



OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

NATAL PROVINCE
THE MOTHER PROVINCE OF THE OBLATES IN AFRICA
WWW.OMI.ORG.ZA/NATAL

OMI NATAL *Update*

VOL. 7 No. 5 Dec 2010



Top News

Christus natus est

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis

OMI Natal Province Wishes Everyone A Happy And Holy Christmas

Other News

Assembly 2010

Consultation for New Provincial and Council

New Appointments in Formation

Good News about Oblate Mission Assembly 2010 points the way forward



Assembly 2010 helped to clarify the way forward for the Natal Province in 2010 and beyond.

The massive growth in the two institutions at Cedara show that the Province has a major responsibility to continue developing St Josephs Scholasticate, the biggest Oblate Scholasticate in the world and St Josephs Theological Institute, the largest provider of theological and philosophical education for priests in Southern Africa.

Developments in the Zimbabwe Mission see it moving forward towards delegation status in the near future with continuing growth in personnel and financial resources.

Youth Ministry has a clear direction forward with the development of the Youth for Life programme that will be extended within KwaZulu Natal and beyond. A programme for youth ministry will also be developed at our Shrine at Ngome.

The Oblate Development Programmes will focus on resurrecting our commitment to education in schools. In addition it will also focus on programmes for youth and HIV/AIDS.

Ministry in service of the Archdiocese of Durban and the Archdiocese of Durban will continue apace with the Oblates looking for ways to serve the poor in their many faces. The successful ACTS programmes will continue.

On the administrative level we will continue to face financial problems and, increasingly, the medical care of our personnel will be a big concern as the cost of private health care increases beyond our capacity to meet the needs.

Good News about Oblate Mission

Consultation for new Leadership in 2011

Fr Evans CHINYEMBA, newly elected General Councillor for the Africa region arrived on 15th November for the consultation for the new Provincial and Council. He spent one week interviewing all Oblates in the province and Zimbabwe. He had an opportunity to visit centres at Estcourt, Pietermaritzburg and Durban to complete this work. The Zimbabweans were interviewed in Durban the day before the

assembly. During the assembly, discussions were held on the issues affecting the province and the way forward. The formal consultation was made



as Oblates completed their secret ballots. The ballot papers were brought up during the offertory procession of the Mass of the Holy

Spirit presided by Fr Chinyemba. The picture shows Fr Chinyemba sealing the ballots in front of the assembly. They were then couriered to Rome for opening during the General Council in January next year. The new provincial elect should be named toward the middle of January and his council early in February. The new administration will be installed during the Celebration of the Approval of our rule which will be anticipated on Monday February 14th at St Joseph's Cedara.

The Province also looks forward with hope to a new leadership which will build on what has gone before and redress some of the weaknesses of the current team.

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the work of the men of this province and through the intercession of Our Lady we hope for a continued renewed response to the poor.

Good News about Oblate Mission New Appointments

The following appointments and obediences were announced at the Assembly:



The new Superior for St Joseph's Scholasticate is Fr Callistus KHATHALI OMI who assumes office on 1 January 2011.

The new Superior of Cebula House of Formation is Fr Mbheki NGCOBO OMI who assumes office on 1 January 2011.



Fr Muzi MADLALA OMI is appointed formator at St Josephs Scholasticate and parish Priest of St Leo, Imbubu.

Deacon Phumlani NDLOVU OMI is appointed assistant at Cebula House of Formation.



Good News about Oblates Ndodana Tshuma for Final vows



Scholastic Ndodana TSHUMA has been accepted for final profession He will make his perpetual vows in Rome on 8th of January 2011. Let us remember him in our prayers as he

prepares for this momentous step in his life.

Good News about Oblates Website on Founder

Fr Frank SANTUCCI, a South African Oblate who has worked for the General Administration for many years, is currently the director of the *Founder and Charism Animation Service*.

In a recent email he alerted us to an important information source for all interested in the history and Charism of St Eugene De Mazenod. It is found on the website www.eugenedemazenod.net. Each day he publishes a daily text of St Eugene with an explanatory comment.

Recently he has started to explore the concept and practice of the parish missions for Eugene from 1816 onwards.

Oblates who are involved in parish missions and indeed all Oblates who preach retreats should look at this site where they can get interesting information for their ministry.

Good News about Oblate Mission Press Comments on the OMI Chapter

The Tablet is an internationally respected review of Catholic matters published in England. In a recent article about the Oblate Chapter in Rome it published the following interesting comment:

The Church is not a democracy. Vatican officials and most bishops, consistently proclaim this refrain whenever there are calls to reform ecclesial structures and governance. And yet democratic-like procedures have been a part of the Christian community since its very foundation. Even the Pope is elected. The best

examples of participatory democracy in the Catholic Church can be found in the hundreds of religious orders. During the past month, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have offered a glimpse of democratic elements and transparency at their best in the Church. Eighty-nine delegates from the 4,000-strong international order have been in Rome for a general Chapter and, like other communities, they elected a new superior general. Fr Louis Lougen, a 58 year old American who served as a missionary in Brazil for nearly 17 years and had led the order's US province since 2005, was elected on Tuesday for a six-year term. What was amazing about this election was that the Oblates videotaped the entire process, including the counting of the votes, and made it available on their open website (<http://www.omiworld.org>). Fr Louis Lougen was elected on the first Ballot, capturing 75 of the 89 possible votes. Many religious communities publish updates on their general chapter, but this type of transparency is unique. And it's not just the election that's available on the OMI World website promised at the beginning of the chapter. It has posted videos and texts of reports, addresses, homilies and liturgies, and also offered daily news summaries and large gallery of photos. This has allowed Oblates in more than 60 countries to participate in the meeting.

Good News about Oblate Mission

De Mazenod Experience 2011

The De Mazenod Experience will take place between 15 September and 25 November 2011. It is a special three-month period which provides each participant with an opportunity to re-examine his spiritual journey in the light of the surroundings and the places which witnessed the conversion of our Founder and the beginnings of our missionary and apostolic religious family.

The De Mazenod Experience is a time during which participants and animators together, mutually enriched by the various journeys we have travelled, are attentive to :

- Our heritage: the life of St. Eugene, our first Fathers, and the charism received;
- Our present: the life of our Units;
- Our own being, becoming and future.

The De Mazenod Experience is normally for those who have had at least 10 years of ministry and are due for a period of long leave. Those who would like to be considered for next year please contact the Provincial.

Dates to Give Thanks

JANUARY

Date	Name	Occasion
06	J Ngubane	First Vows
13	C Rensburg	Birthday
15	B Mkhize (Schol)	Birthday
16	M Foley	Birthday
18	W Weldschidt	Ordination
20	Z Mbanjwa	Birthday
25	M Dlamini	First Vows
25	P Foley	First Vows
25	A Henriques	First Vows
25	S David	First Vows
25	B Gumede	First Vows
25	Z Mbanjwa	First Vows
25	M Mchunu	First Vows
25	T Zondi	First Vows
26	N Nkosi	First Vows
26	C Richmond	First Vows
27	J Nxumalo (Arch bishop)	Birthday
28	S Mbanjwa (Schol)	Birthday
29	C Rensburg	Ordination
29	G Purves	Birthday
29	I Zandoda (Schol)	First Vows
29	S Mbanjwa (Schol)	First Vows
30	A Tshuma (Schol)	Birthday

Provincial's Diary

January 2010

4 Meeting with Scholastics Congella
5-6 Provincial Council

Christmas Blessings to you and to those close to you



From all at the Provincial Office

Provincial's Report to Assembly 2010

CONTENTS

Introduction

A. The Bigger Picture: The Missionary Activity of the Natal Province 1990-2010

1. A Focus on the First Formation of Oblates from the African Region and Beyond
2. The Development of a Tertiary Educational Institution for the Church in Southern Africa
3. The transfer of the Zimbabwe Mission to Natal in 2002.

B. New Missionary Responses of the Natal Province in the last six years

1. The Mission to Youth
2. Retreat and Pilgrimage Ministry
3. Missionary Development and JPIC

C. Developments in Our Oblate Religious Life since the Last Chapter

1. Establishing Eight Communities Each With a Superior
2. Building Unity in the Province
3. Providing Support for Oblates
4. Working towards Financial Sustainability

Conclusion

REPORT

Introduction

I would like to give a word of welcome to Fr Evans Chinyemba recently elected General Councillor for Africa Madagascar. As you know he is a former Delegation Superior of Zambia and a former scholastic at St Josephs Scholasticate Cedara and student at St Josephs Theological Institute.

Now, If you are the kind of Oblate who believes that God is continually present to us renewing the world and saving it; If you believe that he sent Jesus to bring Good News to confront evil and accept the suffering that goes with that, even to death on the Cross; And if you believe that God raised him up to new life as a testimony to all people that God is alive in the world and cares for his people; And if you believe that he established his Church founded on the rock that is Peter and the apostles who were sent out to the whole world to proclaim this Good News; And if you believe that he sent the Holy Spirit upon them so that they had the power to do so many wonderful deeds, more than they ever thought possible. And if you believe that he called Eugene de Mazenod to mission to the poor and abandoned in the new world that came about as a result of the French Revolution and the modernity and colonialism that followed; And if you believe that Eugene called a band of followers and set them up as a community of men offered to the Lord's same mission to bring Good news to the poor through the patronage of Mary in many new places including this one here in Africa; And if you saw Oblates doing this same mission in your place in your own life and you felt called to do the same; And now that you live in this community, as it is established in the Natal Province and the Zimbabwe mission, and you are fully committed to follow our life; then this report is for you. Because it speaks of our works, our lives and our challenges: past, present and future. So for forty minutes pay attention and listen, this is my final report on the state of our province.

A. The Bigger Picture: The Missionary Activity of the Natal Province 1990-2010

OMI Natal province has enabled three major missionary endeavours in the last twenty years. All three are ongoing and are showing pleasing growth and development since the last chapter in 2004.

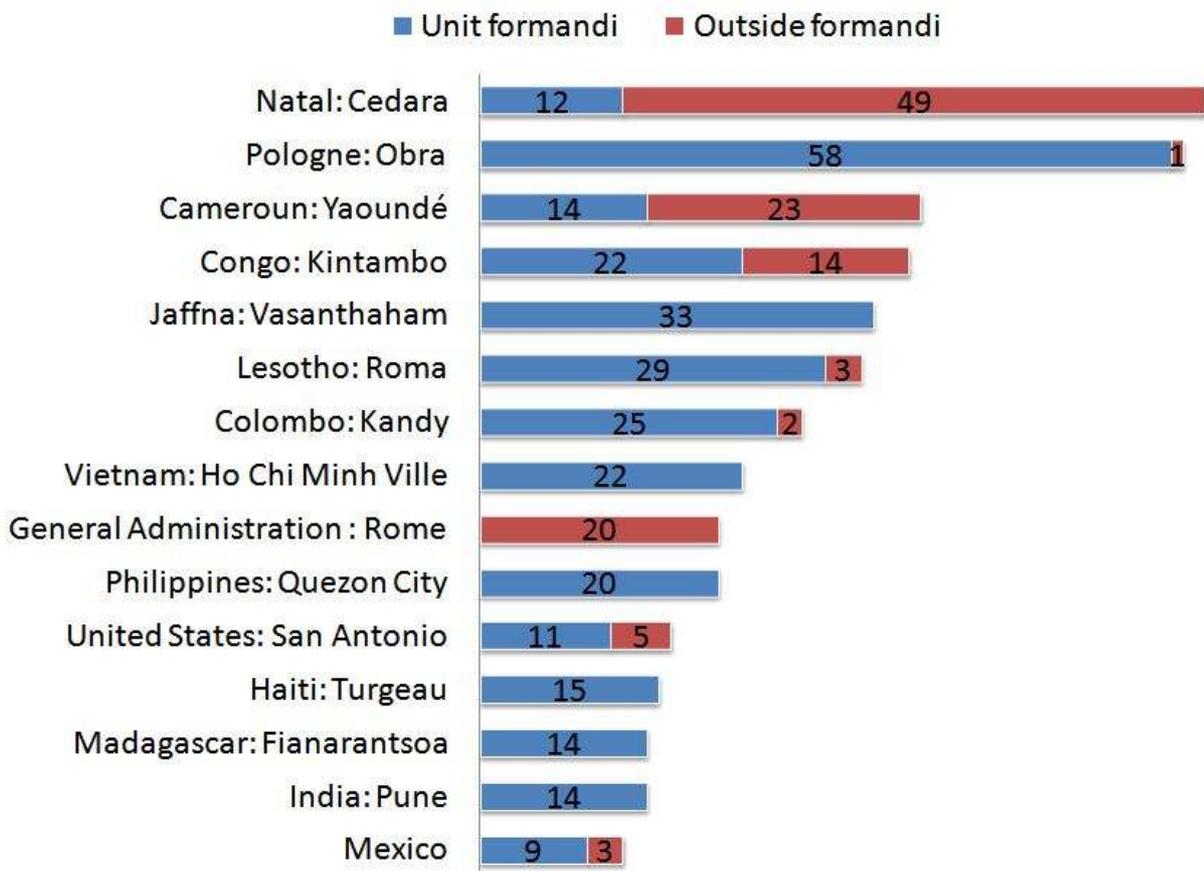
1. A Focus on the First Formation of Oblates from the African Region and Beyond
2. The Development of a Tertiary Educational Institution for the Church in Southern Africa
3. The transfer of the Zimbabwe Mission to Natal in 2002.

I would like to begin my report by presenting the progress on these ministries.

1. A Focus on the First Formation of Oblates from the African Region and Beyond

St Josephs Scholasticate at Cedara has seen considerable change. In 1990 it was a seminary style scholasticate offering education and formation for priests from a number of congregations. In 1992 it became a house of formation for Oblate scholastics only. A new building comprising small community houses promoted formation within a small group. Each community had a formator as chaplain. The number of Oblate units sending their scholastics has grown and currently there are 63 Oblates in the community from ten Oblate units. It is the largest scholasticate in the Congregation!

Scholasticates with 12 and more formandi



In a letter to the Provincial administration “in response to the annual report which you submitted, The Superior General in Council notes:

“Having accepted an interprovincial scholasticate on its territory, the Province will have to creatively accept what it considers as a malaise: the fact that the scholastics who belong to the Natal Province happen to be a minority thus being challenged to find their own identity in the midst of a majority of scholastics coming from outside, and at the same time that Natal scholastics are not known to the majority of the priests of the Province. This “problem” can also be addressed at the IPC level”

One of the ways we tried to redress this issue was the decision to revise our formation programme and to change the Oblate Prenovitiate in Cleland into a House of formation where Natal

candidates in first formation would complete their philosophy programme in addition to the prenovitiate formation.

In 2008, Cebula House of Formation was constituted at the former Cleland prenovitiate. It offers a prenovitiate programme and Oblate community life for those studying philosophy at St Josephs Theological Institute. This year, three candidates completed their philosophy studies and have been accepted into the Novitiate programme.

In his report to the 2010 Chapter Fr General writes *“Formation might not yet be seen by all Oblates as a priority ministry on which depends on the quality not only of our missionaries, but also of our mission. We are “specialists for the difficult missions”, but formation may well be, today, the most difficult mission!”* (Report of Superior General Steckling to the Chapter)

I would like to thank the members of the Province who committed themselves to the difficult ministry of formation in our three houses of formation: St Josephs Scholasticate, Cebula House of Formation and Mazenod Houses Bulawayo during these last six years of our mandate:

Fr Vusi MAZIBUKO who has completed 6 years as superior of the Scholasticate and who is due to take a well earned sabbatical year in 2010; Fr Callistus KHATHALI who has worked as formator at the scholasticate and is currently Superior of Cebula House of Formation; Fr Mbheki NGCOBO who has also completed 6 years at St Joseph’s Scholasticate though with a year in Kenya completing a qualification in Religious formation. Others who have served in our three formation houses include Fr Paul DECOCK, Fr Sean COLEMAN, Fr Mhlanganisi DLAMINI, Fr Thomas ZONDI, Fr Ewen SWARTZ, Fr Mike FOLEY, Fr John PATTERSON, Fr Elphas KHOZA, Fr Charles NABWENJE and Fr Donovan WHEATLEY: 13 Oblates in all!. Thanks also to Fr Frank MCGREAL, Fr Joe SEPHAMOLA, Fr Raymond MWANGALA and Bro Max Mwakacheya from other African Oblate Units who have collaborated with us in this ministry.

-The new Superior for St Joseph’s Scholasticate is Fr Callistus KHATHALI who assumes office on 1 January 2011.

-The new Superior of Cebula House of Formation is Fr Mbheki NGCOBO who assumes office on 1 January 2011.

-Fr Muzi MADLALA is appointed formator at St Josephs Scholasticate

-Deacon Phumlani NDLOVU is appointed assistant at Cebula House of Formation.

2. The Development of a Tertiary Educational Institution for the Church in Southern Africa

In 1990 St Josephs Theological Institute, Cedara was established to provide education for those studying for priesthood. Initially offering a seminary programme, it has grown into a tertiary educational institution offering programmes in Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies. In 2004 it was accredited as a tertiary education provider by the South African Government. It is a founder member of the ecumenical Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutes. In 2010 there were 257 students from 23 countries. They represent 15 congregations of male religious, 9 congregations of women religious and seminarians from seven dioceses. St Joseph’s Theological Institute also offers postgraduate programmes in collaboration with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Institute is responsible for the Catholic Studies Programme of the University. Currently the Institute has one doctoral student and 10 Masters Students. The Institute is an Oblate work realised in collaboration with other religious institutes who participate. The Provincial of Natal Province is always the Chairman of the Board. Oblate major superiors from Northern Province, Central Province, Namibia Province and Zambia Delegation are also board members as are three others representing the other religious congregations and dioceses.

In his report to the General Chapter the outgoing Superior General said:

“Higher studies have a great potential to benefit the way we understand our mission and in practice, incarnate and inculturate the Gospel. At the same time they require a lot of resources

in talented personnel and finances. How could we become more pro-active and cost-effective in this field? For an Oblate, the desire to study should be matched with the needs of a specific mission, be it teaching, specialized ministries or administration. We have a tradition of higher studies supporting formation but what about our supporting other "paths of evangelization"? Specific human sciences may help us to better interpret how we should respond to our context."

St Josephs Theological Institute is a member of the Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning. This association was started in 2007 to promote the importance of the ministry of education in the mission of the Church and in the charism of the Oblate Congregation. St. Eugene sought to promote the education of the church's ministers for the growth and benefit of the entire church and its mission. The association meets annually to ensure that this ministry continues to serve the Oblate Congregation and the needs of the local churches where we are called to serve. Its goal is to foster excellence in academic education and promote the integration of intellectual formation in the total missionary formation process

The other member institutions at the present time are: Notre Dame University, Cotabato Philippines; Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio USA; St. Eugene de Mazenod Institute, Kinshasa Congo, Saint Paul University, Ottawa Canada and, the Oblate Scholasticate, Poznan Poland.

I would like to thank all those members of the Province who have accepted a ministry at St Josephs Theological Institute. Fr Sylvester DAVID was appointed third president of the Institute in 2007 and currently serves in this role. Fr Paul DECOCK also serves on the executive committee. Fr Neil FRANK was head of the Philosophy department until June this year when he began full time studies to complete his doctorate. Other members of the province who lecture at the Institute on a part time basis include Fr Chris RICHMOND, Fr Zaba MBANJWA, Fr Mike FOLEY, and Fr Callistus KHATHALI. Oblates from other units are also on the staff: Fr Raymond MWANGALA from Zambia Delegation and Fr Frank MCGREAL from Northern Province.

3. Transfer of the Zimbabwe Mission to Natal 2002.

In 2002 responsibility for the Zimbabwe mission was transferred to the Natal Province. Fr Michael FOLEY was mission superior until 2007 when Fr Siphon KUNENE was appointed. The first Zimbabwean was ordained in 2006 and there are now five Zimbabwean priests. The Government of Robert Mugabe asked three Natal Oblates, including the mission superior, to leave the mission in 2008. Since the establishment of the Government of National unity, two of them, one the mission superior, have been allowed to return. The Mission also has a brother candidate Bro Bruce Mwenda who is completing his first formation.

B. New Missionary Responses of the Natal Province in the last six years

In 2003 the Province adopted this Mission Statement: *We, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Province of Natal, Called by Jesus Christ to bring good news, Commit ourselves in apostolic communities, Guided by the Spirit, to serve the Church in transition with a renewed response to the poor.* The vision has realised the following missionary developments:

- 1. The Mission to Youth*
- 2. Retreat and Pilgrimage Ministry*
- 3. Missionary Development and JPIC*

1. The Mission to Youth

The Oblate Youth Ministry was established in 2006. A committee drives the ministry and two young Oblates were appointed full time: Fr Mxolisi NGCOBO in a rural area and Fr Merlin INCE in Durban. The ministry has had considerable success in bringing young people together and developing new youth initiatives such as evangelisation through theatre and the media, youth missions to schools and parishes, retreats camps and other programmes. Two specific youth

centres exist: one in Sydenham in Durban and the other at Inchanga. In Sydenham the work of Fr Ince has been continued by Fr Siyabonga DUBE both in the parish and at Durban University of Technology.

Youth Ministry at Inchanga has developed to focus mainly in the area of education ministry, with a distinct Catholic ethos. Classes in Human Development for grades 5 to 7 are offered on a weekly basis every Wednesday. Through these classes young people are educated about the basic values of human living. Inspired by the teachings of Eugene de Mazenod we seek to help these pupils to be dignified human persons. Religious assemblies and masses are also offered for learners

All young Oblates working in the Archdiocese of Durban have been involved in youth ministry. However with the appointment of an Episcopal Vicar for Youth in The archdiocese of Durban and the restructuring of their youth programme, Oblates in parishes work within these structures. I like to believe that the example of our Oblate Youth ministry was one of the catalysts of the changes in the diocese.

In 2010 Fr. Nkululeko MEYIWA was appointed to ministry at Ngome with the specific mandate of developing a youth ministry at the Shrine

The youth for life programme which began at St Josephs Theological Institute in 2000 and which continues there as the Youth for Life AIDS action group has been further developed in Zimbabwe where two full time lay leaders run the programme under the supervision of the Mission superior. It is proposed that his programme be introduced into the Oblate Youth Ministry in Natal and Fr Charles RENSBURG will present this proposal later in the assembly.

In their response to the Provincial reports over the last few years the Superior General in council said that the “commitment to youth ministry is quite remarkable”. As Fr Mxolisi and Fr Merlin move on to new missionary challenges it is my fervent hope that this ministry will continue to be a major thrust of the province. I would like to thank the Young Oblates who have planned and animated this ministry over the last few years as well as Fr Mhlanganisi DLAMINI and Fr Wayne WELDSCHIDT who have been the councillors tasked with this portfolio. There have been ups and downs but the foundation is well laid for others to continue with this wonderful ministerial response to the youth of this generation

2. Retreat and Pilgrimage Ministry

In today's world Retreat and pilgrimage ministry are increasingly important in evangelisation. Since 2005 we have improved our Redacres Retreat centre which is providing excellent facilities at a reasonable cost for ordinary people including youth. It is well utilised and often full. Thanks to Fr Peter FOLEY who is the Oblate responsible for Redacres and to Mrs Veronica Young an Oblate Lay associate who is the on site manager.

In 2009 we were asked to accept the Our Lady Tabernacle of the Most High Shrine at Ngome and the associated parish in the diocese of Eshowe. After discussion in the Provincial Council the matter was referred the Assembly which gave overwhelming support for accepting the new ministry. After a visit to the Bishop of Eshowe and an inspection of the Shrine it was decided to sign a one year contract in which the Oblates were given the pastoral charge of Shrine and the associated parish. Fr Wayne WELDSCHIDT was appointed Rector of the Shrine and Parish Priest. Fr Nkululeko MEYIWA was appointed Assistant Rector and Director of Youth Ministry.

Fr WELDSCHIDT is currently preparing a report on the ministry during his tenure and is to give a recommendation concerning the sustainability of the ministry as an Oblate work. This report will be tabled at or next Provincial Council meeting and a recommendation whether or not to sign a more permanent contract will be made to the new Provincial Administration.

3. Missionary Development and JPIC

JPIC-OMI is an Oblate organisation concerned with promotion of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation according to Catholic Social Teaching. JPIC exists in many Provinces of the Congregation. In Zimbabwe Fr Elphas KHOZA has been appointed to this ministry and will work with the Justice and Peace committee in Bulawayo Archdiocese.

The JPIC ministry has a number of expressions. Human Development programmes are one of these. In 2009 in collaboration with the Anglo-Irish Province we initiated our Missionary Development Ministry which works under the title OBLATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES. The vision is to co-ordinate and to promote development work involving Oblates.

In 2010 the Oblate Development Programme has been working on projects for youth ministry and the development of our schools. One project has been in collaboration with Couples for Christ for the development of our school at Inchanga. It is currently involved in the renovation of a school building.

Fr Charles RENSBURG has been appointed Oblate Development Officer. Fr Donovan WHEATLEY who will return to Natal has been appointed Assistant Development Officer with the portfolio of financial control. A lay associate, Mr Kenny Clark has been appointed Assistant Development Officer with the portfolio of our two schools: Inchanga primary and Sibongumbomvu at Cedara. The Provincial, the Provincial Treasurer and the Mission Superior of Zimbabwe also serve on this committee which meets four times a year one of which is in Zimbabwe

C. Developments in Our Oblate Religious Life since the 2004 Chapter

In our congresses, strategies were identified to help us to live a fully committed Oblate life more deeply. Amongst these were: creating greater province unity; promoting greater commitment to our local community; owning our giftedness as Oblates; recognising God's Spirit working in us; recommitting to regular community and personal prayer; and looking for ways to provide on-going formation including helping Oblates develop a greater knowledge of the civil consequences of our vowed life. The strategies have been implemented in the following initiatives.

1. Establishing Eight Communities Each With a Superior

Three Oblate Houses were constituted since the last chapter (CIC 608 and R77): Sabon House, Durban, Cebula House of Formation, Pietermaritzburg and Gerard House, Hilton. Together with our three districts this means that all Oblates are living in one of seven local communities each with a superior. A council of superiors was established in 2008 comprising the Provincial, the Vicar Provincial, Superiors of local communities and the Zimbabwe Mission Superior. Clear authority has been devolved to local superiors so that individual Oblates no longer deal directly with the provincial. A *Training Workshop for Newly Appointed Superiors* was held in December 2008.

2. Building Unity in the Province

Whilst there are good interpersonal relations between Oblates, the demographics of the province show two different groups with different backgrounds, cultures and approaches. There is a predominantly English speaking group of older Oblates mainly missionaries from overseas and English speaking South Africans. There is also a younger, predominantly Black African group. It was clear that in 2005, hegemony in the province was with the older group and little authority had been devolved from this group causing some resentment amongst younger Oblates.

We responded with three strategies: a) Empowerment of the younger group (our future); b) implementing ways to ensure respect for cultures; and c) ensuring ministry placements which break traditional cultural and racial prejudices. Since then more than 20 young or black Oblates have been appointed to leadership positions in the province. These include the Superior of the Zimbabwe mission; the President of St Josephs Theological Institute; ten provincial councillors

over the two three year mandates; the youth ministry committee, the formation committee, and others. Oblate local communities now have black and/or younger leadership. A series of workshops on cultural diversity was conducted 2007. Since 2005 nine younger black Oblates have been appointed to parishes in urban formerly “white” areas. In 2010 the younger group has grown as 15 Oblates have been ordained since 2005. The older group has declined as ten Oblates have died during the same period.

3. Providing Support for Oblates

The *Missionary Support and Conduct Committee* was initially set up to help Oblates become aware of problems that can occur in ministry and to look at ways to support Oblates in difficult personal circumstances. Initially the group met with experts to build up its capacity to understand professional conduct processes. Subsequently the group split in two. A formal *Professional Conduct Advisory Committee* was set up to help the province deal with accusations against its members. Secondly a *Missionary Support Group* was set up to deal more deeply with matters of personal support of Oblates as well as ways to develop programmes for the whole Province.

Provincial directories have been updated to reflect changes in the South African constitution and other legislation since 1994. They include protocols in financial, legal and professional conduct. These will protect and support Oblates and those they minister to, in accordance with the requirements of civil law. Both documents were presented to the Province at the assembly in July 2009. In our ongoing formation programme eight Oblates are currently involved in postgraduate studies and two in courses improving their capacity in ministry.

4. Working towards Financial Sustainability

In the past Natal Province was reasonably sustainable. But in 2004 we began to experience severe financial problems. There were two reasons. The financial meltdown in Zimbabwe meant all resources had to come from Natal. Secondly, the numbers in first formation has grown since 2000 particularly in Zimbabwe. We responded with a number of strategies. More professional campaigns were organised for parish collections. A website was set up for fundraising. Three young Oblates were sent for training in fundraising. Oblate communities and works were required to present budgets and provide annual financial returns encouraging sustainability. Administrative capacity was improved by appointing a fulltime Provincial Treasurer as well as a young Oblate as his part time assistant. He was also sent for training. The Provincial Office was restructured to allow a more effective administration. A number of workshops and courses have been provided to improve our ability to fund raise, do project management, and have a better understanding of financial administration.

The results have been reasonable. Local collections have improved. Three ministries have become relatively sustainable. All of our houses are also sustainable except Sabon House which has nevertheless made great strides forward. The Province is now fully compliant regarding banking legislation, labour legislation and tax legislation and is making progress with regard to property legislation and administration. Improved fundraising structures are in place. A few Oblates have developed administration skills. Fortuitously, Capital Sharing II came along and we applied for Zimbabwe. The allocation has rendered the mission more sustainable though still supported by Natal resources.

In a letter to the Provincial administration “in response to the annual report which you submitted, The Superior General in Council notes:

Natal is one of the Provinces which function harmoniously with clearly established and regularly evaluated priorities....The Province should continue to plan for and train further competent personnel for the management of temporal goods ... and local fund raising.

The changes made in medical health care support in August this year will create a new financial crisis in 2011 and beyond. It is my view that had these conditions obtained in 2010 the cost to the

Province for those expenses not covered would be of the order of at least R500000. All these expenses were incurred by Oblates over 70 years of age. If that is repeated annually and the Province has to pay this amount then the Province will immediately go back into a financial crisis in the next financial year and will have to find an additional half a million rand each year. Indeed the vast majority of our medical expenses are incurred by our older members. Generally these have served the Province and the Archdiocese well over their years of active ministry. Clearly there is a big problem here for the new administration, and we are sad to have to hand it over to them.

I do believe that the necessity for financial and administrative competence is not fully understood by many members of the province. It often remains as the business of the Provincial administration whereas it should be a concern for all of us.

In a letter to the Provincial administration "in response to the annual report which you submitted, The Superior general in Council notes:

*Among the **challenges** at the level of the African Region, we underline the financial question: many units of the Region still depend too heavily on outside resources. They should increase the means of local self-sufficiency and form personnel competent in the area of finances.*

This remains as a challenge for us.

D. Conclusion

As we come to the end of the six year mandate given to this administration I would like to thank everyone in the Province for the cooperation and commitment you have shown to me personally but also to the other members of the Provincial administration. In many ways it has been a great pleasure for me to serve you in this ministry. I have come to see the great spirit of dedication and commitment that exists in this Province. With very few exceptions Oblates here are living a fully committed Oblate life and are responding to the many challenges of missioning Jesus the way into the world today. *The Way and the World* was the theme of our first congress in 2006 and *Living a fully Committed Oblate Life* was the theme of the second one in 2008

I would like to thank my Vicar Provincial Fr Thomas ZONDI who served for 2 terms as my vicar. He is totally different to me in personality and yet holds the same values. He has been very important in dealing with some difficult situations that I felt he could handle better and in supporting me in difficult times. He is someone who I can be open with, and who has been open with me. When unity in leadership is forged by people who are so different in background, temperament and experience, the Spirit of God is at work.

I would like to thank my Councillors: Fathers MAZIBUKO, DAVID, and DLAMINI who served for two terms and Frs. ZONDI, Mike FOLEY, PHENYANE, KUNENE, MBANJWA, WELDSCHIDT and Peter FOLEY who served for one; and finally to Bishop Barry WOOD who served for 9 months before being appointed Bishop. I cannot remember anyone ever missing a meeting which I think is a great testimony to their commitment to the Province, its mission and its religious life. We went through good times and tough times but the prevailing memory that I will have is the enormous quantity of things we had to deal with: Land claims, administration of our properties; financial concerns, the crisis in Zimbabwe; Cases of sexual and financial abuse; establishing and supporting new ministries; closing down ministries elsewhere and the consequences arising and many other matters. Some items which have been on the agenda since 2005 have not yet been fully resolved mainly due to the very slow progress and lack of capacity in Government organisations. In this regard I would like to thank Fr Chris RICHMOND who participated in many council meetings when issues of civil law were at play. He was a great resource dealing with issues of law and Fr Chris LOCKYER who acted as Provincial Notary and media liaison when sensitive matters were dealt with.

In a particular way I would like to thank the two mission superiors of Zimbabwe, Fr Mike FOLEY and Fr Sipho KUNENE. Fr Mike had the vision and drive to empower the re-founding of the Zimbabwe Mission after a visitation from the General Administration some ten years ago. He was instrumental in building up the formation programme. He completed his term in 2007. Fr Sipho Kunene took over from him and has guided the mission in a very difficult time with the collapse of the country, the expulsion of the South African missionaries including himself and the expansion of the mission with the ordination of 6 Zimbabwean Oblates since 2006. He is a man who has been calm in the storms of Zimbabwe. He has good person to person skills and has helped the young Zimbabweans persevere through a difficult period when circumstances forced them to take on too much responsibility for those only recently ordained. Through his efforts the mission has grown and developed, the Oblates have matured in the responsibilities given to them and things look bright for the future of the mission as it moves towards being a delegation. Thanks also to Fr Claude LUKUBA who stepped in as Acting Mission superior during a period when Fr KUNENE was not able to obtain a renewal of his work permit.

Finally I would like to thank Fr Peter FOLEY my Provincial Treasurer who has put the financial administration on a very solid footing. He is realistic and refreshingly honest and relates well with all. His skills are recognised throughout the congregation. In a letter to the Provincial administration "in response to the annual report which you submitted" The Superior general in Council notes:

"It should be said that the Province has been well served by ...a well trained Provincial Treasurer... I trust this experience can re-enforce and consolidate a tradition on which others will build and that the Province of Natal can be a source of competent consultants to other Units of the Region and Congregation".

Above all however I give thanks to God for the many blessings he has showered on this mother province of the Oblates in Africa. We have great heroes who have worked here in the past. Bishop Allard who struggled and suffered in the beginning but who was ultimately vindicated by the choices he made which gave many fruits after his death. Blessed Joseph Gerard who was ordained here in 1854 and became a great saint through his mission at St Michaels which prepared him for the great work he would do in Lesotho to become the Apostle of the Basotho. Brother Leo Gumede, the first African Oblate, who ministered quietly and with great dignity, mainly on mission farms, including Emoyeni Zululand and Shallcross in Durban. There are many others. We are called to follow them and their example of a lifetime of dedication and service to the Lord, the Church and the people.

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate
Father Stuart C Bate OMI, Provincial

OMI NATAL Update

Newsletter of the Natal Province of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate

✉: Box 17035, Congella, 4013 South Africa

☎: 031 205 9321; Fax: 031 206 0270

E-mail scbate@omi.org

This newsletter is available at

www.omi.org.za/natal/news.htm

www.oblateafrica.org.za/Oblates_of_Mary_Immaculate/Newsletter.html

Back issues are available at

www.omi.org.za/natal/archive.htm