



SHARING THE OBLATE SPIRIT

ST EUGENE DE MAZENOD

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate Australian Province

A personal letter from the Provincial

Dear Oblate Friends,

In 1994, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate will have served the Australian Church for 100 years. The invitation to come to Australia was first issued by the Bishop of Perth. He asked the Oblates to take pastoral care of the parish of Fremantle, preach missions and retreats in the diocese and run an Industrial school for young offenders and wards of the state.

Since those humble beginnings, the face of the Province has changed dramatically, in the diversity of its works and its personnel. Originally staffed by Irish and English Oblates who left their homelands to be missionaries "Down Under", today their proud legacy is to be working with a majority of Australian Oblates, who have been joined by Italian, French, Indonesian, Chinese and Polish confreres.

From a parish and a school in Western Australia, the Oblates today work in every mainland state, with a seminary, Provincial house, 12 parishes, 3 colleges and a youth mission to the poor of the streets based in Melbourne and on the Gold Coast.

When the Australian Province founded an overseas Mission in Java in 1971, it could not have expected that history would repeat itself so soon. Yet, in May 1993, we witnessed the miracle of the establishment of the independent Oblate Province of Indonesia. The Oblates also work in New Zealand, and in 1990, took over responsibility for the China Mission based in Hong Kong.

This story of Oblate missions is an epic of faith and courage, of the Oblate priests and brothers who were the pioneers, and their co-workers, the lay people. Ultimately it has been the lay people who have made the Oblates' work possible, by their love, support and belief in our call. They too have heard the call to be Oblates and responded.

For this reason, we want this pamphlet to express our deepest appreciation to you, our Oblate friends – you who are or have been in our parishes and schools, who are our mission associates, and all those whose spiritual and material support makes our mission possible.

We cannot celebrate our Centenary without you, and we want to forge even closer bonds with you, and bring you up to date with the Province today, and its exciting future. All this we hope will make you feel very much a part of the celebration of the Oblate Centenary.

In the following pages, we want you to share something of the spirit of the Australian Province and be invited and inspired once again to work with us as co-missionaries to build the next 100 years of Oblate endeavour.

We simply cannot do it without you.

May God and His Blessed Mother watch over you.

Father John P Sherman, OMI,

Provincial.

What is an Oblate?

Oblate comes from the Latin word “Oblatus” which means an ‘offering’ or ‘a gift given’ and signifies the total gift of one’s life to God and the Church that the Oblate missionary makes when he takes his final vows.

Is it possible to define an Oblate? What did the Founder, Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, expect of him?

Above all, an Oblate is a Man of Jesus Christ. He has experienced Christ. He has heard the Master’s call to leave all and follow Him. Therefore he has left his possessions, his family, and the possibility of establishing his own family. He strives to live the life of Jesus and to share His mission.

The Oblate is also a Man of the Poor. He is well aware of the misery of the world and he is profoundly affected by it. In the cry of the poor, with their many faces, he has heard the call of Jesus. These poor include unloved adolescents, the unemployed, the sick, prisoners, migrants, everyone who suffers from injustice or who has never heard of Jesus or who has forgotten Him. He loves these poor in particular way and desires to make known to them their own greatness and dignity in Jesus Christ.

The Oblate is also a Man of the Church. For him, Jesus Christ and the Church are one. To love the Church is to love Jesus Christ and that means to be a Man of the Pope and the Bishops. The salvation of the poor, their true growth and happiness, is in the Church, the people of God. The Oblate sees this.

The Oblate is a Man of the Virgin Mary. In pledging himself to follow Christ, he has met His Mother, the Immaculate Virgin and like the apostle John, has taken her home with him. In his life, she has become a support, a discreet and constant presence. He shares his sufferings and joys as a missionary with her. He tries to make her known and loved.

The Oblate is all of that at the same time! At first glance, you might only notice, one aspect. If you look more deeply, you will quickly discover other gifts. You will see that the life of an Oblate and his mission are lived in apostolic community with others who share the same ideal.

Fr Fernand Jettè, Former Superior General.

An Oblate recounted the feedback he had received from one of his parishioners: “you Oblates have two special gifts. You are truly with your brothers, in Oblate community and you are truly with your people, close to them, sharing their lot, their pain, their hope”.

Our Founder a Man for our Times

Eugene de Mazenod was born on August 1st, 1782 at Aix-en-Provence, France, on the eve of the French Revolution. Coming from a family of wealth and nobility, you Eugene was forced to flee his native France at the tender age of 8, under the threat of execution by revolutionaries who were intent on destroying the last remnants of the aristocracy in the New Republic.

For eleven years, de Mazenod lived as a political refugee, moving throughout Italy, trying to keep up his education and planning for the day when he might return to restore the family fortunes. It was during these turbulent times that Eugene received the powerful faith influence of a family in Venice, the Zinellis, to whom he later ascribed his vocation to be a

priest. It was also a time of great temptation, where in places like Palermo, the young 20 year old got caught up in the luxury and “fast lane” lifestyle of the Nobles’ Court.

Like many young adults, de Mazenod had some profound choices put before him. When he finally decided it was safe to return to Provence, he had decided to marry back into money and revive the family fortunes. Thus, he could play out his proper role in society as a powerful aristocrat.

But God had other plans!

Eugene felt a deep sense of dissatisfaction pursuing his worldly ambition – that restlessness that has led many, before and since, to the brink of a decision. For de Mazenod, it brought him on Good Friday, 1807, to the foot of a crucifix, where he was overwhelmed by Jesus’ love and self-sacrifice. This was the moment that changed his life. The following year, he entered the seminary of St. Sulpice, in Paris, and he had a very clear ideal:

..he would be the servant and priest of the poor, to restore the Church so ravaged by the revolution...

When Eugene was ordained to the priesthood in 1811, his Bishop was faced with the dilemma of what to do with this young aristocrat, “so personal and impetuous”. He was somewhat relieved when Eugene asked to work with the poor and abandoned of the cities and outlying villages. The young Father de Mazenod also turned his efforts towards youth, founding an association of some 300 who were to share in his mission to the poor, which included an outreach to prisoners, casualties of the Napoleonic wars and a typhus plague.

The language of the Church was French. The language of the poor was a dialect known as Provençal. With a daring and courage characteristic of his whole missionary life, Fr de Mazenod preached special sermons to the poor in Provençal – for he believed passionately that the Gospel must be preached in the language of the ordinary people. Eavesdropping on one of his sermons on early Lenten morning, to a congregation of farm labourers, servants, peasants and paupers, we would have heard him say:

“You poor, what are you in the eyes of the world?.. The world looks upon you as the scum of humanity, intolerable to look at ... beyond pity or contempt.. Come then and learn what you are in the eyes of God!

All you poor of Jesus Christ, you afflicted, unfortunate, suffering, infirm, diseased, .. You are the children of God, the brother of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His Kingdom, .. You are a holy people, You are Kings, you are Priests, in a sense you are Gods, .. God alone is worthy of your Soul”.

By 1815, Eugene realised his overwhelming ambition to serve would not be accomplished, unless he drew others to his cause, to share a common life, and be united by religious vows. On January 26, 1816, Fr de Mazenod and four friends dedicated their lives to bringing the Good News to the Poor in this way. Their new group was approved by Pope Leo XII on February 17th 1826, and took the name of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Eugene de Mazenod was destined to minister to the broader Church when in 1837, he was named Bishop of Marseilles. This allowed his enormous missionary zeal to affect the whole French Church, and gave greater stability to the Order, allowing it to develop into one of the world’s truly great missionary Orders, as Mazenod had always dreamed it would.

The passage of many Bishops from the New World, through the port city of Marseilles, saw Mazenod hearing and responding to many requests for missionaries. He sent the first overseas missionaries to Canada in 1841, then England 1843, Ceylon 1847, Texas 1849 and Natal (South Africa) in 1850. The first request for a mission in Australia came from the Bishop of Perth in 1845, but the Founder was then not able to respond. That story was to wait 50 more years.

At the time of his death in 1861, the Oblate Congregation numbered 417 men. When, on Mission Sunday 1975, Pope Paul VI beatified Eugene de Mazenod, there were over 6000 Oblates, spreading the Gospel in nearly 60 countries across the globe. His sons, and the Churches they serve, continue to be the clearest sign of the continuing relevance of the Oblate Missionary call, to serve the poor and the most abandoned.

Eugene de Mazenod was a man as much for our time as for his own. His courage and daring to preach the Good News in new ways to new lands, in a new language that the poor could understand, is still the challenge for today's Oblate. The life of the Founder continues to be a beacon for his followers. His conversion from worldly ambition to solidarity with the poor, his passion for preaching the Good News to all, his love and compassion for his brothers in community – are the qualities we continue to live out in a new way. His final words to his Oblates always remind us of what being faithful to his call is going to require:

“Among yourselves, practise Charity, Charity, Charity, and abroad, Zeal for the Salvation of Souls”.

The Founder's Invitation

My Dear Friend,

Read this letter at the foot of your crucifix, and open yourself to listen only to God and to what his glory and the salvation of soul's demand of a person like yourself. Stifle the voice of selfishness, and the desire for comfort and ease.

Meditate carefully on the condition of people in our rural districts, the lack of faith among them, and the despair that is spreading day by day and causing such dreadful havoc. Consider the feeble means which have been employed until now to hold back this torrent of evil.

Ask your heart what it would have You do to remedy these disasters, and then answer my letter.

I assure you, My dear friend, that you are indispensable for the work which the Lord has inspired me to undertake.. to found a Society which will furnish our rural districts with fervent missionaries..

(Letter to Fr Tempier)

Missionaries to the World

Eugene De Mazenod was fired with enthusiasm to win back to the Church those she had lost during the persecutions of the French Revolution.

The Church in our day has been cruelly ravaged... he wrote at the beginning of the Rule he gave to his first Oblates. But his dream was for the Oblates to become a truly international missionary Order. Those early days saw enormous growth inside France – preaching missions, running seminaries and special Shrines to Mary. But it was still a French Order ministering to needs at home.

The great moment when the Oblates began their mission to the New World came in 1841, when the Bishop of Montreal pleaded with Bishop de Mazenod for men to preach the Gospel to the “Indians of the Arctic North”. While he could not spare his men, so great was the demand at home, he decided to trust the Spirit and sent six men to Montreal. Thus began a whole new chapter for the Oblates, and for Canada, where Oblates were the pioneers in opening up vast new areas of the North American Continent, and instrumental in planting the Church in totally virgin territory. Here the Oblates fulfilled their missionary destiny, to plant the faith in the hearts and souls of those who had never before heard the Good News.

The same story was repeated in Ceylon in 1847, and in Natal – South Africa in 1850. In Ceylon, the Oblates established education as a special Church response to the needs of the poor, and in South Africa, they have been always at the forefront of the fight for human rights for all the peoples of the great African Continent. In 1988, the Pope beatified the Oblate Missionary, Blessed Joseph Gerard, the Apostle of Lesotho, and prayed that his spirit continues to inspire the African Church.

During his lifetime, de Mazenod established his Oblates in England and Ireland and from his Province came the eventual foundation of the Oblates in Australia in 1894.

Whenever Oblates meet together from all the Provinces, they become aware how they are truly fulfilling their Founder’s dream to be Missionaries to the World. Oblates come from every continent, and are of all different colours and races and languages, yet all united as brothers in their following of the Oblate call.

In recent years, the Oblates have targeted the Asia-Oceania region for their missionary initiatives. Our Province plays a pivotal role in this, being so close to Asia. We have men working in Java, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Tahiti.

We can hardly be taking Jesus’ command to preach the Gospel to the Whole World if we ignore this region where two-thirds of the world live, and where most have still to hear the Good News. If the next century is to be the age for a new evangelization, then the Oblates are ready to make that a reality, and write a new chapter in their history.

de Mazenod realised that to open our hearts to the crises of the poor, we cannot discriminate. Our charity must know no limits, no boundaries. It doesn’t stop at any frontier post, it must embrace the world that cries out for a love and hope that only Christ can bring.

As we celebrate 100 years, we are joined by all our Oblate brothers, and this will be specially symbolised by the presence of our Superior General at our Centenary. The Congregation is proud of the Australian Oblates and their people who are an integral part of the International Oblate family and who are playing an important part in making this Family even more International.

The Oblates in Australia

The Oblate pioneers of our Province, having established their base in Western Australia with the parish of Fremantle and the school in Glendalough, set out preaching missions as well, to places like the Kalgoorlie gold fields and the remote aboriginal settlements of the North West. Fremantle was not just a thriving parish but a mission headquarters for the earliest

Oblate ventures. It is very appropriate that our Centenary celebrations will centre on St Patrick's, still the centre of a busy Oblate parish.

Significantly, our mission in Australia begins at the isolated western frontier, and only 32 years later do the Oblates move East, to more established territory, when they take the little seaside town of Sorrento, on Port Phillip Bay, 90kms out of Melbourne. This becomes the launching pad for a virtual explosion of missionary activity over the next 50 years.

This only became possible because the Oblate spirit, shared with the people in our parishes and through our mission preaching, inspired the sons of Australian families to become Oblates themselves. It also moved the families affiliated with the Oblates to work to generously support our growth, both spiritually and materially.

Those first Australian Oblates had to study overseas, and so it was major achievement for the Province to establish its first minor seminary at Geelong in 1950 and a major seminary in 1963 at Mary's, Mulgrave. That same story of faith and belief in the potential for a home Province inspired the Australian Oblates to establish a seminary in Java in 1982, for our Indonesian Oblates.

From the beginning, education was always part of the Australian Oblate Mission, especially with disadvantaged youth and this was the most urgent need of the Australian Church in the 1950's and 1960's. In responding to this need, the Oblates established 3 boys colleges, Iona in Brisbane and Mazenod colleges in both Perth and Melbourne.

In the 80's and 90's when so many of our youth have become estranged from their faith, there has been a critical need to train strong young Catholic lay apostles to reach out to the increasing numbers of young people who are homeless, jobless, and treated as society's discards. The Rosies Youth Mission, begun in 1975 in embryonic form, has blossomed into a full time mission in Queensland and Victoria, where the needs of abandoned youth and young adults who feel a call to serve, are met by creating a community among both, inspired by the Oblate spirit of daring.

The backbone of the Province has always been the parish base, for here the ordinary lives of our families are lived out. The Oblates have parishes in W.A., (Fremantle, Lesmurdie, Kalamunda, Carilla-Karragulle), in S.A., (Tea Tree Gully and Dernancourt), in Victoria, (Springvale North, Sorrento, Moe), in N.S.W, (Sefton and Eaglevale), in Qld, (Burpengary), and in New Zealand, (Massey). Previously, they have worked in North Melbourne and Rosebud (Vic), Kalinga and Eagle Junction (Qld), Hibiscus Coast (N.Z.) and Beaconsfield (W.A.).

The work of the Oblates in these communities is often unsung and unheralded, but it is these parishes who really contribute so much through their vocations, both lay and religious, to the wider Church.

The Oblate Rule recognises that Oblates always work very close to their people. The Australian Chapter has been a very clear sign of this. Whether in schools, parishes, special works or youth outreach, the Oblates feel a very special sense of belonging to their people and it is reciprocated.

As we celebrate our Centenary, we salute this very special relationship and pray it will continue to grow and bear fruit for the Church and the poor.

Australian Overseas Missions

Just as we saw with Bishop de Mazenod, Oblate missions that begin at home soon grow wings to spread abroad. The Australian Province in 1971 took the inspired step of beginning a mission to Indonesia – the first Australian Order of priests to do so. Working on the main island of Java, the Oblates were working with the poorest of the poor, in city parishes like Cengkareng, an outer suburb of Jakarta, or in the rural areas like Purwokerto and Cilicap. In their 21 years of work, the Oblates so identified with the people and their needs that many young people began wanting to become part of this missionary family. A seminary was begun in Jogjakarta in 1982, and today there are 9 Indonesian Oblates and many more in training.

The Indonesian Mission expanded with the addition of French and Italian Oblates, who had been driven out of Laos. Their work centres on the island of Kalimantan. The three Oblate delegations (Australian, French, Italian) joined together in May 1993 to form the Oblate Province of Indonesia.

In recent times, the Oblates have also opened up parishes in New Zealand (Massey) and taken over a parish and two schools in Hong Kong, which were originally founded by the Philippine Province and are now run by the Chinese, Australian and Polish Oblates under the Australian Province. In 1997, this British Territory goes back to Mainland China. The chance to preach the Good News to the most populated nation in the world, through the base of Hong Kong, is the dream that sustains our Oblates in this difficult Mission.

It is no accident that the Oblate missionary story, whether in the time of the Founder, or the history of the Australian Province, bears the same characteristics of humble, hectic and often heroic beginnings, an initial focus on the home scene, and then from this base, expanding to reach the needs of those who are most removed from the consolation of the faith. In every case, the Oblates and their people enter into a partnership for mission in the church, to bring Jesus to the world.

The next 100 years will undoubtedly see the same story repeated again, especially in overseas missions like Hong Kong, and the home grown missions like Rosies. It is the Oblate story of daring that we want to share and celebrate as we reach this milestone.

Oblate Rule of Life

We live in a time when all organisations have Mission Statements and policies to direct their business. The Founder knew, in 1816, that if his dream of a missionary Order was to become a reality, he must share it with others who would catch the same inspiration and who would, together with him, commit themselves to an agreed on set of goals and values. This would define their missionary purposes. In the Church, these are known as the “Religious Rule” of an Order.

Having penned his Rule, Mazenod had to get official approval from the Church. In 1826, Pope Leo X11 granted this in extraordinary circumstances. What normally could take years, took the determined Mazenod only a matter of months!

That Rule of Life is the Oblates’ Mission Statement, and has been rewritten over the years to make sure it clearly interprets Mazenod’s dream for today’s world. Below, we have included some of the Key articles that sum up what the Oblate Mission is all about.

Our Call

1. The call of Jesus Christ, heard within the Church through people's need for salvation, draws us together as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Christ thus invites us to follow Him and to share in His mission through word and work.

To Live Jesus Christ

2. We are men "set apart for the Gospel", men ready to leave everything to be disciples of Jesus. The desire to co-operate with Him draws us to know Him more deeply, to identify with Him, to let Him live in us.

In Apostolic Community

3. The community of the apostles with Jesus is the model of our life. Our Lord grouped the Twelve around Him to be His companions and to be sent out as His messengers.

Among the Most Abandoned

4. We are missionary Congregation. Our Principal service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and His Kingdom to the most abandoned. We preach the Gospel among people who have not yet received it and help them see their own values in its light. Where the Church is already established, our commitment is to those groups it touches least.

Leave Nothing Undared

5. We will "leave nothing undared" to awaken or to reawaken the faith in the people to whom we are sent, and we will help them to discover "who Christ is". Our mission puts us on constant call to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church through various forms of witness and ministry...

With Daring, Humility and Trust

6. We will always be close to the people with whom we work, taking into account their values and aspirations. To seek out new ways for the Word of God to reach their hearts often calls for daring; to present Gospel demands in all clarity should never intimidate us...

With Mary Immaculate

7. Mary Immaculate is Patroness of our Congregation. Open to the Spirit, she consecrated herself totally as lowly handmaid to the person and work of the Saviour. She received Christ in order to share him with the world whose hope He is.

Radical Discipleship

8. Our mission requires that in a radical way we follow Jesus who was chaste and poor and who redeemed mankind by His obedience. That is why, through a gift of the Father, we choose the way of the evangelical counsels.

Chastity

9. Consecrated celibacy calls us to develop the riches of the heart. It is an affirmation of life and love; it expresses our total gift of self to God and to others with all our affection, with all the life-giving powers of our being. Our celibacy allows us to be present where the most urgent needs are to be found, to give witness as a group to the Father's love for us and to our enduring love for Him.

Poverty

10. Our choice of poverty compels us to enter into a closer communion with Jesus and with the poor, to contest the excesses of power and wealth and to proclaim the coming of the new world freed from selfishness and open to sharing.

Obedience

11. By obedience, we become the servants of all. Challenging the spirit of domination, we stand as a sign of that new world wherein persons recognise their close interdependence. Religious Obedience is our way of making real the freedom of the Gospel...

Living In Faith

12. We achieve unity in our life only in and through Jesus Christ. Our ministry involves us in a variety of tasks, yet each act in life is an occasion for personal encounter with the Lord, who through us gives himself to others and through others gives himself to us..

...We seek His presence in the heart of the people and in the events of daily life as well as in the Word of God, in the sacraments and in prayer. We are pilgrims with Jesus, walking in faith, hope and love.

Sharing the Oblate Spirit

Wherever Oblates have laboured, they have shared their missionary gift with the people among whom they work. Over time, this grows into an almost tangible sense of being part of the Oblate family.

People and their families have grown up together with the Oblates who over the years have ministered to them, been there when the children were born, or taught them in school, married them, been there to counsel and console them when they are sick or troubled, and finally been there to witness their final journey back to God.

One cannot share so much without feeling a part of people's lives and cherishing the part they have in your own. Out of this closeness between Oblates and their people comes the desire of many to become Oblates themselves. That is how we have seen the Congregation grow, in our own Australian Province, and how it started originally, with the Founder drawing to his side like-minded men who caught his Missionary spirit.

We have wanted to put on record the contribution of all our Oblate co-workers and benefactors in the first 100 years of our Province. At the recent General Chapter in Rome, where all Oblate leaders from around the world meet in conference, it was exciting to hear of the Lay Oblate groups who are claiming the spirit of de Mazenod as their own, and the stories of many young men especially from our mission countries, who are joining seminaries to become Oblate priests and brothers. We see the same movement within our own Province, and invite you, our Oblate Friends to share in it more closely.

HOW?

In what follows, we are going to suggest some ways in which you can become even more closely associated with the Oblate Family and its work. The Lord urged us to constantly pray

“to the Lord of the harvest” for vocations, and we would like to explain how you can become an Oblate Priest or Brother.

Secondly, we are proud to work with young Oblate Lay Missionaries who work with the poor of our own nation, and we would like to explain their work, and invite you to share in it.

Thirdly, for many years, the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate or MAMI has been the backbone of support, both spiritually and financially, for our seminaries and our overseas missions. We would like to explain how you can join this Association.

Finally, we want you to reflect on other ways you can share the Oblate Spirit and together with us fulfil the Founder’s dream of a community of like-minded apostles, priest and lay, men and women, young and old, who would “leave nothing undared” to bring the Good News of Jesus to the poor and most abandoned.

Becoming an Oblate Priest

Maybe you or a friend or a member of your family have thought at some time about what it might be like to live and work as an Oblate Missionary. It is with that kind of thought that most of us first began on the path of our vocations. A daydream, a chance remark by somebody, a particular sermon or retreat experience, something you may have read, even this particular pamphlet, any of these can be the trigger. The Spirit moves us in strange and wonderful ways. But what do we do with this idea? Many will just let it go, or put it to one side, but the Spirit has a curious way of inserting the idea back into our lives so that we cannot ignore it. So, what do you do with it? May we make the following suggestions, as to the steps you might follow:

Step One

It is a good idea initially to meet with and talk to the local Oblate priest. If he knows you well enough, he will be able to give you some personal feedback. And even if he doesn’t, he will be able to provide you with the information and advice as to how to go about making a decision. He will be able to share with you his own journey into the Oblates.

When the Apostles first met Jesus and were curious about His mission, Jesus told them to Come and See. So too, we try to invite anybody thinking about the Oblate missionary life to come and see the seminary, which is in Melbourne, and meet with the other young men who are following this path. During the year, information week-ends are held specifically for those exploring this life choice.

If you do not know any Oblate living near you, then it is best to write to the:

Director of Vocations

PO Box 384

CAMBERWELL VIC 3124

or telephone (03) 882 1604

and he will arrange to visit you, or have an Oblate in your vicinity make an initial contact.

Step Two

If, after this first step, you feel a growing interest in and attraction to the Oblate Life, you can apply to the seminary community to begin a 12 month preparation period which is called the pre-novitiate. During this time, you will live at our seminary with the other Oblate students.

This period is a time of orientation and the chance to “try on” the Oblate life to see if it fits. It will give you the chance to meet, work and live with Oblates first hand, and also to undertake some preliminary studies. Normally, year 12 or its equivalent is required for entry into the pre-novitiate program.

Step Three

If, after this time of initiation into Oblate life, you decide with the community to become an Oblate, you begin what is called the Novitiate Year. This is the heart of the Oblate’s training, focussing on the spiritual Life, and the history and traditions and vows of the Congregation.

It is time set aside for prayer and personal growth in faith, under the guidance of the Novice Master and a Spiritual Counsellor or Director, whose role is to “walk with you” on your journey towards becoming an Oblate.

The year concludes with the novices making their first formal commitment to the Order, by taking First Vows, which is to live the Oblate vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for one year.

Step Four

Once you have made this solemn commitment to live out the vows for a year, your course is set to complete your priestly studies at Catholic Theological College and Monash University, which normally takes between 4 – 6 years, and can include studies for your Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Theology.

Every year, you are invited to renew your vows for a year, and after three years, you can apply to take Final Vows, which makes you a full member of the Congregation. As well as the studies, students (known as scholastics) are given a variety of work experiences to develop skills and prepare them for their future Mission. After Final Vows comes ordination to Diaconate and then Priesthood which completes the years of training for service as an Oblate Missionary.

Becoming an Oblate Brother

While people think of the Oblates as Priests, there is another Oblate Vocation which is equally as important, and that is the Oblate Brother. From the very beginning of the Province, working in the trade school for abandoned youth, and in the parishes, these men have epitomised the Oblate ideal of “working very closely with the people”. The first Australian Oblate, in fact, is a Brother.

Brothers have a vital missionary role to play within the Order. They live and work alongside their fellow Oblates who are priests, usually in the area where they have special talents and

training. This can include social work, catechetical, teaching, and the whole array of professions and trades that building a mission requires.

The steps you take to become an Oblate Brother are similar to that of Oblate Priests. The Oblate Brother is a full and very valued member of the Congregation and his vocation is one that we are trying to highlight in these days of new and creative ways to be an Oblate Missionary.

If you are interested in the vocation of an Oblate Brother, contact the address given on the previous page.

Becoming an Oblate Lay Missionary

In 1975, the Oblate students from the seminary began a summertime youth mission at Rosebud, which then was part of an Oblate parish, and the mecca for holidaying families from Melbourne. It centred on a coffee shop/drop-in centre beside the Church and it came to be known as Rosies.

In the summer of 1987, the concept was trialled on Queensland's Gold Coast, using coffee buses that followed the crowd of young people to their various popular night spots. Three summers of work revealed so great a need, not just of the holidaying youth but of the permanent population of young homeless of the streets, that Rosies Full Time Oblate Mission was born.

Young people, 18 – 25, volunteer for a year's mission work, and commit themselves to live in an Oblate community, and live in the spirit of the Oblate vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, so that they can bring the Gospel to the poor and abandoned of the streets. The work is very demanding, and takes the young missionaries into the courts and jails, seeking out the young people, often their own age and younger, who have been forgotten, or locked away. The Rosies community bring a Gospel inspired friendship and love to these people, to help them re-build their lives, and find again a belief in their own God-given dignity and destiny.

Young people all over Australia have taken up the Rosies challenge. There are now communities in Brisbane and Melbourne. They all share the same vision that developed in the first full time Rosies, at Advancetown, in the Gold Coast hinterland and this is where the Rosies mission is based.

If you are young and have a year in which to give something back to those young people who may not have had the same opportunities as you; if you would like to explore a missionary vocation by living in a Gospel community that tries to take the Oblate vision to the streets of our major cities, then this may be a very special opportunity for you to share the Oblate spirit. Some of these lay Oblates have gone on to overseas Oblate exchange programs, working with Oblates in Canada and Hong Kong.

If you would like more information on being an Oblate Lay Missionary working with Rosies, then write to:

Fr John Sherman OMI
PO Box 384
CAMBERWELL VIC 3124

Becoming an Oblate Associate

We can't all go off and be priests and brothers and we may not be young enough or available to become a lay missionary, but the Order has a very special Association of Oblate Supporters and Friends, who by their prayers and donations, join in all the work of the Oblates, and in a special way, support the work of the Seminary in Melbourne and our overseas missions in Indonesia and Hong Kong. Associates receive a Newsletter every quarter, with news updates on all Oblate happenings, and share in the Prayers and Masses said daily by the Oblate Communities around the Province.

The Oblate Association also has a special Memorial Register for all our relatives and friends who have died, and whom we wish to remember in all our Masses. Members of the Association can have their own loved ones placed on this register.

Many of our Associates make an annual donation to the Oblate missions, and make provision in their wills for Masses to be said for them, or for some mission work to continue through their generosity.

If you are not a member of MAMI, the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, then we invite you now to join us. It is the simplest way we can make you a real partner in our work. We would like to think that everybody who works with the Oblates, in our Parishes and Schools and Special Works, can enrol themselves in the Association and enjoy the sense of family that we want all our Oblate Friends to enjoy, especially on the occasion of our Centenary.

If you would like to become a Missionary Associate, it is very simple. Just write to the MAMI Director:

Fr Denis McCarthy, OMI
PO Box 384
CAMBERWELL VIC 3124
or telephone (03) 882 4013

In Conclusion...

We hope that this little publication has allowed us to share with you our excitement about our forthcoming Centenary and our wish to share it with you in a special way. We live in tough and challenging times, and the Church bears the same scars that mark our community at large. We could be forgiven for thinking that Eugene de Mazenod was speaking about our own times when he said:

...the people are caught up in crass ignorance of all that pertains to their salvation. The consequence of their ignorance has been a weakening of the faith and a corruption of morals with all the licence which that inevitably entails.

His answer also bears the authentic ring of perennial truth:

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

As we approach 100 years of Mission work in the Australian Province, we pay tribute to those giants of men and their people, who laid the foundations of what we have today, and

like them, we once again pledge ourselves to take up with renewed vigour and confidence, the missionary challenge left by the Founder which is beautifully captured in his native tongue as

Toujours L'Audace

- Leave Nothing Undared for the Kingdom of God –

May God bless and keep you all.

The Oblate Province of Australia

1894 -1994

REMEMBERING THE OBLATES IN YOUR WILL

Many of our Mission works have been substantially helped by bequests that have been left to us.

Should you feel in your generosity that you would like to support the Oblates in their Mission through a bequest this is the formula that should be given to your Solicitor for use:

"I give the sum of \$... to the Provincial for the time being, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Property Association, to be used for such charitable purposes as the said Provincial shall determine and I direct that the receipt of the Provincial or Treasurer for the time being of the said such Association shall be sufficient discharge to my executor".

MASSES

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate always pride themselves as being very close to their people and it is a great privilege when people ask us to pray for their intentions in Masses celebrated by Oblate priests.

If from time to time you would like us to pray with you in the Eucharist for your intentions, do not hesitate to get in touch with us at:

MAMI Director
PO Box 384
CAMBERWELL VIC 3124

Any donations that you give in association with your request for Masses are always a great help to our Oblate Mission.