

March 10, 2026

We began this morning very early, even after seven hours of sleep. After our 4 a.m. rise we attended a community French mass in the Mission Church attached to the Foundation House. We joined the group for breakfast at 8 a.m. followed by morning prayer in the chapel. Bonga encouraged us to let the silence speak as we are 'on holy ground;' these walls will speak to us about the founder, Eugene de Mazenod and our call as Oblate associates. There is so much original architecture and elements still present in this building, including the floor that Eugene walked on.

We processed with lit candles to the court yard. This is where some Carmelite gravestones (circa 1739) are restored and revered, remembering the Carmelite convent of Aix-en-Provence which was born during a period of deep spiritual renewal in the Church. It was a place where reality was held before God, hour after hour. Every stone, every passage way, spoke of enclosure not as confinement, but as interior freedom, a freedom born of total availability to God. Today the former Carmel, the Oblate House of Aix stands as a living parable of the Church. It tells that contemplation and mission are not opposites, but movements of the same spirit. We were filled with a deep gratitude for our opportunity to stand on this holy ground.

Our next stop was the Mission Church where Bonga pointed out structure of the building and what remained from the time of the Founder. There is a rich history to be experienced in this building, one of persecution, hope and mission.

Mass, followed by lunch and siesta brought us to more touring of the Foundation House including a presentation in the Guibert Room. What struck us about what Bonga shared was how he fell in love with the broken man that Eugene was. If we listen and develop a close relationship with the Founder, we will deepen the understanding of our own poverty. It was Eugene's grief, exile and crisis that led him to a life changing encounter with Christ on Good Friday. We all have cracks and brokenness that remind us of the presence of Christ in our lives. We were especially struck by the struggle to be merciful within community. It is easy to preach mercy but difficult to live it out.

Bonga wanted us to know about all the places in the building we could access for personal prayer and reflection. We climbed the stairs to the Oratoire, a beautiful gathering space which allowed wonderful views of the surrounding neighbourhood. It is a modern but historical room with the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and often used by youth groups for prayer and reflection.

Before our supper meal we gathered in the chapel and processed with candles to the Foundation Room for the first time, the place where Eugene and the first two Oblate priests gathered to draw up their mission and vision for the congregation. The room was simply adorned with a wooden plank table on two barrels, original library and the Founder's heart leading to a map of how this congregation has spread throughout the world.

Our pilgrimage began today without even leaving the building. We look forward to spending time in these rooms of our 'home here in Aix' reflecting on the past to strengthen our present commitment to Oblate life. We are sent to bring good news to the poor.

-Dan and Joanne Friedt





Original Flooring

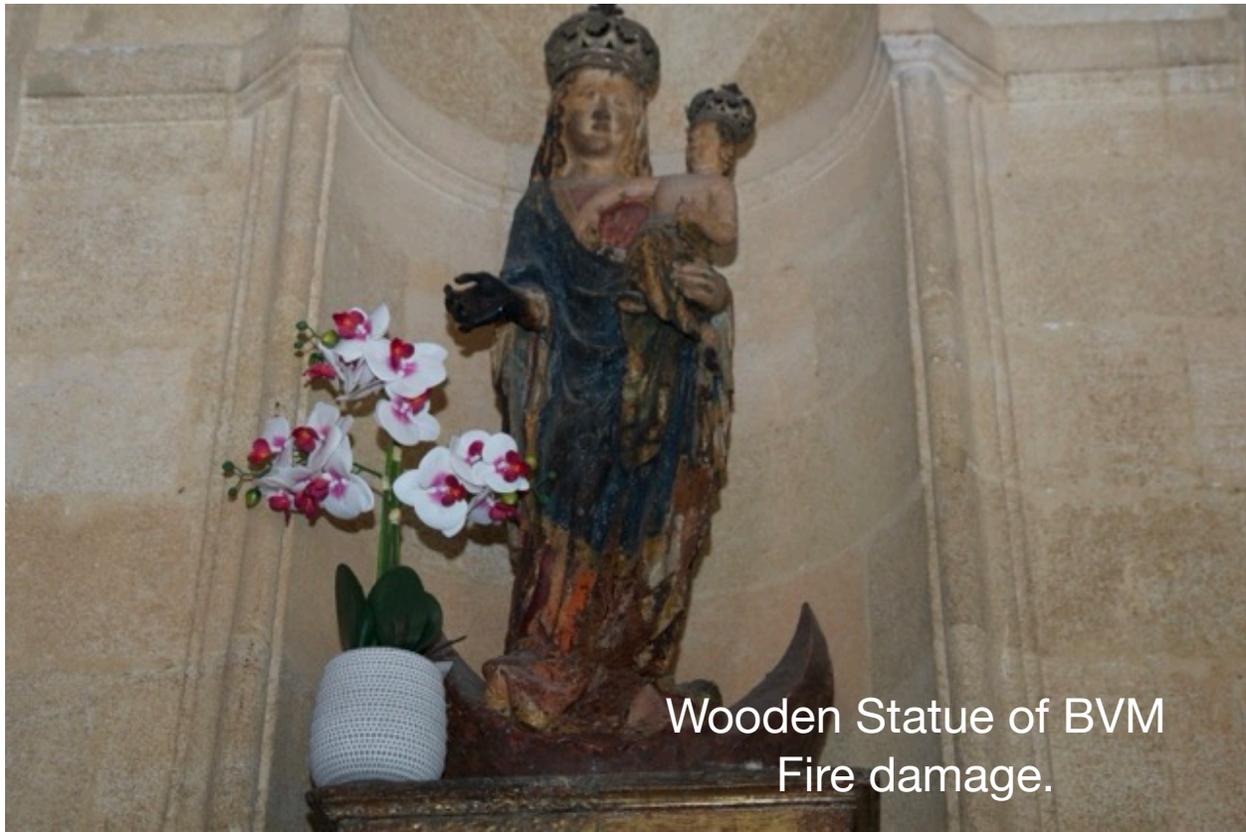


Mission Church





Sacred Heart of Jesus



Wooden Statue of BVM
Fire damage.



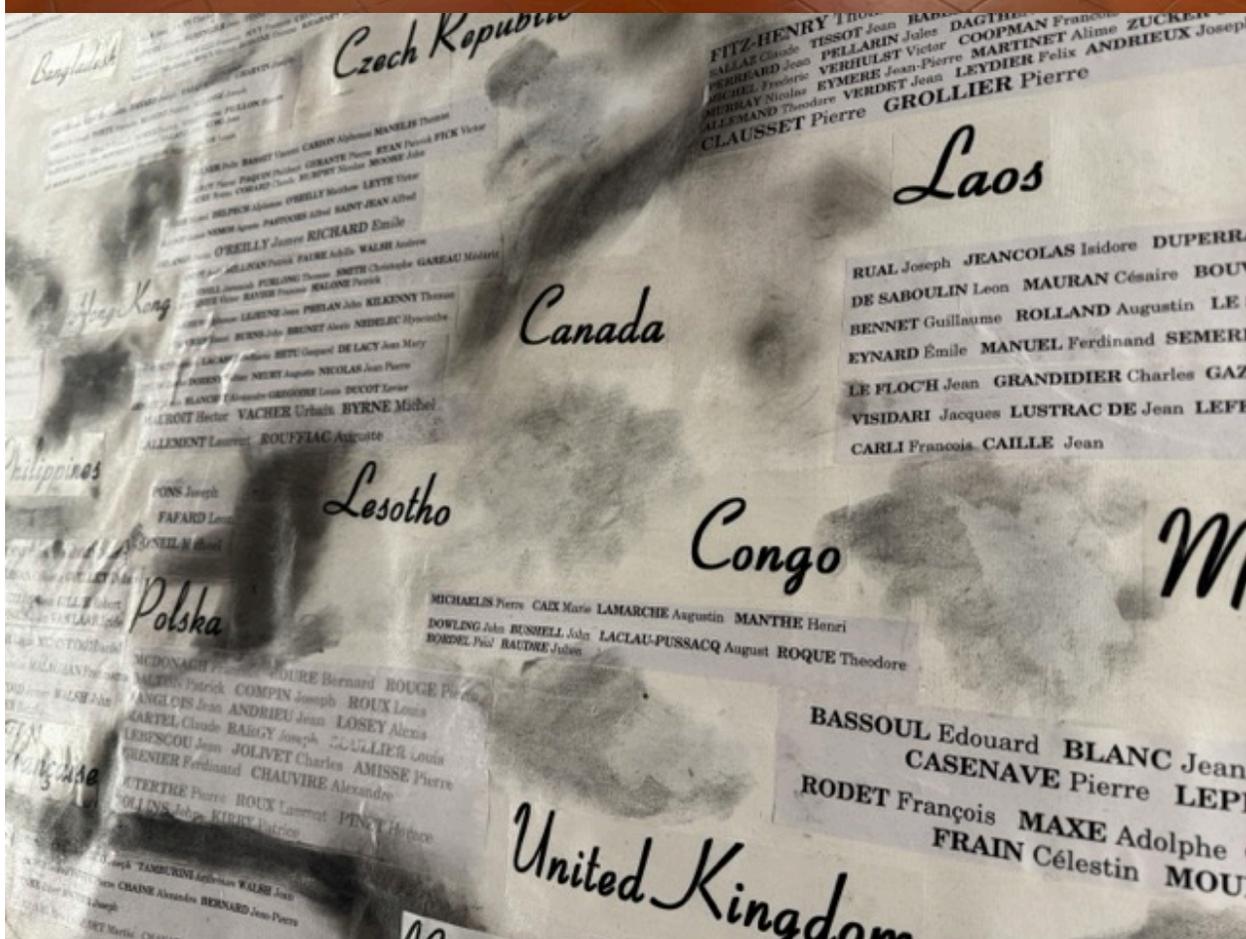


Foundation Room





Foundation Room





Just outside the Foundation Room.





Classroom for our sessions.

**"Yet you,
LORD, are our
Father;
we are the
clay and you
are the potter:
we are all the
work of your
hand."
Isaiah 64:7**



BROKENNESS

Rechercher



Envelopes filled with prayer requests.