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Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

From the Director



As we continue in 2016 to celebrate the 200th year since the founding of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1816, I invited Fr Frank Santucci OMI who regularly contributes a reflection in the MAMI newsletter, to reflect on the missionary spirit of St Eugene.

Fr Frank draws our attention to the Mazenodian Family continuing the missionary spirit of St Eugene today. In his reflection he mentions not only the Priests and Brothers but also our Lay Co-operators as comprising the Mazenodian Family. Our Missionary Associates (MAMI), our Partners in Mission (PIMs) and so many who support us with their prayers and material assistance are indeed members of the MAZENODIAN FAMILY.

To deepen our reflection on St Eugene's missionary spirit being lived out today, I invited Fr Oswald Firth OMI who was born in Sri Lanka to share with us the dynamic missionary spirit of the Oblates of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan mission was accepted by St Eugene and to use Fr Frank's expression, they continue to be Wave- Swingers of Mission through -out Asia and indeed, the world.

As you journey through this MAMI newsletter allow yourself to be inspired by the missionary spirit of St Eugene being alive in just so many wonderful people today. If you are reading what I have said, do know that you are indeed included in these WONDERFUL PEOPLE.

Fr John Sherman OMI
Director of Missions

Mazenod Reflection

WAVE-SWINGERS OF MISSION

Eugene de Mazenod's missionary zeal reminds me of what I think you call a "wave swinger" in Australia: a tall carousel that has chairs suspended to it by chains. When the centre starts to rotate, the chairs on the chains are extended with force as far as they can go as they spin at high speed. What a show of energy that defies gravity! In those chairs are the missionary members of the Mazenodian Family, impelled by Gospel energy.

Eugene's encounter with Jesus the Saviour was such a life-changing experience for him, that he was filled with an irrepressible energy that impelled him outwards. He was now capable of looking at people through the very eyes of Christ the Saviour which had transformed him. He realized how many lost and directionless souls there were. Becoming aware that there were not enough people to remedy the situation in France, he was propelled to respond with the oblation of his life and the foundation of the Missionary Oblates.

In 1841 the cry of the poor came from Canada, causing Eugene to exclaim: "Here is a vast field that is opening up to our zeal. Canada is calling for our ministry, how do we respond to this appeal when there are no members?" Yet he defied gravity and impelled six missionaries to Montreal – each of them filled with his same zeal and passionate love for the poor. They, in turn, did not remain in one place, but looking through the eyes of Christ the Saviour they were irresistibly drawn further and further north and west across Canada ministering to more and more groups: non-French-speaking Catholics, the thousands of young men abandoned

in distant forests as lumbermen, the First Nations tribes, the Inuit in their igloos – and so it continued, propelled by the intensity of that energy unleashed on 25 January 1816.

The requests kept coming, and Eugene and the Oblates continued to defy gravity by responding. His reaction to a Bishop from Ceylon (Sri Lanka today): "This prelate painted such a picture of the deplorable state of the religion in that island that I was unable to refuse coming to his aid despite the needs of the other foreign missions entrusted to our Congregation." Looking through the eyes of Christ the Saviour, Eugene could not refuse such a cry, and the "wave-swingers" continued to propel the energy of the Gospel to all continents.

For 121 years, the Oblate "wave-swingers" have been able to give their lives to this mission in the Australia province only because they have been secure in their relationship with Jesus the Saviour. Today the same principle applies to all who participate in the mission entrusted to us by St. Eugene as vowed or lay members of the Mazenodian Family. To be "wave-swingers" we have to know the Saviour personally and as a community, and live by his love and mercy so as to be his instruments to those in need.

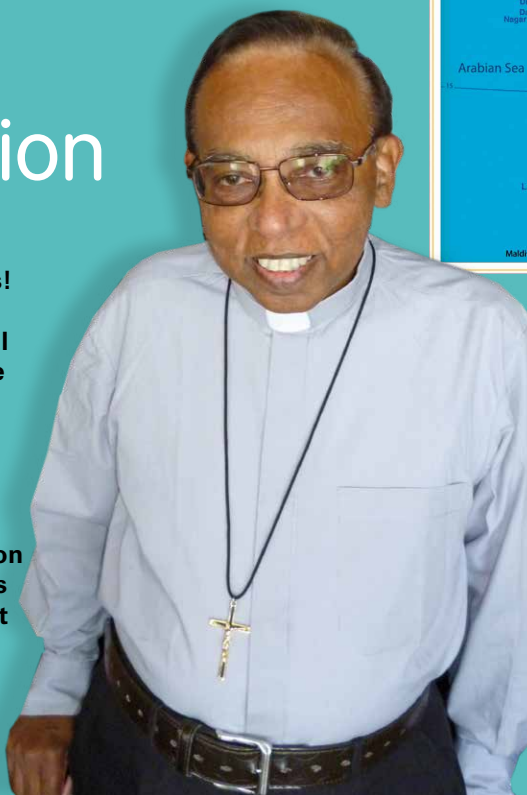
Firmly rooted in this powerhouse, impelled by Gospel energy, we can continue to defy gravity in our response to the needs of those crying for salvation around us.

Fr Frank Santucci OMI



SRI LANKA: The Oblate Trailblazer of Asian Evangelization

“What a field is opening before us! One and a half million Gentiles to be converted in the most beautiful country in the world”. Those were the memorable words of Eugene De Mazenod, the saintly Bishop of Marseilles and Founder of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, as he contemplated the immense mission field which was opening up for his missionaries in the culturally most versatile and largest continent in the world, Asia. Asia shoulders a population of 4.4 billion, widely spread out in 48 countries, with Oblates present in most of them.



Among the more innovative ministries one could mention founding of religious congregations to witness to consecrated contemplative life; enculturation through encounters with non-Christian religious traditions to promote mutual respect and understanding among people of different faiths; institutions to promote awareness of issues related to justice, peace, a sustainable environment and human development in a land ravaged by a thirty-year war; promoting post-war reconciliation through the ‘ministry of presence’; and a nation-wide children’s movement to promote future leadership, racial co-existence and cultural integration. The Province has also produced renowned scholars in Asian theology and maestros in music.

In more recent times, Sri Lankan Oblates have become missionaries ‘ad extra’. In the Asian Continent they have founded missions in India in 1979, Bangladesh in 1973, and Pakistan in 1971, and sent their own missionaries to Japan and Korea in 2010. The Province has also responded to the missionary call and sent their men to Africa, Europe, North America and Australia where they work among migrants and refugees from their own country and also in a wider missionary context as chaplains to universities, teachers in colleges and pastors of parishes. Deciding to send Oblates to Japan, Superior General Fr. Leo Deschatelets remarked, “We Oblates go where others refuse to enter”.

Oblates are known to minister to the ‘poor with their many faces’ especially to those who are most in need. There are bonds of affinity between Oblates and the poor, wherever they may be.

Fr Oswald Firth OMI

It all began in 1847, when Bishop Orazio Bettachini of the Vicariate of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on his way to Rome, visited France in search of missionaries for this tear-drop shaped nation. He was told to approach the Bishop of Marseilles, a man with “a heart as large as the world”, and his request would be granted. Writing on this encounter with Bishop Bettachini, Msgr. De Mazenod expressed with enthusiasm and excitement his prophetic expectations for Sri Lanka, “And so I have accepted this new mission, one of the most beautiful on earth, and I predict that one day this large island will be given over to our Congregation and that our Congregation will make the whole island holy”. “Since Sri Lanka was the first Oblate mission in Asia”, eulogised Superior General Marcello Zago, “our presence there helped to draw attention to the Asian Continent which is so rich in cultures and religions”.

The first team of Oblate missionaries reached the island nation on 21st November 1847. Since setting foot in Sri Lanka, the Oblates have pioneered many ministries and

built the dioceses of Jaffna (1868), Colombo (1886), Chilaw (1940), Anuradhapura (1990), the very heart of Buddhism, and Badulla, the home of Sri Lanka’s tea plantations. These dioceses are today totally indigenized and fully administered by local clergy, most of them trained by the Oblates. The immense contribution made to the island by the Oblates in constructing the local Church is too long to narrate here, but their work forms a large part of the local Church’s historical memory. For well over 150 years, the Oblates have left indelible footprints in the annals of the history of Sri Lanka. With foresight and determination, the Oblates launched into every known apostolate in the Church and had the courage to initiate new ones in response to the needs of the time.

Among the more traditional ministries undertaken by the Oblates to promote evangelization the following are worthy of special mention: training of diocesan and religious clergy, colleges (among the best in the island) to promote education from primary grades to university level, preaching and parish missions, and prison and hospital chaplaincies.

Fr Leon Peter Anderson OMI

Died 17 October, 2015,
– reflection on Fr Leon's life by
Fr Leo Mifsud OMI.

On one of my visits, which was close to lunchtime, I asked Leon if he already had his lunch. In a stuttering voice he answered 'Yes, but if I had known you were coming I wouldn't have'. I ask why. With a cheeky grin he answered, 'Because if I had known you were coming I would have feasted on your presence'.

On other occasions he would begin the conversation by announcing, 'We will probably have the same conversation a couple of times before you go. I tend to lose track of conversations'. After his near death experience and resulting disabilities Fr Leon faced his life's greatest challenges with grace and humour which could only have come from an equally great reserve of faith and dedication to his ministry.

Born in Sydney in 1946, Fr Leon was educated by the Christian Brothers at Strathfield. He completed his secondary education at Chanel College in Geelong, Victoria while also attending the nearby Oblate Juniorate at Lovely Banks. In 1965 he entered the Oblate Novitiate, and began studying at St Mary's Seminary in Mulgrave the following year.

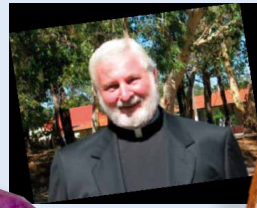
I remember vividly the preparation at Sefton in 1972 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception for his Ordination. I was 17 years old then and still at school. I didn't get to see much of the ordination for the size of the crowd. I do remember however, Fr John Coakley OMI who was parish priest at the time whisking this newly ordained priest away from the sanctuary where he was giving 'first blessings' after the ceremony so that he could go to the Parish Hall and greet the people there. Who would

have imagined what lay ahead of this young priest with so much promise and talent, what challenges he would have to endure and what ministry the Lord would ultimately call him to.

Following his ordination, Fr Leon worked for two years at St Kieran's in Moe, Victoria. While at Moe, Fr. Leon excelled at gathering young people and showed great aptitude in working with the youth. At the end of 1974 Fr. Leon organized the youth group from Moe to invite the youth group from Sefton to gather in Moe for a weekend of activities which culminated in a Youth Mass. This was the beginning of the journey of my vocation. Following this appointment he was then transferred to Eagle Junction in Queensland where he worked predominantly with youth, especially with CLAG, for 10 years.

In 1985 he was sent to Lesmurdie in Western Australia where he worked for three years as assistant priest at the former Oblate parish of Our Lady's. In 1988 Fr Leon was appointed parish priest of Kalamunda in Western Australia where he stayed until 1992. In 1993 Fr Leon was appointed as assistant to Moe. In August 1993, he survived a near-fatal car accident while returning from celebrating Sunday Mass at St John's in Erica, an outstation of St Kieran's Moe, Victoria. His car skidded on a wet road and hit a tree. He was not expected to live. In fact Fr. Vin Ryan OMI who was parish priest at the time was told by doctors that his family and friends should visit him and say their farewells.

It soon became apparent however, that God had other plans for Fr Leon. He spent the next two years in intensive rehabilitation programs and eventually, he recovered well enough to live at St John Vianney's in Springvale North. With the care of



Fr Mackintosh and the community of St John Vianney's, Fr. Leon was able to go to Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Lesmurdie, Western Australia where he ministered by celebrating the occasional Mass. Eventually the difficult decision had to be made to transfer him to a nursing home, despite what many thought was a relatively young age of 64 years old. Fr Leon retired in 2011 to the Little Sisters of the Poor home in Glendalough. I believe his final years were the most active years of ministry, a ministry of prayer and being a true disciple who like Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus, sat beside Jesus and listened to his word. I also believe that Fr Leon gave his Oblate family the most precious gift of faithfulness to the end.

This was a huge adjustment for Fr Leon but with the support of his most faithful friend Mr. Peter Reedy who had been a fellow student in his early days at Lovely Banks, the Oblate community at Fremantle and his many friends from Lesmurdie, Fr Leon settled in to his new environment. I would not say that he retired here. Fr Leon continued to be a member of the Fremantle Community until shortly before his death. Thanks to Peter Reedy and his other carers, he would visit the community twice a week to concelebrate Mass and join in the community meals, as well as other special occasions.

Perhaps this was Fr. Leon's most profound ministry, which was 'being a priest and an Oblate'. Beyond the activity of priesthood Fr Leon displayed a quality of 'faith and hope in the Lord' for which we strive. I believe he did this quite deliberately. Those who visited him would have been aware of his struggle and yet equally aware that he was putting his life in God's hands and gently submitting to His Will. He shared with his visitors a wonderful warmth and compassion. Several times when I was asking him how he was doing he would interrupt and ask, 'How are *you* really doing?'

Fr Leo Mifsud OMI

Orphanage in Vietnam

Mazenod College and Mazenod Old Collegians Association (MOCA) proudly continue to support educational funding in the form of scholarships for children from the Oblate Orphanage (Nha Tinh Thuong) in Binh Duong province in Vietnam. There are currently 44 children in the orphanage aged between 6 and 19, all of whom come from poor families and are either orphans or have parent(s) who don't have the money to send their child to school.

It has been 6 years since MOCA first reached out to the Oblates in Vietnam to establish an education program. I had the privilege of visiting the Orphanage again in February to meet the children. Fr Hien OMI (middle) along with Br Long OMI (left of the photo) report that the children are all in good health and regularly attend school.

Two years ago MOCA (Mazenod College Victoria Old Collegians Association) purchased computers for the Orphanage and a volunteer teacher currently teaches computer classes to the children. It is still a privilege for students to learn computer skills in Vietnam as most public schools are not equipped



with computers, and therefore Information Technology is not normally part of the school curriculum.

The children from the orphanage express their gratitude to the St Simons School Community, Rowville, Victoria for the shipment of gifts they received last year.



Thanks to the ongoing support of MOCA, MAMI, individual donations and the Mazenod College Community, who we hope will be able to continue supporting the Vietnam scholarship program for years to come.

Minh Truong
(former MOCA member and 2001 Old Boy).




Christmas card appeal

A BIG THANKS for the very successful Christmas card campaign!

Results:	
Bikes for India	\$10,097
Books for China	\$7,038
China Little Flower	\$718
Indonesia: Chooks	\$9,211
Goats	\$7,208
Tool Boxes	\$6,799
Total	\$41,071

These amounts will be transferred to our Oblate missions in China, Indonesia and India.

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 _____

Address _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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

☐ or direct my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa the amount of \$ _____

☐ Once off ☐ Monthly

Card number _____

Expiry date ____ / ____

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: _____

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

MISSIONS

Touching the heart strings

With the Brussels/Paris bombings etc. the Media portrays a very negative picture of Islamic people but living among them, working together to overcome poverty, ignorance, sickness etc. we know that nearly all men/women of all faiths and none, just want to live in peace, raise their children, work harmoniously with others to create a better environment for all, through the struggles of daily life – and as 40% or 100,000,000 of Indonesians live on less than one U.S. Dollar a day – so many really have to struggle.



Not long ago, a man who is a key person in our rice field reclamation program, where all are Islam's, came to me and told me he was to have his daughter married in a few days' time and he had been promised that someone would buy one of his rice fields and the money from this would pay for the wedding. But the deal had fallen through and now he had no money to pay for the wedding – the situation stressed him out, and when I told him I would give him a soft loan, he broke down in tears – with relief.

The same man, when Bishop Mark Edwards and his mother and father came with me to see the project – were given a meal in this man's house. He explained how his wife had cervical cancer (because of a prolonged family planning method) and was hospitalized for operations and chemo therapy, and of 25 women with the same complaint, 60% had died. The doctors had explained to him how important it was that his wife have no stress – feel protected, loved etc. and she was now recovering, because he and his children were able to create together the necessary home conditions so that healing and recovery could happen. Bishop Edward's mother was very taken with this lady.

Last week, the head of a remote village came to me with a request to build a dyke/road base. He told me he had known Y.S.B.S. – our Social Foundation – since he was 3yrs old, and many times the village experienced severe food shortages and hunger and on all these occasions Y.S.B.S. came to the rescue with food-for-work programs. Then, he cried – and told me every time he thinks back on his childhood and the struggle to get food and how Y.S.B.S. always helped, he is touched – and so was I: the honor of being able to help in times of dire need.

The help of M.A.M.I. Australia over our 45 years of working here has made many thousands of such situations possible and it will be very hard for extremists to negate these experiences. M.A.M.I. makes dialogue of action a reality and we thank all those who have continued to help over so many years.

Fr Charlie Burrows OMI



Immersion Experiences



Regularly we are seeking "Partners in Mission" (PIMs) to assist with programs of learning English both in Hong Kong and Beijing, China. The following message came recently from Fr Giovanni Zevola OMI in Beijing:

'We need more and more a good teacher, so hopefully we will find suitable candidates for the next semester, which starts on September 01 and ends in the middle of January (due to the earlier Chinese New Year, Jan 28th).'

Both programs are looking for a current or retired teacher prepared to be present for the whole of the semester.

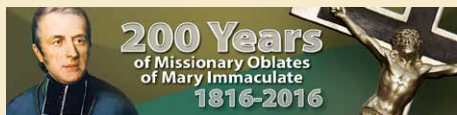
There is also need for enthusiastic people to assist these programs. Please contact Luisa Amati, the Coordinator of the Partners in Mission (PIMs) program at luisa.amati@gmail.com



Cancelation of MAMI China Experience 2016

Due to insufficient numbers this Experience will not be held this year. Luisa regrets this but maybe next year!

Events we are celebrating in 2016



Victoria: DE MAZENOD FAMILY FUNDRAISING MASS AND DINNER 200th Anniversary

The De Mazenod Family Fundraising Mass & Dinner aims to bring together the De Mazenod family in Victoria, which includes Victorian Parishes (Springvale North, Moe & Sorrento), MAMI Supporters, Mazenod College Victoria, Oblate Youth Australia and Rosies Vic for a night of faith, fun and fundraising. Money raised this year will go towards Rosies Victoria. Please join us to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Oblates & in supporting Rosies Oblate Youth Mission.

YOU'RE INVITED!

Date: Friday 8th July, 2016

Mass details: 6:30pm at St John Vianney's Church, 23 Police Rd, Mulgrave (Melways Ref: 80 B4)

Dinner Details: 8:00pm at the Mulgrave Country Club, Cnr. Wellington Rd & Jells Rd, Wheelers Hill

Cost: \$50 per ticket, Buffet meal including soft drinks (alcohol at bar prices)

RSVP for the dinner is essential by Friday 1 July, 2016

For more information contact:

Rosies Office (03) 9795 5077 or erice@oblates.com.au

Queensland:

9th August: Mass at St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane.

Western Australia:

28th Sept (note the change of date from Feb. MAMI newsletter): 7.00pm Mass at the Basilica of St Patrick's – Oblates of the Australian Province on retreat in WA will concelebrate.



Fr John Sebastian Ramesh OMI is currently helping in Dernancourt SA.

Fr Gerry Conlan OMI has been having a break from the mission in Kenya, and while on an Australian holiday has visited all Oblate parishes and colleges.

Fr Dave Shelton OMI is recovering well from recent heart surgery.

Fr John O'Doherty OMI is slowly recovering from recent surgery.

Easter with Joshua Nash in the novitiate, Godfrey, USA



We have had a full-on, but very enjoyable Holy Week here. We attended Palm Sunday Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul Proto-Cathedral in Alton, which for many years was an Oblate parish. St Eugene's large portrait still hangs in the Church. At the beginning of the week we commemorated the death of Oscar Romero by watching a few films about his life and we have started studying Fr Al Hubenig's book, "Living in the Spirit's Fire". It has been fascinating to get in-depth into St. Eugene's life. Thursday evening we celebrated Mass at our local parish of St Ambrose.

For Good Friday we ventured down to the Oblate Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, where we walked the Stations of the Cross, which the liturgy group did a great job of acting out with some very meaningful monologues. The 3.00 pm service at the Shrine was definitely a highlight. The place was packed! A beautiful and meaningful service; the best part was when it came time for the veneration of the cross, they didn't hold up the big cross, but instead

all the Oblates stood out the front with their Oblate crosses and the congregation joyfully processed up to kiss the Oblate crosses. It was a really touching moment!

Easter Saturday vigil was again celebrated at our local parish with 12 catechumens being baptised, praise God! Then Fr Jack and I cooked a very extensive vigil dinner. Now it's Easter Sunday and we have just returned from Mass at a small mission church out in the country. In the next couple of days we will be on Retreat up in Springfield, IL with the Franciscan Sisters, so looking forward to that.



Other Oblate events to note:

• **7th May – Mazenod College Western Australia Past Students dinner to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the college.** Contact the college for further details.

• **Silver Jubilee of Priesthood** Fr Eric Alleaume OMI 31st May
• **Diamond Jubilee of Priesthood** Fr Austin Cooper OMI 16th September



Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

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