

Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

Christmas Greetings

May this year's celebration of the Birth of Christ be a time of blessing for all members of the De Mazenod Family. Your prayers and material support during 2017 have enabled the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate especially in the Asia-Oceania Region and Africa, to continue their support of the 'poor with their many faces'.

The years 2016, 2017 and 2018 were, and will be, times for celebration in our three Oblate Colleges. In 2016 and 2017 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Mazenod College in Western Australia and Mazenod College Victoria. Next year the first of our colleges, Iona College in Queensland will celebrate 60 years since its opening.

Fr William Morell OMI from the United States Province, facilitated our recent Australian Province Congress. He published his impressions of his visits to Iona College Queensland and Mazenod College Victoria in articles on our General Administration website. Fr Bill did not visit Mazenod College in WA but his comments can equally be applied to that outstanding college.

Mazenod College, Melbourne Silence. It's not a word you would associate with 1400 high school boys packed into a gym... but then, maybe there's something special in Australian water! If it had happened in only one Oblate college in Australia, I might have assumed it was something external like the water. But at two colleges 1000 miles apart... at two Masses a week apart! No, silence was not an accident of place or situation. Nor was reverence, or respect. None of these come to 1,400 boys by accident.

Former high school teachers don't impress easily. It has been 30 years since I taught at the Oblate High School Seminary in Texas. But I cannot say my memories of those years are dominated by occasions where silence or respect prevailed. Triumphant shouts from the ball field or borderline chaos in a classroom or two, an occasional act of exceptional bravery or prowess... for me those memories prevail, not what I saw at these two Australian Oblate schools.

In fact, one can learn quite a lot if the scene and message are consistent and insistent. The Oblates and their very openly Oblate-inspired ministry with youth at these schools witness clearly to values and priorities St. Eugene championed early in his priesthood with his Association of Christian Youth. Fr Christian Fini OMI didn't have to point this out as he showed me the campus where he is Rector/Principal and where I concelebrated the huge school Mass in honour of St. Eugene's feast day and the 50th anniversary of Mazenod College.

continued...



The sketch of Mary and Jesus was done by Brother Thuan OMI of St Mary's Australian Oblate Seminary.



From the Director

As we come to the end of another year, on behalf of our Oblates both overseas and in Australia, THANKS for your continuing prayers and financial support.

It seems to be a long standing custom with MAMI newsletters to have the photo of the Director. I prefer to include others with me. Sandra Dwyer for me is the guiding spirit of MAMI. Sandra's involvement goes back to the time of Fr. Denis McCarthy OMI. Through your phone calls and letters, Sandra is known to so many of our friends and supporters. Luisa Amati organises many of the Oblate immersion experiences. Luisa also makes sure that the MAMI newsletter is produced. THANKS is almost inadequate to express my appreciation for the work they do.

The words of Mr John Payne below, who led an immersion experience recently, gives focus to what you as members of the De Mazenod Family



are doing. You are all amazing people supporting equally amazing Oblates and their co-workers wherever they are missioning.

Sri Lanka. The students of Mazenod College WA recently went on an immersion experience to Sri Lanka. "There are so many amazing Oblates in Sri Lanka working with the poor and marginalised," deputy principal John Payne said. "The experience was humbling, rewarding, enriching and spiritual."

With so many Australians of Sri Lankan origin wanting to assist the missionary and developmental work in Sri Lanka, the Australian MAMI is happy to help with collecting and transferring funds. This is always after the local Oblate Provincial has evaluated and recommended a project. It is important to remember that a donation promoting religious work is not tax deductible in Australia but approved developmental projects are. This same facility is also available through MAMI to assist our Oblate missionaries in Asia, Africa and Central and southern America.

Many thanks to all those who supported the AUGUST APPEAL.

It was an outstanding success and your generosity will help make a difference in the lives of so many.

In an effort to keep our publication costs down and at the same time continue to keep you informed of our missionary work, we have decided next year there will be three MAMI newsletters published in March, July and November together with the August appeal letter.

The Christmas Novena is a special time for family and friends. Accompanying this MAMI newsletter is a form for you to fill in your intentions for the Christmas Novena. The Masses will be said for nine days finishing on Christmas Day, by the Oblate Camberwell Community. Praying for you and your family is special to us Oblates.

Fr John Sherman OMI

...continued cover article



Iona College, Brisbane

Let me speak more particularly about the school where I spent three full days on landing in Australia. There is absolutely no question of its Oblate association and identity. Look in any direction and you will see an Oblate reference... on a building, in the name of school organizations, and even in the name of a classroom.

I often walked through the complex campus of **Iona College** with its Rector/Principal, Fr Michael Twigg OMI. It is sprawling and gorgeous, the first secondary school founded by the Oblates of Australia. But its beauty and size are not what prompted my admiration. No, it was the attitude of the students, 1500 of them... collectively gathered, (just like at Mazenod College) in respectful silence to begin their Founder's Day Mass and in the countless individual boys I spoke to or was greeted by. That's what impressed me. I knew their attitudes and their spirit did not come by accident.

I taught high school for 10 years and I have been around high school age nieces and nephews for decades. Aware as I am that "all comparisons are odious", I won't compare. But I will say the respect, genuine and readily-expressed friendliness, and appropriately-timed silence (without

a spoken directive!), frequent reference to the poor, attentiveness to others, all these are very impressive. Not wanting to leave such values to chance expression, they are consciously and carefully cultivated by the Oblates, the staff, and the campus itself.

On walls, on steps, passage ways, doorways...everywhere you look there are plaques with the words "**#i respect...**": #i respect ... truth, #i respect ... diversity, #i respect ... Eucharist, #i respect ... nature, #i respect... courage, "#i respect...

As I said, I don't think I impress easily. But the spirit and the respect, even the silence I found at these schools left me wide-eyed, open-mouthed... and proud of how the Oblates are making St. Eugene's commitment to youth so effective in the nearly 3,000 students I walked among, spoke to... and heard from, in words and with silence.

Fr Oswald Firth OMI – 50 years of Priesthood

Fr Oswald Firth volunteered to come to Australia following the completion of his term as Assistant General. His short time in Australia endeared him to many, especially in North Springvale and Sunshine. Fr Subash Fernando OMI who is studying for the Colombo Province at Notre Dame University in Western Australia where he is also chaplain, shares his thoughts on Fr Oswald.

Before joining the Oblate Juniorate in 1989, I saw the young and energetic Oswald B. Firth OMI together with Tissa Balasooriya OMI on local TV and in newspapers fighting for social justice issues in Sri Lanka. I still remember one senior ardent Catholic from my hometown, Maggona, was arguing whether it was right for Catholic priests to be involved in such secular issues.

Oswald Bernard Firth was born on September 13th 1942 in Nugegoda, Sri Lanka to Claude Reginald Firth and Hyacinth Mabel Wille. He was baptised on September 20th 1942 in St. Thomas' Church, Kotte.

He studied at St. Sebastian's College Moratuwa and obtained his General Certificate of Ordinary Level Examination.

He entered the Oblate Novitiate in Kalutara on April 7th 1960 and made his first vows on May 31st 1961.

After completing his philosophical studies, he professed his perpetual vows on May 31st 1963 at the Oblate Scholasticate in Kandy. Then he left for Rome for his theological and higher studies. In Rome he obtained his baccalaureate and licentiate in sacred theology.

He was ordained as a priest on December 21st 1967 in Rome by Archbishop Fitzgerald of South Africa.

After returning to his motherland in 1972 he received his first obedience as a lecturer to the National Seminary, Ampitiya, Kandy. In 1972 he was appointed as assistant priest of St. Joseph's Church, Wennappuwa. In 1974 he obtained his doctorate in Strasbourg, France. In 1974 he was appointed priest in charge of the Philosophate, Mattakkuliya. In 1981 he returned to the National Seminary to lecture. From 1986 – 1990 he was the director of SETIK, Kandy. From 1991 – 1995 he worked as the director of Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC.

After entering into Oblate vowed life when I went to Kandy for my philosophical and theological studies I was privileged to study philosophical psychology under Oswald. Then he left for The Netherlands, where

he obtained his diploma in rural development. When he returned to Sri Lanka in 1996 he was appointed director of the Centre for Society and Religion, Colombo.

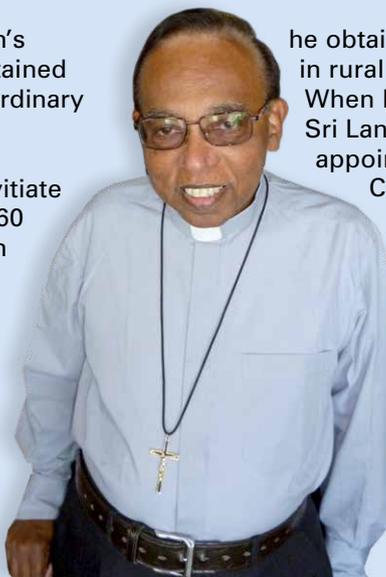
In February 2002 he was installed as the Provincial of Colombo (Ceylon) Province. In October 2002 while he was taking part in the General Chapter he

was chosen as the Assistant General of Formation, Rome.

After serving the general administration until 2010, he returned to Sri Lanka and later he opted to work in the Australian province. In 2011, he was appointed as assistant parish priest and lecturer at Catholic Theological College, Melbourne.

When I was preparing to come to Australia for mission and studies, the guidance and encouragement I received from him was immense. He was also there burning his midnight oil to welcome me at the Sunshine parish when I arrived in Australia in 2015. He then left for Sri Lanka to set up a new mission. He is still a frequent traveler to Australia. He is highly valued and appreciated by every Oblate who ministers in Australia.

We wish him "Ayubowewa" (long-priestly-life) and good health in mind and body!



Fr Bill Morell OMI writes:

For 30 years, the homeless in Australia have had a "friend on the street" thanks to the Missionary Oblates and a network of more than 1000 volunteers.



The friends are known as Rosies. In a dozen cities, they provide services and friendship to the homeless and marginalised. They distribute food, clothing and personal items. Equally as important, they provide friendship to people who are down on their luck.

"There is something mystical about each and every encounter we make," said Fr. John David OMI, Queensland Rosies chaplain. "This outreach helps me realise how much is achieved through the love of neighbours while bringing the Good News to everyone."

Today the Rosies programmes have grown to reach out to all friends on the streets, in the courts, detention

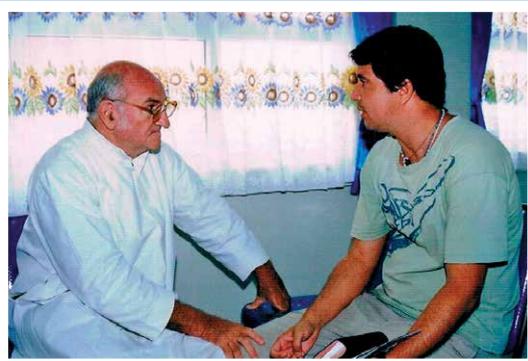
centres, prisons and drop-in centres. Through the joy of friendship, they aim to acknowledge human dignity and inspire an increased self-reliance.

Most of the Rosies members are young people connected to Oblate schools and parishes in Australia. Many continue to volunteer as adults, either working on the streets or fundraising for the program. More than 95 percent of the Rosies' expenses are covered by local donations.

"As members of Rosies, we play various roles to share our love of outreach," Fr. John David said. "We get to see the good in people. We get to see Christ through them."

Fr Charlie in Indonesia

October 10th was World Day Against the Death Penalty, and one group held a day-long seminar in Jakarta on Saturday Oct 7th. Fr Charlie was invited to speak and did so. There was also a reviewing of a documentary on the life and death of a Brazilian, Marco, who died without a chaplain accompanying him as Fr Charlie was refused entry to the prison island.



Some recent photos give an idea of just where some of Fr Charlie's zeal and energy is focused.



SRI LANKA – Jaffna Province

MAMI is helping with funding of education and special skills development for the youth at the Oblate Technical Education Centre, Kilmoichchi. Multiple displacements, death, injuries, deprivation of water, food and medical care during the war in this area have disrupted family life, social values, the economy and education. Throughout the district, the whole social fabric has been affected.



Fr. Sholto Douglas OMI in Zimbabwe

Fr Sholto recently visited Australia and spoke in all our Oblate parishes and colleges. Following his return to Zimbabwe, the leader of the Oblate Mission in Zimbabwe has written appealing for assistance with a bore-drilling programme to get clean and safe water to villages in the mission's territory. This is such an important project to help to improve quality of life that MAMI Australia has made it the focus of one of its Christmas card projects.

Fr Gerry Conlan OMI reports that the new mattresses have been welcomed by the students in the local boarding school.

CHINA

Luisa Amati, our coordinator of immersion programmes especially in China, desperately needs volunteers for the missions in Hong Kong and Beijing.





Partners in mission

Three retired teachers, Moss and Helen Fuller and Elwyn Bourbon, all from Melbourne, set out for Hong Kong on July 14. They were met there by Josie Howard, a volunteer from Wagga Wagga, to take part in the PIMs summer program to teach English to students at Notre Dame College, an Oblate school. The students ranged from mid-primary to mid-secondary levels. In all, 100 or more students would have attended the two fortnightly sessions. This was an indication of students' interest in the program, as their peers were enjoying their summer vacation.

Where there is a need, the Church responds to it and the response comes so often from lay volunteers. The reward for the work they do is unquantifiable and can only be measured by the degree of generosity in answering the call. The Oblates are doing outstanding work in Hong Kong and, to assist them, to partner them in their mission, was our reward during our four-week stay in Hong Kong. We should keep them in our prayers for the missionary work they are doing there.

Elwyn Bourbon
Hong Kong Summer Program 2017

INDONESIA – An immersion tour with a difference

In mid-2018 we are SEEKING to run a 10-day immersion tour to Indonesia. Discover the history of Indonesia with Fr. Widi in Yogyakarta, work alongside Fr. Charlie Burrows in Cilacap and see the capital's sights with Fr. Andre, all with the spirit of St. Eugene De Mazenod. Participants must be over 18, independent and in good health (able to manage stairs).

We are taking expression of interest for this tour. Interested?

There are 10 positions available. If you would like to secure a position or require further information, contact Luisa Amati at the MAMI office on (03) 9805 8888 or pims@oblates.com.au.

Teaching in Hong Kong

Moss and I had the good fortune to spend a month in Hong Kong from July 17 – August 11. Our main reason for being there was to teach English in a summer school, comprising students from the one secondary and three primary Oblate schools in Hong Kong. However, it was also a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Hong Kong, its people and history and, even more importantly, to discover more about the Oblates' missionary endeavours in the region.

The Oblate schools are in Kowloon, in a poorer area of Hong Kong, in keeping with the stated Oblate Mission to reach out to the "poorest of the poor". Geographically, the schools are quite close to each other and Fr. Slawek Kalisz is the administrator of all four. Even though they are now owned by the Chinese Government, they are still able to function as Catholic schools, under the agreement between Hong Kong and China. Few of the students are Catholics but prayers are said, religion is taught and the schools have a Christian ethos. This seems to bear fruit as Fr. Slawek told us there are about 1000 converts to Catholicism in Hong Kong each Easter. A large proportion of them are inspired to join the Church by their experiences as students in Catholic schools.

We were joined in our teaching endeavours by Elwyn Bourbon, who taught the secondary group, while Moss, myself and Josie Howard, from Wagga Wagga, taught the three primary groups. Elwyn's wife, Anne, also came along to help and was a great asset. We taught two morning sessions of one and three-quarter hours each. We did our teaching at Notre Dame Secondary College, a 20-minute walk from our accommodation. Teaching was a little challenging, as you might expect. We were endeavouring to teach children in a language with which they were unfamiliar, while not knowing any of their language. However, we soldiered on and discovered that children are the same the world over, mostly



loveable, occasionally mischievous. We were accommodated, very comfortably, on the top floor of the Oblate primary school, with a view that Fr. Slawek described as "the best in Hong Kong". Indeed, it was magnificent, looking down on Victoria Harbor with all the shipping going backwards and forwards to Hong Kong Island. The lights at night were a sight to see.

We found Hong Kong an interesting place and one of the good things about the job was that we had time to enjoy it. We went on interesting trips, including to Macau, the New Territories and Discovery Island. We visited the museums and learnt a lot about Hong Kong and Chinese history. In the evenings, we were able to explore the local area, which we found quite fascinating with its numerous little shops and restaurants. We were fortunate in that Josie and Elwyn and Anne had been there before and they were able to show us the ropes. On the spiritual side, it was a joy to be able to start the day with morning Mass. One Sunday, we attended a beautiful Mass at the Cathedral on Hong Kong Island and another Sunday we were inspired by a very joyous Mass for the Filipino people at Notre Dame. The Oblates have a special ministry to the many Filipino maids who live in the area, providing them with a meeting place at Notre Dame, where they can eat lunch and have Mass. We were treated with the utmost hospitality by the priests at Notre Dame and every week-day we enjoyed a hearty breakfast and a delicious cooked lunch. On the last day, we were surprised by a special meal, for which one of the priests, Fr. William, cooked a beautiful cake. We also enjoyed the hospitality of the priests at St. Alfred's Parish, where we were treated to a delicious farewell banquet.

We consider it a great honour to have shared in the Oblate ministry through the PIMS program. We thank Luisa for organising our trip and Fr. Slawek and the Hong Kong priests for their generous hospitality.

Helen Fuller
Hong Kong Summer Program 2017



Great news!

Fr Casmir Arul OMI who completed his studies for the priesthood at St Mary's Seminary and was ordained recently in India, has received his first appointment from Fr General. He has been appointed to the Australian Province.

We eagerly await his getting his visa and returning to his Aussie home.

Fr Pat Moroney OMI is back in Australia after recent surgery in London.

Fr James Jeyachandran OMI has been appointed to the Sefton Parish.

Fr Austin Cooper OMI with Catholic Theological College Deputy Master Sr. Francis Baker has been leading the study tour of centres of spirituality in Britain, Ireland and Europe. Fr Kevin Davine OMI was one of a number of Priests taking part in the experience.

Fr Peter Daly OMI has been kept on the move visiting members of the Province. At the time you read this newsletter he will probably be visiting our Oblates of the China Mission, followed by the Oblates in Vietnam.

Fr Eric Alleaume OMI was installed on Saturday 21st October as Parish Priest of Cannon Hill in Brisbane. Cannon Hill is the most recent parish entrusted to the pastoral care of the Oblates.

Fr Harry Dyer OMI in addition to being parish priest in Moe/ Newborough is also a police chaplain in his local area. The photo is of Fr Harry making a presentation to Acting S/SGT Jen McKenna whose sons attend Mazenod College Victoria, at an assembly honouring members of the Emergency Services. The assembly is held annually to remember past student Stephen Tynan, a policeman who was killed in the line of duty.



VOCATIONS

The promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life was the top goal set at the recently Province Congress. The General Administration has named 2018 as the Year of Vocations.

Brothers Josh and Thuan have just conducted a successful 'Come and See' weekend. They anxiously look over the fence at Camberwell and study the progress being made on the new St Mary's next door.



The National Oblate Youth Encounter, held each year in Victoria, is a wonderful opportunity for young adults 17 – 35 years to grow in their faith and in their appreciation of the Oblate mission and charism. The NOYE will be held January 4th – 7th. For more information contact Emma Rice, the Oblate Youth Coordinator on 03 9795 5077.

Gathering for the annual retreat

In early October, most of the Oblates gathered in Victoria for our annual retreat given by Bishop Hilton Deakin. Bishop Hilton is now classified as 'retired' but his years of being involved at an international level with Caritas International and his ongoing involvement in East Timor helped us to renew and grow in our Oblate spirituality of choosing to walk with the "poor with their many faces".

Important Information

The MAMI OFFICE will close THURSDAY DECEMBER 21st 2017 and reopen MONDAY JANUARY 15th 2018.



Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

Published by the Oblate Office of Mission, M.A.M.I. Centre, P.O. Box 384, Camberwell, Vic 3124
Telephone (03) 9805 8888 Fax: (03) 9813 2696 Email: mami@oblates.com.au Web: www.oblates.com.au