Oblate
Missiologists

Harry E. Winter, O.M.I., Editor
ECCLESIA PEREGRINANS NATURA SUA MISSIONARIA EST.
(Vatican II, Decree on Missionary Activity, #2).

THE PILGRIM CHURCH IS MISSIONARY BY HER VERY NATURE.

Used both in Catechism, #’s 850 and 767, and in
Pope John Paul II Redemptoris Missio, #’s 5, 32, 49, 62.
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Introduction

by Harry Winter

(Harry Winter O.M.I. is a director of the Oblate Center for Mission Studies. He specializes in ecumenical missiology.)

“We are preachers, not writers.” This statement, developed by former Oblate superior general Fernand Jetté O.M.I. in a round table discussion, helps to explain the reason for this book. When I first began teaching Introduction to Missiology, it was evident that nothing existed in English about our Oblate missiologists. Here, under one cover, the reader will find a sampling, representative not exhaustive, of Oblates who have seriously contributed to the science of missiology.

The audience is the English-speaking Oblate seminarian (scholastic). But I hope this book will also be useful to older Oblates, and to anyone interested in the way the Holy Spirit inspires and strengthens Oblates to spread the Good News.

Two hundred copies are being printed for distribution primarily to our formators and missiologists. I welcome feedback from our readers. The intention is to then expand this book and give it to a publisher, in about three years time.

The original plan was to include at least two Oblate missiologists from each of the six Oblate geographical regions. Unfortunately, several Oblates assigned were unable, due to circumstances beyond their control, to complete their assignments. Articles from individual Oblates, or from groups, are most welcome. Perhaps this book will stimulate written projects in missiology within each region where they do not now exist.

This work is dedicated first to the “Hidden Apostles,” those many brothers and priests whose names have been forgotten here on earth, but are inscribed in heaven. (Hidden Apostles is the title of Father Pierre Duchaussois O.M.I.’s work on “Our Lay Brother Missionaries,” published in French in 1936 and in English in 1937. Fr. Duchaussois’s Mid Snow and Ice [1921] is the best introduction to the vast literature by Oblates about our work in the Arctic. See Appendix for Oblate work in the Arctic).

This effort is also dedicated to those who have become known as missiologists and need to be better known, at least in our congregation, especially Fathers Perbal, Streit, Dindinger, and Rommerskirchen. Finally, this work is dedicated to our two most prolific living writers, André Seumois and Marcello Zago.

My thanks to the Oblate community, Washington, D.C., for their encouragement and support. Father William O’Donnell O.M.I., vicar-provincial, and Mrs. Honya Weeks, secretary, who typed and retyped this manuscript as it went through various revisions, are especially thanked.

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¹Fernand Jetté O.M.I., Round-table Discussion, Meeting of Heads of Oblate Universities and Centres of Theological Studies, St. Paul’s University, Ottawa, July 22, 1997. Fr. Jetté explained this from St. Eugene de
On December 8, 1967, the Oblate chapel of Our Lady, Queen of Missions was dedicated at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C. It has been the privilege of Oblates in Washington to assist with Masses and confessions at the Shrine since its completion in 1959. It is more than symbolic that the Queen of Missions chapel was dedicated in the presence of the five U.S. provincials by a great Oblate missionary archbishop, Joseph P. Fitzgerald O.M.I. (1914-86), then archbishop of Bloemfontain, S. Africa.

Encouraged by the witness of Mary and of all our deceased Oblate brothers and priests, may Oblates become ever more effective missionaries and evangelizers.

Harry Winter O.M.I.
Oblate Center for Mission Studies
Washington, D.C. December, 1997

SEPTEMBER 1998 EDITION A Latin American Region missiologist, William Reinhard, is now included, p. 46a-c. One hundred more copies have been distributed.

MAY 2011 INTERNET EDITION; I have added updates at the end of the account of each missiologist, where necessary. The internet edition may be accessed directly: www.harrywinter.org, click on “Oblate Missiologists.” Or you may go to the USA Oblate Province website www.omiusa.org, click on “Useful Links,” and search for “Oblate Ecumenism.”

The Oblate Center for Mission Studies closed in 1999.

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Denis Hurley (1915- )
Courageous and Consistent Witness for Social Justice
by Paddy Kearney

Editor’s Note: During the annual meeting of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association, October 25-27, 1996, in Denver, Colorado, the South African missiologist Albert Nolan O.P. was one of the three featured speakers. I asked him for the best expert on Archbishop Denis Hurley, presuming he would name an Oblate. Instead he recommended without any hesitation Paddy Kearney.

Mr. Kearney quickly agreed to write the contribution on Archbishop Hurley as the persistent prophet of social justice. Mr. Kearney, a native South African, was born at Pietermaritzburg in 1942, and was a member of the Marist Brothers’ Congregation from 1960-69. He then did further studies in education at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, earning a BA and a University Education Diploma from that university, a Bachelor of Education from the U. of Witwatersrand and Masters in Education from the University of Toledo, Ohio. During 1991/92 he spent an academic year at Harvard University, studying theology and conflict resolution.

Since 1976 he has been employed by Diakonia, an organization founded by Archbishop Hurley in that year, and has served as Director for the amalgamated organization known as Diakonia Council of Churches since 1994.

My gratitude to Father Nolan for recommending Mr. Kearney, and to Mr. Kearney for contributing the following chapter.

When the Oblate General Chapter of 1986 had an audience with Pope John Paul II, he put before them the lives of two Oblates who could be regarded as examples to the whole congregation. The one he described as an example “from the past’. This was Bishop Vital Grandin, an early Oblate missionary Bishop among the Eskimos in the far north of Canada whose cause for canonization has been introduced. The other, an example “from the present’, was Archbishop Denis Hurley, whom the Pope described as “the courageous President of South Africa’s episcopal conference”.

This chapter will detail the remarkable consistency of Archbishop Hurley’s courageous concern and action for justice over more than 50 years.

We begin in 1942 with Denis Hurley as a 26 year old curate at Durban’s Emmanuel Cathedral, stressing from the pulpit this country’s vast inequalities:
On one side we have enormous wealth and financial power, fabulous fortunes and unbelievable luxury; and on the other, the depths of poverty and insecurity, hard work without adequate remuneration, impossible conditions in the home and miserable upbringing for children.¹

Father Denis Hurley had only recently returned from long years of priestly study at the Angelicum (now St. Thomas Aquinas University) and the Gregorian University in Rome, during which time he had been deeply impressed by the social teaching of the Church which set out the social, political and economic implications of the gospel for the world today. In his sermon, he went on to say that Catholics in South Africa had done little to change the situation of inequality that confronted them.

We have met together and discussed it and deplored with great eloquence and feeling, but we have done very little about it. Others have seen too, but they have been wiser than us, they have been quicker to act; and when they have acted, we have sat back to criticise. (They move) from the realm of principle to the realm of application, whereas we appear not to.²

The sermon ended with a call to professionals, students, teachers, members of the business community, every Catholic with “enthusiasm...to get things done”, to meet in committees drawn from different racial groups to understand each other better and to try to solve each other’s problems. All were invited to join forces to find solutions.

And so the dominant themes of a lifetime’s work for justice were clearly set out: eloquent and articulate description of social conditions clamouring for Christian action; enthusiastic challenge to the Church to bring the transforming power of the gospel into the social situation. This is a call that Denis Hurley has tirelessly repeated on countless occasions. Few have taken Timothy’s words more seriously: “Preach the Gospel in season and out of season: convince, entreat, rebuke with perfect patience” (2 Tim. 4:2). And the Archbishop’s example of practical involvement and identification has been there to show the way...

Two years after this landmark sermon, Father Denis Hurley was appointed the first Superior of St. Joseph’s Oblate Scholasticate, at Cleland outside Pietermaritzburg. He had been in that position for just three years when, at the end of 1946, he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Natal, the youngest bishop in the world. He went on to become the world’s youngest Archbishop at the age of 35. A year later, in 1952, he was elected the first President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference. Of this remarkably swift rise to high office, Denis Hurley says with characteristic humility “I happened to find myself in a lift that was going up!”

A massive challenge faced this young and dynamic leader. The National Party which was to govern South Africa for decades, right until 1994, had come to power in 1948, just after Denis

¹Sermon for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost, entitled “The social problem of South Africa”, Archives of the Archdiocese of Durban.

²Ibid.
Hurley had been ordained bishop. The party took office with a mandate from the exclusively White electorate to control the Black population through a programme of legislated segregation known as apartheid. The new Archbishop had to deal with the political and social problems caused by the Nationalist Party’s racial policies: as the party entrenched apartheid ever more deeply, the bishops, with Archbishop Hurley as their president, had to find how best to respond.

The Bantu Education Act, one of the cornerstones of legislated apartheid, was introduced in 1953. Government subsidies were withdrawn from church schools so that all Black schooling could be more effectively controlled by the central government. Archbishop Hurley, using the energy and enthusiasm hinted at in the 1942 sermon, quoted above, led the bishops in a national fundraising campaign to keep their schools rather than hand them over to the State.

The ‘Bishops’ Campaign’, as it was popularly known, involved about 8,000 volunteers from all over South Africa. With assistance from a Canadian fundraising expert it was a spectacular success: while the target was £400,000.00, so great was the response that £750,000.00 was raised (corresponding in purchasing power to nearly £22½ million in 1996), and thus the 600 Catholic schools for Africans were able to keep going for a number of years. Other Christian denominations feared they would compromise themselves by continuing their involvement in schools whose curriculum, they thought, would increasingly be influenced by the apartheid ideology. These denominations chose to hand over their schools to the government, as a form of protest.

In retrospect, the Bishops’ Campaign can be seen as a significant act of defiance of the Nationalist Government and its Bantu Education Act, though the motivation at the time was not political. The Catholic Church regarded the schools as its principal instrument for evangelisation. This was why it was determined to keep them, rather than out of a concern about state control of the curriculum, the issue which most troubled the Anglican church. The Bishops’ Campaign also showed Archbishop Hurley’s ability to inspire and lead the church in a direction faithful to the gospel and fundamentally at odds with the Nationalist Government’s plans. This was all the more significant given the caution and conservatism that characterised the newly-established Bishops’ Conference in its first few years.

Five years later, the church’s conflict with the government had sharpened. Draft legislation tabled in 1957 included the so-called ‘Church-Clause’ which could have been used to outlaw any form of racially mixed worship. The Archbishop said this new proposal demonstrated that apartheid was “essentially evil and anti-Christian”, and instructed his clergy to continue allowing people of different races to worship together “regardless of the consequences”. So strong was the opposition to the legislation from church leaders, clergy and laity all over South Africa, that the government had to abandon the clause - an indication of the effect of sustained opposition from the church.

1957 also saw the publication of a pastoral letter drafted by Archbishop Hurley and published by the Bishops’ Conference, in which apartheid was described as “intrinsically evil”, many years before the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared apartheid a “heresy”.

Another cornerstone of apartheid legislation was the notorious Group Areas Act, which gave the government power to impose residential segregation in urban areas. By the late 1950s hundreds of thousands of people were being uprooted in terms of this Act. Archbishop Hurley, by this time a keen member of the South African Institute of Race Relations, was much influenced by their research into the social effects of such legislation. In 1959 he issued a stirring denunciation of the
Group Areas removals from the multi-racial Durban settlement of Cato Manor to make way for White suburbs, describing these removals as “an enormous act of piracy”.³

To intimidate opponents of apartheid, the government introduced the Sabotage Bill, which allowed for 60-day detention without trial. “For God’s sake have a regard for justice”, was the Archbishop’s challenge to the authorities in a speech which drew prolonged applause from a Durban City Hall packed with protestors against the proposed legislation. This was language and action never before seen from a Catholic leader in South Africa.

The Sabotage Bill became law however and the apartheid legislative juggernaut rolled on.

Resistance was building up, particularly in the African community, against these repressive measures introduced by the White minority Nationalist Government.

Under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), opposition to carrying identity documents known as “passes” came to a climax in March 1961 when more than 60 people were gunned down at a protest meeting outside the Sharpeville police station, in what was then called the Transvaal. The “Sharpeville Massacre”, as it came to be known, was a significant turning point in the history of South Africa, leading on the one hand to a massive crackdown on opposition groups and on the other to the ANC and PAC abandoning non-violence as a strategy.

One month after the Sharpeville massacre, a ‘Natal Convention’ brought together an impressive array of personalities from the Natal province strongly opposed to apartheid and deeply concerned about the future of South Africa in the light of this new turn of events. The Archbishop, who chaired the closing session of the Convention, called for a national campaign involving Christians, Jews and others. The aim was to set before While South Africans “the exciting challenge of breaking the racial fear barrier through the inspiration of a clear grasp of their religious convictions”. The campaign was to be dramatised by large gatherings and rallies which would bring together people of various denominations and racial groups. It was also to involve a “concentrated effort over a particular period to make the best use of pulpit, religious press, religious guild and study group meetings to put the practical implications of religious principle squarely before people in relation to South Africa’s social and racial problems”.⁴

Sadly, nothing seems to have come of this suggestion, possibly because, by the Archbishop’s own admission, there had been no prior consultation about the idea; in part because there was no organization able to take up the call; perhaps too because there was at the time not much enthusiasm for ecumenical or interfaith collaboration. The Archbishop was himself, at the time, caught up with preparations for the Second Vatican Council, having been appointed to serve on its Central Preparatory Commission and therefore his attentions were directed to Rome rather than towards setting up a vehicle for Christian or interfaith collaboration in the struggle against apartheid.

³Daily News, 11.2.59.

⁴Sunday Times, 23.4.61.
Archbishop Hurley regards the Council as one of the highlights of his life. He was to play a key role in rescuing the Council's agenda from stifling control by the Curia, and made a number of significant interventions in the plenary sessions. While he was helping to shape the Council, it was also making a powerful impact on him, giving new impetus to his views on social justice. In Rome, during the historic sessions of the Council between 1962 and 1965, he was to meet many bishops who were also bravely struggling against inhuman social conditions in their home countries. From this time on he could speak and act with ever greater boldness, aware that he was part of a global church struggle for justice and had allies and friends in many countries. Moreover the official position of the church, at the highest level, was totally in line with his own teaching and action.

In an address to the South Africa Institute of Race Relations in 1964, entitled 'Apartheid: A Crisis of Christian Conscience', the Archbishop returned to his earlier idea of a national campaign to end apartheid when he called for a 'crusade of love'. Reproaching Christians for leaving the field of social reform wide open to Communists (the theme of the 1942 sermon quoted earlier), he spoke eloquently of the need for a 'crusading zeal' if Christians were to make any impact:

*Let us make no mistake about it - only crusaders succeed in the field of social reforms. It takes drive and dynamism to alter a social pattern. If Christianity wants to have any say in the alteration of South Africa's social pattern, its representatives will have to become crusaders, crusaders fully possessed of that which is characteristic of crusaders - a flame of conviction, a fire of zeal.*

The 'flame of conviction' and 'fire of zeal' characterised the Archbishop's involvement in another issue involving the forced removal of people in 1968 by South Africa's Nationalist Party Government. African people were being forcefully removed from the village of Meran to a barren area known as Limehill. The grand apartheid design was to create homelands where African people would have some political control. These homelands would also be used as a labour pool for the cities, but in the cities they would be migrant workers without any political rights at all.

The Archbishop had opposed and denounced the Limehill removal before it took place, was present on the day of the removal to show solidarity, and afterwards spent much time there listening to the problems of the resettled community and expressing the church's care and concern for them. The tough statements he directed at the cabinet minister responsible for the resettlement revealed how he had been moved by this first-hand encounter with the intense pain and suffering caused by the ideology of apartheid. "I say to Minister Botha: 'Would you ask Whites to pull down their homes and go where there were no houses, no schools and no medical facilities? Before God, how can you bear the responsibility?"*

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6 Sunday Tribune, 28.1.68.
One of the clearest proofs of the cruelty of forced removals, was the number of children who died at Limehill within a short period after their arrival in this new and barren environment. When the evidence was dismissed by the government, Archbishop Hurley went personally to count every child’s grave in Limehill and carefully noted the names and ages. He released the full list to the media, much to the embarrassment and anger of the government.

With the strong backing of the Second Vatican Council, especially its decree on the Church in the Modern World, the Archbishop, who had long been known as the moving spirit behind the South African bishops’ pastoral letters condemning apartheid, was now moving in an increasingly activist direction. He felt called to associate himself ever more closely with those suffering the effects of apartheid legislation and to identify himself with those protesting against a policy which he saw as completely at odds with Christian teaching.

In 1972 a small band of clergy hiked from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape to Cape Town, a distance of 1,057 kilometres. They were protesting against the evils of migrant labour which made it illegal for rural workers to bring their families to town with them, and which was described even by the conservative pro-Government Dutch Reformed Church as “a cancer eating away at family life”. The Archbishop joined the hikers as they approached Cape Town. He walked with them for the last few kilometres to a final demonstration where he was a key speaker calling for the abolition of the migrant labour system.

In subsequent years he has also frequently taken part in poster demonstrations, standing as a silent witness against injustice, sometimes with a group, sometimes alone. As a fellow protestor, the noted sociologist Prof. Fatima Meer, has said:

Where others looked over their shoulders and to their right and to their left, to ensure that the company they kept was right in the protests they undertook, Denis Hurley’s only concern at all times, was that the cause was right. Status never deterred him from his activism. Status was to be used in the cause of justice, no matter how insignificant by social reckoning the victim or the fellow protestor.⁷

1974 saw the first public opposition to conscription into apartheid’s defence force. At the national conference of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) a resolution was passed encouraging young white men to consider the option of conscientious objection. Outraged, the government changed the law so that they could impose severe penalties on anyone calling for, or even encouraging, conscientious objection. Despite this effort to silence all discussion of conscientious objection, Archbishop Hurley indicated his full support for the SACC’s resolution, saying it was simply a matter of conscience: in this as in all other questions, conscripts would have to be bound by their conscience.

During this time the Archbishop was keenly aware of the need for an effective ecumenical instrument to promote justice and social change in the city of Durban, the cathedral city of his Archdiocese. In 1976, after a two-year period of consultation, he founded the ecumenical agency Diakonia, to promote joint action for social justice through Durban churches. Perhaps he had learnt from the failure of earlier calls for campaigns against apartheid that little could be achieved without structures and full-time staff?

His support and enthusiasm were also helpful in the establishment in 1979 of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (Pacsa) - a similar ecumenical organisation based in Pietermaritzburg, the second largest city of Natal province, 80 kilometres inland from Durban. Both organisations, the former now amalgamated with the local council of churches to form the Diakonia Council of Churches, continue to play a significant role in the two main urban centres of the Archdiocese.

As Chairperson of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s Commission for Christian Education and Worship, the Archbishop was influential in opening Catholic schools to children of all races, after making calls for school integration from as early as the 50s. These calls had been taken up by sisters working in a number of the schools who, in 1976, simply began to admit Black students, saying they could in conscience no longer work in segregated schools. They left the bishops to work out the legal complications with a government once again both embarrassed and enraged by church defiance. Archbishop Hurley was also mainly responsible for ending the racial segregation of Catholic seminaries in South Africa. As well as calling on the government to end the racial segregation, he was determined to tackle apartheid in the church’s own institutions.

The Soweto uprising of June 16, 1976 was another major turning point in South African history. On that day large numbers of young people were shot as they marched in protest against the government’s imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Black schools. Just a few weeks later, the Archbishop was the keynote speaker at the South African Council of Churches’ National Conference. He used the opportunity to call on the churches to undertake a “great mobilisation for peace”. What he had in mind was “the total mobilisation of white opinion in the cause of peace...to prepare Whites psychologically for majority rule and for Blacks to prepare themselves both technically and psychologically for it”.8

Out of this call came the ‘Human Awareness Programme’, established in 1977. It continued for nearly 20 years to do important work in helping organisations committed to change become more effective through workshops, consultations and resources directed chiefly at organisational development. Some dimensions of what the Archbishop was calling for in relation to the White community were to become the initial focus of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) established by former opposition members of parliament, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert and Alex Boraine, with Archbishop Hurley as one of the directors.

Idasa played a significant role in helping the negotiations process to get under way in South Africa by bravely bringing together Afrikaner politicians and academics with the African National Congress leadership in exile. Such contacts with banned organisations were unheard of at the time and were in fact illegal. They built up the pressure for the unbanning of the ANC and PAC by President F W de Klerk (1990), the release of Nelson Mandela (1992), and the multi-party negotiations which paved the way for multi-party elections in 1994 and the passing of a new constitution in 1996.

But we must retrace our steps a little, to 1982, when during his second term as President of

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Archbishop Hurley visited Namibia with a delegation of South African bishops. The party met many groups in all parts of the country to discuss how they saw the situation and what their hopes were for the future. In a hard-hitting report on their visit, the bishops detailed allegations of intimidation and gross human rights violations by the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the special police unit known as Koevoet. It was the publication of these allegations in a media conference which led to Archbishop Hurley being charged and brought to court under South African law (cf. pg. 14). The bishops noted that the SADF was regarded as an army of occupation and claimed that the South West African People’s Organisation (Swapo) enjoyed massive support and would easily win any free and fair election.

One of the most successful church campaigns in which the Archbishop was involved was the 1984 joint SACBC-SACC campaign against the government’s policy of forcefully resettling people to areas designated for their particular race group. A report which contained a powerful condemnation of the policy was jointly produced by the two bodies and received wide media coverage locally and overseas. An ecumenical delegation travelled extensively in Europe to present this report to governments and to the Pope. In the face of enormous national and international pressure - to which this campaign contributed strongly - the government was ultimately compelled to abandon the policy of forced removals. The Archbishop is keenly aware that the media and other public platforms can be effective “pulpits” from which to make known the church’s viewpoint on issues of justice. A highly articulate speaker, he has often been sought out by the media for his forthright comments.

In 1983, much influenced by the impact of the Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) assemblies of Latin American Bishops, Archbishop Hurley called for a great national assembly of Christian groups working for justice in South Africa. By 1985 this idea developed into a programme known as “Christians for Justice and Peace”, aimed at building up a network of groups to prepare for a conference which in turn would give further impetus to the network.

The idea enjoyed considerable support in various parts of South Africa. Regrettably it was opposed by some who claimed it was too much of a White initiative. However, Rev. Frank Chikane, former General Secretary of the SACC, says that he regarded the “Standing for the Truth” campaign established by a convocation of church leaders in May 1988 as strongly influenced by the Archbishop’s earlier call. “Standing for the Truth” brought the churches into direct public defiance against the government, in a long overdue move beyond statements to active non-violence.

The Archbishop has readily given evidence on behalf of those on trial for their opposition to apartheid, and used these opportunities to proclaim the gospel message.

Thus in 1982 he took to the witness box to plead on behalf of conscientious objector Charles Yeats, one of the first to be jailed for refusing to do military service. Yeats had decided, on the basis of his Christian belief, that he could not serve in the army, and the Archbishop was asked by the court whether it would be correct to say that “the apartheid policy is indefensible”. The Archbishop replied, “In the light of how apartheid has worked in the last 30 thirty years, yes.”

In 1983 he appeared in the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court to make a plea in mitigation.

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of sentence for three men convicted of treason - a capital offence at that time. In trying to help the court understand why the defendants had taken to violence, he spoke of the feelings of deep resentment in the hearts of many Black people - anger at being deprived of human rights in their own country. He also stressed that the death sentence would turn the condemned into political martyrs. The court took note of the plea and the three escaped the death penalty, being given lengthy prison sentences instead.

In what has come to be known in legal texts as the “Hurley case” (1985), he successfully applied to the Natal Supreme Court for the release of a detainee - the author of this chapter - held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act - a clause which enabled the security police to detain government opponents in solitary confinement, indefinitely. This was the first such release in South African legal history - and a judgment subsequently upheld by the Appellate Division. It set a precedent for the release of other detainees held under this section.

When Phillip Wilkinson, another conscientious objector, was tried in 1987, the Archbishop said that he ‘entirely condoned’ Wilkinson’s defiance of the government’s conscription laws, as there was a clash between the government and the church on the issue.

In his statement Phillip has managed to link his attitude of acceptance of all human beings as being equal to his religious beliefs...which I find amazing in a person of his youth and also very edifying.\(^9\)

Because of his great admiration for conscientious objectors, it was appropriate that in 1988, when 24 young Durban men publicly defied the law by declaring their objection to military service, they chose Archbishop Hurley’s office as the venue for a media conference to announce their stand. The Archbishop congratulated them warmly:

I would like to express from the fullness of my heart my congratulations, my full moral support for them, and the intention to do all I can to further their cause...\(^1\)

\(^9\) SACBC Justice and Peace Commission, “Conscientious Objector Phillip Wilkinson: Further evidence from the trial”.

\(^1\) Ibid.
Workers have also enjoyed the powerful support of Archbishop Hurley. Two examples stand out: his participation in 1980 in an ecumenical delegation which sought to end the deadlock between the Frame Textile Group and 6,000 of their striking workers, and a similar plea made in 1985 on behalf of 900 workers from the Sarmcol rubber plant outside Pietermaritzburg. The Archbishop has consistently backed the latter workers since their dismissal, supporting the donation of church land to mount a farming project out of which to provide an income for the workers and their families. Following a plenary session of the SACBC in 1982, when the bishops were addressed by trade unionists and labour experts, the Archbishop indicated clearly that the church felt obliged to give vigorous support to the unions, because their cause was just: "We want to throw the moral weight of the church behind their struggle."

These and many other actions of witness and identification with the struggle against apartheid and other forms of injustice, have not been without cost. There has been much criticism, especially from those who accuse the Archbishop of being a political priest, and from conservative clergy hesitant to involve themselves or their parishioners in action for justice. Archbishop Hurley has frequently featured in right-wing propaganda leaflets. In 1984, Mr. Brian Edwards, a member of the Natal Provincial Council, described him in the Council as an “ecclesiastical Che Guevara”. Mr. Jimmy Kruger, while Minister of Justice, seriously considered banning him but was dissuaded by his cabinet colleagues. Former President P W Botha once gave the Archbishop a public dressing-down in the presence of other church leaders. In the mid-60s the Archbishop’s house was petrol-bombed, and in 1984 he was charged for remarks made at a media conference, after the SACBC delegation’s visit to Namibia, concerning allegations about atrocities carried out by the “Koevoet” police unit - though the charges were withdrawn three days before his court appearance, the first time in 30 years that an archbishop had been in the dock anywhere in the world.

The new South African government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with the gross human rights violations of the last 30 years of apartheid rule. Through the investigations of this Commission during 1996 and 1997 it has come to light that Archbishop Hurley, along with Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was among the five church leaders whom the security police regarded as the state’s most wanted political opponents. Because these two Archbishops couldn’t be arrested or banned, they recommended to the State Security Council that they should be harassed in various ways such as through smear campaigns.

The Archbishop has typically shrugged off such attacks, criticism and state harassment with a calm and philosophical air. Underlying this is a generosity of spirit towards opponents, nicely exemplified by a story he tells of a visit by security police: they came to inform him he was being charged and were treated to a discussion on the current state of South African rugby!

Sometimes he has also been criticised by progressive groups. Thus, for example, some were surprised and disappointed that he declined to be a signatory of two significant statements of liberation theology published in South Africa, the *Kairos Document* (1985) and *The Road to Damascus* (1989). The Archbishop, never one to simply follow the current fashion, did not feel he could identify himself with all aspects of these documents, particularly as he had been left with the

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12 The Star, 5.2.82.
impression that in the final rush towards publication, the penultimate text of the Kairos Document clearly promoted violence. Though the final version was altered in response to this criticism it was too late for him to add his endorsement.

More controversial was his criticism of the presence of South African Communist Party flags in the Freedom March held in Durban on 22 September 1989. The Archbishop was among a number of church leaders who led that march but strongly objected to the presence of the Communist flag, which was frequently seen immediately behind him. For Archbishop Hurley, the “red” flag represented a great deal of oppression in many countries around the world, and he did not want to be associated with it. Some local political activists found this difficult to accept and challenged the Archbishop afterwards.

Archbishop Hurley has nevertheless consistently displayed a patient attitude towards those with a different view of the South African situation. This patience is based on his awareness of how powerful social attitudes are:

...social attitudes are the steel structure of human society. They give society shape, cohesion and endurance. They are the bones and sinews of a society’s culture. They reproduce themselves in the children born into it and brought up in it, socialised and inculcated into it. They provide the community context within which people see, perceive, understand, relate and reject, work and relax, love and hate. The community instinct is probably the strongest one in human nature. People can be induced to do practically anything for their community, especially their ethnic community. An ethnic community, and particularly one with a religious dimension, is a very tough proposition indeed, as witnessed in the dominant group in Northern Ireland and Iran and, to a certain extent, the Afrikaner nation. Here you have a complex of social attitudes held together by two of mankind’s deepest and most powerful bonds. It is not easy for the individual to step out of that tangle of steel wires and look at his society through other eyes.13

It is impossible to do justice to Archbishop Hurley’s lifetime of action for justice in a brief article such as this, and in these pages reference has been made to only a few aspects and examples. Which of these many and varied contributions to the struggle for justice had made the most lasting impact?

Some would regard the cumulative impact of his many years of opposition to apartheid as of most importance. During the long and dark years of apartheid repression, there could be no doubt in the minds of South Africans that Archbishop Hurley was totally opposed to the system and determined to see it brought to an end. The famous South African author, Alan Paton, described him as a “guardian of the light” for his role of “warnings and guiding” about the evils of apartheid. Others would refer to the Pastoral Plan, developed by the bishops under his leadership and launched throughout South Africa on Pentecost Sunday 1989. It is the most comprehensive and promising of the campaigns the Archbishop has inspired and led over nearly 60 years as a priest and more than 50 years as bishop. Its full implementation would undoubtedly make a significant impact on injustice and inequality in this country.

The Pastoral Plan grew out of the Archbishop’s painful awareness that the church, for half a century or so:

“...had its declarations and denunciations, its prophets and confessors, clergy, religious and laity; imprisoned, detained and deported. But we have had little success in translating proclamations of principles and sporadic acts of Christian witness into a sustained process of evangelisation profoundly affecting the social body of the church, either in its Black or White membership. From time to time, from place to place, religious attention has been given to South Africa’s agonising problem, but never in a measure calculated to involve significant numbers of people. There has been no organised church effort only a ‘take it or leave it’ approach.”

The Pastoral Plan is intended to be such a “sustained process of evangelisation profoundly affecting the social body of the church”. With its theme ‘Community Serving Humanity’ it is intended to have what the Archbishop calls:

...four dimensions of totality. It must involve the whole message of Jesus. It must involve the whole church, laity as well as clergy and religious. It must reach out to the whole of the human family. It must be concerned with the whole of humanity: the person, the family, society, and in regard to society, with culture, politics and economics.

Central to the Pastoral Plan is the promotion of small groups which meet regularly for bible sharing, prayer, reflection and concern with local issues, thus bringing together faith and life.

The Pastoral Plan includes dimensions that the young Father Denis Hurley, curate at Emmanuel Cathedral, was calling for in his 1942 sermon quoted at the beginning of this chapter - but the Pastoral Plan is much more all-embracing. The Archbishop, 47 years later, was once again urging that every Catholic “with enthusiasm to get things done” respond to the challenges of the South African situation. His own enthusiasm was clear from a pastoral letter jointly written with Auxiliary Bishop Dominic Khumalo O.M.I. in May 1989 on the eve of the Pastoral Plan launch:

We write this letter to invite you to share the joy, hope and excitement that fill our hearts. One of us, the Archbishop, has been a priest for nearly 50 years and a bishop for 42. Caution and calm should be associated with his years and experience, but he can honestly say that he is as excited now as he was on the eve of his priestly ordination in July 1939.

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15 Ibid, p. 4.

On October 4, 1992 Archbishop Hurley, by this time the world’s longest-serving Catholic Bishop, was succeeded by Wilfrid Napier OFM as Archbishop of Durban. Since his retirement, Denis Hurley, who now has the title “Archbishop-Emeritus”, has been stationed at Emmanuel Cathedral, the first time in nearly 60 years of priesthood that he has held the office of parish priest! The energy that used to go into running the Archdiocese of Durban is now focused on running a large inner-city parish in one of the poorest areas of Durban, where many people live on pavements - displaceses of the political violence that has plagued KwaZulu-Natal for the last 15 years and refugees from rural poverty.

The Archbishop vigorously promotes the Pastoral Plan in this parish, through small Christian communities which meet regularly to discuss issues of faith and life. He is renewing the liturgy with communion under both kinds at all masses, a monthly mass in both Zulu and English to bind the parish into a close community, and the introduction of girl servers - to mention just a few examples. A “Family and Society” group has been established to focus on social issues - one of its first projects being to organise events, where, in the context of a healing liturgy, people of all race groups tell stories of trauma caused by apartheid and political violence.

In his retirement, the Archbishop spends a day a week writing his memoirs, but is much more engaged with the present and the future. As Chancellor of the University of Natal, he presides over numerous graduation ceremonies and takes a keen interest in various aspects of campus life. He heads the Archdiocesan AIDS Programme, one of the strongest church programmes on AIDS in South Africa. He continues to serve on the Justice and Peace Department of the Bishops’ Conference.

On March 19, 1997 Archbishop Hurley celebrated the golden jubilee of his episcopal ordination, a rare distinction. Speaking at a special breakfast held to mark the occasion, Professor Fatima Meer paid this tribute:

Born in South Africa, rooted in an Irish Catholic tradition, he has been a continuous presence in our midst throughout 50 years. Guiding us through all our travels, standing with us in our afflictions and pointing the way to better things to come as they have today. He has ministered to all South Africans and particularly to those who have been overlooked by society or excluded from it, those without rights and resources, invariably the victims of apartheid. We gather today to celebrate the meaning of Denis Hurley’s ministry, a meaning established and centralised in God and through God, realising a universalism, an activism that embraces all humanity and all life and removes all barriers between the temporal and spiritual, the Catholic and non-Catholic, the Christian and non-Christian. His strength is the church, and he is the strength of the church. Without his courage and his leadership...the church may have remained hostage to apartheid. The church may never have stood up against apartheid. We thank him for his courage.17

Denis Hurley’s “retirement” began as South Africa entered a time of transition from the long oppressive years of apartheid, to the miraculous birth of a new and democratic society.

He welcomed this new South Africa with joy: indeed he has described the presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela as one of the great highlights of his own life - along with the Second Vatican Council. The Archbishop-Emeritus was present as a special guest, in the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings to witness the most famous prisoner in the world taking

17 Meer, F., Ibid, p. 31, 32.
He has expressed particular enthusiasm for the new government’s “Reconstruction and Development Programme” popularly known as “the RDP”.

*It was a stoke of genius for the South African government inspired by COSATU* to follow up the liberation and the election and the installation of the president with the publication of a vision for the country, the vision of Reconstruction and Development. When I read the Policy Framework published by the ANC in 1994 my interest and enthusiasm grew with every page. I thought it a superb document with which to launch the new state coming into existence after the long dark years. *It was a vision of greatness to be achieved for the people, by the people.*

The Archbishop was struck by how much the RDP was in harmony with Catholic social teaching.

And yet there has been a sober realism in his assessment of the massive challenge still facing this country.

The RDP, though not officially abandoned by the government, has been effectively replaced by a new macro-economic policy known as GEAR - “Growth, Employment and Redistribution”. A programme much influenced by economic forces such as globalization, and international institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. “We now seem to be jumping on the same capitalist bandwagon as everyone else”, was his less than enthusiastic response.

Apartheid now conquered - a second great challenge confronts the churches - the establishment of economic justice. Surrounded as he is in this Cathedral parish by a sea of poverty, the 82 year old Archbishop is enthusiastic to face up to this challenge:

*It could so easily happen that millions of our people could find themselves excluded, through poverty, from the fruits of victory over apartheid and the establishment of democracy. To avoid this unhappy future, may God give us the guidance and grace to strive together ecumenically and beyond the ecumenical boundaries, to strive together on an interfaith basis, for the achievement of greater prosperity, greater human rights and a better human life for all those now so sadly deprived.*

**Denis Hurley - A Brief Curriculum Vitae**

9 November 1915  Born of Irish parents in Cape Town, South Africa

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18Congress of South African Trade Unions.


21Idem.

1931 Matriculated from St. Charles’ College (Marist Brothers), Pietermaritzburg
1932 Novitiate of Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Ireland
1933 Began studies in Rome

1936 Obtained Licentiate in Philosophy at the Angelicum (now St. Thomas Aquinas University), Rome
9 July 1939 Ordained priest in Rome
1940 Obtained Licentiate of Theology at the Gregorian University, Rome
1940-1943 Curate at Emmanuel Cathedral, Durban
1944-1946 Superior of St. Joseph’s Scholasticate, Cleland, Pietermaritzburg
12 December 1946 Named Vicar Apostolic of Natal with rank of Bishop
19 March 1947 Ordained Bishop, the youngest in the world at the time
11 January 1951 Appointed Archbishop, the youngest in the world at the time
1952-1961 President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference
1961 Member of the Central Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council
1962-1965 Attended Vatican Council and served as member of the Commission for Priestly Formation and Christian Education
1964 Appointed member of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy
1965-1966 President of the South African Institute of Race Relations
1965-1968 Member of the Liturgical Consilium, a Vatican body dealing with public worship
1967 Attended Synod of Bishops in Rome
1968 Convened first Synod of the Archdiocese of Durban
1969-1974 Member of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship
1970 Honorary Doctor of Laws, Notre Dame University, Indiana
1972 Civic Honours, City of Durban
1974 Attended Synod of Bishops in Rome; elected member of Consilium (organising committee)
1975 Elected chairperson of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy
1975 Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (France)
1976 Founded Diakonia, Durban ecumenical agency for social concern and action
1977 Founded the Human Awareness Programme
1977 Attended Synod of Bishops in Rome; elected member of Consilium
1978 Honorary Doctor of Literature, University of Natal
1981-1987 President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference
1982 Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Catholic University of America, Washington
9 October 1984 Charged with an offence under South African law for making “false statements” concerning atrocities by “Koevoet” a para-military police unit in Namibia
18 February 1985  Acquitted when the prosecutor announced the State would not proceed with the trial, as the case was based on “rumour and hearsay evidence”

1985  Brought Supreme Court application which made legal history when it led to first court ordered release of detainees held under Section 29 of Internal Security Act

1986  Honorary member of Black Sash, a women’s anti-apartheid organisation

1986  Honorary Doctor of Laws, De Paul University, Chicago

1986  Honorary Doctor of Sacred Theology, Santa Clara University, California

1987  Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Georgetown University, Washington

1988  Honorary Doctor of Social Sciences, University of Cape Town

1988  Honorary Doctorate, University of Leuven, Belgium

30 July 1989  Golden Jubilee of priestly ordination

23 June 1992  Resignation officially accepted on the appointment of Wilfrid Napier OFM as his successor.

1992  Appointed Administrator of the Archdiocese until the installation of Wilfrid Napier as Archbishop of Durban on 4 October 1992.

1992  Appointed Parish Priest, Emmanuel Cathedral

1992  Freedom of the City of Durban

1993  Chancellor of Natal University

1993  Honorary Doctorate, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

1996  Honorary Doctorate, St. Paul’s University, Ottawa

19 March 1997  Golden Jubilee of episcopal ordination

1997  Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (Onorificenza de Grande Ufficiale)

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*A Time for Faith*. The Presidential Address delivered at the annual Council Meeting of the South African Institute of Race Relations in the Students’ Union Hall, University of Natal, Durban, on January 18, 1965 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1965).

*Human Dignity and Race Relations.* The Presidential Address delivered at the annual Council Meeting of the South African Institute of Race Relations at Hiddingh Hall, University of Cape Town, on January 18, 1966 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1966).


“What can the Church do to Overcome Apartheid?”, *Concilium* 124/4 (1979), pp. 116-121.


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**MAY 2011 UPDATE**

Michael Rodrigo (1927-1987)
Martyr in Living the Interreligious Dialogue
by Philip Singarayar

Editor’s Note: Philip Singarayar O.M.I. (1938- ) is a Sri Lankan Tamil. He was born in Talawakelle Kandy District and received his early education in Kandy, Jaffna and Colombo. Priestly studies were at the National Seminary, Kandy. He was associate and pastor in the South Colombo Diocese Bilingual Parishes. He has served on the formation team in Kandy, Bangalore (India) and Washington, D.C., and as associate in the Bronx and Miami. He is now part of the formation team at The Oblate House of Theology, Chicago, IL. My thanks to Fr. Singarayar for this contribution, especially for insisting that Michael Rodrigo lived what he believed.

On the eve of November 10, 1987, Fr. Michael Rodrigo had come to the last part of the Eucharist when he heard a noise behind him. He turned, received the bullet of an assassin in his face, and his blood flowed into the chalice on the altar.

Michael Rodrigo was born on June 30, 1927 in Sri Lanka. His father came from a Buddhist family. He did his early studies at St. Peter’s College, Colombo. He did his priestly studies at the Gregorian University in Rome from 1948-1955 earning his first doctorate: The Enlightenment of the Buddha (1959).

His first assignment was in 1955 to the staff of the newly begun National Seminary of Sri Lanka in Kandy, under the rectorship of Fr. Fred Sackett, OMI, from Texas. He taught Liturgy and Comparative Religion. On weekends he went to the parishes and conducted seminars on Liturgy, thus living with the people and living what he taught.

From 1971-1973 he did his second doctorate in Major Religions. The title was The Moral Passover from Self to Selflessness in Christianity and the Living Faiths of Asia (Institute Catholique de Paris, 1973). From 1973-1975 he was at the Centre for Society and Religion, working with Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI.

In 1975 Bishop Leo Nanayakara of the newly formed Diocese of Badulla invited Fr. Michael Rodrigo to take charge of his new seminary. The seminarians lived with the poor people in the villages and received their formation and classes in Philosophy and Theology. Thus Fr. Rodrigo was a pioneer in challenging the traditional seminary formation. It was here that he heard the “Cry Of The Poor.” In 1980, he took up residence at his new mission in Buttala, a strong Buddhist area, where the people were poor and neglected. He formed a small group of two religious sisters and lay people and worked for the spiritual and social betterment of the poor. In 1987 he gave a talk at the University of California at Berkeley on village dialogue and life, which reflected his work in Buttala. He called it “Christianity Living for Buddhism at the Village Level.”

Near the end of his life, he received threats and began to discern the Will of God for himself. On that fateful November day, towards the end of the Eucharist, he was discerning with his little group about the continuation of his ministry. It was then that he heard the noise behind him. Thus he died a martyr, laying down his life at the altar.
Léo Deschâtelets (1899-1974),
Joseph Champagne (1905-1969) and the
Institute of Mission Studies, St. Paul University,
Ottawa, Canada (1948-)

by Harry Winter

When Ronan Hoffman OFM Conv. wrote his article “Missiology” for the 1967 edition of the New Catholic Encyclopedia, he alerted his readers: “P. Deschatelet (sic), OMI, began teaching missiology in Ottawa in 1932, and he organized the first Semaine d’études missionaries du Canada in 1934. He was succeeded by J. Champagne, OMI, who became the first director of the Institute of Missiology at the University of Ottawa in 1948.”¹

These two Oblate pioneer missiologists exercised an influence far beyond Canada. Father Deschâtelets, who served as superior general of the Oblates during the peak and decline of numbers (1947-72) was the animator of Mission. Father Champagne was the one who strengthened Deschâtelets’ vision by putting bricks and mortar around it, establishing the Institute of Mission Studies in 1948.

Léo Deschâtelets
Mission Animator

One of Léo Deschâtelets’ great gifts was his enthusiastic animation. He was the eighth and last superior general elected for life. Although ill health, particularly heart problems and deafness forced him to resign on May 5, 1972, the twenty-five years he served as superior general was the 3rd longest term of the eight. During those twenty-five years, his animation influenced first the Oblates of French Canada, then the entire congregation, and finally the whole Church through his role in various Rome-based organizations, and at the Second Vatican Council.

Léo Deschâtelets was born in Montreal, Canada, on March 8, 1899, and although he was trained by the Christian Brothers and the Sulpicians, the example of an Oblate Arctic missionary, his great uncle Zepherinus Gascon (1826-1914), influenced him to join the Oblates.²


²Irénée Tourigny O.M.I., Léo Deschâtelets Oblate of Mary Immaculate (General House, Rome, 1976), p. 18. Fr. Tourigny had access to all of Fr. Deschâtelets’ unpublished papers, and served as his secretary during much of his generalate.
Oblate historian Gaston Carrière, writing in 1969 stated "He was certainly one of the first professors of this discipline (misiology) in Canada." Hoffman noted above the importance of the first Week of Missionary Studies, organized by Fr. Deschâtelets in Ottawa in 1934; Carrière adds Deschâtelets' role in "the 1936 Quebec Week, this giving a great impulse to the study of missionary sciences in Canada." In 1937, he was named undersecretary of the Missionary Union of Clergy and spent over a year in Rome, also serving as a director in the Oblate International Scholasticate. He saw at first hand the various cultures as the seminarians from many Oblate missions lived together. He attended the 1938 General Chapter as delegate from Keewatin, Canada.

Father Deschâtelets was named superior of St. Joseph Scholasticate, Ottawa, on November 20, 1938, serving in that capacity until November 21, 1944, when he was named provincial of the Eastern Canadian Province, which was the largest Oblate jurisdiction at that time, covering French speaking eastern Canada and numbering over 800 Oblates, with another 100 in the mission of Lesotho, South Africa. His six years as superior of the scholasticate were years of joy, enthusiasm and openness for the faculty, students and himself. One tragedy did darken it, and followed Fr. Deschâtelets the rest of his life: during a summer excursion on July 7, 1942, at Perkins, Quebec, two of the newly ordained priests and four of the seminarians were drowned when a sudden storm overtook their canoe.

An Oblate of international stature, Cardinal Jean-Marie Rodigue Villeneuve O.M.I., had taken the young Deschâtelets under his wing and assigned him as professor at St. Joseph’s Scholasticate in 1926 even before he completed his studies. Yet Fr. Carrière notes that Fr. Deschâtelets’ respect for Cardinal Villeneuve did not prevent him from changing Villeneuve’s policies when Deschâtelets took over Villeneuve’s position as superior of the scholasticate (Carrière, 1969, 90; see Tourigny 1976, 23, 41).

On May 2, 1947, on the second ballot of the election, the 48 year old Canadian provincial was elected superior general. His long-term secretary, Fr. Tourigny, describes the critical stage in the Oblates’ growth. The death of the previous general, Theodore Labouré, had occurred on February 28, 1944; the vicar general, because of the war and its aftermath, had been unable to convocate a general chapter until the spring of 1947 (Tourigny, 1976, 49-51).

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The new general began to share his vision both by many writings and frequent visits to the world-wide congregation. After the isolation caused by World War II, the new general’s spirited animation helped push the congregation to its peak of 7,628 members on January 1, 1966. By the time of his resignation in 1972, it had declined to 7,010. Already, at the 1947 Chapter, “defections” were a problem (Tourigny 1976, 79). But the large exodus in the 1960’s particularly anguished the very sensitive general.

As a student at the International Scholasticate in the early 1960’s (when it occupied one wing of the general house), I remember in particular glimpsing departing Michael Wolfe O.M.I., one of the first Oblates to work in Greenland. He was hoping that the general, because of the need for Catholic clergy in Greenland, would lobby for a married priesthood there, to include Wolfe. It was a particularly tense time when we were given to understand that the general could not support such a request, and Wolfe departed from the Oblates.

Yet in his leadership, Fr. Deschâtelets had continually stressed the spirit over the law (Carrière 1969, 94). When he opposed a married missionary clergy as full Oblates, it was not due to a rigidity caused by his many years of administration. It was rather due to a sincere and prayerful belief that such experiments were neither in the mind of the Founder of the Oblates, nor, in the 1960’s, beneficial to the Mission of the Church.

A brief overview of Fr. Deschâtelets’ work in various Vatican organizations, from the Union of Superiors General to SEDOS (Servizio di Documentazione e Studi), with a short sketch of Vatican II, is given by Father Michael O’Reilly O.M.I. in the issue of Etudes Oblates devoted to Deschâtelets’ 50th Anniversary of Priesthood. The student of Deschâtelets’ impact should consult these articles.

As one of the several superiors general of religious communities named full members of the Second Vatican Council,

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4For a list of his writings, see Tourigny on his Memoirs, (p. 10, 14, passim), and one of his assistant generals, Stanislas-Albini Larochelle O.M.I., “Pere Leo Deschâtelets, O.M.I.,” Vie Oblate Life 50 (1991, August, #2) 141.


6The statistics are given each year in the publication by the general administration; for 1966, see A.R.O.M.I. June, 39 (#6), p. 73; for 1972, *Information* 64/72 (February), p. 1; for 1997 when membership had declined to 4844, *Information* 353 (February 1997) p. 1. In his report to the 1972 General Chapter (Circular #274), Fr. Deschâtelets used the figure of 7540 (1966) as the “high-tide” of the congregation: p. 384. The decline has been sharpest in North America and Europe (except for Italy and Poland); in Latin America, there are more Oblates than ever, with a growing number of scholastics.

he was probably the most widely traveled missionary at the Council. And he related to a group of Oblates that, when the Council was being prepared, religious order priests had no voice in its preparation (in contrast to diocesan priests, who were being consulted). As a member of the Union of Superiors General, Father Deschâtelets was requested to raise this issue with the appropriate cardinal. He was told by a dumbfounded cardinal: "We missed this, thank you for bringing it to our attention."  

Probably the most famous of Fr. Deschâtelets writings is the August 15, 1951, 95 page circular letter (#191) Our Vocation and Our Life of Intimate Union with Mary Immaculate. It bore the instruction that it "is to be read in each Community as soon as possible after its reception. It will also be read during each annual retreat until the meeting of the General Chapter in 1953."

The first half of this letter treats the eight crucial elements of Oblate spirituality. The third of these is "missionary," and the author treats it as a challenge, admitting the tension between a certain monastic stability, and missionary flexibility (pp. 23-25). He then returns to the theme with Pius XI's expression for the Oblates during the papal audience of the 1938 General Chapter "Specialists in difficult missions" (p. 28; see also pp. 52-53 for the "most abject and miserable").

In the second half, Fr. Deschâtelets explains "Why and how we should live our Oblate life in intimate union with Mary Immaculate" (pp. 53-92). Before he became very concrete about the methods (specific prayers to Mary, Marian shrines, etc.), he wrote these paragraphs, which could summarize the missionary concern of the entire circular letter.

Dear Fathers and Brothers, as Missionaries, we are the special apostles, the specialists of divine mercy. But, we shall never properly understand this specialization unless we keep in mind the remarkable way in which we belong to Mary Immaculate. Only thus shall we gradually develop the most characteristic trait of the Oblate, a whole-hearted and heartfelt sympathy for the souls who are most wretched of all. The purity learned and practiced in the school of Mary Immaculate will urge us to the conquest of the souls who are most neglected and contaminated by sin. The contemplation of the Immaculate one will fill our hearts with an apostolic and ceaseless desire to bring men to a true appreciation of the merciful God who wishes to receive the repentant sinner (p. 77).

Let us never forget that one of our principal obligations is to be apostles of Mary among the souls entrusted to our care; let us always remember that it is the poor who have most need of their merciful, heavenly Mother. It would be shameful if, in this matter as well as in others, we fail to follow the mind of our Founder. It was for the poor that he established the Congregation, and throughout his life his

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9 Harry E. Winter O.M.I., Personal Recollection.
preference was for the ministry among the most abandoned (p. 84).\(^{10}\)

Considering the way in which the Oblates of Fr. Deschâtelets’ time absorbed this document, the words of one of those strongly influenced by him, the former Oblate and now Executive Director of Columbia University’s Center for the Study of Human Rights, are very relevant. In an unpublished article examining the way Roman Catholics and Protestant missionaries worked among the Sotho people in Lesotho, South Africa, Dr. Paul Martin observes “Catholic proselytization focused on women.” He notes that the introduction of nuns “to educate girls and work with Sotho widows and estranged wives” resulted in some of the girls choosing to “become nuns and by 1877 there were six African sisters and eleven Europeans. The Catholics were able to offer an alternative life-style to Sotho women which the Protestants could not. They were thus able to attract Sotho women unhappy with their traditional situation.”\(^{11}\)

It is interesting to note the role Mary plays in tempering the temptation to male chauvinism inherent in religious orders of men. And perhaps it is significant that one of those who absorbed Deschâtelets’ circular during his seminary studies noticed that impact on Sotho women.

**Joseph Etienne Champagne**

**Mission Architect**

Already during his seminary days, Joseph Champagne specialized in Mission studies and dreamt of the best way to form missionaries.\(^{12}\) Ordained at Ottawa in 1932, he was sent to Rome for doctoral studies; his thesis in missiology was awarded with honors in 1938, and the principle elements were published in French in 1949: *Les Missions catholiques dans l’Ouest canadien.*\(^{13}\)

Although a chair of missiology had been established at the University of Ottawa in 1930, it was not easy to convince the administration that an institute of missiology could survive. Fr. Champagne began his formal request in 1945. He “used all the powers of persuasion at his disposal, not the least of which was that of Very Reverend Léo Deschâtelets, elected general in 1947,” (Gauthier 1969, 56). Note that both had been in Rome in 1937; both were at St. Joseph Scholasticate from 1938-44.

Fr. Gauthier in his analysis of Fr. Champagne’s statutes for the Institute, observes how they anticipated Vatican II’s

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By 1954, Chinese and Vietnamese students had joined the American and European students in Ottawa (Gauthier, 1969, 58). Fr. Champagne had begun by influencing Oblate students at St. Joseph’s Scholasticate; now he was animating missionaries from many congregations around the world.

It was evident to the Oblate that any missionary needs to be aware of anthropology and sociology. This concern took concrete form on December 8, 1952 when he convoked a meeting which let to the establishment of the Centre de Recherches d’Anthropologie Amerindienne. Its subsequent development is described by Jean Trudeau O.M.I., who succeeded Fr. Champagne as director of both the Institute of Mission Studies and Canadian Center for Anthropological Research.

When Fr. Champagne died on March 19, 1969, on the feast of his patron, St. Joseph, also the patron saint of the universal Church, several of the remembrances paid attention to his suffering. It seems that he did not enjoy strong physical health; the way he offered those sufferings struck many. And the friction which he occasionally encountered between some missionaries and some missiologists added to that suffering.

### Institute of Mission Studies, (1948- )

During the meeting of the Heads of the Seven Oblate Universities and Theological Centers, July 21-25, 1997, at St. Paul’s University, an important luncheon occurred. Arranged by Fr. William Morell O.M.I., president of Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas, the luncheon meeting took place on Wednesday, July 23 and included Fathers Dale Schlitt O.M.I., Rector of St. Paul’s University; Eugene Lapointe O.M.I., Director of the Institute of Mission Studies; Richard Coté O.M.I., professor at the Institute; and myself, representing the Oblate Center for Mission Studies, Washington, D.C. The purpose of the meeting, as explained by Fr. Morell, was to promote coordination between the three Oblate institutions in Ottawa, San Antonio, and Washington, as regards missiology.

Oblate School of Theology plans to develop a Doctorate of Ministry with a concentration in Mission Studies, as a pastoral degree. We discussed how the proposed Ph.D. in Mission Studies by St. Paul’s would be an academic degree, and

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the only Catholic degree of this kind in North America. Plans were also made for expanding Mission, (the journal of the Institute) especially in Spanish. 18

The Institute of Mission Studies has always been considered the jewel of the Oblate Congregation’s missiology efforts. Those who earned their Master’s of Arts in Mission Studies earned a valued degree. And the Institute has always been ready to help other Oblate and even non-Oblate institutions develop missiology programs.

When the Oblates in Washington, D.C., began to specialize in the ecumenical dimension of missiology, the then director of the Institute sent the first thesis from Ottawa in this area as a gift to Oblate College, Washington, D.C. 19 As its Mission Statement affirms below, fruitful contacts “with other Missionary Centres” have always been a goal.

The Institute of Mission Studies sees its task in the light of the missio Dei, the ongoing movement of the Father’s sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and therefore of God’s history and dealings with a world of many cultures.

Founded in 1948 by Joseph E. Champagne, O.M.I., the Institute, under the aegis of Saint Paul University, seeks to promote Mission and Evangelization as constitutive dimensions of the Church, and attempts to draw out and foster the full implications of this vision.

Aware that it is the mission of Christ that creates the Church, and ever conscious of the imperative to reach out to those who have not heard the Gospel or who have not really been evangelized, the Institute of Mission Studies has a dual focus around which it structures its activities and resources: the transcultural dimension and the intracultural dimension, that is the missio ad extra and the missio ad intra.

Within this dynamic perspective, the Institute offers degree programs, courses, seminars, and ongoing training to anyone (laity and clergy alike) who wishes to meet or deepen the challenge of their missionary vocation. It seeks to make its resources especially available to the local Churches - at home or abroad - that wish to enhance their Mission efforts and programs.

The Institute commits itself to ongoing research in the field of mission studies, seeking to draw upon the best available resources and establishing fruitful contacts with other Missionary Centres and International


Institutions.

Since the nature and scope of its Mission objective are so closely tied into the human, social and cultural patterns of peoples, the Institute embraces a decidedly interdisciplinary approach. It also seeks to promote genuine dialogue with other world, traditional, and folk religions, not only with a view to understanding them better but also for the purpose of mutual growth and enrichment.

The Institute attends its every endeavour with a spirit that seeks to foster hospitality, open discussion, teamwork, and the personal witness to one’s faith. 20

Programs and activities include a one year certificate in Mission Studies, and a two year Masters of Arts Degree in Missiology. Intensive study sessions of one or two weeks, consisting of 20-40 hours of courses followed by a workshop, are also offered. The fact that these activities are presented in both French and English has been the hallmark of the Institute, enabling a unique cross-cultural transfer to take place.

The journal Kerygma which Fr. Champagne established in 1967 (renamed Mission in 1994) has also established its reputation as both scholarly and pastoral, both in French and English. Volume fifteen reminded its readers of the initial goal to become a communication medium among missionaries on the one hand, and “between the missionaries and the Institute of Missiology on the other.” 21 Mission of course has specialized in the anthropology and missiology of the Native American peoples, both Indian (Dene) and Eskimo (Inuit). A valuable bibliography was furnished in the 1987 issue: “Twenty Years of Reflection on the Church and Canada’s Native Peoples: Index” (21:245-51).

However, European developments were also included. One of the valued non-Oblate collaborators, Armand Garon, W.F., had his doctorate Hendrik Kraemer and the Mission to Islam, featured in the 1979 volume. 22 And developments in the U.S.A., such as the effort of the Paulists to establish a national program for “drop-out Catholic,” were examined by Claude


21Jean-Guy Goulet O.M.I., “A Missionary Periodical,” Kerygma 15 (1981, #36) 109. Named Kerygma by Fr. Champagne, and evaluated very “triumphantly” in his “Examen de conscience,” Kerygma 1 (1967, #4) 3-5, it was renamed, with explanation by its then editor, Martin Roberge O.M.I., in the first issue of 1994, pp. 7-8. Kerygma began with an emphasis on the proclamation of the joyful news of salvation, “living the spirit of optimism of Vatican II.” Mission plans to continue this element, while adding more on “development and liberation, religious freedom...and inculturation.”


Of course, much time has been spent in adapting the Institute to modern developments in missiology. Initially, there was a long effort to examine its relation to Ottawa University itself (Gauthier 1969, 57); the most recent revision in the M.A. program was done in 1994 and “reflects the most contemporary research in mission” (Calendar, 1996-98, MIS 7).

Finally, one should not forget the evaluation service for missionaries, which gives both prospective missionaries and experienced missionaries an opportunity to “personally discover his/her strengths and limitations, with the help of a committee of experts that evaluates the pros and cons of his/her missionary plans.”

The missionary thrust of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate began in Marseilles, France, with many decisions made by the Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, and his companions. With other Europeans such as Fathers Perbal, Streit, Dindinger, Rommerskirchen, Seumois, Zago, etc., the Oblates’ contribution to the science of missiology took root and flourished.

Fathers Champagne and Deschâtelets represent the crossing of this European contribution to French Canada. In areas as widely diverse as the Arctic and Lesotho, the missionary thrust and the missiological contribution from Europe were now receiving an introduction to the New World. The Institute of Mission Studies at Ottawa, with its sturdy emphasis on both languages, French and English, makes an important and significant contribution to the broadening of missiology. And aided by many collaborators in French Canada, Champagne and Deschâtelets strengthened Roman Catholic missiology world-wide.

Marcello Zago (1932- )


Assisi and Interreligious Dialogue

by Harry Winter

As eleventh superior general of our congregation (1986-), Marcello Zago has influenced the Oblates of Mary, and the entire Church, in many ways. But the way which will leave the deepest mark was his role in the Assisi event of October 27, 1986, and his subsequent leadership in promoting interreligious dialogue between Christianity and other religions.

Born on August 9, 1932, at Villorba, diocese of Treviso in northern Italy, Father Zago completed two years of theology at the Treviso Major Seminary, and entered the Italian Oblate novitiate of Ripalimosani in 1955. On May 22, 1959, he received his obedience for Laos; was ordained subdeacon, July 12; deacon, August 9; priest, September 13. He pronounced his perpetual vows on September 29 and left for language studies in Southeast Asia. In 1961, he served as Superior-delegate for the Oblates in their pastoral year, in Sriracha, Thailand.

After working as both a missionary and formator in Laos, Father Zago returned to Rome in 1966. While a staff member of the International Scholasticate, he obtained a Doctorate in Missiology at the Gregorian University. He expanded his thesis on Buddhist funeral rites and the university published it in French as #6 in its missionary documentation series: *Rites et cérémonies en milieu bouddhiste lao* (1972, 408 pages). Gaston Carrière O.M.I. reviewed it and observed “This working instrument, which is completed by an excellent analytical index, is indispensable for a better understanding of Buddhism” (*Etudes Oblates* 32 [1973] 220).


Father Zago was giving a course at St. Paul University’s Institute of Mission Studies in Ottawa, Canada, when the General Chapter of 1974 elected him Assistant General, a post he occupied until 1980. From 1981-83, he was a full-time Professor of Missiology in Roman universities, and was serving as superior of the Italian Province’s scholasticate at Vermicino when the Holy See, in 1983, named him Secretary of the Vatican Secretariate for Inter-Religious Dialogue.

Since 1973 he has been a Consultor to the Secretariate for Non-Christians (now the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue); the Holy See appointed him in 1984 as Consultor to the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Bishop Jean-Pierre Urkia of Savannakhet, Laos, and the Federation of Asian Bishops chose him to be their peritus at the synod on Evangelization (1974). He was a member, elected by the Union of Superiors General, of three synods: The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and World of Today—Twenty Years after Vatican II (1987), The Formation of Priests (1990), and Consecrated Life and its Mission in the World (1994). Pope John Paul II appointed him Special Secretary of that synod. During the same year, he was a member, appointed by the pope, of the Synod for Africa. While in Rome, he was Vice-President of the Union of Superiors General’s Commission on Mission (1976-80), and since 1980, Consultor and member of the Organizing Committee of the same Commission. Since 1987 he has been a member of the Council for the Union of Superiors General, and especially involved together with two other Superiors General in two Congresses on Religious Life: in 1993 for Superiors General and in 1997 for Young Religious. He has served as a member of the Vatican’s Congregation for Consecrated Life (1989-94) and of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1995-). (These organizations each have four Superiors General as members;
the other members are Cardinals or Bishops).¹

In his first letter to the Oblates, Father Zago subtly apologized for devoting so much of his time between his election as general on September 13, 1986 and December, to the Assisi event.

You will have noticed that an Oblate presented to the Pope the 37 non-Christian delegations that had come from all over the world; that the same Oblate led the ten groups of different world religions to the prayer podium. That Oblate was your superior General. Right from its very outset he had been involved in the organization of this historical event that has been described as the greatest significant step to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.²

Father Zago poignantly described the Assisi event first in the February, 1987 OMI DOCUMENTATION and then reprinted in the Ottawa Institute of Mission Studies Kerygma (now Mission). This article should be required reading for every Oblate, not just those in first formation. Speaking prophetically, he concluded his article: “Of interreligious dialogue, the event of Assisi is a symbol, a peak, and a reference point that is rich in meaning.”³

The new general traveled world-wide as part of his leadership role. His writings now begin to reflect that world-wide familiarity with missionary situations.

On December 7, 1990, Pope John Paul II published his landmark encyclical on the Missions Redemptoris Missio, or as it is known in English On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate. Father Zago has never denied his very crucial role in gathering, writing, and editing this document. Thus Father Zago’s “Commentary on Redemptoris Missio” becomes an important statement for anyone studying our general’s impact on missiology.⁴ Very early in his studies, Father Zago noted the similarities between ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Thus when John Paul published the first ever encyclical on ecumenism, Ut Unum Sint (English title That All May Be One), on May 25, 1995, our general began a thorough

¹I am indebted to the editor of OMI Information, Sept. 1986 (236/86) for the above information: pp. 1-2; Ned Carolan O.M.I. helped me update it.


study of interreligious dialogue, mission, and ecumenism, which was published in December, 1995. Any Oblate who wishes to explore the relationship between ecumenism, missiology and interreligious dialogue should begin with this article.

During Father Zago’s administration, Blessed Joseph Gerard was beatified in Lesotho (Sept. 15, 1988) and Saint Eugene De Mazenod canonized in Rome (Dec. 3, 1995). Making the missionary charism of these two evangelizers available to the entire Church was of course the work of many people, but it fell to the “always smiling” missiologist to be in the right place at the right time. Especially notable was the gathering of Oblate bishops Dec. 2-5, 1995 (during the canonization) to discuss the relationship of their missionary Oblate life to the episcopal ministry.

The role of the laity in mission is one of the newly emerging themes in missiology. Under Father Zago’s administration, the first ever International Seminar for Lay Associates took place at our General House in Rome from September 25-28, 1995, followed by the International Congress of Oblate Lay Associates, Aix-en-Provence, May 18-20, 1996. Significantly, the first article of Father Zago’s to be indexed in the Bibliographia Missionaria was on a remarkable American layman, Dr. Tom Dooley.

From 1967 to 1997, Marcello Zago has consistently opened up new vistas for Oblates, especially in the spirituality of Oblate missionaries, in the dialogue first with Buddhists and then with all religions, and now in the revitalization of missiology, particularly as it affects ecumenism and the theology of the laity. In 1989, he received a doctorate honoris causa from the University of Ottawa, for studies on Buddhism and Interreligious Dialogue.

Writings: we are listing only those in English. Father Zago’s many French and Italian writings (and some in Spanish, German and Polish) may be found catalogued in Bibliographia Missionaria, beginning in 1967 (vol. XXXI).

“Missionary Pastoral Practice in a Laotian Buddhist Milieu,” Teaching All Nations 9 (Manila,


6 When he was a seminarian in 1957, his superior described him as “always smiling”: OMI Information, Sept. 1986 (236/86), p. 2.


“Proclamation of the Kerygma to the Buddhists,” Worldmission 28 (N.Y., 1977) 197-207.


“Dialogue Situation in Theravada Buddhist Countries of South-East Asia,” ibid, 270-76.


Importance and Role of the Laity in the Missionary Activity... #2 Collection Laity and Evangelization, Pontifical Missionary Union, Rome, 1986, pp. 11-12; 13-55.


“Sharing the Same Charism: Values in the DeMazenod Charism Which Can Also Nourish a Lay Spirituality,” *Vie Oblate Life* 51 (Ottawa, 1992) 31-47.


In the Footsteps of St. Eugene (Oblate General House, Rome, 1997).

May 2011 Update

On March 28, 1998, Pope John Paul II appointed Fr. Zago Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and titular bishop (archbishop) of Rusellae. He died less than three years later, on March 1, 2001, of an acute form of leukemia at age 68.

His last visit to the USA was to the Mission Congress in Chicago, IL, Sept. 28-Oct1, 2000, where in "his gentle, soft-spoken manner, Archbishop Zago challenged the Church in the United Sates to make a more visible 'missionary impact' around the world" (Rosanne Rustemeyer, SSND, Mission Update, Spring 2001, p. 2).

As Pope Benedict XVI prepares for the 25th anniversary of the original Assisi event (Oct. 27, 2011), we can anticipate more interest in the statement of Pope John Paul II "there is no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue" On the Permanent Validity . . ., #55). Archbishop Zago certainly had a great deal to do with that formula.

For a complete list of all his writings, see Marek Rostkowski OMI, "Il Patrimonio Teologico e Missiologico Di Mons. Marcello Zago, o.m.i.," Vie Oblate Life 59 (Dec. 2000, #3): 395-429.