

HIGHLIGHTS

ONTARIO DISTRICT NEWS

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THE SEED OF THE OBLATE CHARISM

This was the theme and focus of our annual Oblate retreat this fall. It was held at the beautiful Manresa Spiritual Renewal Centre in Pickering, Ontario run by the Jesuits. Spending time together like this is a welcome break from the ongoing busyness of life.

There were some 29 Oblates, Associates and Affiliates present from the Ontario District. The three and a half day retreat was led by Fr. Bonga Majola, OMI. Originally from South Africa of Zulu heritage, Fr. Bonga is currently attached to the Aix-en-Provence Prayer House in France. His ministry includes the De Mazenod Experience and renewal of the Oblate charism through a focus on the life of our Society's founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod.

In a series of masterful reflections interwoven with writings of St. Eugene, scripture references, quotes from Pope Francis and JP II, relevant constitutional and other important Oblate texts, a centering focus on Jesus Christ, silence during the mornings and a call to action from the 36th General Chapter, we were engaged from start to finish in an intensely personal experience.

We explored St. Eugene's pain of a broken family and his refugee life until he had that encounter with the crucified Christ on Good Friday in 1806. St. Eugene realizes in all his brokenness that he is loved unconditionally by God and has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. He starts to heal, is completely transformed and

decides to devote his life to the glorification of God and the salvation of souls with a preferential option for the poor. The seed of the charism given to St. Eugene by God is reaching out to the poor. Due to the lack of family stability in his childhood, Eugene had a strong need for loving family relations which, through God's grace, led him to establish the community of Oblates to:

"Help people to be human beings, then to be Christians, then to be holy and finally to become Saints"

We realize Eugene's life is a template for our own – broken, in need of healing, an encounter with Jesus Christ, healing, a desire to know God, to seek holiness and even a striving to become a saint.



Photo courtesy of Paul Howard

HIGHLIGHTS

Fall Retreat (continued)

If Christ is not at the centre of my life, why not?

We discussed the importance of community and our need for love, support and affirmation in our journey from brokenness to sainthood. We acknowledged that problems exist in Oblate community life much like the problems that exist in other communities and in families and marriages. We need to first recognize our own brokenness and seek healing before we can reach out and help others in their brokenness. We must ponder the meaning of scripture before we can be credible witnesses and voices.

- As members of the Mazenodian Family, our call to action was expressed at the 36th General Chapter in 2016, namely: Mission and the new faces of the poor;

- Mission with youth
- Formation for mission
- Mission and interculturality
- Mission and social media
- Mission and finance

We left with a feeling of peace, gratitude and greater acceptance of ourselves and others. We felt renewed having realized again that Jesus really does love each of us. We felt more capable than ever of passing his love on to others in our lives and of being more accepting of others' differences. Much gratitude and appreciation was expressed by all to Fr. Bonga for his youthful witness, for his joy and for skillfully guiding us on this intensely personal renewal experience. The charism of St Eugene lives on in each of us by



Fr. Bonga Majola, OMI

dwelling on the seed of life, the water of baptism and the softening of our hearts through love of the cross. Thank you Fr. Bonga, St. Eugene and all our Mazenodian family brothers and sisters for this wonderful renewal experience. We can hardly wait until next year's retreat.

Thanks to David and Marie Morgan, Associate/Affiliate, Arnprior, for this article.

FR JOE KANE, OMI

MAY 12, 1929– SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

Fr. Joe Kane died peacefully on Sunday, September 17, 2017 at St. Patrick's Home, Ottawa, at the age of 88.

He professed his first vows September 8, 1949 in Arnprior, and his final vows on September 8, 1952 to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Fr. Joe was ordained to the priesthood on April 15, 1956 in Ottawa. As a missionary, Fr. Joe began his ministry working with the Native people in Kamloops, BC. He was then sent to join the Oblate mission in Peru from 1963-69, 1970-76 and again in 1977-1982. Here

he was a member of the Oblate delegation and worked as a pastor at the parishes of Nuestra Señora de la Paz and Madre de la Iglesia in Lima. Fr. Joe returned to Ottawa in 1983 and worked in Catholic renewal until his retirement.

Many friends and family members came out to Canadian Martyrs for the prayer services and Funeral Mass on Friday, Sept 22 and Saturday, Sept 23, respectively. Fr. Joe was remembered as a well-loved man of prayer.



FORMER OBLATE REUNION, AUGUST 14-17

Three years have been lived since we last came together to share the stories of ourselves, our lives and the undefinable common solidarity we value so dearly. That particular bond is one rooted in the Oblate life. In no time at all, the couple of lads who pulled up chairs in the screened in patio at Galilee soon had to keep adding chairs, expanding the circle of brother/sisterhood. Yes, some wives were there to keep the balance! One chap told me it was his first visit to Galilee since his novitiate in 1954 ... thus the stories and experiences began emerging!

Former Oblate gatherings have been organized and animated by Roy Boucher, OMI and a team of former Oblates/spouses every two-three years since the 1970s. This year, Fr. Jim Clarke (Diocese of Los

Angeles) joined us as a participant/resource person and a brotherly presence amongst us, listening to our experiences. The uniqueness and diversity of each person was heard and lovingly respected. Our sharings revealed unique life paths; ministries and services with those marginalized; struggles with faith, hesitant faith or loss of faith; the challenges and joys of family life; how the present day church is not meeting current needs; and finally, how do our individual/communal responses bring about change? Fr. Jim assured us "we never left the priesthood as each one of us is a priest."

Our various responses to new vocations (eg. marriage) are often larger calls, continuing to imbibe the Oblate values experienced while in formation. Fr. Jim

attentively listened to us for an entire morning. He reflected adeptly back to us what he had heard, affirming us, placing the richness of our essence within the lived contexts of our present lives. We truly do need one another and the gifts of one another's vocations as we gratefully and mindfully continue on this pilgrimage. A common seed of 'Oblateness' planted decades ago continues to transcend the expressed call of ordained, married or single life.

May this spirit renew us as we keep each other in mind, heart and prayer – may we respond generously to the current needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us often gaze into the Father's eyes as He tenderly calls our name.

Colleen Kerr

Upcoming Events at Galilee Centre

**How to Live with a Prickly Porcupine:
Letting the Difficult Person Heal Us**

November 10-12, 2017

Presenter: Fr. Matt Linn, S.J.

For more information on these and other events, contact Galilee Centre at 613-623-4242, ext 21, or info@galileecentre.com.



Photo courtesy of Paul Howard

HIGHLIGHTS

FROM ST. EUGENE

"We must lead men to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints."

The Preface, C&R



CELEBRATIONS

ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST VOWS

Fr. Antonio Pannunzi, October 3 (50 years)

ANNIVERSARY OF FINAL VOWS

Fr. Frank Kavanagh, October 7 (68 years)

Fr. Jan Rademaker, October 4 (48 years)

ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION

Fr. Jim Fiori, October 9 (46 years)



BIRTHDAYS

Fr. Normand Bonneau October 5

Fr. Ollie Rich October 8

Fr. Heinner Paucar October 23



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