHERE OBLATES MINISTER IN INDIA

Fr.Varghese, sharing provisions with poor families at Chinthalavats Parish, AP

Fr.Gnanpragasam, sharing food materials with construction workers

Sharing food materials in Chennai through Annai Mangalam Agency

Fr.Gregory and scholastics, sharing dry rations with people in Pune

OMI Oblates sharing dry rations with poor people

Fr.Aruldoss, sharing food materials with tribal people in Ramsapathar, Assam

Oblate Madonna

May Our Lady stay with us everyday
and may it be through her eyes
 that we look out and greet
 all the new people we shall meet each day

ADDRESS
 St. Eugene Province, INDIA
 Provincial House, 2/17-Z Rudra Road,
 St. Thomas Mount, Chennai - 16

www.omiindia.org
 steugeneprovinceindia@gmail.com

Kenya

Fr. Gerry Conlan, OMI:

We are all locked down for Covid-19, but that does not mean God is sleeping, and nor should we be. At this stage we do not know what will happen, but I do know that the Holy Spirit is with us as we help so many people in difficult situations. The grant will help to maintain the work of four of our missions for over two months.

Vietnam



WE CONTINUE TO ASSIST THE WORK OF OUR VIETNAMESE OBLATES WITH THEIR WORK AMONG DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

For a full report on the Indian Province's response to Covid-19 and on Fr Charlie's Land Reclamation Program see MAMI on the Australian Oblate Province website.



Bishop Mark’s appointment

Bishop Mark Edwards, OMI, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Melbourne has been appointed by Pope Francis to be Bishop of Wagga Wagga, NSW

In a letter to the faithful of Wagga Wagga, Bishop Edwards described his appointment “as a call from God to be with you and journey with you as disciple, brother and Bishop”.

“Together, as a community of missionary disciples, we will worship, love and evangelise,” he said.

“I am aware that I have much to learn, particularly about parish life and the joys and challenges of being a Catholic in Wagga Wagga. Keen to listen to your stories and those of the Diocese, I come humbly, with deep interest and love.

“Please pray for me that I may offer the service that the Diocese needs. I will pray for you.”

For more details regarding Bishop Mark’s appointment please refer to the Australian Province website www.oblates.com.au.

Oblate appointments:

The Oblate appointments announced in the February MAMI newsletter have been put on hold due to Covid-19 and will take place at a date to be announced once Mass resumes as normal.

You are invited to explore the websites of the Australian Province www.oblates.com.au and the General Administration of the Oblates in Rome www.omiworld.org. They are an amazing resource providing everything that is worth knowing about the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the De Mazenod Family.

Online links:

Attached to the online version are links to:

- [A visit to St Mary’s Seminary.](#)
- [Students of Mazenod College Western Australia immersion in both the India and China Missions.](#)
- [Fr. Charlie Burrows’ report on his development projects.](#)
- The needs of the Oblates’ mission schools because of Covid-19:
 - [Two Wheeler for Buttayaqudem, India.](#)
 - [List of Oblate Schools, India.](#)



Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

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