

# BORN

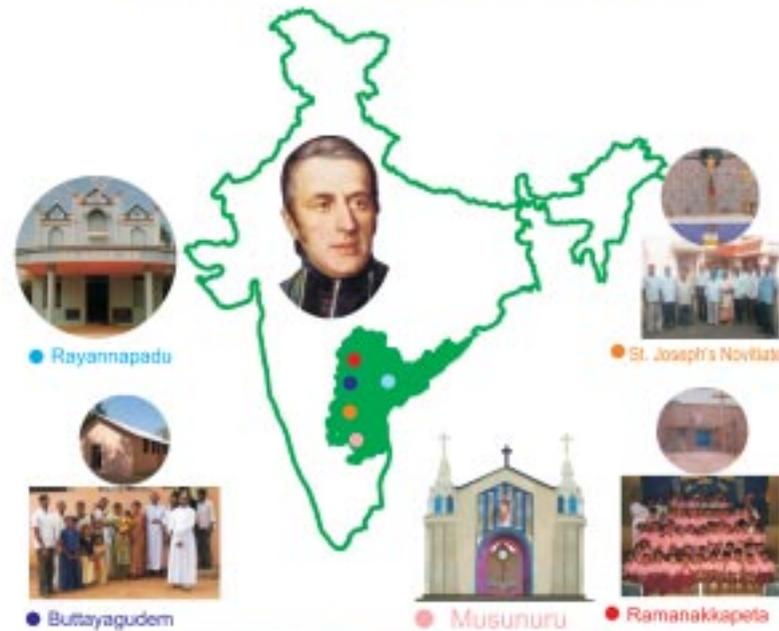


*Bharath Oblate Regional News*

Apr - June 2008 News Letter No.5 OMI Delegation of India

## Silver Jubilee

**A Celebrative Milestone of  
OMI Presence - Vision & Mission in A.P.**



**1983 - 2008**

*Pilgrims with the Poor towards Fullness of Life*

## CONGRATS ON YOUR PRIESTLY ORDINATION



**Fathers Bruno John Baptist OMI, Antony Samy OMI, Harry Immanuel OMI, (Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa, Madras - Mylapore)  
Sagaya Raj OMI, (Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, Delegation Superior, Fr. Samuel Savio, Rector SHS)  
Joseph Thambi OMI,(Fr. Jeevaratnam OMI, Rector St. Pauls Institute) and Solomon Moses OMI.**

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR LIFE WITH US

OMI

India

Wishes

You

Fruitful

Ministry



Most Rev. Archbishop SYLVAIN LAVOIE OMI  
Diocese of Keewatin - The Pas, Canada.



JACK LAU OMI, U.S



### VOCATION CAMPS



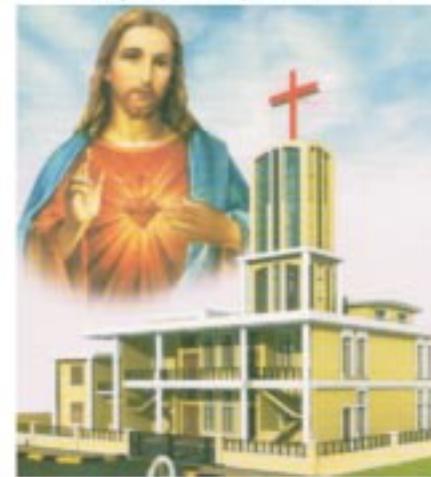
Congrats to the Vocation Director and Coordinators



CONGRATS ON YOUR FIRST RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT  
Nirmal, Arputharaj, Joe, Martin, Antonyraj, Arockiadoss, Nicholas (Musunuru, A.P.) and  
Bernu Rajesh (Bandarawela, Srilanka)

## SACRED HEART CHURCH

Bangarapet, Bangalore Diocese



Congrats to the Parish Community and People  
on the Successful completion of new church

Comments, Suggestions and News will be gratefully received by the Editorial Board

Editor: S.D.Arokiaraj OMI

OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

St. Joseph Bhavan, Rudra Road, St. Thomas Mount, Chennai – 600 016

Tel: 044-22346766; 22346769; Fax: 22318668

E-Mail : [indiaomi@vsnl.net](mailto:indiaomi@vsnl.net) / [oblates@omiindia.org](mailto:oblates@omiindia.org) Web : [www.omiindia.org](http://www.omiindia.org)

Printed at FSJ St. Joseph's Press, AGS Colony,  
Phase-III, St.Thomas Hospital Campus, Chennai-600 116.

E-mail : [stjosephspress@gmail.com](mailto:stjosephspress@gmail.com)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Superior's Message	- 02
2. Superior General's Corner -5 (Missionary Meditation - June '08)	- 05
3. A "Personal" Journey to India – Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie OMI	- 07
4. Jubilee Message – Rt Rev Dr Mallavarappu Prakash D.D	- 10
5. Message from Fr. Roland Jacques OMI	- 11
6. News from the Oblate District Units	
1. St. Eugene District Community	- 16
a. St. Joseph Bhavan	
b. From Treasure's Desk	
c. St. Eugene Preaching Center – Preachers' Voice	
d. Pre-novices 2008 – Towards Oblate Missionary life	
2. Amala Annai District Community	- 22
a. Gnanalayam – De Mazenod Juniorate	
b. SACCIDANANDA Temple – Part II	
c. From "YOU" Animator	
d. From the "Cave of my Heart" – Jack Lau OMI	
3. Bl Joseph Gerard District Community	- 33
a. Kombadimadurai– Tête-à-tête	
4. Fernand Jette' District Community – A.P	- 34
a. St. Joseph Church, Musunuru – Silver Jubilee Special	
b. Jyothirmai Matha Devalayamu- R.K.Peta	
c. Arpanalayam- St. Joseph Novitiate	
5. Marzello Zago District Community	- 42
a. New Church & Oblate presence at Bangarapet	
6. Bl Joseph Cebula District Community – North India	- 46
a. Faith Formation – Boda	
7. Administrative Directory	- 47
8. Advisory Council - Towards Sustainable Finance Management	- 49
9. From Vocation Director	- 50
10. An Experience at Aanmodaya Ashram	- 51
11. INBOX Corner	- 55
12. Birthdays, Feast days and Anniversaries	- 56



## *Superior's Message*

---

### *An Exodus from Mission to Ministry*

In the Indian sub-continent April – May – June is a time of movements! Clergy and religious in most Dioceses and Congregations as Oblates, assume new assignments shedding the old. It's true we, the Oblates move from one place to another, often in unceremonious and simple ways from the place and people we have loved and served about four to six years! Many times with anxieties of losing the known and embracing the unknown! This year we have some Oblates who leave the motherland to foreign lands for various purposes and ministry! I wish to thank all of you first of all for your faithful service in the place of mission that you bid good-bye and secondly for accepting very generously to take up the new mission with all the consequences of mission movements!

Thomas Carlyle was of 18<sup>th</sup> century who was a simple man turned illustrious and inspiring writer! He knew better than most men. All his life until then had been a struggle against poverty and illness, against uncertainty and despair. He had prepared for the ministry, but gave it up when he could no longer accept the bigotry of narrow creed. He had tried teaching, but gave that up when he lost patience with stupidity. He had tried other professions, briefly and without joy, though always doing his duty as he saw it.

Not until he turned to writing did he find his life's work, and his life's happiness. He described it later in his reminiscences as "an immense victory." His philosophy of life was, "***Blessed is he who has found his work***"! This particular sentence has influenced and inspired great persons like Darwin, Ruskin, Dickens, Tennyson, Browning etc Immense victory he had found is not that he had at last hit upon a million dollar job or high profit business but life's purpose, life's direction, life's fruit to humanity! When such vision of life's purpose is missing in persons then it is candidly evident at the first sight that there is no heart in the life, no joy, no enthusiasm, no fire in

life; what our Founder St Eugene called them as “smouldering wicks”! Life’s purpose leads us beyond the peripherals and externals!

This is what I call as moving from mission to ministry, from status to service, from mere word to work, from mere rituals to spirituals, from reform to renewal! Mission is a place! Specially when it comes to assigning for ministry, parishes/missions appear with its own glamour; this parish or that parish is much sought after! This position or that position is most zealously hunted in keen contest using every influence available! Rituals like festive Eucharist are satisfying and rubricated! Could we make ministry our target? Could service be our obsession? Can spirituality be the driving force? While mission, status, rituals etc give a platform for ministry, service, spiritualities often we are caught up with the former sacrificing the latter! Mission, rituals and status are external while service, spirituality and ministry is an inner power and realization of one’s life’s purpose leading to flowering of many other lives! It’s not finding a work but attempting a revolution in one’s life to realize all the potentials to fruition, a total change in the cause of commitment!

By this way of perception of “mission to ministry” categories we are not falling prey to the dualism of the middle ages contra-posing the coupling realities! We know for sure that one can’t be without the other. We attempt to create a symbiotic synthesis born of creative tension between the integrated confluences of the realities! In simpler terms it is as important to build a visible church as it is to build the community! One needs to hold the two realities in live and creative tension that life is meaningful and fecundate! They are not opposed but complimentary towards new creative force!

“Success depends on a plus condition of mind and body, on power of work, on courage”, wrote Emerson in his article on “Self-Reliance”! “If we want more roses, we must plant more trees”, George Eliot sums up one of the oldest secrets of achievements! The real difficulty of religious and priestly life is that the challenge of success and achievements in this walk of life touches the inner world and the non-quantifiable values – ministry, service, spirituality etc! But we would like to deal with quantifiable world of the senses – mission, rituals

etc. This is the frustration religious feel during times of evaluation of success and achievements!

In this sense alluding to a biblical paradigm of renewal one could very well see “Exodus” from the security of the known past to a hitherto unexperienced freedom looming in the horizon! New mission calling for new movement is an “exodus experience”! So, without doubt, new missionary movements are times of renewal! The central theme in the bible, the exodus, is tested in its durability, challenged with trials, sufferings as purifying process towards marching into the land of freedom, flowing with milk and honey!

Another paradigmatic personality is St Paul, the missionary par excellence, whose jubilee we are called on to celebrate to renew our missionary thrust! Missionary principles of St Paul clearly depict his life’s purpose: Witnessing to Christ crucified with his word and work, adapting to the religio-cultural ethos of the people of God, creating communities of disciples to Jesus, His Master!

As we recall the Pauline Jubilee we, the Oblates in India are immensely grateful to God and proud of all the Oblate stalwarts and vanguards who led us from the front to mature into 40 years of life and mission, the **Ruby Jubilee** of Oblate presence in India and **25 years, Silver Jubilee of Oblate presence in Andhra Pradesh!** We remember and pray for all the pioneering Oblate missionaries who sowed the seeds of Oblate charism! It’s a rich year of blessing as all jubilee years are “favourable and Graced moment” for renewal and growth! With Isaiah we confess, “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.” (Is 7:9)

**Rev Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI**  
Delegation Superior



*Year of St. Paul, the Apostle*

## Superior General's Corner - 5

**MISSIONARY MEDITATION, JUNE 2008**

*Among those who do not believe*



My last journey brought me to Ukraine where I participated in a meeting of the 30 Oblates who work in this country. I learned that the most important challenge these missionaries are confronted with, is unbelief. More than half of the 46 million Ukrainian citizens can be considered as non-believers today. Even though there was an awakening to religion after the 1989 fall of the Berlin wall, the Soviet system has had a lasting impact on the survival of faith. For 70 years, atheism had been taught in school and the words “God does not exist” were in use as a greeting for too long.

Each mission questions the faith of the missionary in its own way. For example, I have always been impressed by the early morning call to prayer in Muslim countries. It challenges my Christian faith: to almost everyone in these countries, except a tiny minority, Jesus Christ is not what He is for me. However, God is invoked and believed in, and people strive to make him the center of their personal lives and society.

Unbelief presents a different and much deeper challenge. It poses the radical question: does God exist at all? Ukraine is not the only place in the world where this lack of faith is so evident. Rich, industrialized societies in the West and the Far East, as well as poor countries such as Uruguay, push believers into a minority status.

How does unbelief come about? It may be the result of God being systematically explained away. Often science is invoked for this: natural science, the results of brain research or the insights of psychology; “The God delusion”, is the title of a popular book committed to this explaining away. Unbelief is propagated not only by an aggressive atheism (“there is no God”) or a serene agnosticism (“nothing can be known”); it may also come about as a result of simple disinterest (“I have other things to do”). All these mechanisms somehow work! It seems that through reasoning and education or simple distraction by other things, faith can be deleted from the minds of people as if it were a computer program, and so for the next generation, a tradition has been discontinued.

What does this mean for our mission? Apparently in such contexts conversions are difficult, as our Oblates in the Ukraine would affirm. The three postulants, who are with us in Ukraine, showed an acute awareness of the challenge when they asked me about the possible ways of mission in the former Soviet Union and similar experiences of Oblates in other parts of the world. I could not tell them many stories about full success, though I was able to give them some hints about approaches used by Oblates: hospitality, listening, care for the poor, work through the media.

However, I am personally convinced that this new, apparently barren mission field among those who do not believe may start greening one day and will finally bear fruit. We do have some encouraging experiences. But before that can happen, the challenge to our own faith must be taken up. Not only our missionary methods are put in question, unbelief also challenges our own personal and communitarian vocation of being Christians. Within us a residual unbelief may have remained that has resisted conversion and needs to be exposed. “Working in this country makes you feel naked”, a missionary (from another continent) stated. Being questioned by the silent, apparently unmovable majority of unbelievers is hard for us but unavoidable; Providence might have put it before us to purify our faith.

In a world of unbelief, the first and most important question for us must then be: is God truly believed in by us? The second one follows: can God’s presence in us be felt by others, can it be experienced in the quality and beauty of our lives? If people apparently have no longer a sense of God, it is up to us missionaries to make God tangible and visible to them through our own lives. Unbelief challenges us to once again put the search for God and our relationship with God, back into the center of our lives. Just as God’s majesty once shone in the life of Jesus, crucified and risen, the same miracle must happen again in the lives of his disciples. Many who today are struck with unbelief could then receive the gift of faith and with it, life in abundance.

**Fr. Wilhelm Steckling OMI**  
Superior General  
Rome

## ***A “Personnel” Journey to India & Sri Lanka***

**- Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie OMI**

From March 31 to April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, I undertook a journey to Sri Lanka and India to explore the possibility of a mutually beneficial, long-range arrangement regarding missionary personnel for our archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas in northern Canada. A Canadian funding agency covered the cost of the trip. The hope was that this could be a joint Oblate-diocesan venture but Fr. Jim Fiori OMI was unable to work this into his schedule.

There were many reasons for such a trip. Initially, Fr. Francis Jayakody from Sri Lanka, who is ministering in our diocese, was returning home to renew his visa and celebrate his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood. He invited me to attend his anniversary and that started the ball rolling.

More pressing, our diocese is in urgent need of younger priests who can work with youth and promote local vocations, especially among aboriginal youth. We also want to reinforce the Oblate presence that is already in the diocese, including the presence of newly arrived Fr. Susai Jesu OMI from India.

In Sri Lanka I was able to visit Archbishop Oswald Gomis, Oblate Provincial Clement Waidyasekera, the retired Oblates in Colombo; the Oblate scholasticate and the National Seminary at Kandy and Bishop Norbert Andradi, whom I met at the new bishops' school in Rome. The hospitality of the Salesians and Archbishop Oswald Gomis in Sri Lanka was tremendous.

In Chennai, India, I enjoyed the warm and generous hospitality of the Oblate delegation residence, dialogued with the delegation superior Francis Nallappan OMI, met many local Oblates in their parishes and some from the tribal areas, visited Aanmodaya Ashram directed by Swami Joseph A. Samarakone OMI, and gave a talk to the pre-novices. I briefly met with Archbishop Chinnappa, toured a Hindu temple and visited the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI)

next door, where I met Fr. Susai's sister Lilly, as well as their founder Fr. Arulraj.

While some names surfaced of Oblates interested in coming to our diocese to minister, giving me some hope, there are a number of observations that are worth noting:

1. The Oblates of this area are being called upon to provide personnel for other parts of the congregation.
2. As globalization, a rising economy and secularity insert themselves into this fairly Catholic area, the number of vocations may start to decline here as well.
3. The radical action of leaving one's homeland to minister in a foreign nation remains a special calling involving a small number of Oblates.
4. There is a need, expressed especially by Bishop Norbert Andradi, for on-going renewal for his personnel. The idea of priests coming to Canada for a year of orientation and personal renewal, perhaps at St. Paul's University, followed by a year or two of ministry in our diocese, was explored as a mutually beneficial arrangement. Our challenge would be to find funding to help this happen.
5. Twinning of parishes in our diocese with missions in the diocese of Anuradhapura was requested by Bishop Andradi. We will both work at developing this further.
6. The Oblates both in Sri Lanka and India have a sound, well-developed formation program that covers from pre-novitiate to ordination. This approach also includes mentoring for priests ordained less than five years, and that is very encouraging and commendable.
7. The situation of ministry among the tribal peoples in the north of India and in Sri Lanka is a point of interest for our diocese that has a 70% Aboriginal presence.

This was an initial "personnel journey" for the purpose of gathering information and exploring possibilities. Any next steps involving Oblates coming to minister in our diocese would of course

be in collaboration with the Oblate leadership in each country and perhaps at times with the General Administration.

It is hard to measure the value and impact of such a journey. In Sri Lanka, to celebrate Fr. Jayakody's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priesthood in his home parish; to see the housing projects he initiated; to meet legendary Sr. Bernie Silva and tour *Samatha Sarana*, the five story center of charity she founded, and finally to visit Bishop Norbert OMI in his northern diocese of Anuradhapura, was unique and enriching. My only regret was that the time was too short to visit the Oblates in Jaffna province in the north.

In India, staying with brother Oblates was truly special, in all their joyful simplicity. The visit to the Ashram and a Hindu temple was a powerful, challenging and broadening experience. To be in a land that reaches back to apostolic times through St. Thomas, not to mention the evangelization by St. Francis Xavier, was inspiring and humbling.

I especially bonded with the Oblates in Chennai, was impressed by their dedication, and feel hopeful future initiatives could be explored that would be beneficial and rewarding for all involved as we seek to build up the Reign of God both East and West.

Sincerely, in the Lord and Mary Immaculate,

+ **Sylvain Lavoie OMI**  
Archbishop of Keewatin - The Pas  
Canada



## **Most Rev. PRAKASH MALLAVARAPU DD**

Bishop of Vijayawada  
Bishop's House, Vijayawada - 520 008, A.P., India

Off. : Tel: 0866-2471355, Fax : 0866-5569926 (P) : 0866-2484647, Fax : 0866-2475955 E-mail : bishopvja@sify.com

5<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### **MESSAGE**

Dear Fr. C. T. Varghese and all the OMI Fathers and Brothers,  
Greetings of Peace in the Lord!

I am happy that Oblates of Mary Immaculate, OMI, Congregation is having celebrations to mark the completion of 25 years of fruitful service in Andhra Pradesh and in Musunuru in Vijayawada Diocese. I hereby extend my hearty congratulations and greetings on the occasion of these Silver Jubilee celebrations to Fr. Nallappan, the Provincial and all the OMI Fathers and Brothers associated with the mission in Vijayawada Diocese serving the Christian Community at Musunuru and Ramanakkapeta Parishes.



With the presence and through different forms of apostolate the OMI fathers and brothers have made substantial contribution to the people of Musunuru and Ramanakkapeta, especially the poor in the Catholic Christian Community. The contribution of OMI Congregation in the areas of education and socio-economic development is really commendable. I take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation and gratitude on behalf of the faithful of Musunuru and Ramanakkapeta and the whole diocese of Vijayawada, for all the dedicated services of OMI members in the past twenty five years, enriching the Christian life in this vast Diocese of Vijayawada.

I extend prayerful greetings and wishes to all the OMI fathers and brothers on the, occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations at Musunuru on 20<sup>th</sup> May. May the Lord continue to bless and take care of everything that they undertake for the building up of the life of people!

Invoking the blessings of the Lord,

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

+ **Prakash Mallavarapu**  
(Bishop of Vijayawada)



## **MESSAGE FROM A RENOWNED CANONIST & LINGUIST**

Dear brother Oblates of India,

Greetings in the Lord on this holy day marking the birth into heaven of our Founder Eugene de Mazenod. His feastday is a good opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks for the way the Delegation of India welcomed me in April and earlier this month. Today in Hochiminh-City eight young men are taking their first vows as Oblates in the OMI Vietnam Mission, and all and each one of you are present in my prayer.

Besides the kind invitation of Fr. Nallappan, and Fr. Denis Dancause's pressing encouragements, I had two good reasons to visit India, linked with my academic career as well as my international Oblate experience.(1) In the book I published in 1999 on the Portuguese Missions to Asia I concentrated on the Far East - China, Vietnam, etc. - because I was graduating in Far-Eastern studies. And yet, India had a prominent place in that history, which I could not bypass in any way. In spite of extensive reading on the country, its age-old civilisation and its present struggles, I always felt somehow guilty of writing so many pages about a nation I had not visited, even once, and I wanted to atone for that old sin.

(2) Of course, in my Oblate career in Europe and North America I had met with a number of persons hailing from India, including Oblates (the first was Fr. Sam at the 1980 General Chapter) and students of canon law. I was accompanying some in their doctoral research. This was wetting my appetite to meet with 'real' India: not only the object of historical, cultural, or juridical science, but men and women and communities in their daily endeavours and accomplishments, in the very place that has shaped the features of their soul.

I feel immensely grateful to the Fathers and Brothers of the Oblate Delegation of India for allowing me to gain some initial first-hand knowledge of this great nation. Thanks to you my first glance on 'real'

India has not been in any way of the touristy kind - the 'first impressions' one can read about in glossy paper magazines. You went out of your way, not only to make my stay pleasant (in spite of the heat) and meet or anticipate my daily needs, but to involve me, as an esteemed brother, in a vital dimension of your life and mission: initial formation (cf. CRR, C 49). And I do believe that this involvement has been, indeed, "a process of mutual evangelisation" (C 48), which allowed me to grow in my own Oblate vocation.

Yet the first impression is worth mentioning: Saint Joseph Bhavan, anchored on the rock of Saint Thomas Mount. For the historian in me this is a very powerful and moving symbol. The Oblates figure among the junior congregations in India, but we did set roots in the wonderful past history of the Church in India! This small house has a vibrant spirit, thanks to a young, dynamic and caring central team - superior, econome and secretary - together with the praying presence of the veteran of the Oblate venture in India, Fr. Emmanuel. The visitor is pleased to see how the house is presently growing into its full stature as the centre of the future, nationwide Province of India.

My first contact with the Oblate mission proper was the trip to Kancheepuram. Within a few hours I discovered the Ashram, Aanmodaya, that makes many Oblates around the world proud of their Indian brothers. With the Real Presence as the heart and soul of this place, I could sense its tremendous potential to promote inter-religious dialogue, in line with the rich spiritual traditions of the Indian nation and the pioneering inspiration of dear departed Father Amalraj. In stark contrast, I was thrilled by the celebrations in Kancheepuram, experiencing firsthand a thriving Tamil parish; I know that this is the result of many Oblates toiling, over a few decades, to sow the word of God and lead numerous people, especially the poor, to Jesus Christ as Saviour.

After a memorable night on the Howrah express to Eluru, I discovered another side of the Indian way of making the Oblate charism alive. As a tourist I would describe the narrow, winding highways of Andhra Pradesh overfilled with all kinds of human and animal life and displaying every possible variation on the theme of

vehicles for the underprivileged, heading through a stunning landscape toward populous towns and villages. This is quite an eye-filler for the traveller coming from a rich place like Canada, where children are a rare sight, poverty is carefully concealed, and people do not seem to believe in transmitting life any longer.

But then, any idea of tourism was forgotten upon arriving in Arpanalayam, the “place of oblation.” Father Francis and his novices - now professed Oblates - had gone out of their way to make me, just another Oblate confrere, feel like a most honoured and much-loved guest, like a brother coming home after many years. That moment makes the visitor forget at once any inconvenience experienced on a lengthy trip. All these ceremonial gestures, cordial words, rites and prayers upon arriving at a community, or leaving it, are indeed quite moving, and give possibly the best glimpse on the successful blend between Oblate straightforward simplicity and the striking intensity of the Indian soul.

Spending a week with the novices, and later two days with the prenovices, I had many opportunities to appreciate their watchful attentions, and especially their eagerness to learn more about the Oblate charism to make it their own. In line with my personal experience, I offered them a more historical approach, supported by the exemplary lives and deaths of our “Oblate martyrs” in Laos, an example that spells out at once consecration and mission. Visibly, this approach was new to the group but, after a moment of hesitation, they responded very well; it was then much easier to move on to more abstract topics taken from our Constitutions and Church Law. My best reward came in the words of one of the prenovices, summarising what they had kept from my short lessons: “I am proud of belonging to such a congregation!” Yes indeed, the Indian Delegation, just as so many Oblate Provinces and Missions around the world, does not have a lot to show in terms of institutions - conventual buildings, schools, hospitals, shrines, etc. No gold or silver to offer, but what we have is worth thousands times more: Jesus Christ announced to the poor, and the hope which only He can fully bring.

With the upcoming generations of young Oblates I felt that we

shared indeed the same love and pride for this very special Oblate identity. Once this love and pride are rooted in their hearts, they will be able to steer clear of some confusion that comes inevitably with philosophical and theological studies today. One question that the novices debated with me was “what is salvation today.” I told them that they will find the true Oblate answer, not in the most recent theological fads, but in reading and meditating our Constitutions, especially CC. 5 and 10.

Of course, peaceful and beautiful Arpanalayam does not exhaust the Oblate presence in the Nuzvid area. I feel most fortunate for having been able to pay short visits to Musunuru and Ramanakkapeta, including the Hill Shrine but leaving Buttayagudem for my next visit. Truly, here in these poor areas, we Oblates live among the most abandoned, and very close to people; i.e. we are in our own place, in the position assigned to us by our Founder. I watched the sparkle in the eyes of these confreres, I felt the joy in their hearts, and how eager they are to offer what the poor need most: education is their top priority, and it means promoting literacy as well as breaking the unadulterated Word of God they are thirsting for. How can I forget the children assembled in Ramanakkapeta for a 3-day camp, so full of life and hope for a better future, and so intent on listening to the Gospel message? After these few evening trips, in my turn I can say: “I am proud of belonging to such a congregation.”

During the second week of my stay I saw more of the city life, discovering the fast developing conurbation of Chennai from the vantage point that the Oblates chose, namely Poonamallee. If the metropolis itself is betting on high-tech and attracting wealth from all over, we Oblates here as elsewhere are faithful to our own calling. No doubt the tomb of Saint Thomas in the Mylapore cathedral is a place of beauty, yet our church of Saint John the Baptist speaks more to people’s hearts. With Fr. Jeeva as a knowledgeable tour guide I got plenty of both sides of the show.

Yet the highpoint of the week was the encounter at Saint Paul with the Oblate deacons. They were coming from temporary assignments in various settings, tired but full of their first real-life

experience of pastoral realities and issues. They were seeing the usefulness of canon law as well as its limits. Together we endeavoured to reach beyond the law to the core of the evangelical mystery, as witnesses to the love of Jesus Christ for the poor and the sinners, imbued with Eugene de Mazenod's unconditional love for the Church. To this group in particular, the heroic example left by our Oblate martyrs in Laos spoke volumes. I am greatly indebted to them - now they are the youngest Oblate priests of the Delegation - for allowing me to come a little more closely in contact with the real needs of our parishes and missions in India.

I did not say a word on my visit to Gnanalayam, the "place of wisdom," but I do remember it fondly, and I am eager to rediscover it in full activity some time in the future; and then, Bangalore, Pune, and the Northern mission districts: so many places, so many brothers, so many people to discover... As I mentioned a few times during my stay, being councillor of the OMI Vietnam Mission I am dreaming of sending some of our Vietnamese scholastics to learn from the Indian experience how to serve the poor in Asia. Thank you again, Dear Fathers Francis Nallappan, S.D., and Gnanam and dear Fathers and Brothers that I met, for the true Oblate brotherhood that you demonstrated so vividly. Do forgive me if I unwittingly hurt you in any way.

**Fr. Roland Jacques, OMI**

(Province of France / Vietnam Mission)

Dean, Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, Ottawa

Postulator for the Martyrs of Laos

May 21, 2008

## 6. NEWS FROM THE OBLATE DISTRICT UNITS

### 1. ST. EUGENE DISTRICT

#### a. St. Joseph Bhavan

#### April

6 – we wish a prayerful and joyous SILVER JUBILEE of the Sacerdotal Ordination of our beloved Fathers, namely, Ambrose, Pragasam and Pathinathan. We were also privileged to have one of the silver jubilarians Fr. Pathinathan OMI in the presence of Rev Fr. Labaglay, OMI along with St. Eugene District. We thank our district members and also Frs. Varghese and Peter Sakra for their presence with us.

7 - a historical missionary-visit of Oblate Archbishop, His Excellency Most Rev Dr. Sylvain OMI, Archbishop of the diocese of Keewatin The Pas, Canada, was with us for four days. He arrived at 8.00pm and stayed till 10<sup>th</sup> April. Fr. Susai, an Indian Oblate is a missionary in his diocese in Canada. His stay has left us an indelible impression of cheerfulness, simplicity and unassuming features of a noble and benign personality. He was on his missionary-visit to SriLanka and way back to India. We the Oblates in India wish God's abundant blessings for his good health and successful Episcopal ministry in his diocese. May the Heavenly Father pour out more vocations for his diocese.

10 - We wish a bon voyage to His Excellency Most Rev Dr. Sylvain OMI, Archbishop of the diocese of Keewatin The Pas, Canada, and Rev Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, Delegation Superior who is attending Superiors' Meet in Manila, Philippines.

#### May

5 - Welcome and a big thanks to Rev Fr. Roland Jacques OMI, Canon Law, Ottawa University, Canada. We are very proud of your presence and precious time you spent with us in the Delegation. Your animation for the Deacons in Chennai and Novices in Andhra Pradesh has made memorable contribution to the Delegation of India. May

your ministry of teaching and cause of the Martyrs of Laos be blessed by the Lord.

19 - congratulations to Bros. Antonnyraj Joseph OMI, Arockiadoss Soosai OMI, Arputharaj Jesuraj OMI, Joe Antony OMI, Martin Susai OMI, Nicholas Santiago OMI and Nirmal Kumar OMI on your First religious commitment at St. Joseph Church, Musunuru and Hearty Welcome and Congratulations to Bro. Berno Rajesh OMI on your First Vows at Bandarawela, Srilanka.

29 - Hearty Congratulations to newly Ordained priests, Fathers Antony Samy OMI, Bruno John Baptist OMI, Harry Immanuel OMI, Joseph Thambi OMI, Sagaya Raj OMI and Solomon Moses OMI. We wish them a happy ministry with their motto “in Christ - with Christ-for Christ”. We thank His Excellency Most Rev Dr.A.M.Chinnappa SDB, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore for conferring the Sacred Order of Priesthood for them at St. John the Baptist Church, Karayanchavdi.

30 – thanks to all the newly ordained priests for sharing their joy with us in the holy Mass at St. Joseph Bhavan.

### **June**

13- bon voyage to Fr.Jack Lau OMI. We wish him a happy and fruitful ministry. All the Oblates in India fondly remember you with joy and cheerfulness that you have shared with us during your life at the Aanmodaya Ashram. May SACCIDANANDA, the Holy Trinity Be with you always!

18- Happy Journey to Novices Arul Doss and Selvaraj . We wish you a happy novitiate life at Bandarawela, Srilanka.

26 - Hearty Welcome to Fr. Santhappan Chinnappan OMI. We appreciate your dedicated commitment and service at our OMI Generalate, Rome. We wish you a happy and fruitful ministry in our Delegation.

**St. Joseph Bhavan**  
St. Thomas Mount, Chennai

**b. From Treasurer's Desk**

I sincerely thank all the members of our Delegation for submitting the accounts for the accounting year 2007-2008. The auditing was done between 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> May'08. I thank you for your cooperation. May I request you to attend to the following remarks:

1. please attach Xerox copy of the computerized bills like, electricity bills, fuel bills etc with the originals since the print of the original bills fade away after a few months.
2. make entries of the description of the purchasing commodity in your computer.
3. try to keep cash-bills to whatever you buy.
4. please offer Masses for the intention of our benefactors.
5. kindly keep the minimum balance of Rs.1000.00 in your Bank accounts.

**Rev Fr. Gnanapragasam OMI**  
Treasurer

**c. Preacher's voice**

Dear fellow oblates greetings of love and prayers from TOP (Team of Oblate Preachers), St. Eugene Preaching Center, Chennai. With renewed spirit and giving a face-lift to the Center, we started our ministry. We had our community meeting on 15.05.08. We have sorted out certain possible goals for the year 2008-2009. They are;

1. To develop the infrastructure of the center.
2. To have night prayer in the center once a month.
3. To have tuition for the poor children in the evening.
4. To keep sign board in order to help people to find our center.
5. To make known our presence & ministry we give add in various diocesan newsletters and catholic -magazines.

We thank you for all your help and if you need any spiritual help please inform us. We request you to inform about our work to your parishioners and friends.

**Team of Oblate Preachers**  
Senneerkuppam

#### **d. Pre-Novices 2008 - Towards Oblate Missionary life Sharing Experience as Pre-novices**

“Experience is a comb which nature gives us when we are bald”. It is a Chinese proverb that gives lot of insights to all who reflect upon it. Accordingly in the light of this proverb we the nine pre-novices deeply reflected upon the experiences that we drew from this three months of pre-novitiate. Although it is the shortest programme than any other in the years of formation, it is the way to become perfect, leading a good life. Therefore we gathered our experience in the words which would certainly bring a new experience.

#### **Our experience in St. Paul’s Institute**

On February 14<sup>th</sup> we, the twelve of the regents arrived St.Pual’s Institute at Poonamallee to do our Pre-Novitiate. After having had so many experiences during the regency exposure, it was little difficult for us to get back to timetable as we had during our philosephate. Perhaps our pre-novitiate masters namely Fr. Jeeva and Fr. Yesuraj assisted us a lot to get into the rhythm. Indeed our scholastics too motivated us in all the way possible to take part in the community activities attentively. Above all our pre-novitiate masters putting their efforts and energy together guided us by various classes. Fr. Jeeva mainly concentrated on Values, Formation and Sexuality. On the other hand Fr. Yesuraj paved us a path to know clearly about the life of Our Founder St. Eugene and the history of our Congregation.

Indeed these subjects made us aware of the life we have chosen and missionary zeal which should be burning in the hearts of each oblate. In addition we had ten days of Ashram experience at Kachipuram where we were spiritually and mentally formed by Fr. Samarakone. This year we are fortunate to have participated in the vocation camp which was held here. In those days we were reminded of the vocation we received from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Twenty four students from various dioceses actively participated in this camp and enriched us by their performances.

On the first day of the camp Fr. Labagley O.M.I. the general councilor of the Asia – Oceania region addressed the students

explaining the growth of the oblates, the difficulties of the oblates and the new missions undertaken by the oblates in the world, mainly in the Asia- Oceania region. On April 5<sup>th</sup> we were invited to Gnanalayam by Fr. Chinnppan and Fr. Maria Selvam to take part in the Annual day. Really we had a joyful evening with the Gnanalayam community remembering the old moments that we had during the first year of formation. Therefore at the outset it is very clear we are having a fruitful pre-novitiate in St. Paul's Institute at Poonamallee. It is because of the effort of St.Pual's community that we well organized programme.

### **Our Ashram Experience**

“God is the one whom we experience through various ways and means of Religion”. Our hearts are over flowing with profound joy and happiness to pen down our experience at Oblate Aanmodaya Ashram. It was a very great privilege for us to live there ten days. We were enriched by the assistance of Swami Samarakone OMI and the administrator Fr. Andrew OMI. We were enriched and enlightened to love the Indian spirituality of our land. At this juncture we feel it is worth mentioning some of the important ways and means to be with God who is in our hearts. They are:

- ❖ We should rely on God totally,.
- ❖ We need to be compassionate in our life.
- ❖ We should do all our actions with awareness
- ❖ We should not proclaim with out God's experience.

Meditation dispels all our fear, emotion, anger, ego from our hearts. Yoga asanas are indispensable to meditate daily. We have learnt various types of meditations. Practically we have understood that God is one whom we experience through various ways and means of Religion. Therefore as Indian Oblates we should respect the spirituality of all religions of our country.

### **Experience with Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie OMI**

It is a great privilege and golden opportunity to pen down some of the things that Bishop Sylvain Lavoie OMI, the archbishop of the Keewatin The Pas shared some thing about his mission in Canada

with us. First and foremost he was glad to see all of us and he also welcomed us as missionaries to his Diocese. . In his address he said that to be a missionary is always a special gift, invitation and grace from God. In Canada he came across two different kinds of people. On the one side people enjoy, make merry and be happy without spiritual life or a sense of God. And on the other side people who are spiritual in their activities.

In his diocese there are 49 parishes and only 16 priests and among them eleven of them are Oblates. To visit the people or celebrate the Holy Mass, priests have to travel for a long distance to parishes. The priests are also growing old. And less vocations. Therefore he has welcomed all of us to be missionaries as our Founder St. Eugene himself emphasized for his first Oblates. He celebrated Mass on that day. In the Mass he said, "I am very happy and glad to celebrate the holy mass in India, especially for our Oblates Fathers and Brothers. He appreciated us for our small stage performance, about our Founder's life style and his thirst for mission. As we are in the missionary congregation, we should be ready to go out to any part of the world with missionary zeal to proclaim the word of God, especially among the poor, and the most abandoned people, who do not know about Jesus Christ.

Thanks to our formators for their inspiration and encouragement and also the present pre-novices, namely, Arul Doss, Dias, John Bharathy, Selvaraj, Salamon, Stephen, Vinoth, William and Arokiam.

**Pre - novices `08**

St. Paul's Institute, Karayanchavadi

## **2. AMALA ANNAI DISTRICT COMMUNITY**

### **a. Gnanalayam: De Mazenod Juniorate**

1. After summer Holidays the students who were promoted to Pre-philosophy came back to Gnanalayam on 5th June, 2008. There are 13 Pre-philosophy students: 2 from North India, 1 from Andhra Pradesh, 1 from Karnataka and 9 from Tamil Nadu. These students are at Gnanalayam to initiate the new students to the life and activities of Gnanalayam. They will be leaving for Bangalore for their formation on the 20th July, 2008.
2. The arrival of New Students: The new students arrived at Gnanalayam during the first two weeks of June. At present we have at our Juniorate 13 senior students and 33 new students. Of these 33 new students 5 are from Andhra Pradesh, 4 from the North and the rest- 24 are from different dioceses of Tamilnadu. We thank God for the gift of 33 students and we congratulate Fr. Benedict OMI, the Vocation Promoter and Other Omi fathers who helped him in this important ministry vocation.
3. The Inauguration of the Academic year- 2008-2009: On the 11<sup>th</sup> June we had the inauguration of Academic year in the presence of Fr. Nallappan, the Delegation Superior. Fr. Mariaselvam, OMI celebrated the Eucharist and Fr. Nallappan gave homily. In his sermon Fr. Nallappan pointed out to the students the set Goal at this stage of formation and the essential things that should accompany them throughout the years of formation. Fr. Gnanapragasam, omi, the Procurator and Fr. Varghese, omi, the councillor incharge of finance were present for the Mass as well as for the felicitation programme organised for Fr. Maria Selvam, the out-going staff, for Fr. John David and Bro. Kuppala, the new staff and for the new students. Our sincere thanks to Fr. Maria Selvam for his dedicated service and wish him all the best. We whole heartedly welcome Fr. John David and Bro. Kuppala.

**Gnanalayam Community**

De Mazenod Juniorate

Perampakkam

## **b. SAT-CHIT-ANANDA Temple**

**TRUE BEING - PURE CONSCIOUSNESS - BLISS**

*A dream of the Aanmodaya Ashram for today-come true!*

### **Part – II**

*(NB: Part-I of this article is published in the last newsletter No.4)*

#### **The Symbols of World Religions at Sat-Chit-Ananda temple**

Symbols are objects, pictures, or other concrete representations of ideas, concepts, or other abstractions. Unless these abstract principles are made concrete by following the principle of ‘From the seen to the unseen’ From the known to the unknown’, they cannot be comprehended. Herein lies the necessity and utility of symbols.



Infact, life is impossible without the use of symbols. Even language is a symbol. All religions have symbols, often, more than one. The new temple of the Aanmodaya Ashram has twenty four Symbols representing the Major Religions of the world. A brief and reverent study of these symbols of world religions in our temple is as fascinating as it is spiritually rewarding.

 During the early period of Christianity i.e., up to the end of the Patristic period (ca.,850), Cross without the crucified image of Jesus, often called the **Empty Cross**, after the manner of the **Empty Tomb** symbolized the Christian faith in the **Resurrection of Jesus**. The Cross stands as the symbol of the **Kenosis - total Self-emptying of Jesus**, and an invitation from Christ to everyone “to deny yourself - transcend oneself – take up the Cross daily and follow me” (Mt 16/ 24). Herein lies the fulfillment of one’s life.

 This particular form of the Cross is something very particular to India. Historians and research scholars place the engraving of this CROSS to around 650 A.D. This is often referred to as **Saint Thomas Cross** and is found fixed on the altar of Saint Thomas Shrine on the Hill top at Saint Thomas Mount, Chennai. Saint Thomas Christians of Kerala consider this as their unique symbol and call it **Mar Toma Sliba – Saint Thomas Cross**.

**Symbolism** : The “Empty Cross” and the “Blooming Buds” on the four ends of the Cross – Symbol of **New Life**, symbolize the Resurrection of **Jesus**. The “Descending Dove” symbolizes the Holy Spirit which Jesus breathed upon the Church at the very moment of his death (according to the Johanine tradition, cf Jn19:30).

**Symbolism of the Lotus**: According to many Scholars this Cross is erected upon a **Lotus**. (To substantiate this assumption Scholars refer to the Chinese Cross erected upon a **Lotus** coming from the same era.) Lotus has always been the **Symbol** of the **Seat** of the **Divine** according to our Indian Spiritual Tradition, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism. Hence the erection of the **Cross** on a Lotus flower symbolizes the entry of the Christian faith into the Spiritual Heritage of India: **Inculturation**.



**The Symbol Natarajah**: This is one of the most beautiful icons of the Divine performing the five Sacred Actions: Creation, Preservation, ‘Destruction’ but more correctly Consummation, ‘Concealment’ (this is more to do with dealing with evil) and finally Giving of Grace. Gathering everything that is scattered (of Col 1:16-17) together, Natarajah holds everything in unity and communion in him (col 1:16-17). This is basically a very ancient symbol coming from the Saivite tradition, (circa 3000 B.C) but Hinduism too considers this as its own. Besides, the scientific community, especially the ‘Astro Physicists’ say: “the icon ‘Natarajah’ though symbolically but very accurately portrays the universe that we know of it today scientifically!” Hence the import of the universal significance of this beautiful symbol.



This symbol “**AUM**” is from the Hindu tradition virtually symbolizing the Divine. It is the ‘Sound Symbol of Divine’, the sound of the vibration of God’s **BREATH**, passing through everything in creation, giving life to all. Hence this symbol too has universal significance, though it was discovered by the Hindu Sages.



**SRICHAKRA**: This perhaps the most important and most widely used symbol of **SAKTI** cult, the cult of the Divine Mother. The divine vibrations or ‘nada’ gets concentrated to a point or ‘Bindu’. This Bindu, like a dicotyledonous seed contains the “Siva-Sakti” principle as one closely knit unit. It then gradually swells, giving rise to the polarization of ‘**SIVA**’ (father-principle) and ‘**SAKTI**’ (mother-principle) retaining simultaneously the original latent and potent status containing the ‘Siva-Sakti’ combination. These three units now form a triangle, as it were.

This process goes on and on until it results in the **Srichakra**. This is nothing but a representation of the Supreme Consciousness in its various levels of evolution.



**The Symbol Mary** – ‘Ave Maria’ is placed parallel to the ‘Srichakra’ symbol. Within the Christian tradition Mary represents the transparency of the Divine by her total surrender to the Lord and by her readiness to confirm to will of God at all times. ‘Let it be done to me according to your word’ (Lk 1:38). Mary thus reached the 4<sup>th</sup> level of consciousness, namely ‘**TURIYA**’ participating fully in the Consciousness of the Divine.



This symbol represents the Vaisnava tradition. ‘**VISHNU**’ is the principle deity. Vishnu literally means the one who pervades everything, one who has entered into everything. So, Vishnu is the Cosmic Spirit the absolute which pervades everything. The symbol is called ‘Urdhva pundra’ which literally means a religious mark. In common parlance, it is called ‘nama’ (name). Vaisnavism has a strong Bhakti tradition. Vaisnavism emerged with the emergence of the **Ithihasas**, namely Ramayana and Mahabharata around 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Centaury B.C.



**Jainism:** the Svastika and the Chakra are the symbols frequently used in Jainism. It consists of a digit of the moon, three dots, the Svastika and the palm of a hand with chakra inset consisting of 24 spokes. The principal teaching of Jainism is AHIMSA (non violence). This is a religion founded by the ‘Jinas’ or conquerers also known as ‘tirthankaras’ or founders of faith, men of perfection who have mastered themselves. These ‘Jainas’ or ‘thirthankaras’ are said to be 24 in number but only Parsuanatha (700 BC) and Vardhamana Mahavira (599 BC) the last two ‘thirthankaras’ have been accepted by modern historians to have definitely lived. The Open Palm Abahaya Mudra is the Mudra of Assurances: “Do not be afraid”. If you follow the Wheel of Dharma, the 24 spokes representing the teachings of the 24 tirthankaras, you will experience ‘auspiciouness’, symbolized by the ‘Svastika’ and get liberated and attain ‘Moksha’



**DHARMACHAKARA:** ‘Wheel of the Law’ is the most important symbol of Buddhism. The founder of this religion is Lord Buddha, born as Sidhartha Gautama in 560 BC at Lumbini in Nepal; he renounced the world at the age of 29, and after intense struggle spread over five years, attained *Nibbana* – enlightenment, under

the Bodhi tree near Gaya (in Bihar, India) and became 'the Buddha', the illumined one. The Wheel with the eight spokes is the symbol that represents the 'Dharma Chakra' the Wheel of Dharma. After the compendium of the teachings of Lord Buddha the eight spokes come to represent the eightfold path. Just as a wheel cannot be held together without the spokes so too Dharma cannot be held together without the practice of the eightfold path as taught by Lord Buddha.



**TORII** or TORI-WI is the symbol of Shintoism, the ancient and native faith of Japan. The word 'Shinto' is derived from 'Shen-Tao' which means the 'way of the Gods'. It is inspired more by LOVE and gratitude than fear. It accepts the Sun-goddess, the Food-goddess and the God of earth as the three 'greatest gods' who are beneficent while the gods of fire, thunder and rain-storm are malignant deities who have to be propitiated by offerings. The symbol TORII represents a 'Gate-Frame'. Torii is sometimes used to mark the sacred character of some natural or man-made objects.



**Taoism:** This is represented by the symbol the 'Tai-Chi' or 'the Great Absolute'. The origin of **Taoism**, is attributed to a Chinese philosopher by the name of LAO-TSU, who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in China. His great work is '**Tao Te Ching**'. **Tao** means the 'way' or the '**Absolute**'. **Tao** is the unchanging mystery underlying the changing plurality. It is the first all-embracing principle from which all things are produced. It is indescribable which exists by itself. As opposed to this all things in this phenomenal world result from the interaction of two opposite but complementary articles, viz., the 'yin' and the 'yang'. **Yin** is the passive female principle and **Yang**, the active male principle. The symbol **Tai Chi** or the great Absolute is pictured as a circle comprised of two parts: one dark, representing **Yin** and the other white, representing **Yang**. The dark area contains a white spot and the white area contains a dark spot, there by indicating that no element is absolutely positive or negative, and each inheres in the other. The entire diagram is surrounded by a circle representing the **Tao** – the **Way** or the **Absolute**.



**ZOROASTRIANISM**, popularly known as the Parsi religion, due to its origin from Persia, the modern day Iran. The founder of this religion is **Zoroaster** who lived in Eastern Iran, some time between 1300 and 600 B.C. **Zoroaster** is said to have received divine inspiration from **Ahura Mazda** the **Wise Lord, God**. Zoroaster

taught the religion of one God as opposed to the primitive animism and blood sacrifice. The essence of this religion is humata (good thoughts), hookta (good words) and hvarsta (good deeds). When Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda to give him a symbol, Fire was given him as a symbol, since it burns away all evil and it can never be made impure. **The maintenance of a Sacred Fire** in the **Fire Temples** called **Altar-Beheram**, without allowing the fire to be extinguished, is an important feature of Zoroastrianism. Fire, to the Zoroastrian, represents God and typifies the divine spark within.



**Ahura Mazda** is often pictorially represented like an old man with a cap and a beard, as also wings.

**Islam: The Crescent and the Star:** Though Islam is very much against all symbols representing the Divine, the Crescent and the Star is, however, a very popular symbol most widely used. Even as the crescent moon, a waxing moon, gives cool and soothing light to a weary traveler on the hot sands of Arabia and stars guide him towards his destination, the religion of Islam also gives cool light and solace to the weary traveler in the scorched path of worldly existence and guides him towards **Allah**, the Supreme God.



The sacred calligraphy, the creedal formula of Muslims, taken from the Holy Quran itself, is also another symbol widely in use.



**Judaism** – the Menorah, the seven limbed **Candelabrum** is the most typical and important of the symbols of Judaism, the religion of the Jews or Hebrews. The ‘Menorah’ is the representation of the creation of the world by God. According to the book of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, God created the world in six days and rested in the seventh day. According to some scholars the middle light indicates the Sabbath – the last day of the week, a Holy Day and a day of rest. The other six lights the six days of Creation. According to some others the seven branches may represent the seven heavens created by God. The first Jewish temple built by the King Solomon (983 BC) contained ten golden Menorahs and the second (516 BC) only one. The light of the candles symbolizes the presence of God or ‘*Shekinah*’ within the temple. It is believed that the light in the Original Temple was never extinguished until the *Shekinah* withdrew of His own accord in anticipation of its destruction. The Menorah stands at the far western area of the sanctuary, before the Holy of holies. For the Jews, the Menorah with its golden branches and flaming candles signifies the undying and inexhaustible spirit of Judaism.



The “**Magen David**”- the Star of David, a six pointed star is another symbol of Judaism, though less known, often used by the Jews.

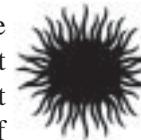


**Sikhism - Swords, Dagger and Shield:** This is the symbol of Sikhism, one of the youngest of the world religions, founded by Guru Nanak [1469-1538 A.D.] Nanak was followed by nine more gurus, the last being Guru Govind Singh [1666-1708 A.D.] Sikhism is basically a religion of “Sisyas” or Disciples [the word *Sikh* comes from the word “Sisya”, one who owed complete allegiance to the Guru.] Guru Govind Singh declared that after him the Book- *Granth* or *Granth Sahid* will take the place of the Guru. Guru Govind Singh established the *Khalsa*, a new order of militant Sikhs who should always be ready to fight and even sacrifice their life in defense of their Dharma or Faith. The swords represent their readiness to fight for Justice; they are to be the defenders of the nation as well. But before drawing the sword they should consult the *Kara* [the iron bangle] which represents **compassion**. Hence forward, the Sikhs would all be of one community with no distinction of caste or gender. They shall all wear the turban (and not just the chieftains alone as was the custom at that time), and this will remind them of their responsibility of upholding the ideals of humanity. Sikhism teaches that God is *Ekomkar* - **One God** who lives within all, in the cave of the heart and that he can be attained by devout repetition of his name- *NamaYapa*. By evolving the doctrine Ekomkar – One God, Guru Nanak was able to reconcile the fears Monotheism of the Muslims and the Hindu Doctrine of the Immanent Presence of God in all. Guru Nanak and Sikhism thus played a big role in bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity and harmony.



**The Bow and Arrow** - This is the religious symbol of the pre-historic people and their religious experience of God. Though this symbol we recognize their religious experience of God.

**SUN** - This is the symbol of the religion of the ancient people of our land. The Sun was for them is not just a created object but a symbol which not only signified the presence of “that [unseen]sun” but also offered to man/woman and the whole of creation Light, Heat and Energy that sustained Life. This is the spirit in which our people even today stand before the rising and setting sun and worship the sun doing *Suriya-Namaskara* and chant the *Gayatri Mantra*.





These are two “**Shamanic**” symbols representing the religious experience of the Native American and Aboriginal people. These symbols bring home the point that God has not left out a single human group but has been journeying with all people giving each an adventure with the Divine, giving rise to god-experience which expresses itself as a religion according to each culture. This is the point that has emerged from scientific research done among all human groups.



**BAHA’I FAITH**- this is perhaps the youngest religion, founded by BAHA’U’LLAH in 1863 in Tehran, Iran. The main teaching: ONE GOD, who has progressively revealed himself/herself through the major world religions. Hence the Baha’i Faith is symbolized by a nine-pointed star representing the nine major religions of the world and God in the centre. Because of its basic interreligious ethos people say that the Baha’i Faith is the “**Religion of Tomorrow**”.

**The Hammer and the Sickle** – The symbol of **Communism**- Today when we speak of interreligious Dialogue we speak of Dialogue with religions and Ideologies too. If humankind has to broaden its understanding and be enriched through Dialogue with religions today, Ideologies cannot be left out. Ideologies represented by communism and similar human groups, though do not speak of God, their sacrifice and commitment to the human cause calls all religions to dialogue with them. The **Hammer** represents the industrial labourers and the **Sickle**, the agricultural labourers. Communism and the other Ideologies are committed to these people – **the Proletariat**, the masses who are often exploited by the Capitalistic forces.



**Oblate/OMI Emblem:** The OMI emblem too finds a place among the symbols adorning the ornamented pillars in our **Temple**. While doing *arati* (waving lamps in front of the Sacred Symbols ) we are able to unite ourselves with the whole Oblate World.



**SACCIDANANDAM:** The DIVINE has always remained an incomprehensible, transcendent **Mystery - Mysterium Facians - Facinating Mystery**. The furtherest extent the human mind, inspired by God’s grace no doubt, could go to unravel this **Divine Mystery** is to consider this Mystery

in its triple dimension: the Divine Mystery is **SAT** - Being or Reality ; it is **CIT** - Consciousness; and it is **ANANDAM** - Bliss. All these dimensions are commingled into One and the Divine Mystery is named as **SACCIDANANDAM**. One of the converts to Christianity and later to Catholicism was the Bengali Brahmin Hindu - Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya [1861-1907]. He was a seminal thinker and a great luminary on the Indian theological horizon. A very good example of his effort at Indian or Contextual Theologizing is his beautiful interpretation of the ancient word for God - **Saccidanandam** as the Holy Trinity; **Sat** - the **Being** is the **Father**; **Cit** - the **Consciousness** is the **Son**; **Anandam** - the **Bliss** or the **Plenitude** is the **Holy Spirit**. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya will always be remembered for making known the Mystery of God, the Holy Trinity as **Saccidananda**.

His vision comes through in a beautiful Sanskrit hymn he composed in praise of the Holy Trinity: **Vande Saccidanandam**. This song is widely sung in Christian Ashrams all over India today. It is very significant that Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya dared to do this more than a hundred years ago. More than sixty years later there appears another theological luminary - Swami Abhishiktananda [or Fr. Henri de Saux, OSB, the French Benedictine Monk], the co-founder of *Shantivanam Ashram*, Thannerpalli [near Trichy], the first Catholic Ashram. Incidentally this Ashram is named **Saccidananda Ashram**. **Swami Abhishiktananda** delved deeply into this Mystery of **Saccidananda** as the Holy Trinity, and plunged deeply into the Hindu doctrine of **Advaita** [Non-Duality] and gave expression to his deepest experience thus: “It is the Mystery of the **Saccidananda**, the **Advaita** (Non-Duality) of the Son and the Father, at the depth of which is the **Anandam**, [the Bliss] - the Spirit, and this Mystery of Non-Duality is the root and paradigm of all that is real!”

- ❖ Our Ashram Temple is christened **Saccidananda Temple** as an expression of our Faith in and our worship of the **Holy Trinity**, and as a witness to the monumental efforts we are making at **Inculturation**.

#### VANDE SACCIDANANDAM

**Swami Joseph Samarakone OMI**

Director

Aanmodaya Ashram

Centre for Indian Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue

Enathur, Kancheepuram – 631 561, T.N.

Tel : +91-44 27264225

Email : [asamarakoneomi@yahoo.co.in](mailto:asamarakoneomi@yahoo.co.in)

### c. From “YOU” Animator

“YOU” (Young Oblate Unit) Meeting at Gnanalayam, Perambakkam:



The young Oblates, 15 of them came to Gnanalayam for two-days get-together- on the first day, on the 27th of May, they had one day seminar on Ecology by Kasi Rayappa from Vellore Diocese. Through his talks, Video Clippings and short films on nature he explained the beauty of Mother earth and the urgent need to save it. We thank Fr. Kasi Rayappa for his availability and wish him all the best in his new ministry.

On the second day, 28th July, after about two hours of sharing of life and ministry they went for a half a day Picnic to Dash N Splash- Swimming Pool at Thandalam. These two days were both enriching and interesting. I thank Fr. Ramesh, OMI the Convener of YOU and others for their co-operation and support.

**Fr. M. Chinnappan OMI**  
“YOU” Animator, Perambakkam

### d. From the “Cave of my Heart”

Dear Brothers

As I sit down to reflect upon the past 10 months with you, I am filled with gratitude, appreciation and awe. Our Oblate Family is truly gifted with so many amazing individuals, who together with the charism of St. Eugene make up this, our family in Christ. I am truly grateful. It was three years ago that the Oswald Firth, OMI, first asked me to consider coming to India to live in the Ashram Community in Kancheepuram. Who could have guessed what would follow. So I thank Oswald for his keen insight into my personality and my journey. I first contacted Pathi OMI who warmly welcomed this possibility and then Francis who prepared for my arrival and has always been mindful of my presence and needs. I will always remember his welcome at the airport with the delegation community. After a long flight, to see family waiting at the gate is always a good feeling!

As I write here at the Ashram, I am One with/in the community and the soil that I have worked and weeded. To those present here: the staff. Our Amma who has made sure that my plate had no chilies on it. To Maria whose youthful smile opens to the horizon of tomorrow. To Siga and Ramo

who tend the cow and the rice paddies with respect and hard work. And to the many individuals who come to help us out and support the daily running of the Dairy / Farm / Ashram. The Ashram would not exist without them. To Andrew, you have been my younger brother/thambi and what we have shared together has been gift. This has been your first year in priestly ministry and I hope that I have been able to support you and challenge you as you progress on your own journey in Light. To Samarakone, a deep well spring of appreciation and gratitude goes out to you. As brothers we have together traveled the length and breath of India. Words can not express my sentiments. Your vision of a truly inculturated Church in India is a beacon of light for others to see and then to express in ways that reflect the signs and the times and the movement of the spirit. Thank you for your patience as I slowly entered into the ashram experience and the Indian culture. It was not always so easy, but time in prayer and silence did foster the integration of the experience.

Thank you to the many formation communities that I visited. You gave me hope, laughter, love and the opportunity to Dance!!!! Every time I would write to my family in the States when at a formation house, they always said how I seemed energized. You are doing awesome work; formator and formatee. Know of my continued prayers. For those that I have met in the parishes. You are doing Oblate work as you reach out to those most abandoned and in need of knowing Christ's love and presence. The boarding schools in Andhra Pradesh touch my heart and let me know how I was at that time "father" to these young boys and girls.

For those I was unable to visit, I wish I could have. But time ran out and distance and travel makes getting together difficult at time. Wow, I can't believe that I am writing this to you because I am still here at the Ashram and I carry you where every I go in the "cave of my heart". And it is in the heart that we find no time, no barriers, no distance only love and presence. So that is what the Founder meant when he spoke of his time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Using the image of Kancheepuram "The Silk City", this time with you has woven you into the fabric of my life like an intricate silk sari and we are forever bound to each other in love and fraternal Charity.

Thank you, *Nandri*  
With God's Blessings,  
**Jack Lau, OMI**  
Email: jean\_mond@hotmail.com

### **3. BL JOSEPH GERARD DISTRICT COMMUNITY**

#### **a. Tête-à-tête with Fr. Ambrose Antonysamy OMI**

My dear BORN readers, greetings from the new pastors of Kombadimadurai Oblate mission and St. Eugene High School. At the very outset, we thank our beloved outgoing pastors, Frs. Ambrose OMI and Gregory OMI for their marvelous services rendered for the progress and development of our Oblate mission. They have made a difference by bringing a face-lift to the mission with an upgraded school under the patronage of St. Eugene De Mazenod. We also thank the Delegation for entrusting us with this mission. We are happy to wish all of you through this news from our mission. We are presenting to you a brief conversation (tête-à-tête) that we had with the outgoing pastors, especially with Fr. Ambrose OMI. This brief conversation consists of questions and answers and thus concluding with desired aspirations and vision for the mission at Kombadimadurai.

#### **Questions**

- ⌘ How do you feel after work in Kombadimadurai?
- ⌘ What do you think of the structural progress in Kombadimadurai?
- ⌘ What is your experience with the parish and school administration?
- ⌘ Any special inspiration...? & What is your message for the new pastors?

These are a few questions asked from Fr. Ambrose OMI. We thank him for his willingness and time. In this dialogue he expressed his gratitude for the administration and benefactors who have helped him to succeed with a new school for the mission. He was much satisfied with the service rendered at the mission. He had involved himself deeply in the work and development of the mission along with his co-pastors. And it is to be noted that St. Eugene High School with its magnificent structure is his tangible and meaningful service at the mission. With deep love and gratitude, he surrenders his prayers to God for HIS blessings and journey. Because, even amidst many difficulties, he had fulfilled the task entrusted to him.

With his humble experience, he requests his successors to be open to the needs of the people. We must plan our ministry together with the staff and people only then, our vision becomes concrete. “God’s grace was my power...I believe in His strength and in my intense prayer” says Fr. Ambrose with his own experience past 25 years as priest in His vineyard. “Trust in HIM and continue your services” is his message for us.

### **Good news from St. Eugene High School**

29<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 brought a new face lift to St. Eugene High School, Kombadimadurai. The hard work of our teachers have borne much fruits. The rural underdeveloped area school students have proved their mettle in their SSLC public exams. D. Arockia Edwin Jenipher ranked first in our school with 457/500. This is the highest total ever in these 4 years. [N. Murali-435, A.Pandidurai-428, J. Robin- 404, P. Kannan - 404]. Six more students have scored more than 350. In Maths one girl has scored 100 and 5 others have scored more than 90 marks. This achievement is really marvelous. This has established a good name for our school and the parents are really happy. We are proud of our students and the teachers. Hats off to the oblates.

**Frs. A. Chinnapparaj OMI &  
Maria Rajan OMI**  
Kombadimadurai

## **4. FERNAND JETTE' DISTRICT COMMUNITY – A.P**

### **a. Silver Jubilee - 1983 - 2008 - Musunuru**

25 years of Oblate presence in Andhra Pradesh

### **“Towards Widening the Horizons”**

#### **Introduction**

Vibrating with the biblical tradition, the Ruby year (40 years) of the OMI in India, and 25 years in Andhra Pradesh has turned out to be a blessed and sacred season to remember the great services that we Oblates have silently, humbly and nobly contributed to the church in India with our specific motto of our Father and Founder St. Eugene De Mazenod.

#### **Call of the Jubilee**

The Jubilee year has offered immense opportunities for a ‘collective remembering’ of our services and contributions with a critical introspection and assessment in a futuristic perspective. One can find many valid reasons to celebrate Silver Jubilee of OMI presence in Andhra Pradesh... Firstly, a profound sense of gratitude and hope: there exists a deep awareness of the ‘deeds’ that God has done in the annals of the OMI Delegation in India and especially with Oblates in Andhra Pradesh, and the abundant hope welling up from this collective commemoration of the past in prayer and reflection.

Secondly, an organic identity. Our consciousness in reference to the original vision, and an evolving identity in reference to the ever widening horizons of new challenges and ever broadening new arenas of commitments.

Thirdly, a focused mission: OMI India as a young and growing Oblate Unit, may become once again aware of the emphasizing thrust of the General Chapters along with the IMMENSE HOPE of the Congregation and STRATEGIC DOCUMENT of the Indian Delegation and thus extend its horizons to farthest ends of the nation, especially towards north India.

### **Jubilee Celebration at St. Joseph Church, Musunuru**

The 25 years of oblate presence in Andhra Pradesh was celebrated grandly. An year of preparation went on one year with dynamic animations. A Jubilee committee was set up consisting of Frs. Francis Xavier, Superior of the Fernand Jette district community, the parish priests, representation of village elders, catechists and teachers and youth. The committee decided with the elders of the entire parish to collect Rs. 50 per family from the substations and Rs.200.00 per family from the main village of Musunuru. The committee collected this amount and started the celebrations.

As spiritual preparation we conducted in all the villages the chain rosaries, pastoral camps of Rev. Sisters, preparing the faithful for this great event. The children were given first holy communion, prepared the children and adults for confirmation. This camp ended with a Feast day celebration in which procession with the statue of our Lady was most welcome.

The main celebrations were three days from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008. The whole celebrations came to a culmination with the feast of St. Eugene on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008. We coupled this jubilee with the 25 years of establishment of Musunuru parish and feast of St. Joseph, the patron of the parish. People offered a chain of rosaries for the entire congregation of the oblates, the diocese, the faithful and the sick of the parish. The statues of Our Lady, Sts. Joseph the patron of the mission and Eugene were taken from each substation on the last day with a band set.

The nine days Novina and mass were offered from 11<sup>th</sup> May, Sunday with the hoisting of flag by the Vicar Forane of Nuzvid Vicariate, Rev. Fr. Swaminathan and every day Holy Mass, preaching and novena and Jubilee prayer through St. Eugene and Oblate Madonna were significant. On 18<sup>th</sup> about 84 children and adults were confirmed by Mgr. M. Chinnappa, the V.G. of Vijayawada diocese. On 19<sup>th</sup> all the Oblates who pioneered and toiled hard to bring the parish to this level were honored. Many families

came forward to gift them and garland them. During the holy Eucharistic celebrations nine of our Novices made their first vows. The Main celebrants were Frs. Nallappan OMI, the delegation superior and Fr. Pragasam one of the pioneers of this mission.

On 20<sup>th</sup> the renovated and extended church was blessed open by the most Rev. Mallavarpu Prakash D.D. the bishop of Vijayawada. In the homily he urged the Oblates to live the Charism of their founder St. Eugene. He also praised and applauded the OMI Fathers for their hard and laborious work to spread the kingdom values and ministry of education to the poor, the most abandoned of the people of his diocese especially in these poor and neglected regions of the vast diocese. He expressed his thanks to Rev. Fr. Terlisner and German Province for helping to renovate and extend this Musunuru church building. All expressed that, it is a Jubilee gift from the Oblates to the parish and gathering together and praying together is our gift to them. After the Holy mass and felicitation there meals were given for all. We thank his lordship bishop Prakash Mallavarpu D.D. the Bishop of Vijayawada and Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI our delegation superior for their financial support, Oblates of Fernand Jette District community, and all the fathers, sisters, brothers, various committees, catechists, elders of both Ramanakkapeta and Musunuru parish for their full co-operation to make this jubilee a success. .

As we are overwhelmed with joy for God's blessings and His journey with us for the past 25 years, its right to evaluate and revise our history and revive our enthusiasm with our Founders' Spirit and zeal for God's people. Following message has been updated from its original source, namely, Bharath Dhiyagavani.

### **Geographical Description**

Musunuru mission is in the diocese of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh of south India. This is a poor and rural station at 70 kms away from Vijayawada city. There are 14 outstations with nearly 6000 Catholics. This region was originally evangelized by PIME missionaries in the 1930s. The community was established in 1947. Fr. John Simonella PIME constructed the church in 1974. Musunuru was erected a parish by bifurcating the parish of Ramanakapeta in March 1984.

**A bird's eye view of Oblate work & presence past 25 years in A.P and especially at Musunuru: (cf BHARATH DHIYAGAVANI - The Voice**

of the Indian Oblates, Oblates amidst Religions and cultures today, No.7, Jan-June 2003, Pg.33-36):

The people are poor and agricultural labourers. Most of them don't have their own land. They mainly depend on the rich landlords for their daily sustenance. Here crops are seasonal. Even though the people are poor their faith is simple and edifying. Until the beginning of 1983, Oblates of the Indian Delegation were confining their apostolate to the state of Tamil Nadu. In order to extend the apostolate, Indian Oblates explored various possibilities and finally in April 1983, Rev Fr. Joseph Samarakone OMI, the then Delegation Superior received a formal invitation from Rt Rev Dr Joseph Thumma, the then Bishop of Vijayawada diocese. Here we would like to place on record our deep appreciation and gratitude to Lt Rev Fr. Lucian Schmitt OMI, a former provincial of Srilanka who was instrumental in this regard.

After evaluating the various possibilities that are open to the Oblates, the consensus merged in the delegation meeting that the Musunuru mission would be an ideal mission for the Oblates at that time. The mantle fell on the newly ordained priests of the second batch of the Indian Delegation, namely, Frs. Ambrose Antonysamy and Pragasam Paniadimai to serve the new mission in Vijayawada. Both the priests learned Telugu, the local language of the people of Andhra Pradesh. After good training in the local language and culture of the people, they were sent to the proper mission at Musunuru. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1984, Musunuru was formally erected as a parish and Fr. Ambrose Antonysamy was installed as the first parish priest and Fr. Pragasam Paniadimai as his co-pastor. Here we would like to thank all the Bishops, predecessors and their co-pastors who have toiled for the growth of this mission. On 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1986, ARPANALAYAM was formally inaugurated by Bishop Thumma. This center was created for the residence for the priests, training center for catechists and an easy access for people to meet their pastors.

### **Socio-pastoral issues, Health and Hygiene**

With regular sacramental and pastoral care of the people, we Oblates focused our attention on certain social issues affecting the people of our region. To empower women was our demanding task at that time. For this we cooperate with the governmental and non-governmental organizations to emancipate the poor women from the clutches of the social evils such as dowry, wife-beating, child-labour, child-marriage, and women and children

exploitation. Since 75% of the people are illiterate, awareness programs, street plays and health & hygiene camps were periodically conducted. Thanks to the bishops and local priests and religious sisters who supported us in all our efforts right from our inception at Musunuru. We are happy to say that 100% we have educated our people regarding the effects of child marriage and child labour. It's a good news to reveal the reality that, today no more child marriages are taking place in our region. But we are constantly working out solutions for the problem of child labour which is thinly spread over here and there due to poverty and density of population. We have also formed small savings and self-help groups in our mission. Thus, doing all these needed socio-pastoral activities, we fulfill the mission and vision of our Founder St. Eugene De Mazenod. "Awareness of our shortcomings humbles us, yet God's power makes us confident as we strive to bring all people – especially the poor to full consciousness of their dignity as human beings and as sons and daughters of God (CC.8).

### **Conclusion**

To continue and sustain the joy of the 40th birth day of the OMI Indian Delegation, and especially the 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Jubilee of our Oblate presence in Andhra Pradesh, a futuristic perspective has to be preferentially pursued. The pulse of the present ethos is, speed, knowledge, creativity and innovation. Here lies the imperative of evolving a creative identity and an innovative deepening of the commitment. Then what we need is a valid theory and veritable praxis. Our subject and "caption" point to this new direction: "Widening the Horizons". It proposes a new paradigm and a new praxis for life and ministry for the coming years; it calls for a new identity construction of our Oblate – PRESENCE so that the OMI Unit becomes a competent agent as well as a vibrant platform for a radical renewal of the Church. With these reflections, once again, Oblates in Andhra Pradesh, known as Fr. Fernand Jette` District Community extend hearty thanks to the OMI Indian Delegation, Colombo Province and the General Administration, Rome for your constant guidance, encouragement and prayers. As Oblates in this mission, we live, "the leaven of the Beatitudes at the heart of the world"(Cc11),in order "to see the world through the eyes of our crucified saviour"(Cc4).

*All the best to...*

1. Team of Catechists & Elders of the parish,
2. Legion of Mary pious association,
3. Vincent de Paul Society,
4. EYE- Eugene Youth Empowerment,
5. Altar Boys

***Hearty Thanks and appreciation  
to all the Oblates  
who laboured in this soil for 25 years!***

- Fr. Ambrose Anthonysamy OMI - March 1984-April 1989 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. Pragasam Paniadimai OMI – Co-pastor
- Fr. Cyril J. Augustine OMI - April 1989-Feb1992 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. Simon OMI Co-pastor
- Fr. Simon Vadakoot - Feb 1992-Jul 1993 – Parish Priest  
- Frs. Simeon OMI, F. Nallappan OMI – Co-pastors
- Fr. Pragasam Paniadimai OMI - July 1993-May1998 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. Kallor Tomy Thomas OMI – Co-pastor
- Fr. C.T. Varghese OMI - May 1998-Aug 1999 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. Kallor Tomy Thomas OMI – Co-pastor
- Fr. Kallor Tomy Thomas OMI - Aug 1999-May 2002 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. James Devasahayam OMI – Co-pastor
- Fr. C.T. Varghese OMI - May 2002-May 2008 – Parish Priest  
- Fr. Irudayaraj OMI (2003-2004) Co-pastor  
- Fr. James Devasahayam OMI (2004-2005) //  
- Fr. S.D.Arokiaraj OMI (2005-2006) //  
- Fr. S.J. Basil OMI (2006-2007) //  
- Fr. P.I. Joseph OMI (2007-2008) //
- Fr. S.J. Basil OMI - May 2008- Parish Priest  
- Fr. P.I. Joseph OMI (2008- ) Co-pastor

**Fr. C.T. Varghese OMI**

With Fr. Fernand Jette' District Community  
Musunuru, A.P

*Happy Silver Jubilee*



Congrats to Fernand Jette` District Community - A.P. and  
All Oblates who served in Andhra Pradesh for 25 years.

## **b. A new Chapel for “Our Lady of Light”**

*“Jyothirmai Matha Devalayamu”* at Suriypalli Center

### **Ramanakkapeta**

A new chapel is Blessed open in our Ramanakapet Parish on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008. It is a new settlement area with people from different communities built their houses and got settled. It was a long desire of the Catholics of this area (Suriypalli Center) to have a permanent place of worship. During this search, one Hindu devotee came forward to donate a piece of land (five cents) in September 2006, at free of cost for building a church for the catholic community. The then Parish Priest, Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, was very happy to receive this donation. Then with the help of Fr. Josef Mathuni OMI and with the contribution from our dear Bishop Mallavarpu Prakash, we were able to do this construction. All these time (for the last 10 years) this little catholic community was gathering themselves in some houses for their Sunday worship and Liturgy. Now they are very happy to have this New church. It is named as “*Jyothirmai Matha Devalayamu*”(Our Lady of Light). We thank God for His divine inspiration to name the chapel under the patronage of Bl Virgin Mary in whom the TRUE LIGHT – Jesus Christ took HIS incarnation.

Sisters from Nirmala Niketan, Vijayawada: Srs. Priya, Vinnarasi and Sunitha came here for ten days pastoral camp, sacrificing their summer holidays, and did house visits, prayer services, and prepared the community for sacraments including rectification of marriages. All our catechists rendered their services to this community. On the final day (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008) our OMI Indian Delegation Superior Fr. Francis Nallappan Blessed Open this new chapel. We the Parish Community wish you all for your support and may Our Lady of Light fill your life with light of life and joy!

**Frs. Simon Vadakoot OMI &  
S.J.Basil OMI**  
Ramanakkapet, A.P

## **c. St. Joseph’s Novitiate**

### **April**

9- Six deacons of Vijaywada diocese did their retreat (9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> April) before their ordination at Arpanalayam. We wish them happy life in the vineyard of the Lord.

### **Vocation Camp**

Two days vocation camp (from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>) was organized by the vocation promoter of Andhra Pradesh Fr. Basil OMI, in our novitiate. There were 11 students, from various parts of Andhra Pradesh attended the vocation camp. Frs. Francis Xavier OMI, Benni OMI, Joseph OMI, personally met the students for selection. Thanks to the oblate fathers and to the novitiate community for helping us through various ways for the success of the camp.

### **Welcome to Fr. Roland OMI**

On 28<sup>th</sup> of April the novitiate community extended a hearty welcome to Fr. Roland OMI. He took classes on Cannon law, OMI CCR and about the missionaries of Laos, within a short stay in the novitiate. His class on Cannon law was an enlightening to the novices through which the novices were able to clear many doubts. He also very clearly explained to the novices about the term “Leave of Absence.” The novitiate community thanks Fr. Roland for his availability, simplicity and for his open sharing with the novices.

### **May**

#### **Hearty Welcome to the Pre-Novices**

On 9<sup>th</sup>, 7 of our pre-novices after completing their three months of pre-novitiate, arrived at Arpanalayam. Novitiate community extended a hearty welcome to all of them.

#### **Annual Retreat**

On 12<sup>th</sup> morning, the pre-novices and the novices commenced their annual retreat for the preparation of their novitiate and for the first profession respectively. Fr. Simeon OMI was the retreat preacher. He shared his reflection on various themes which was really helpful for the brothers to prepare themselves. The themes are as such: Total Involvement, Desire, Open to the Grace of God, Prayer, Community Life, Obedience, Poverty, Chastity and Perseverance.

#### **First Commitment**

On 19<sup>th</sup>, 7 of our novices professed their first commitment at Musunur parish, during the solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by our superior Rev. Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI. There were many oblates, religious, parents and parishioners to share our joy and happiness.

### **Initiation**

On 20<sup>th</sup>, 7 of our pre- novices were formally initiated into the novitiate by our superior Rev. Fr. Francis Nallappan, during the Eucharistic adoration in the presence of many oblates.

### **Farewell**

On 21<sup>st</sup>, the novitiate community bid adieu to Bro. Lawrence Arokiaraj OMI and Fr. David OMI. The novitiate community thanks them for their tireless service towards the community.

**Arpanalayam**  
St. Joseph Novitiate, A.P

## **5. MARZELLO ZAGO DISTRICT COMMUNITY**

### **a. Oblates at the New Church- Bangarapet**

(First Oblate mission in the Archdiocese of Bangalore  
and in the state of Karnataka)

### **Introduction**

14<sup>th</sup> June 2008 is a red letter day that has entered the annals of Oblate history and mission and a joyful day for the people of Bangarapet and Oblates. The long awaited and much desired date of the opening, blessing and inauguration of Bangarapet church with community hall and presbytery was witnessed by the local ordinary, priests and people. In this regard I deem it a privilege to express my deep sentiments of joy on the occasion of the successful completion of the new church building at Sacred Heart Church, Bangarapet, Bangalore Diocese. The Indian Oblates began their pastoral and evangelical ministry at this mission with the spirit of the diocese, namely, "*United in solemn counsel, we have to devise plans for the development of the church, for the strengthening of Christian life among our flock and for a wider diffusion of Christian virtues and of apostolic zeal... all our endeavors should be directed to promote the knowledge and love of God and the salvation of men*" (Source: Fr. Antony Simo, History of the Archdiocese of Bangalore: Vol I, pg.372). God had been so much benevolent and generous all through out our efforts towards the construction and completion of the new church. We thank God for His presence and success of our work at the mission. We also thank our beloved Archbishop his Excellency Most Rev Dr. Bernard Moras DD, Archbishop of Bangalore diocese. On behalf of the parish, I thank our Bishop for accepting to

inaugurate and bless open the new church and the parish community hall. I also thank Rev Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, our Delegation Superior for accepting to bless and inaugurate the presbytery. As we are indeed overwhelmed with joy and happiness, herewith may I give a brief and general history of our Oblate parish at Bangarapet in the diocese of Bangalore.

### **Brief historical and geographical background of Bangarapet parish**

Our mission parish of Sacred Heart Church, Bangarapet, is situated under the parochial jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Bangalore, but in the arid, dry district of Kolar, South India. At the request of our Delegation Administration, the then Archbishop Most Rev Dr. Ignatius Pinto entrusted this new mission parish to the pastoral care and guidance of the Oblates on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2003. The Bishop first directed the Oblates to this mission at their request to serve in the diocese. Then, accordingly, at the request of the administration, a team of Oblates, (Rev Frs. Pragasam OMI, Jeevaratnam OMI, Varaprasadham OMI and M.Chinnappan OMI) who first visited this mission in view of accepting it for their pastoral ministry, felt that this mission was the ideal of the ministry of the Oblates (who were proclaimed by Pope Pius XI as “Specialists in difficult missions”) that is in line with St. Eugene’s charism for the OMI congregation, to proclaim the Good News to the most abandoned.

Rev Fr. Anthony Jeevaratnam OMI, became the first Oblate parish priest of this mission. Fr. Antonyraj OMI assisted him for one year. Although Bangarapet is a town, the church and the community here has been a small substation from the 1909, until 2003 when we took it up as a mission parish. This newly bifurcated and erected parish extends its boundaries into four directions of the Kolar district, surrounded by five main catholic churches, namely: in the North: Kolar – in the South: Bodikote village, in the east: T.Gollahalli and in the West: Malur –Bangarapet Taluk boundary.

Since this is a central town in this locality, with 28 surrounding villages, and the town itself with the vast majority of people yet to receive the Gospel, since 20 years now, the small catholic community has been requesting the Archbishop to make Bangarapet into a parish. And so, it is a parish from the year 2003 and more specially the first Oblate mission in the Archdiocese of Bangalore and in the whole state of Karnataka.

### **Origin of the presence of a small community**

The Sacred Heart Church had been erected as a small chapel, to serve

a handful of catholic families (about 20 to 25 families of a minimum catholic faithful of 100 to 150 members). The chapel had been established as a substation to Holy Cross Church, BEML, KGF. It existed as a substation ever since its inception in 1909 up to 2003 June, when it was officially handed over to the congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate (but in between it has served as a parish for at least 14 years). The stone mark shows that the small chapel was laid by H.L.MGR.P.Thomas D.D, on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1951.

The Oblates gratefully remember and commend all the pastors under the care of our Master Jesus Christ and appreciate the tremendous work of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Bangalore who have labored hard to keep the catholic faith alive and vibrant in this Hindu-Islam and Pentecostal influences and domination. Many priests of the neighborhood parishes rendered their service to this parish ever since its inception in 1909 with Rev Fr.Piesiar, Coramandal and altogether atleast 40 priests of various neighborhood parishes had taken in charge of this new parish until 2003 when it was finally given to the Oblates.

#### **Rise of Catholic Population, space-limit and necessity for a new church building**

After a long period of the presence of a handful of catholic faithful, near the South Western railway station at Bangarapet, they had grown in population and had welcomed new converts. There are also frequent settlers who have found their permanent abode in Bangarapet parish. Thus, the catholic community gradually developed to a considerable number. But as years went by, the small chapel could not accommodate the growing number. So, a two third of the faithful are compelled to sit outside the chapel and take part in the daily and especially Sunday worship, but this caused a lot of inconveniences and disturbances.

As we have quoted above from the History of the Archdiocese of Bangalore, we the parish community experienced an utmost and immediate need for a new church, so as to fulfill the needs of the diocese. Presently, there are nearly 70 to 75 catholic families, with a total number of nearly 550 to 600 people. This statistics is an inclusion of children but exclusion of the new converts who are on the catechumen process. On the other hand we also witness a considerable number of non-Catholics who participate in the regular Sunday and other Liturgical services.

### **Other pastoral activities**

We were able to form various pious associations and periodically animate various sessions for the life and mission of the church. Pious units like Legion of Mary, Vincent de Paul Society are very active and vibrant. Special appreciation to Fr. S.D.Arokiaraj OMI(co-pastor as Deacon, Jan-May'05)for his pioneering initiative of MAMI(Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate) and EYE (Eugene Youth Empowerment) that are more vibrant today and Bl Joseph Gerard Altar Boys and Girls, and choir, Youth Catechism and children catechism etc., are really the revelation of joy and life in the mission which has been initiated by the advent of the Oblates.

### **Conclusion with a vote of thanks**

A tremendous life and enthusiasm among the faithful is a witnessing reality for the improvement and progress of the parish. There are a mixed group of faithful, namely, Tamils, Kannadigas, Konkansis, Telugu and Keralites. There is a lot of hope that even the present increasing catholic flock will grow denser very sooner or later. At this juncture, a very special thanks to Rev Fr. Jeevarthnam, OMI, the first Oblate parish priest for his dream and initiative towards construction of a new church and my co-pastors, namely, Anthonyraj OMI, S.D.Arokiaraj OMI, S.A.Peter OMI, Joseph Maria Selvam OMI and Anthony Thiyagaraj OMI. I too extend my hearty thanks and appreciation to all our benefactor, friends and parishioners. I also thank our administration former and the present for their continual support and encouragement. I wish to thank Rev Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, Delegation Superior, for his vision and foresightedness towards the progress of our Oblate mission at Bangarapet. As a community, we congratulate and appreciate his efforts and perseverance in all his undertakings. The new church with presbytery and community hall is a gift of God for the mission in the diocese. I wish and welcome the new pastors, namely Fr.Ambrose Anthonysamy OMI, the succeeding parish priest and Fr. K.Sagayaraj OMI, his co-pastor. May God's presence go with them as they undertake their mission from June'08. A big thanks to my beloved people of Bangarapet!

**Rev Fr. Pragasam Paniadimai OMI**  
Consigning parish priest  
Bangarapet

## **6. BL JOSEPH CEBULA DISTRICT COMMUNITY – NORTH INDIA**

### **a. Faith Formation at Boda - Oblate Tribal Mission**

#### **Thanks Be To God**

First of all I thank the Almighty God for his unconditional love and innumerable blessings upon Boda mission as I complete my first year of ministry to the least, uncivilized, illiterate and marginalized tribal people of my parish in North India.

#### **Pastoral Visit of the Delegation Superior**

Our community was blessed to have Rev Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI, the Delegation Superior, for the 4<sup>th</sup> time with his councilor and the treasurer.

- They arrived on 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 to our Oblate Tribal Parish in the Northern part of India.
- They met the parish council and explained briefly the oblates' mission, presence and the ministry to the tribals in the parish.
- They also met the existing school committee on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2008 and shared about the rules and the regulations, commitment, responsibility and the cooperation to Fr.Pauldass Selvaraj OMI, Parish Priest, Boda.
- While explaining the people about their cooperation to the parish and the school he also thanked Fr,Pauldass Selvaraj OMI , for his willingness to serve in the hard mission of North India.
- On the other hand Fr. Nallappan OMI also thanked Fr. John Dewaji OMI for assisting in the parish as well as helping in the school for the past one year.
- On 13<sup>th</sup> May Frs . Francis Nallappan OMI, Gnanapragasam OMI, Peter Sakra OMI, and Fr.Arokia Vijay OMI went to the Archdiocese of Raipur in search of new mission in the diocese.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008 Bl Joseph Cebula District Community met for two purposes. They are: a). Annual Evaluation of both missions and the Formation b). Future Plans of the missions and the formation.

#### **Two Ordinations at Boda**

- Deacons. Abraham Bara and James Kujur were Ordained as Priests for the diocese of Ambikapur. It was a memorable day in the history of Boda parish, Oblate Mission. His Grace Rt. Rev. Patras Minj S.J, DD, solemnized the Ordination. The Bishop thanked the OMI Pastors of the mission for their hard work, which was seen at the time of Ordination.

He also thanked Rev Fr. Nallappan OMI for his presence during the ordination. The Bishop was very happy to comment that the 4 years old new Oblate parish had 52 priests for the great ordination ceremony in that remote and rural area. This ordination ceremony was a good opportunity for the oblates to recruit vocations for our delegation and we got 5 vocations from this diocese for this year.

### **Farewell and Welcome**

From June 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 we had admissions for our St. Eugene Primary School at Boda. This year we began the academic year on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008 with new students and teachers. On 15<sup>th</sup> of June The parish gave farewell to the outgoing co-pastor Fr. John Dewaji OMI and a hearty welcome was extended to Fr. Harry Emmanuel OMI the new priest and the new co-pastor of Boda. I thank Fr. John Dewaji OMI for his live and sharing for the growth of the mission and development of St. Eugene Primary School. The Boda community extends a happy and fruitful ministry in his new designation at Tilaidhar.

**Frs. Pauldass Selvaraj OMI & Harry Immanuel OMI**  
Boda, Ambikapur Diocese, North India

## **7. TOWARDS SHAPING OUR ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTORY**

Greetings of Peace and Creative life born of the Spirit!

This letter is a formal call from the Delegation Administration to all the Oblates in Indian Delegation to initiate the long process of the formation of the Administrative Directory of the Oblate Delegation in India!

### **Rationale**

As all of us in the Oblate Delegation know that working out an Administrative Directory has been the most urgent need and mandate given from the deliberations on Immense Hope (Oct 2003), Leadership Congress (Feb 2007), Joint Session of District Superiors and Council (Oct 2007) and in the letter of our Superior General dated 17 Feb 2008! We the administrative team that gathered on 9-10 July 2008 affirmed the decision of the whole Delegation to formulate the directory. As the number of Oblate personnel is touching the century mark it is time to set the ball rolling for better governance and decision-making.

### **Process**

We know it involves a long process of intra-personal and inter-personal listening, learning and disciplining of the various aspects of our life and mission as Oblate Religious sent to be “pilgrims with the poor towards

fullness of life"! So this work would have to involve all the members of the Delegation in expressing the direction, needs, solutions etc. Evidently it would be worked out in different Phases in the milieu of our various community meetings!

Each individual Oblate of the Delegation has the right in the formulation of the Directory as in the duty to observe it! A copy of each communiqué would reach individual Oblate and he could reflect, add changes and new observations. The local community could discuss it before taking it up in the District Community forum. The written response to the issues of the Directory could come from the District Community or from local community or from the individual Oblate!

### **Committee on Administrative Directory**

All the District Superiors with the Delegation Superior form the committee immediately! In the gradual submission the Delegation council, provincial and General Administration would be automatically involved in correction, acceptance and approval!

### **Phase I - on formulating the basic working document**

From our life-experience as Scholastic, young and senior Oblate and basing on discussions in the various Committees and meetings of the Delegation body let's raise the various issues, points, concerns to be included in the Directory; then enlist in order all the issues raised and culled out from existing directories.

### **Phase II - Documents on Deliberations and Data**

It could be an elaborate reflection, discussion in local and district community meetings on each of the issues raised in Phase I. While we discuss these issues we could also refer to the various existing Oblate and non-oblate administrative directories of other provinces and delegations, and our own traditions lived and written in various documents in the Delegation office!

**Phase III** - would involve more specialists like Canonists and legal and literary specialists who would take up the result of our discussions to shape it out before presenting it to Delegation and Provincial and General uniformly acceptable direction.

Love and Prayers  
**Fr Francis Nallappan OMI**  
Delegation Superior

## **8. ADVISORY COUNCIL - TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FINANCE MANAGEMENT**

At the joint session of the General Administration and the Asia-Oceania Region in Manila in the third week of April 2008 Fr F Labaglay, the Councillor for the Region called together many members of the General Administration with Fr Rufus Whitley and Fr Clement Waidyasekara, the provincial and Fr Nallappan the Delegation Superior with the intent of listening and finding an “Advisory Council” for Strategic Planning on Sustainable finance Management in Oblate unit in India. It follows largely from the Leadership Congress of Feb 2007 jointly organized by Frs Oswald Firth and Peding and the Strategic planning of the new Delegation Administration with District Superiors Oct 2007 and as the result of Fr General’s visit in Jan 2008. Self-sufficiency was the watch word of the entire Delegation during the Congress! Towards realizing such aim the following members form the advisory council: Fathers Rufus, Clement, Aloys Terliesner, Denis of the Philippines, Nallappan, Gnanam, Varghese and Simeon. We are to meet on 1-6 Nov 2008 in Chennai!

The Finance Committee gathered on 08 July 2008 was briefed of the intention of the formation of the advisory council and the need to prepare for the meeting in the first week of November 2008. The Delegation Administration gathered on 09-10 July 08 took up the deliberations of this Finance Committee and mandated to take up a study on the maximizing the profit-utilization of some of our prime properties – land at Seneerkuppam, Chennai, at Nivedanam, Bangalore, at Viageshwaram in Andhra Pradesh, at Perambakkam in Tamilnadu! Fathers Gnanam, Simeon and Varghese were requested to consult property development agencies and come up with viable proposals for further study and decisions for implementation at the November 08 meeting! The Finance Committee would gather again on 20 August 2008.

Both the finance committee and the Delegation administration is also aware of the other needs of the Delegation like: a) Providing basic Infrastructures – (i) Delegation House extension; ii) Seminary in North India iii) New Church and parish residences in three missions (Buttaygudem, Horasolai, Rayannappadu) where Oblates live in rented houses and two missions (Thilaidar and East Marianathapuram) need better house.

b) In service of the poor – i) Community Development Center (CDC) i.e., educational help for the orphaned and the semi-orphan and very poor

children of our parishes and missions; ii) Boardings and educational ministry through school & tuition center to poor children; iii) Vocational training programme – computer learning, Spoken-English, two-wheeler mechanism and printing etc for the poor youth of the south Chennai

As for measures for self-sufficiency the task is two fold – one is to generate funds from existing property through creative management; the other is the challenge to each of our community to readjust our budget and lead to

some small savings, to find ways of generating local funds and affordable parishes come forward to support poorer missions. All of us know that not many of our missions are rich yet the spirit to share is what counts! Thank you for coming forward to express your opinion on these matters and hope these efforts would help us realize our common dreams to be self-sufficient!

**Please Note...**

**15<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at 5.30 pm**

Blessing of the Extended Building of OMI St. Joseph Bhavan, St. Thomas Mount, Chennai.

**ANNUAL RETREAT OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION**

15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Sep. `08 – 1<sup>st</sup> Batch

21<sup>st</sup> Sep. `08 – Delegation Gathering

21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Sep. `08 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Batch

**Venue :** St. Joseph Bhavan, Chennai.

**Fr. Francis Nallappan OMI**  
Delegation Superior

## **9. NEWS FROM VOCATION DIRECTOR**

*“The apostolate of vocations concerns all Oblates individually and as a group. In cooperation with pontifical and diocesan work, members of the Congregation will foster vocations, whether Oblate or other” (OMI Rule 53).*

At the outset I am happy with the greater responsibility of vocation for our oblate congregation. Of course, there were lot of discouragements, obstacles, challenges and difficulties. It is not an easy job as in earlier times and in this job one should have lot of dedication and forgo many things to reach the target. Therefore, in the first place I thank sincerely Fr.Nallappan, Delegation superior, procurator and the Councilors. This year we had four vocation camps in different states of India. The first vocation camp was held at St. Paul’s Institute in Poonamallee on 31<sup>st</sup> of March and 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2008. From five dioceses 25 students came for the Vocation camp.

Formation committee selected only 18 students out 25 students. My special thanks goes to Fr.Jeeva, Fr.Yesuraj and Pre-novices.

The second vocation camp was held at R.C. High school in Madurai on 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 2008. From seven dioceses 20 students came for the Vocation camp. Formation committee selected only 16 students out 20 students. Thanks to Bro. David SHS and the Headmaster of R.C High School. The third vocation camp was held at Arpanalyam in Andhra Pradesh on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008. From five dioceses 11 students came for the Vocation camp. Out of 11 students 8 students were selected. Thanks to Fr.Francis Xavier, Fr.Basil, Fr.David, Fr.Joseph, Fr.Joseph Thambi, Bro.Kuppala ArockiaRaj and Novices.

The fourth vocation camp was held at Boda Parish in North India on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2008. Thanks to Fr.Dewaji and all the oblates from North India. Infact, I sincerely thank formation committee members for their constant guidance and availability during vocation camps. They are namely; Fr.Alex OMI Formation councilor and Rector, Pune Scholasticate, Fr.Jeeva OMI, Rector, St. Paul's Institute, Fr. Francis Xavier OMI Novice Master, Fr.Simeon OMI Philosophate Rector and Fr. Chinnappan OMI Juniorate Rector.

After the vocation camps I visited all the families of selected candidates in order to know the family background, economical condition, family status and the standard of student. Moreover, I visited all the parish priests of the selected candidates. The selected candidates joined the seminary from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2008 and this year I have admitted 31 students in the Juniorate, namely; 26 students from Tamilnadu and 5 students from Andhra Pradesh. I render my special thanks to My Vocation Co-ordinator Fr.Basil who supported and helped me to get some students from Andhra Pradesh and I also thank all the students from Nivedanam for their assistance and support. Let us all work together to promote oblate vocations and I request you all to support me through your prayers that I may do well in this venture.

**Fr. Benedict OMI**  
Vocation Director

## **10. AN EXPERIENCE AT AANMODAYA ASHRAM**

When I came to India, almost a year ago, I found that there is something different and creative in the Christian liturgy. During my three months of stay at Poonamallee Scholasticate, I sensed some aspects of inculturation

in the liturgy; for example, all would sit on the floor, and sometimes chant 'bhajans' and use 'arathi'.

Back in the university, through some of the lectures I was able to understand the gradual development of Indian Christian thinking. When I got a chance to present a paper on the contribution of Swami Abishiktananda, I thought to myself, I should spend a few days at our Oblate Ashram to get an idea of what an ashram is. Finally, during my summer holidays, I decided to spend a month at Aanmodaya Ashram. It is also my internship programme, which is required by my university. In this brief writ-up I would like to express my experience at the Aanmodaya Ashram.

### **1. Promotion of Interreligious harmony**

From the very entrance of the Ashram one can notice the symbols of all the main world religions. They are highlighted on the temple columns. A person of any faith could feel at home by the very atmosphere of the ashram. This aspect is deeply expressed in the inculturated community worship where sacred scriptures of all the major world religions, writings and songs of sages of the land find their place.

### **2. Interiorization of religion**

Any religion could be sociologically seen as an entity that has a cult, a code, a creed and a community. But a religion that lacks spirituality has no depth and vitality. Though an ashram does not intend to cater to any single religion as such, it helps people to go deeper into their own religion. Through 'dhyana' (meditation) the 'sadhaka' (the seeker) is gradually initiated to experience the depth of his / her own religion. I benefited much by the meditations that were often led by Swami Samarakone OMI.

### **3. Integral growth**

The present day man and woman are caught up in a rat race to meet the demands of life which eventually creates a lot of stress. Sometimes, this leads to much psychosomatic problems. The thrust given by the ashram is one of holistic growth. In our ashram, daily there is one hour for the practice of yoga. On every Saturday a yoga master came to help us acquire these skills. Above all, my personal encounter with Swami Samarakone helped me to broaden certain attitudes and vision of life.

#### **4. The religious atmosphere**

Kanchipuram is known as one of India's seven sacred cities. It is called as the golden city of thousand temples. The Aanmodaya Ashram is situated at Enathur, just four k.m. from the city. The historical and religious background of the city adds much value to the Ashram.

I was able to visit many of the important temples in the city and that added more flavor to my ashram experience. I was impressed by the devotional attitude of the Hindus who regularly come to these places for worship.

#### **5. Vegetarian diet**

Food in the Ashram is always vegetarian, a well balanced diet. It gives one good health of both mind and body. Thanks to the good preparations done by the domestic staff, I cherished that food.

#### **6. Respect for all religions**

The spirit of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council has been one of openness and dialogue, which recognizes the salvific value in every religion. Many seminarians, religious and priests get a true understanding of dialogue and respect for all religions by spending a week or ten days at the Ashram.

#### **7. Open to all**

The Ashram benefits both lay and religious persons who wish to get a deeper understanding of spiritual life. It is also an experience of going back to our own heritage to find the spiritual wealth in it.

#### **8. Inculturation**

The use of Indian rite (for Eucharist) was a novel experience for me. It begins and ends with chanting of 'Om'. In this liturgy, we offer our homage to God through 'arathi'. During the liturgy of the Word, we read not only Christian scriptures but also from sacred scriptures of other faiths. The preparation of gifts and prayer of the faithful are combined. Something that touched me was the act of placing eight flowers in eight directions around the offerings symbolizing the gathering of the whole universe. The bread used for Mass is a 'chapathi' prepared by the community. The Mass is celebrated seated on the floor and the priest wears a 'shawl' instead of a chasuble. Thus, one can notice the concepts of inculturation in practical terms in the liturgy at

the Ashram. Ashram is an open space to practice much creativity in liturgy.

#### 9. An inculturated model of religious life

In the context of an ashram, there is possibility for any person to live simple life with ample time for solitude and prayer. One is free to offer service through manual labour. The community is built within a guru-disciple relationship. Thus, I found that this could be an inculturated form of religious life.

#### Conclusion

I am glad that I have had a rewarding experience at the Aanmodaya Ashram one month. I am very thankful to Swami Joseph Samarakone OMI and Fr. Andrew OMI for making my stay pleasant and fruitful. I am also grateful to all the inmates who have contributed much through their labour and kind gestures. I will joyfully remember all what I have experienced at the Ashram.

**Rev Fr. Chrysantha Thilakeratne OMI**  
P.G. Studies- University of Madras



*Congrats and best wishes to Deacon Peter Rajan OMI  
for being elected as the Economer among the executive  
members of Indian priests and religious association in  
Rome.*

*“Every man is a volume if you know how to read him.”*

*- William Ellery Channing*

3 April 2008

Dear Editor, thank you for sending me “Born”, No 3.

Seeing a picture of your Oblate-family-day, I think it was really a happy Oblate-day.

I am happy that you are working in India with so many Oblates who are working for the poor. I have a special interest in India, because I have a book, written by Collins: “freedom at midnight”. Gandhi was a very spiritual man and I have the impression that the people in India are more religious than the people in Western-Europe. The spirituality of Gandhi is and was very important for India. Our Queen Beatrix is very interested in this spirituality. I have, less or more, correspondence with our Queen. I wish you much inspiration and also courage for expressing your opinion.

**Fr. De Grauw OMI**  
The Netherlands

---

Dear Editor, thank you for sending me the BORN issue. Always interesting and informative of the fine ministry the OMIs of India are accomplishing.

**Guy Lavallee OMI**  
Taché Community, Lacombe Canada

---

Dear Editor, Thanks for the newsletter. Wow – it is quite a production. I am very much impressed, and proud to see what the Oblates in that part of the world are doing. I especially noted the Superior General’s message and mention of senior Oblates coming to India to share, and the possibility of Oblates going out from India to serve in other parts of the world. Fr. Francis’ message about our new Oblate martyr was also very moving. Thank you very much for sending the newsletter my way. Great work.

Peace, + Sylvain  
Archbishop of Keewatin The Pas, Canada

# Birthdays, Feast Days & Anniversaries

## JULY

- 03 - feastday of Fr. Tomy
- 08 - ordination day of Frs. S.D & Ramesh
- 09 - ordination day of Frs. M.Chinnappan, James & Chinnapparaj
- 11 - feastday of Fr. Benedict
- 12 - birthday of Bro. Rajesh Paul
- 15 - birthday of Fr. CH. John David
- 17 - birthday of Fr. John Kishore
- 20 - birthday of Bro. Shanthakumar
- 21 - ordination day of Fr. Varam
- 24 - ordination day of Fr. Yesurathinam
- 25 - feastday of Fr. James
- 26 - birthday of Fr. Pathinathan
- 27 - birthday of Fr. Emmanuel Mariam Pillai
- ordination of Frs. Amalraj, Gnanapragasam & Susai



## AUGUST

- 01 - 226<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of our Founder  
St. Charles Joseph Eugene De Mazenod.
- Final Vows of Frs. Ambrose, Pragasam, Pathinathan, Joe & Jeevaratnam
- birthday of Fr. Amirtharaj
- ordination day of Frs. Vincent, Amirtharaj, Kishore, David & Anthonyraj
- 03 - birthday of Deacon Peter Rajan & Bro. Maria Arokiam
- 05 - final Vows of Fr. Francis Xavier
- 06 - ordination day of Fr. Emmanuel Mariam Pillai
- 08 - birthday of Fr. Amalraj
- 10 - feastday of Fr. Lawrence
- 12 - birthday of Fr. Jeevaratnam
- 15 - 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Indian Independence
- feast of the assumption of BI Mother Mary
- 16 - birth anniversary of St. John Bosco, SDB: "His way for Youth : not with blows but with love, you can't change them with blows but with kindness...."
- 21 - feastday of Fr. Pathinathan
- 24 - birthday of Fr. Joe
- 25 - ordinationday of Fr. Jeevaratnam
- 29 - feastday of Fr. Bruno Baptist