

A JUBILEE ISSUE

COMMEMORATING THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE PRESENCE and MISSION OF THE OBLATES
IN SRI LANKA



© Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI (Editor)
Rajabima Oblate Centre,
Jayanthi Mawatha, Anuradhapura,
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2022 April

A Jubilee Issue

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Editor: Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI
Rajabima Oblate Centre, Anuradhapura,
2022 April



**Bishop Eugene de Mazenod,
Founder of the Oblate Congregation**

THE PAPAL APPROVAL OF THE OBLATE CONGREGATION

Founding of the Society of Provence was announced by Fr. Eugene de Mazenod on October 1806. It was formed on January 25, 1816 and Frs. Eugene, Tempier and probably Icard began living together as a community in the abandoned Carmelite Convent at Aix, France. Pope Leo XII approved this community with its Constitutions and Rules on February 17, 1826. It is worth noting the full title the Pope gave this community in the papal approbation: *“We hereby, with ready and willing mind, establish (the Congregation) and wish it to be known by the name of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, conceived without sin.”*

On February 18, 1826, Fr. Eugene de Mazenod wrote to the Oblates: *“Heart and soul we should cling to our Rules and practice with exactitude everything they prescribe....They are no longer mere regulations, nor simply pious directives; they are Rules which the Church, after very careful examination, has approved... They have become the property of the Church, for she has adopted them... We are few in number... but we have our place in the Church as definitely as the most famous Institutes and the most saintly Societies... Recognise your dignity and be very careful never to dishonor your mother...She will bring forth many children, provided that we are faithful and do not by our treachery bring upon her a shameful sterility. In the name of God, let us be saints.*

Jubilee Prayer



Loving and compassionate Father,

On the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the missionary life and presence of the Oblates in Sri Lanka, we are gathered as a compassionate and prophetic community in the holy ground from where our beloved Oblate pioneers launched their intrepid missionary endeavours. .

We are gathered here today in order to praise, thank and glorify you through the Holy Spirit of your Son, our Saviour, for having accompanied us, your loving Oblates.

On this memorable occasion, we are much conscious of the special divine energy and motivation with which you, loving Lord, had empowered St. Eugene de Mazenod to respond to the urgent call to serve the poor and to mould a new generation of Christians.

Merciful Father, we recall with much love and affection the innumerable blessings you have poured on us, Oblates, to lead lives worthy of the sacred vocation to which you have called us and initiate with Mazenodian creativity and commitment.

Loving God, we are confident that you will guide us through the Spirit of Jesus, your Beloved Son, to proclaim the Good News of Salvation in new ways in the emerging new situations of the poor in Sri Lanka and in other countries.

Oh Mary Immaculate, our tender loving Mother, continue to keep us under your loving and protecting mantle so that we, the Oblates, may continue to remain responding faithfully to the vocation to which we are called. Amen.

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate

**THE INAUGURATION OF 175th YEAR
OF THE PRESENCE AND MISSION
OF THE OBLATES IN SRI LANKA WAS
CELEBRATED AT COLUMBUTURAI, JAFFNA,
ON FEBRUARY 14, 2022.**



**Bishops and Oblate Provincials at the Jubilee celebrations
in Jaffna on February 14, 2022.**

(from left) Fr. Roshan Silva OMI (Colombo), Bishop Noel Emmanuel (Trincomalee), Bishop Justin Gnanapragasam (Jaffna), Bishop Fidelis Emmanuel Fernando (Mannar), Bishop Joseph Ponniah (Batticaloa) and Fr.B. Eugene OMI (Jaffna).

**THE MISSIONARY COMMITMENT
OF THE OBLATES IN SRI LANKA
DURING THE PAST 175 YEARS (1847 -2022)**

- Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI

On the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the active missionary presence of the Oblates in Sri Lanka, it is good to remember and celebrate with joy the contribution the Oblates (both foreign and local) have made (a) to keep alive the faith of the Catholics, (b) to the education of children belonging also to the other Religions and (c) to the genuine felt needs of the poor, the orphans, the elders and the delinquents.

The Catholics in Sri Lanka, during their persecution under the Dutch, lived for 30 years without the presence of Catholic priests, until the arrival of Fr. Joseph Vaz in 1687 from India.

Although after the arrival of the British in Sri Lanka in 1802, the Catholics gained Religious Freedom on May 27, 1806, the Catholics could not readily expect many Catholic priests from India or from Europe.

According to Fr. Martin Quere OMI, our historian, an invitation to send missionaries to Sri Lanka had come to Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, the Oblate Founder, through a French missionary, Fr. Andre Reinhaud, who had been working in Sri Lanka since 1844. He had been a member of the Oblate mission-preaching team in Corsica and had left the Oblate Congregation in 1842. He had made known to Bishop de Mazenod the great need Sri Lanka had of apostolic workers. The General Council of the Oblate

Congregation had studied the case in 1846. Due to lack of personnel an immediate positive response could not be given.¹

Dearth of missionaries compelled **Fr. Orazio Bettacchini** who had come to Sri Lanka and had become Pro-Vicar and Coadjutor of the Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, to go to Europe in 1845 in search of missionaries for the North of Sri Lanka that was entrusted to him.

Arrival of the Oblates

Having failed to obtain help from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome, Bishop Orazio Bettacchini went to France. During his trip in France, he met Bishop Berteaud of Tulle who had told him to approach Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, the Founder of a new Congregation of priests, in Marseille, France, and who has a heart as St. Paul's and tell him that it is a matter of saving the poor souls. When he hears that word, 'poor', he will be unable to resist it. The meeting took place on 25 -26 July 1847.

Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, although he had only a few Oblates at that time, readily responded to the urgent missionary request of Bishop Bettacchini and sent four Oblates – Frs Joseph Ciamin, Lewis Keating, Bro. Gaspard de Steffanis – led by **Fr. Stephen Semeria OMI**. They arrived in Sri Lanka on November 28, 1847 and began their missionary labours in 1848

¹ Fr. Martin Quere OMI, A history of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Sri Lanka (1847-1947), Vol 1,p 11-12)

beginning in the North of Sri Lanka. Fr. Semeria was consecrated bishop of the Vicariate of Jaffna in 1857.



Bishop Étienne Semeria (AD)

In accepting the new mission in Sri Lanka, the Oblate Founder wrote to Fr. Vincens, the Novice Master, *“I have accepted this new mission, one of the most beautiful on earth, and I predict that one day this large island will be given over to our Congregation and that our Congregation will make the whole island holy”*

Significant Services of the Oblates

Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, the Oblate Founder, used to remind Fr. Stephen Semeria that the Oblates were sent to Sri Lanka to evangelise the non-Christians. Again and again, he repeated that their task was not merely to take care of a group of Christians. He wrote: *“I want new Christians, formed in another mould.”*

Though the Oblate Founder wanted the conversion of the people to the Church to be the primary aim of the Oblates, the existing pastoral situation forced the pioneer Oblates under the leadership of their Religious leaders to have as their main concern the neglected groups of Christians. They were compelled to concentrate primarily on the renewal of the Christian life in the Vicariate of Jaffna. Ignorance was the major cause of superficiality among the Christians. Hence the Oblate missionaries had to visit regularly the ten to twenty mission stations. Since there was hardly any Catholic education, they had

to organize catechetical instructions for children and adults. A great part of the year was spent in travelling. Once a year, they had to visit the mission stations for the patronal feasts of the respective mission stations. They would arrive a few days before the feast, hear the confessions, explain the catechism and bring about reconciliation in cases of disputes and disunity.

They trekked for souls in bullock carts and bicycles



The Oblate Missionaries, like good humble shepherdic leaders imitating Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Jn 11:52), trekked fearlessly in bullock carts and by bicycles through the forests and jungles, full of elephants, bears and snakes, in search of the Catholics, and established Centres of worship and of instructions.

In the coastal parishes, besides providing the sacraments, the Oblates tried to improve the living conditions of the fisherfolk. In the hinterlands, the Oblates established parishes and spent their lives selflessly caring for the poor and the neglected. The European Oblates learnt the national languages (Sinhala and Tamil) in order to serve the people.

The pastoral needs of the people made the Oblate missionaries not to live under one roof but to spread over the vast territory and

to be bound together by their Oblate charism. They were physically distant from each other. They lacked the modern means of travel. Postal services were poor. However they did meet together at the annual retreat.

Formation of catechists

As an apostolic group, the Oblates had to take some initiatives within the given context at that time. They had to teach the fundamentals of the Christian faith and the importance of the Sacraments. In order to achieve these objectives, there was need to form catechists.

Mission - preaching

The Oblates realized also the importance of “preaching missions”. When Fr. Stephen Semeria OMI succeeded Bishop Orazio Bettachchini, he began to organize parish - missions. **The first parish mission was preached by Frs Constant Chounavel and Christopher Bonjean at Kayts from September 19th to October 29th, 1857.** Though there were only a few Oblate missionaries and demanded many sacrifices from them, necessity forced the Oblate leaders to take this initiative.

The Oblates have continued to concentrate on “**Parish-Mission-preaching**” and “**Novena preaching**” by setting up two Houses for Oblate Preachers (Nazareth, Wennappuwa and Amaithy Aham, Vavuniya) and have become noted preachers.

Shrines

It was Oblate Bishop Christopher Bonjean, who inaugurated the July 02 annual festival at **Madhu** in 1870, which grew in popularity over the years and became the one festival in Sri Lanka which brought the biggest number of Catholic worshippers to one spot from all parts of the island.

When the war was declared in 1939, the shrine at **Tewatte**, Ragama, gained prominence due to a Vow made by the then **Archbishop of Colombo, Jean Marie Masson OMI**, to Our Lady on 26.5.1940 that if Sri Lanka was spared the horrors of War, he would build a Votive Shrine in her honour under the title of Our Lady of Lanka.

The fulfilling of the above-mentioned vow and the building of the votive Shrine (later declared a Minor Basilica by the Pope) was carried out by his successor, **Archbishop Thomas Cooray OMI (later a Cardinal)**.

St. Jude's Shrine at Indigolla built and became a place of pilgrimage due to the foresight of **Fr. Philip Dissanayake OMI**.

Formation of a native clergy

Bishop Christopher Bonjean OMI, who succeeded Bishop S.Semeria in 1869, became the founder of the first Seminary in Sri Lanka when he took the initiative to establish **St. Martin's Seminary** in Jaffna.



St. Martin's Seminary, Jaffna

Fr. Joh Pahamuny OMI, a convert and a brother of Ven. Sri Saranankara Sumangala of Malwatte Chapter in Kandy, became one of the first seminarians of St. Martin's Seminary.

When Christopher Bonjean became the Metropolitan Archbishop of Colombo in 1883, he began **St. Bernard's Seminary** in Colombo, which in the course of the next three-quarters of a century, until the amalgamation with the present National Major Seminary, Kandy, in 1955, produced a large number of presbyters (diocesan and Oblates).

The Oblates were able to form presbyters for the dioceses and facilitate the establishment of the dioceses. A few Oblates became bishops of the dioceses in Sri Lanka. Bishop Edmund Peiris (Chilaw), Archbishop Thomas Cooray (Colombo), Emilianus Pillai (Jaffna), Bishop Edmund Fernando (Badulla) and Bishop Norbert Andradi (Anuradhapura). **Archbishop Thomas Cooray OMI became the first Sri Lankan Cardinal.**



Cardinal Thomas Cooray OMI

Promoters of Catholic education

Bishop Christopher Bonjean OMI fought for Catholic education in Sri Lanka and in 1865 he proposed a system of State Assisted Schools to be administered by each religious denomination (Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim). So the Government in 1869 decided that any religious denomination could open school for its children which would be given a grant by the Government. **Bishop Bonjean became the Father of Denominational School Ststem in Ceylon.** He transformed the Catholic School Society of Jaffna initiated by Vicar Apostolic Orazio Bettachchini into **St. Patrick's College**, Jaffna, and paved the way for the establishment of **St. Joseph's College** in Colombo.

According to Fr. W.L.A. Don Peter, (former Rector of St. Joseph's College) Oblate Archbishop Christopher Bonjean's contribution he made in the course of time to Sri Lanka, in both Jaffna and Colombo, especially in the field of education, is enormous. He stands out as the greatest Churchman in the history of the Church in the British period.

Colleges and Schools built and directed by the Oblates

In the Jaffna diocese: St. Patrick's College (Jaffna), St. Henry's College (Illavalai), and St. Anthony's College, (Kayts).

In the Archdiocese of Colombo: St. Joseph's College, St. Peter's College, Aquinas College of Higher Education, De Mazenod College (Kandana), St. John's College (Dematagoda) Don Boosco College (Hanwella).

In the Trincomalee diocese: St. Joseph's College, Trincomalee.

In Anuradhapura diocese: St. Joseph's College, Anuradhapura.
Every parish in the dioceses has a school.

The above-mentioned colleges were given to the respective dioceses very generously by the Oblates.

On January 03, 2019 Oblates began a new College (Mazenod College) at Anuradhapura.

Education of girls

For the education of the girls, at the invitation of the Oblates, the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux came to Sri Lanka in 1861.

Media

From the very outset, the Oblates established a weekly publication in both English and the local languages- *the Catholic Messenger*, *Gnanartha Pradeepaya* (in Colombo), *Catholic Guardian and Pathukawalan* (in Jaffna) and also *the Sacred Heart Messenger*.

For nursing the Sick and the Elders

In 1886, Bishop Bonjean brought the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) for nursing at the General Hospital, Colombo, in response to an appeal by Dr. Kynsey, Head of the medical department. In 1888, he got the Little Sisters of the Poor to open a Home for elders at Maradana.

Properties, such as the one where the Archbishop's House, Aquinas College, St. Aloysius Seminary and the Catholic Press, are situated, were bought by Bishop Christopher Bonjean OMI

with money brought from France. St. Francis Xavier's Major Seminary at Columbuturai, Jaffna, is built in a property bought by the Oblates. These properties were given to the respective dioceses very generously.

Innovators

For example, **Fr. Swaminathapillai Gnanapragasar**, popularly known as Swami Gnanapragasar, born of devout Hindu parents at Manipay, became an innovative evangelizer, a linguist, a writer and a famous historian. **Fr. Peter Pillai** became the Apostle of Social Justice Movement in Sri Lanka, ably assisted by **Fr. Tissa Balasuriya** who took the initiative also to introduce the teachings of the 2nd Vatican Council to the Lay Faithful, the Religious and the clergy and worked for social justice through the Centre for Society and Religion (CSR). **Fr. Andrew Peter Fernando** helped to translate the Holy Bible into Sinhala language (Catholic Edition). **Bishop Edmund Peries** was a noted historian, writer and a preacher. **Fr. Marcelline Jayakody** promoted mass media and music (cultural and liturgical). .

The coastal population in the Northern and in the Western Provinces of Sri Lanka engaged in fishing was cared very much by the Oblate Fathers. Special mention must be made of **Fathers Victor Deslandes, Emile Viard, H. Moreau, J.B. Antoninus and F.J. Stanislaus** who had been involved in the development of the fisher-families in Jaffna. **Victor Deslandes** was a member of the Government Fisheries Commission of Sri Lanka.

Fr. M. Anthony Fernando OMI, who laboured very much for the resident and migrant fishermen and their families of

Negombo, submitted on November 20, 1980, a Memorandum signed by him, to Bishop Frank Marcus Fernando, the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, requesting the Bishops to set up a Mandatory Lay Apostolic Organisation since the fisher-families were facing many problems.



Fr. J. B. Antoninus, who was much involved in raising the quality of life of the fisher-families in the dioceses of Jaffna and



Chilaw was a member of the Fisheries Advisory Board. At the invitation of Bishop Leo Nanayakkara OSB, he went to the diocese of Kandy and set up a Centre, SETIK, and worked also for the upliftment of the tea estate workers.

Fr. Jayantha Pinnawela OMI, a competent lecturer and a lover of the oppressed, heard the cries of the farmers and their families. He reached out to many Buddhist farmers. He died serving the poor farmers.



Charismatic and prophetic **Fr. Michael Rodrigo OMI**, with two doctorates in Philosophy (Rome) and Theology (Paris), pitched his tent among the peasants of Buttala in July 1980 to uplift them.



Fr. Michael Rodrigo OMI

He was brutally killed on November 10, 1987 while celebrating the Eucharist in his tent in the evening.

Fr. Lucien Schmitt helped to establish the Social and Economic Development Centre (SEDEC) for the development of the poor. Since he had good contacts with the funding Agencies in Europe, he was able to obtain financial assistance for many projects and programmes, thereby helped the struggling families.

Frs. Henk Schram was engaged in the apostolate of the Christian Workers' Movement (CWM) and **Fr. Stanislaus Fernando** was involved in the apostolate of the young Christian students (YCS) and workers (YCW). Both of them concentrated very much on the training of leaders with Christian values.

Fr. Felix Mevel introduced the "*Lakrivi*" (Children's Movement) in Sri Lanka.

The Irish Oblate, **Fr. Charles Lytton**, Principal of St. Patrick's College advocated and sponsored the construction of the railway line to Jaffna.

Care of the sick, the prisoners and orphans

Many Oblates have been chaplains to the sick and the infirm in the hospitals in Colombo. **Fr. Claude Lawrence** had been a chaplain to the prisoners and to the sick in the Hospitals in Colombo for more than 45 years, using an old push-bicycle for his apostolate. **Fr. Adrien Duffo who cared for the prisoners, converted Sardiell of Utumankanda** in 1864.

Spiritual Guides

The Oblates have also animated spiritually **the mandated Associations of the Layfaithful**, such as the Legion of Mary,

Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP), the Sacred Heart Confraternity and empowered Layfaithful through YCS, YCW and CWM.

Shrines at Madhu, Tewatte and at Indigolla, a Reformatory (Susithodaya) and an Orphanage at Maggona, a Retreat House at Tewatte, a Catechetical Centre at Tammita, Negombo, and a Holiday House (Underbank) at Nuwara Eliya are also due to the initiative of the Oblates.

Many convent- schools and welfare centres run by the Religious Congregations began in Sri Lanka at the invitation of the Oblates.

Foreign Missions

Fr. M. Anthony Fernando, the first Sri Lankan Oblate who became the Provincial Superior (1962-1969) in Sri Lanka, opened missions outside Sri Lanka. In 1968, he sent **Fr. Emmanuel Mariampillai** and **Fr. Philips Stanislaus** as border-crossing missionaries



Fr.E. Mariampillai OMI Fr. P.Stanislaus OMI

to Kanchipuram, South India.

Besides sending Sri Lankan Oblates to Rome for theological and social studies, Fr Anthony began sending the Sri Lankan Oblates for pastoral studies to Philippines and India.

Fr. Lucien Schmitt, who succeeded Fr. Anthony as Provincial Superior, started the Nilaveli mission in Trincomalee in 1970 and sent Sri Lankan Oblates to Pakistan in 1971, and to Bangladesh in 1973. He **Fr. Louis Ponniah**, who became the Major Superior, General Delegation of Jaffna in 1985 and Oblate Provincial in 1988, opened a mission in Norway and sent Fr. N. Arulnesan to United Arab Emirates. Fr. W. Steckling OMI (now a Bishop in Paraguay, former Superior General and his council officially transferred the General Delegation of Japan-Korea to the Oblate Province of Colombo, headed by **Fr. Clement Waidyasekara**, on April 10, 2010. Many Sri Lanka Oblates are now ministering in many countries among the poor and the abandoned.

An Assessment

According to **Fr. W.L.A. Don Peter** (former Rector of St. Joseph's College, Colombo and of Aquinas College of Higher Studies, Colombo, historian and educationist), Bishop de Mazenod's initial concern for his Oblates and their work had been a factor contributing to the progress of the Oblate activities in Sri Lanka. The Oblates were leading missionaries and pastors in the island and the chief architects of the Lankan Church in the British period. The Founder of the Oblates, St. Eugene de

Mazenod, not only willingly sent members of his Order for work in Sri Lanka but continued to give them guidance. During the 14 years from the first arrival of Oblates in Sri Lanka in 1847 up to his death in 1861 he sent 51 letters to Sri Lanka most of them to Father (later Bishop) Stephen Semeria. (cf. *Catholic Church in Sri Lanka - A History in outline- The British Period*).

Partnership needed today

Today the Oblates in Sri Lanka are in a new historic situation, facing many new realities in a very fast changing country. Holy Spirit of God is One who will help to build a spirit of partnership among the Consecrated Religious, the ordained presbyters and the Layfaithful in order to bring abundance of life, which Jesus has promised for all human beings (Jn 10:10; 2: 1-10; 21: 1-14).

“They must strive to be saints. They must walk courageously along the same paths trodden by so many before them: apostolic labourers for the Gospel who, while carrying out the same ministry to which they themselves now feel called, handed on such splendid examples of virtue.”

- St. Eugene de Mazenod



Jubilee Homily

GOSPEL REFLECTION (Eph.1:3-6,11-12; Lk.1:46-55)

at the Eucharistic Celebration on Feb. 14th, 2022

at De Mazenod Chapel, Columbuturai, Jaffna,

by Gerard de Rosairo, OMI

Dear Rev. Bishops, fellow Religious, Lay Associates and Brother Oblates! We are gathered together to thank and praise God for God's actions for our people in and through our pioneering Oblates. It is only right that we thank God for them in the words of Mother Mary.

Mother Mary magnified the Lord, proclaiming God's actions in her own life and rejoicing in God as Saviour. She began with God's actions in her own life for choosing her to be the Mother of Messiah. Today we thank God who began His saving actions through the humble pioneering Oblates of Mary Immaculate, sent here by Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, the Founder himself, a man with a heart larger than the world.

These humble servants came here with willing hearts, pitched their camp among our people imitating Jesus (Jn.1:14), worked in virgin soil, crossing boundaries. In their multi-faceted ministries they reached out to the poorest, the socially and economically less privileged, focusing on formation of the local churches and giving priority to formal education. Their initiative in education later had a bearing on education in vernacular and formation of schools of other religions. Let us remember Bishop Bonjean in this venture. They were conscious also of national safety and security. Let us recall Archbishop Jean Marie Masson who vowed to build a basilica for our Mother Mary.

Mother Mary, being blessed to be the Mother of the Saviour, having listened to Simeon's prophecy in the Temple about her Son, was to bear the grief of Him being rejected, shamed and crucified outside the camp (Heb. 13: 13). It was scarcely for her an unmixed blessings, yet she kept everything in her heart and thanked God.

This experience of our Missionary Mother was an inspiration to our missionaries when they faced setbacks, ungratefulness, moments of being expelled, etc. Nevertheless they kept their missionary spirit aflame. I believe the whole Church being missionary in character, has kept alive such missionary character by the Religious in the life of the Church. Let us thank God with Mother Mary.

Mother Mary perceived furthermore God's action in her life which was consistent with the saving action in her history. God whom she praised was a God who saved an "embodied people",

not some isolated souls, a God who acted in a concrete historical situation, a God who filled the needy with good things, lifted up the lowly granting them dignity and honour, a seat at the table, a voice in the conversation, showed strength by disrupting the world's power structures.

Clearly such saving actions of God, proclaimed by Mother Mary are Good News to the poor, bringing hope to the lowly ones. The Church, the community of the faithful, is called to announce this Good news to the poor. It is for this purpose the Church exists. The Church should do the proclamation in communion, making participation of all possible, recognizing the pluriformity of Charisms in the Community of the Faithful. We need to consider our fellowship in ministering the Good News to different sections of peoples in a liberating way in word and action as Jesus did.

If communion in being and ministering fails or lacks, then it will hinder the effective and witnessing ministry. It will be counter witnessing. It is through effective ministry of the Good News, the saving actions of God that we can lead the flock to God's realm. That is the goal of our ministry of the Good News.

Good News is the new wine which needs new wine skins! We need to push the boat further and cast the nets in deep water!

The universal communion is operative in the heart of people and among people who are aware of God's presence among them. For us who believe in the Holy Trinity, it should be more evident. We should therefore act promptly in communion. It is being in communion that we will be free of self-absorption. We need to

realize our own need for conversion. Being open to the universal communion of the Blessed Trinity, we need to be transformed.

As St. Paul states, “God has already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make His Family... Let us Praise God for this glorious grace and work in communion and solidarity....” (Eph. 1:4-5).

God bless you.

“Mary Immaculate is patroness of our Congregation.....We shall always look on her as our mother. In the joys and sorrows of our missionary life, we feel close to her who is the Mother of Mercy. Wherever our ministry takes us, we will strive to instill genuine devotion to the Immaculate Virgin who prefigures God’s final victory over all evil” (OMI C 10)

MESSAGE OF OUR SUPERIOR GENERAL



Dear Very Reverend Father Provincial, Eugene Benedict OMI,
Provincial of Jaffna Province,

Dear Very Reverend Father Provincial, Roshan Silva OMI, Provincial
of Colombo Province,

Very dear Reverend Fathers and Brothers, Missionary Oblates of Mary
Immaculate,

Very dear faithful devoted lay men and women associated to us through
friendship, support and in living the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod,
and Very dear and dedicated Oblate Youth,

May God's gracious blessings be upon all of you as you celebrate this
175th jubilee of Oblate life and mission in Sri Lanka!

Our beloved Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, wrote in 1847: "What
a field of labour is opening up before us... in the most beautiful country
of the world... How would it be possible to resist so many pressing
motives and not respond with gratitude to cooperate powerfully in such
a great good work? I have therefore accepted this new mission, one of
the most beautiful in the world. I foresee that one day this great island

will become an endowment which our Congregation will sanctify entirely."

St. Eugene's missionary initiative to accept this field of labour has proved very true! We see Oblate life and mission flourishing "in the most beautiful country of the world." On your invitation for the 175th Jubilee Year, you have a theme inspired in the words of Pope Francis to the members of the 36th General Chapter in 2016: "... [M]ay the Lord allow you to write new pages that are as evangelically fruitful as those of your brothers who, over the past 200 years, have borne witness sometimes, even with blood, to that great love for Christ and for the Church." You have expressed the desire that you want to write new pages of evangelization with the creativity and commitment of St. Eugene. In light of the theme that you have chosen for this year, I pray the Lord to bless you with a three-fold grace.

The grace of conversion: In order to write new pages of the Gospel that will be fruitful, we stand in need of conversion: a change of heart and a transformation of our way of thinking, so that we have new behavior. For St. Eugene, this is nothing less than the call to become saints, a lifelong commitment to conversion. Your jubilee is a kairos event of God's grace. It is an opportunity given by God to shake you up, to wake you up and to summon you to a deeper commitment as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Take up the Constitutions and Rules and confront your Oblate lives with the common commitment we have all made. Examine your faithfulness to the four evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty, obedience and perseverance. Meditate and share with one another about your commitment to the life of prayer, both personally and as communities. Finally, review your life, your generosity, your active engagement in living apostolic community.

Saint Eugene made an inner connection between holiness and mission. Without the grace of conversion that leads to holiness, our mission becomes weak, without passion, and focused on ourselves.

The grace of Mazenodian creativity: I ask the Lord to bless you with the grace expressed on your jubilee logo: Mazenodian creativity. I would also add the word, audacity: leave nothing undared to extend the Reign of Christ! The Oblate charism and the repeated call of Pope Francis is to discern the most urgent needs of the Church and the poor and to respond to them. For an apostolic body such as ours, we need to have clear priorities and a focus as we respond to the needs of the poor. We can be overwhelmed with so many calls, so we must be aware and humbly admit that we cannot do everything. Let us discern, choose and do some ministries very well. Common discernment of priorities is needed and then, forming communities of Oblates to minister together in response to the needs.

May the Lord bless you with the grace of Mazenodian creativity and commitment in the face of the urgent needs of the Church and of the poor.

The grace to be the most united family on earth: Finally, I ask our heavenly Father to help you become that to which St. Eugene called us: the most united family on earth. The theme for the 37th General Chapter captures this: "Pilgrims of Hope in Communion." Our unity as an Oblate Family is of course connected to our commitment to apostolic community and to our growth in becoming saints. Whether at the level of the local Oblate apostolic community; the Oblate district community; each Province; both Provinces, Colombo and Jaffna; and at the level of the entire Congregation: we are called to live in communion, both in spiritual ways and in concrete expressions of forgiveness, reconciliation, friendship, solidarity, dialogue and trust-building.

Many Oblates in Sri Lanka are involved in ministering to the people in centers for conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation, centers of support for victims, those traumatized, etc. Many of you are also involved in inter-religious dialogue in many ways. We must also consider reconciliation among Oblates, frequent, regular ongoing inter-

provincial dialogue, the healing of memories and trust building among the members of the Oblate Congregation. As we minister to others, are we ministering to ourselves? Are we witnesses of communion, healing, fraternal love, forgiveness?

It is wonderful that this jubilee has been promoted by both Provinces. I pray for the grace that this will be a true "revolution of tenderness", a commitment to communion among Oblates that will be intentionally promoted by both Provinces. In this way, St. Eugene's desire that we would be the most united family on earth can take place in the most beautiful country on earth.

We accompany you in prayer during this year. May God's kairos pour forth many blessings upon you and the people whom you serve. May Mary Immaculate, our Mother of Mercy and Patroness intercede for you to do God's will as she told the servants in Cana: "Do whatever He tells you."

Happy jubilee!

Your brother Oblate in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I.

Most Rev. Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I.
Superior General
February 08, 2022



THE OBLATES WHO HAD DIE

MESSAGE OF FR. B. EUGENE OMI, Provincial Superior, Oblate Province of Jaffna



Dear Fathers, Brothers and friends,

It gives me immense pleasure to say a few words on this occasion of the 175th year of jubilee of the arrival, life and presence of the Oblates in our country.

The Oblate Charism:

The tree, it is said, lives by its roots. Pope Paul VI using for the first time the term “charism of the founders” pointed the need of returning to it as the first requirement for the renewal of religious life.

Historical Events:

For us history is not a mere timeline of events of the past that explains away how we arrived at where we are today. But it is a continuing and ongoing salvation history. It is an account of what

God has done for his people. The same could be said of the history of our life in Sri Lanka as we celebrate this jubilee. We cannot but be filled with apostolic favor when we recall each time how our predecessors were eager to leave everything that were dear to them and set out on a journey to bring the Gospel to an unknown land far away.

Religious life:

Religious life is a permanent commitment to live in love. A religious commits to Love within structure of vows and community. The religious vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of Her mission. Our belongingness is further extended by the fact that our vocation calls us to be deeply united with the world and its history. These fundamental principles make us realize that we are not alone; instead we form part of a network of Congregations that share a common task.

Life as a religious becomes sterile if we consecrated to God refuse to tune our ears to the truth that appears emerges from the society and act accordingly. In this a religious should transcend conventional way of living. Radicalism of a religious is to go beyond comfort zones, longing for satisfaction and an eagerness to be successful. Instead, radicalism embraces the risk to love, the pain to grow and the passion to transcend. The religious is called to be a realist and to be attentive to the signs of the times, convinced that the Lord manifests his will also through the demands of time and place. Timely response to these needs requires a well-balanced creativity.

Phrases such as attentive to the signs of the times, the demands of the time and place and to keep abreast with the new trends, which we often encounter in our official documents, confirm our need to recognize and respond to change with a spirit of initiative and flexibility.

Holy Father Pope Francis:

The Holy Father Pope Francis in his address to the participants of the 36th General Chapter on the 7th of October 2016 fondly reminded us that we are a missionary religious family and noted that the Church, along with the entire world, is experiencing an age of great transformation, in the most diverse of fields. It needs men who carry in their hearts the same love for Jesus Christ that lived in the heart of the young Eugene de Mazenod. He also invited the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to work for a Church that is for everyone, a Church that is ready to welcome and to accompany.

In the same message, the pope indicates that the Church needs of us, of our missionary courage, our availability to bring to everyone the Good News that frees and consoles. He insists that we experience the joy of the Gospel first, then shine forth on our face, making us joyful witnesses and he wishes us that charity be among us be our first rule of life, the premise of every apostolic action; and May zeal for the salvation of souls be a natural consequence of this fraternal charity.

We are Proud

As we celebrate this wondrous occasion, with grateful hearts,

we thank our heavenly Father for his mercy, fidelity and love. May the Lord allow us to write new pages that are as evangelically fruitful as those of our brothers, who over the past 175 years have borne witness to that great love of Christ and His Church. We look to the future with unwavering hope and an unshaking trust and faith in the Lord.

We, the Oblates in Sri Lanka, raise our minds and hearts to God in thanksgiving for letting us to be part of this illustrious history of the Church in Sri Lanka. Let us be encouraged and continue with courage and passion to be faithful to the unique missionary calling the Lord has entrusted to us. For this, we look to the past with gratitude, live out the present with passion and ready to embrace the future with hope. We are Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

May this name be for us a constant commitment to the mission.

Stay blessed always.

Fr. B. Eugene, OMI
Provincial Superior,
Oblate Province of Jaffna.

14. 02.2022

**MESSAGE OF FR. ROSHAN SILVA OMI,
Provincial Superior, Oblate Province of Colombo**



Dear Bishops, dear Fathers, dear Sisters and dear friends,

Today we are gathered here for inaugural celebration of the Jubilee year, the 175th Anniversary of the Oblate presence in Sri Lanka. This is an event which is very much significant and thus it has to be celebrated. I take this opportunity to salute all the Oblates who have worked hard in our soil to make our Oblate what they are today. Their commitment, dedication, loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity, duty consciousness, sense of obedience had been beyond explanation and we owe so much to our pioneers. Our Founder sent Missionaries to Sri Lanka out of sheer zeal for the evangelization of the country since there was a dearth of missionaries. Our Founder referred to Ceylon as the most beautiful island in the world and the most promising mission which divine providence had opened for the Oblates. Thus, the Oblates have been working with both urban and rural communities, especially with the poorest of the poor, the marginalized and the abandoned in the society. Wherever the poor are, one would find the Oblates.

The Oblates today can be proud since in so many places they are found in the margins of society. Our charism makes us to evangelize the poor and to be evangelized by the poor. During the past 175 years, the Oblates had ventured into challenging ministries such as non-formal education, inter-religious dialogue, ministry for social justice and integrity of creation, ministry for ethnic peace, helping the people affected by the war etc. Pope Pius XI declared Oblates as "specialists in the most difficult missions of the Church". The success of Oblate activities is in many ways due to the fact that the Oblates work close to the people. They are ready to take risks and are able to rough out and go through difficulties. The Oblate Provinces of Jaffna and Colombo have not limited their services to Sri Lanka only. We have begun to send missionaries abroad as pioneers to establish new missions in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Korea, Japan, Norway, France, Denmark, Cuba, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Italy etc. There were many outstanding Oblates who have left their indelible mark in the lives of the people through their competence and their creativity, especially in their missionary ventures, in the fields of education and development. Now it is our turn my dear brother Oblates and the formees, the future of the Oblate Provinces.

1. It is true that we glory in the past and take pride in the Oblate giants of the past. Now it is our task to continue to work together, to have a clear Oblate identity.
2. We need not any more become hired servants of some bishops, who would hire and fire us when they decide. We are happy that we are able to work together as Sri Lankan Oblates, though we have two Oblate Provinces.
3. We need to continue to read the times and raise our heads and see where we are needed. The local Ordinaries, the bishops, may not need us now to manage the parishes.

They have their diocesan priests. But we as Oblates need to continue to reflect as to where we are needed, the places where the diocesan clergy may not like to go and get involved in certain apostolates. Let us raise our heads and see. Fr. R. Rolheiser OMI says: "**A missionary is one who goes where he or she is needed but not wanted, and who leaves when he or she is wanted but not needed.**" I like to conclude my speech with the words of theologian Edward Schillebeeckx who said: "**What you dream alone remains a dream, but what you dream together can become a reality.**" Let us make it also our own.

The Oblate charism is predicated on the conviction that compassion must be collective in order to be effective. Hence, as Sri Lankan Oblates - of the two Oblate Provinces of Colombo and Jaffna- are preparing to celebrate our presence in Sri Lanka, let us decide to dream together, to walk together, to talk together and to work together. As missionaries, our sole objective is to discover together new pathways for the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of today. Thank you. May God bless you all.

Fr. Roshan Silva OMI
Provincial Superior,
Oblate Province of Colombo
14.02.202

**THE OBLATES WHO HAD DIED IN SRI LANKA
SINCE THE 150th ANNIVERSARY
(1847 -1997/1998) OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE OBLATES
IN SRI LANKA**

(**THE TRIBUTE** by Fr. Philips Jesuthasan OMI contains information regarding the 470 Oblates who had passed away between 1847 – 1997/1998).

During the past 25 years (14.1.1999 - 17.1. 2022), 93 Oblates, who had served our people in Sri Lanka, had gone to rest in peace with God, our Maternal Father. Please find below each Oblate's name with the date, the month and the year of his death.

1. Fr. Louis Joseph OMI (14.1.1999)
2. Br. Don Marcelline Kuruwita OMI (15.6.1999)
3. Fr. Emmanuel Wijeratnam OMI (5.7.1999)
4. Fr. Luigi Gonzaga Hettiarachchi OMI (11.11.1999)
5. Br. Neville Fernando OMI (25.1.2000)
6. Bp. Henry Goonewardena OMI (17.4.2000)
7. Fr. Michael Saverimuttu OMI (29.5.2000)
8. Fr. Emile Perera OMI (26.7.2000)
9. Fr. Raphael Aloysius OMI (19.9.2000)
10. Fr. Jayantha Pinnawela OMI (31.10.2000)
11. Fr. Gaston Alwinus OMI (5.9.2001)
12. Fr. Alfred Rayappu OMI (16.1.2002)
13. Fr. John Francis OMI (29.1.2002)\
14. Fr. Adrian Joseph OMI (17.2.2002)
15. Fr. Sarath Silva OMI (14.3. 2002)
16. Fr. Eugene Rinchon (22.10.2002)
17. Fr. Mervyn Lowe OMI (12.4.2003)
18. Fr. Eugene Lepeltier (9.12.2003)

19. Fr. Jean Louis Miqueu OMI (20.1.2004)
20. Fr. Gallo Balma Augustino OMI (15.2.2004)
21. Fr. Albert Pleiber OMI (22.3.2004)
22. Fr. Anthony Dharmaratne OMI (19.5.2004)
23. Bp. Edmund Fernando OMI (16.7. 2004)
24. Fr. Michael Croos OMI (1.9.2004)
25. Fr. Michaelsamy Arochiasamy (23.10.2004)
26. Fr. Shirely Ferdinando OMI (1.4.2005)
27. Fr. Fredrick Sackett OMI (27.6.2005)
28. Fr. Arulnesan Nicholapillai OMI (3,2.2006)
29. Br. Maurice Gaveau OMI (03.03.2006)
30. Fr. Joseph Pulle OMI (10.4.2006)
31. Fr. Joseph Perera OMI (27.6.2006)
32. Fr. Stanislaus Fernandopulle OMI (6.1.2007)
33. Fr. Henry Farinelle OM I (12.1.2007)
34. Fr. Mark Berard OMI (18.4.2007)
35. Fr. Clinton Anandappa OMI (18.5. 2007)
36. Fr. Lucien Schmitt OMI (10.7.2007)
37. Fr. Hilarian Dissanayake OMI (29.3.2008)
38. Fr. Jean Habestroh OMI (15.07.2008)
39. Fr. Yves Caroff OMI (12.8.2008)
40. Fr. Gilbert Perera OMI (26.9.2008)
41. Fr. Peter Stanislaus Fernando OMI (30.1.2009)
42. Fr. Mariampillai Emmanuel OMI (27.02.2009)
43. Br. Don Remigius OMI (09.04.2009)
44. Fr. Marcus Anandanpulle OMI (07.08.2009)
45. Fr. Philippiah Jesunesan OMI (13.08.2009)
46. Fr. Oswald Amirthampillai OMI (28.8.2009)
47. Fr. Mariampillai Pavilupillai OMI (08.09.2009)
48. Fr. Patrick Gnanapragasm OMI (21.12.2009)
49. Fr. Dalston Forbes OMI (21.1.2010)
50. Br. Paul Fernando OMI (21.5.2010)

51. Fr. Reginald de Silva OMI (12.7.2010)
52. Fr. Mervyn Shelton Perera OMI (22.1. 2011)
53. Fr. Robert Luckhart OMI (4.2.2011)
54. Fr. Bastampillai Singarayer Mariathanasan (11.3.2011)
55. Fr. Anthony Francis Kulas OMI (22.9.2011)
56. Fr. Anselm Silva OMI (18.11.2011)
57. Fr. Marcus Rupesinghe OMI (18.11.2011)
58. Fr. Leander Fernando OMI (7.5.2012)
59. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI (17.1.2013)
60. Fr. Boniface Bastians OMI (10.5.2013)
61. Fr. Jan Heemrood OMI (31.5.2013)
62. Fr. Bernard Quintus OMI (9.10.2013)
63. Fr. Santhiapillai Joseph Francis OMI (13.1.2014)
64. Fr. Joseph Navaratnam OMI (19.1.2014)
65. Fr. Martin Quere OMI (23.6.2014)
66. Fr. Edwin Thevathanasan OMI(18.8.2014)
67. Fr. Damian Fernando OMI (9.9.2014)
68. Fr. Joseph Tarcisius Rodrigo OMI (28.4.2015)
69. Br. John Gilbert Pullenayagam OMI (28.1.2016)
70. Fr. Andre Didon OMI (16.5.2016)
71. Fr. Joseph Perera OMI (24.6.2016)
72. Fr. Ernest Premasiri OMI (28.11.2016)
73. Fr. Peter Chrysanthus Fernando OMI (4.1.2017)
74. Fr. Chritian Gilles OMI (11.2.2017)
75. Br. Cecil Marcus Perera OMI (16.2.2017)
76. Fr. Dudley Perera OMI (3.5.2017)
77. Fr. Anthony Padidilian OMI (18.8.2017)
78. Fr. Joseph Samarakone OMI (11.9.2017)
79. Fr. Betram Tirimanne OMI(3.4.2018)
80. Fr. Fraccid Anthony Fernando OMI (21.5.2018)
81. Fr. Camillus Silva OMI (9.8.2018)
82. Fr. Hilarion Vethanayagam OMI (29.11.2018)

83. Fr. Jeevanadas Fernando OMI (16.4.2019)
84. Fr. P.Emmanuel Jesuthsan OMI (23.9.2019)
85. Fr. Peduru Amalnathan OMI (16.3.2020)
86. Fr. Hilary Peiris OMI (30.3.2020)
87. Fr. A. Victor Jeyasingham OMI (29.9.2020)
88. Bp. Victor Gnanapragasam OMI (12.12.2020)
89. Fr. Lucian Perera OMI (28.3.2021)
90. Fr. G. Edmund Michael OMI (13.11.2021)
91. Fr. Chryshantha Fernando OMI (17.1.2022).
92. Fr. Gamini Silva OMI (05.4.2022)

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**“Death is not extinguishing the light;
it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.”**
- Rabindranath Tagore

**“We will keep alive the memory of our deceased
and not fail to pray for them, faithfully offering
the suffrages prescribed on their behalf.”**
(Oblate CC 43).

SRI LANKAN OBLATES MINISTERING IN COUNTRIES OUTSIDE SRI LANKA

From the Oblate Province of Jaffna

1. Fr. Edmund Reginald OMI in Denmark
2. Fr. Soosaipillai Alrin OMI in Denmark
3. Fr. Christy Joy Fernando OMI in Denmark
4. Fr. Jagath Premanath Gunapala OMI in Norway
5. Fr. Jeyanthan Paul Pachchek OMI in Norway
6. Fr. James Jeyachandran OMI in Australia
7. Fr. Meno Basti Jayantha OMI in Australia
8. Fr. Praveen Mahesan OMI in Kenya
9. Fr. Jesuratnam Jude Bernard OMI in the Philippines
10. Fr. Bede Sujaharan OMI in Mexico
11. Fr. Peter Rajanayagam OMI in Italy
12. Fr. Velichor A. Jerome OMI in Italy (General House)
13. Fr. Parananthu Vimalarajan OMI in Great Britain
14. Fr. Linus Adrian Soyza OMI in France
15. Fr. Paul Mathanraj OMI in France

From the Oblate Province of Colombo

1. Fr. J.J. Edward Thraisingham OMI in Pakistan
2. Fr. Derrick Vernon Warnakulasuriya OMI in Pakistan
3. Fr. E. Thyagan Fonseka OMI in Pakistan
4. Fr. Jude Peirisulle OMI in Japan
5. Fr. Bradley Rozairo OMI in Japan
6. Fr. Huran Indika Jayawardena OMI in Japan
7. Fr. Joseph Benedict OMI in U.S.A
8. Fr. A.D. Joseph Alex OMI in Great Britain
9. Fr. George Shihan Shanaka OMI in Cuba
10. Fr. Angelo Wijewickrema OMI in Australia
11. Fr. Clement Waidyasekara OMI in Italy (General House)
12. Fr. Shanil Dinuka Jayawardena in Italy (General House)

OUR FUTURE

Lankan Oblate Mission The Way Forward

In 1847 Bishop Eugène de Mazenod in Marseilles responding swiftly to an urgent call, despite meagre resources of personnel hastened to send the first band of four missionaries to Ceylon, the most beautiful island in the world and dreamt it to be the most promising mission for the Oblates. He was right and so it was as we look at the scenario of 175 years of oblate presence and missionary work in this tear-shaped island in the Indian Ocean. The Founder in fact was opening a grand mission in a strategic location in far-away Asia well known as an oasis of religions and cultures but also a continent of poverty. This jubilee is not only a milestone in the missionary history of the country, but also a point of departure for a new springtime of missionary endeavors for the near 350 Oblates of the two Oblate Provinces working both in Sri Lanka and overseas.

New Paradigms for Mission in Sri Lanka

Oblates are called to go beyond the beaten path and venture into pioneering missionary work with creative and innovative missionary strategies and commitments in the British Ceylon of the first Oblates which by now has been transformed dramatically since Independence of 1948. **Evangelization of the most abandoned among the poor and the most urgent needs of the Church remain the twin-criteria that validate any Oblate endeavor in the present context as well as in our way forward, remembering that our mission is not in isolation of the socio-cultural and even political conditions that will affect not only our motherland but our other missions.**

In Sri Lanka, though an ecclesiastical Province and a local church, or rather a communion of 12 diocesan local churches, there are many areas, even geographically that are still to be reached in missionary

evangelization. While we probe the possibilities of geographical expansion, one must probe into the areas of values that are in question today in our country and as a missionary Congregation confront the current alarmingly challenging human, socio-cultural, political and communication trends with its spill-over in the many faces of the poor. In addition to available parish ministry, the various centers presently active in the Oblate Provinces will serve ideally to this end, with more qualified personnel being prepared and projects stream-lined.

The Mission of National Reconciliation

As far as the local church of Sri Lanka is concerned, an utmost priority for us is to be a catalyst of social integration, national harmony and ethnic reconciliation which appear as matters of urgency. It is a matter of regret that Sri Lanka which Oblates have evangelized for 175 years is today an oasis of cultural tensions, religious extremisms and racial alienation. Placing ourselves in the vanguard of evangelization, the two Oblate Provinces of Jaffna and Colombo are amply equipped since Sri Lankan Oblates are multi-ethnic and share the same vision regarding their missionary commitments to all Sri Lankans. Acting within the official church structure itself, the Oblates can act as salt and leaven taking the Church forward in this matter. Differences can be mended only by those who can transcend them. Our mission commitment demands that we participate in this urgent task of national reconciliation, collaborating in a spirit of common mission and solidarity. To this end it is necessary as the Superior General has pointed out that there be firstly, a sense of communion and reconciliation among all Sri Lankan Oblates. The theme of the coming Chapter “pilgrims of hope in communion” can inspire us powerfully in facing this challenge.

The challenge of the Overseas Missions

Sri Lanka was able to open new missions in India in 1968, in Pakistan in 1970 and in Norway in 1986. These commitments continue to challenge us in our fidelity to the pledges made to these local churches.

In the meantime, due to many a crisis overtaking missionary Congregations the dwindling personnel had created a global problem in maintaining our apostolates. In this context the General chapters between 1998 and 2016 came up with the idea of restructuring personnel and units which resulted in the merging of many units and redistribution of personnel. It is in this light that the missions of Japan, Korea and Scandinavia were entrusted to the care of the Sri Lankan Oblate Provinces. Missionary calls for personnel have also come from other countries apart from the Asia-Oceania region like Europe, Latin America, USA, Australia and the new free territories of the former Soviet Union like Belarus, Ukraine and Turkmenistan. **It is now our turn to reach out to missions overseas in the light of the Oblate General Chapters with their clarion call to inter-culturality and internationality.** The long line of foreign missionaries who came to our motherland, provide an excellent paradigm for our response to this call.

Evangelizing the Poor in their New Faces

The issue of the poor and catering to the most abandoned and vulnerable among them form the essence of Oblate evangelization, resonating well with our Oblate Charism. The question is raised as to the “new faces” of the poor and the new “arëopagi” that Pope St. John Paul II wanted the Church to confront in evangelization. **Some of the ill effects of the war still continue to cripple the nation even as different forms of extremism and onslaught of a mismanaged economy are affecting us adversely.** There is the inevitable exposure to the phenomena of secularization and globalization which have begun to intrude into our cultures. The open economy, the relentless greed for profit and the spirit of teeming competition cause social traumas. We should follow the great evangelizing paradigm of our founder: *“first make people human, then Christian and finally help them to become saints”*.

In this context, the work for human liberation, social justice, education for peace and peace building, healing the traumatized,

value formation for children and youth etc are becoming increasingly important. One has to enter the world of the poor, wherever they are located and in whatever form they appear. Even in a well-structured Church, there could be the marginalized in the various peripheries. For reaching out to the poor and being reachable by the poor, we must be sensitive to any appearance of opulence and ostentation that alienate us from them. Our vocation is exclusively defined in terms of the poor.

As we step into the next 25 years moving towards the bicentennial of Oblate presence in Sri Lanka, succeeding in some of these challenges will bring a new springtime for Oblates and the Church. As an international Congregation of pontifical right, we contribute richly to the global mission of evangelization that the Lord of the harvest entrusted to the universal Church, of which we are an apostolic and missionary corps.

Fr. Leopold Ratnasekera OMI

EUCHARISTIC LIVING IN TODAY'S WORLD

To the person(s) who came crying, “Dom Helder, a thief has broken into one of our churches and opened the tabernacle. The thief threw away the hosts and threw them into the mud.... Now we must have a great ceremony of atonement”, Helder Camera, Bishop of Recife, Brazil, had told, “We are shocked because our brother, the thief threw the Eucharistic Christ into the mud. But here in North East, Brazil, Christ lives in mud all the time. We must open our eyes to recognize the Eucharist of the poor, the oppressed, the suffering.”

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF OUR OBLATES NOW?

The jubilee year, marking the 175 years of Oblate presence and missionary activities in Sri Lanka, makes today's Oblates to celebrate the many achievements with humility, thanking God who inspired our beloved Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, to send his missionaries burning with zeal to work in solidarity with the poor and the afflicted. The Oblates carried out their responsibilities by reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel to revive the spirit of the Catholic community that had suffered due to the persecution by the Dutch Calvinists. Today's Oblates have a duty to keep alive the beautiful memories to fulfil the dream of our Founder which he expressed when he wrote to Fr. Vincens, superior of Notre-Dame de l'osier; "... *I foresee that one day this great Island will become an endowment which our Congregation will sanctify entirely.*" Keeping alive such a spirit, we, the present community of Oblates, should also focus our attention of important issues for the present and for the future.

Community life.

As follower of Jesus Christ we need to deepen our commitment to each other. We need to commit ourselves to ongoing conversion and be formed in the spirit of Jesus Christ. This ongoing conversion is the foundation for our life in the community and for the wellspring of our mission. We commit ourselves to living and working together promising fraternal support to each other. Our commitment must embrace mutual responsibility also for the care of each other's basic human needs.

Our community spirit demands fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for each other, forgiving each other's failings, encouraging each one's talents, acknowledging each other's achievements, celebrating important events of each other's lives, caring for the members who are infirm, aging, or going through crises and spending

time together. As Oblates, we are called to share our talents and skills and be transparent and accountable in our dealings. We need to share responsibility for our common life, our ministries and our resources. This accountability requires presence and knowledge of one another in community, as well as willingness to sacrifice for each other and for our common life and mission.

Our Mission

Our Oblate community life should focus on our being faithful to the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. The mandate in the gospel of Mathew (28:19-20): “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” The Word of God commissions us to liberate the world from sin by preaching the Good News and rescuing the oppressed with many faces.

The primary objective and the purpose of our Oblate Congregation is to bring the Good News to the poor with many faces whose condition cries for salvation. Therefore, a missionary heart “never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It realizes that it has to grow in its own understanding of the Gospel and in discerning the paths of the Spirit, and so it always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street” (*Evangelii Gaudium*: EG 45).

A renewed commitment will give a dynamic spirit to our mission. The missionary mandate of Jesus calls all of us also for a reorientation of our life for the integral liberation of all creation. Our focus and the goal of our mission therefore should include concern for the natural environment. If people destroy creation, creation will destroy people. We are stewards and not owners of creation. Therefore we need to promote wholeness and healing of wounded nature. Being aware that God is the master, the Lord and the owner of creation, makes us

accountable to God, employing our skills, talents and abilities and resources to promote wholeness of infra-human beings. This becomes only possible when we accept our own vulnerability and helplessness and depend on God's providence. Fidelity to the charism of our Founder will make us become tireless apostles, fervent pastors, helpers of the poor, voices of the voiceless, comforters of the afflicted, messengers of justice and peace and promoters of good relationships.

Witness

The consummate expression of God's love was culminated in giving His only Son to the world for its salvation. That unconditional and total submission of His Son, Jesus, led him to reveal also the merciful love of the Father. Pope Francis has made it clear that the Church's mission of being a witness to God's mercy begins with our own spiritual conversion. **We simply cannot witness to God's mercy if we have not experienced the merciful love of Christ.** We, as individuals and communities, need to focus our attention on our own spiritual transformation. This personal spiritual transformation is the core of credible witness which we are to give to the world. As our founder's last words on this earth was "charity", we, the Oblates, need to strive hard to witness to the merciful love of God, enabling everyone also to experience reconciliation, justice, joy and peace.

St. Eugene de Mazenod, our Oblate Founder wanted the Oblates to share the gospel of charity with those in our natural environments. Our focus must embrace a vision-mission which is beyond our social, political and cultural boundaries.

Fr. Nilushan Fernando OMI

WHAT SHOULD BE THE OBLATE FOCUS OF OUR OBLATE PROVINCES FROM NOW?

The nucleus of our Oblate missionary life is “the Cross of Jesus” (Constitution no. 4). As an Oblate Province, belonging to the missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, our primary service in Church wherever we are, is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. In other words, wherever we work, we bring Good News to “those people whose condition cries out for salvation” (Constitution no. 5). These poor people with many faces have to be given preference in our mission today. Our Oblate mission has to lead us as a Province now to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church where we are present through different forms of witness and ministry.

Forming strong apostolic communities in the Province where the Oblates are working are essential nowadays. The Oblate community is the strength and support that enables us, the Oblates, to accomplish our mission effectively. Our Constitutions stress that, “Our mission is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and seek it before all else. We fulfill this mission in community” (Constitution no 11). “Community is the life-giving reality fashioned by the vows which binds us in love to the Lord and to his people” (Constitution no 12). Thus, becoming a living cell in the Church, we never strive alone but we strive together.

Preaching missions at home has been vital to the apostolate of our Province since the time of its inception. “We preach the Gospel among those who have not received it and help them see their own values in its light” (Constitution no. 5). It is always indispensable to prioritize the preaching ministry today. Through various ways and means available at present, “We will spare no effort to awaken or reawaken the faith in the people to whom we are sent, and we will help them discover ‘who Christ is’” (Constitution no. 7).

Our Oblate charism urges us to identify another face of poverty in the youth of Sri Lanka today. The youth do not have enough job

opportunities. Some have lost their employments. They seem to have lost hopes for the future. These dire circumstances have wreaked havoc in the lives of our young people today. These situations compel us to accompany them in their journey of life. We need to feel called by the Spirit like our beloved Founder St. Eugene de Mazenod, to become a pillar of strength, hope and motivation to them. Ultimately, to help them towards becoming saints of today.

The spirit of our founder, St. Eugene stirs us today to be channels of hope, compassion and mercy ministering as chaplains to the prisoners, the sick and the elderly in a world where the weak are forgotten and marginalized. “Our mission puts us on constant call to respond to the most urgent needs of the Church through various forms of witness and ministry, but especially through proclaiming the Word of God which finds its fulfillment in the celebration of the sacraments and in service to others” (Constitution no. 7).

Giving importance to the sphere of “Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation” is very crucial in our mission today. “While recognizing our own need for conversion, we bear witness to God’s holiness and justice” (Constitution no. 9). “Action on behalf of justice, peace and integrity of creation is an integral part of evangelization” (Rules no 9a). Living in an environment where people go through a lot of injustice with no hope for justice being meted out, we have to be a voice of the innocent people in the spheres where the decisions are made affecting them. “We will hear and make heard the clamour of the voiceless, which is a cry to God who brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly (Constitution no 9). It is our duty to work for harmony, peace and coexistence of the people in society. Protecting the Mother Nature for the existence of humanity is our responsibility as religious.

Education plays a vital role in our society. The role of a good education in forming the future generation with Christian values and discipline is another emerging ministry and a felt need that the Oblates have to recognize today. Our education institutes and schools will

enable to shape the minds, hearts and character of students as we work hard to contribute to the progress of ideas, communities and spirituality.

“The proclamation of the Word to all peoples requires a deep rooting of the faith in their respective cultures. While formation opens the Oblate to an appreciation of all cultures, it will specially help him to be formed in and through the authentic values of the people among whom he lives and works” (Rule no 47a). Today, we are called to evangelize in a tough context where our lives are being challenged on the basis of our life style. Hence, the initial and the on-going formation of the Oblates in the Province has to be thought of prudently and sensibly.

It is imperative that we maintain the environment well for the elderly and sick Oblates among us, to spend the evening of their priestly life joyfully and peacefully. They are the storehouses and living libraries of our Province. They remain missionaries to the end, by their very presence and witness in the community.

In conclusion, “there is no ministry, however, which is foreign to us, provided we never lose sight of the Congregation’s primary purpose: to evangelize the most abandoned” (Rule no. 7b). Hence, it is timely pertinent for us to lift our hearts and minds and to see where we are needed. Having inspired by the missionary spirit of our blessed Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, we need to respond positively to the pressing needs of the Church today as a Province. Thus, our Oblate focus as an Oblate Province rests in the emerging needs of the Church where we are present.

Fr. Charuka Namal OMI

MAY OUR DREAMS FOR THE POOR BE SACRED

We rejoice in the Lord for the 175 years (1847 – 2022) of Oblate presence in Sri Lanka. On 28th November 1847, four Oblate missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka under the leadership of Fr. Stephen Semeria OMI, due to a request of Bishop Orazio Bettacchini. Since that time the Oblates have contributed immensely to the establishment of the local Church in Sri Lanka.¹ It is not a mistake to say that after St. Joseph Vaz, it was St. Eugene De Mazenod who laid the foundation for the establishment of the local Church in Sri Lanka.

We, the candidates at the Oblate Scholasticate, Kandy, would like our Oblate Provinces to concentrate on counselling, education and rural and city missions with an Oblate flavour.

A Centre for Counselling – Our Oblate Provinces have a number of Oblates who are engaged in the apostolate of counselling. It is good for them to operate as a team attached to a Centre. The absence of such centre at the moment has made the valuable services of the Oblates appear sporadic. The ever increasing numbers of broken families, drug addicts, victims of sexual abuses and of violence, prostitutes, depressed school children, LGBT⁺ persons and even the stressful elders need Oblate counsellors. Hence, an appropriate streamlining of the ministry is necessary.

Systematic Training for the apostolate of Education

This is another area which also need the attention of our Oblate Provinces. The Oblates who are assigned to or marked for this apostolate could be encouraged to go to a College of education or

¹ (see page 5: Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI, The Missionary Commitment of the Oblates in Sri Lanka during the past 175 years (1847 – 2022).

similar institutes for proper training, and then be enabled to look for schools where under-privileged children can obtain their services.

St. Vincent's Home at Maggona is a long - standing technical school run by the Oblates. It needs constant upgrading to give much opportunities and facilities for the poor children and youth who are trained there. Such steps would help the work of rehabilitation of the children and youth effective. There should be timely programs to transform the antisocial habits through sports, music and other aesthetic activities. All these will make the guidance given to them much beneficial.

Mission Involvement in the FreeTrade Zones – It will be beneficial for the Oblates to get themselves actively involved in the free trade zones (FTZ), through the AIT (Asain Institute of Theology) exposure programs. To date, this has been done at the FTZ, Katunayake. This can be expanded to include many similar places. The workers at FTZ are coming from economically poor rural family settings. The Oblate Scholastics value the opportunities they receive in order to appreciate and admire the living experiences of the young workers. This is an area where the Oblate Provinces can pay more attention in order to help this category of the poor. The Oblates should be alive to the hardships of these poor workers.

Missions to the Peasants, Fisher-folk, Tea Estate Labourers, and Slum-dwellers – Oblate charism demands from the members of the Oblate Provinces much attention to these categories of people. Centres like 'Suba Seth Gedara,' Buttala or 'Amathipuram Oblate Centre', could be established in suitable regions with a clear vision and mission. The knowledge and the interest of the Oblates in social doctrine of the Church should be constantly updated and renewed to get themselves involved in the apostolates to the above-mentioned categories of people.

Ministry of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation – A strong way of being in the Kingdom of God is by promoting justice and peace in

the world. The activities of the Oblate Provinces are not sufficient in this area of justice and peace since only a few Oblates are actively involved in these areas. It is important to look for capable Oblates for training in this area for the continuity and the widening of these ministries.

Other Related Concerns

Appropriate Formation Program – The objectives of the Oblate formation should be geared to the contextual situations. Candidates with special talents and capabilities should be rightly discerned and then opportunities should be given by the formators to grow in those areas to address the needs of the Oblate Congregation.

Clear Vision and Mission – Periodical evaluation of the work of the Oblate Provinces need to be done on the basis of the defined vision and mission. For this purpose a very clear vision and mission has to be elaborated.

The young Oblates could be given opportunities to grow in their passions when they are not contrary to the common aims and then they be supported and encouraged to find new missions. The Oblate Provinces should dare to change when necessary, and should think beyond their traditional missions, reading the signs of the time.

Two Provinces Working Together – The two Oblate provinces of Sri Lanka can give a very strong witnessing value by working together in the mission field. This should be always mutually highlighted.

Community Life – In the mission fields, the life in the setting of the religious community is joyful and purposeful. The Oblates need to understand the vitality of community living for missionary work. A strong spirit of community living will keep the members together with a joyful feeling. Fraternal visits and fraternal sharing will enrich the apostolates and give witness value to the people.

The present generation of Oblates are called to be responsible to continue the legacies of the past generations. This is a noble and sacred duty which cannot be overlooked. The identity and the image of the Oblates in Sri Lanka call for ongoing reflection and action. In this journey the poor are not to be forgotten because they are the active participants with whom the Oblates write their history for future generations. All these demand that the planning and designing of Oblates missionary activities should be done with immense seriousness and sincerity.

Oblate Scholastics,
Ampitiya, Kandy.

CRITICAL YEARS OF MID-LIFE

“The critical years of mid-life are a time when a new integration is sought through the renewal of basic choices of life remade with greater depth and insight in the face of a sense of routine and possible disillusionment. A period of full maturity comes "after refining certain features of the personality” such as individualism, inflexibility, self-centredness or diminished enthusiasm. At this time, “the gift of self is made to God more genuinely, and with greater generosity; it extends to others with greater serenity and wisdom, as well as with greater simplicity and richness oof grace” (VC 70).

- General Norms for Oblate Formation, no 275, p 79.

OUR OBLATE CONCERNS

Biblical Spirituality

Consecrated vowed life demands transcending self-love and manifesting it through deeds of service to the neighbours, especially to the poor and the vulneral. We need to develop a biblical spirituality which embodies also social and ecological concerns. These issues have become important preoccupations in the minds of the people today. One needs to understand these issues in the light of the Christian faith and biblical spirituality.

Mission priorities

In the fast-changing Sri Lanka, we, the Consecrated Religious, need to prayerfully discern also some of our mission priorities.

A well-staffed Theologate

The Oblates need a well-staffed Theologate (an Institute for theological reflection and research which may also be multi-disciplinary with ancillary sciences) directed with the collaboration of the Consecrated Religious in Sri Lanka. Such a need has arisen since the theological education provided at the National Seminary in Kandy does not adequately respond to the needs of the Consecrated Religious, whether they be in the ranks of the ordained ministry or vowed life, with special reference to both the theology of Consecrated Life in general as well as the vision and mission of their respective Religious Congregations.

Formation / Accompaniment

Oblate Formation (accompaniment) is a special apostolate which demands competent Oblates involved in the work of formation specific to the Oblate charism. Specialised knowledge alone is not sufficient.

Besides acquiring the knowledge of English language, we need to emphasise also the importance of knowing our national languages (Sinhala and Tamil) to serve our people. Knowing our national languages will also facilitate the apostolate of reconciliation and peace in Sri Lankan society.

Each ordained Oblate presbyter and each Oblate Brother who has professed for life, need to become agent of his ongoing formation which is co-terminous with life.

Pastoral Action

- a) The importance of preaching ‘**Parish missions**’, demands further training in the art of preaching which must include a training in mass-media communication.
- b) Emphasise the great need to train Oblates for the apostolate of education.
- c) Apostolate of Social and Ecological justice demands competent Oblates with the needed skills to work with the struggling masses (e.g farmers, fisher-folk, estate workers, industrial workers, etc)
- d) Personal and pastoral counselling are an urgent need in the fast changing Sri Lankan society.
- e) National reconciliation must be seen as a mission priority for the Oblates today.
- f) Need to respond to “internationality”, crossing borders.
- g) More innovative projects are to be introduced for inter-Provincial collaboration.
- h) Oblate pastoral action is in and through the Oblate community.

Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI

ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික ධර්මදූතවරුන්ගේ සේවාව වසර 175 පුරාවට (1847-2022)

ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ක්‍රියාකාරී සේවාව ආරම්භ කර වසර 175 ක් ගතවන මොහොතේ, නිර්මල මරිය නිකාය තුළින් කතෝලික ඇඳහීම ජීවත් කරලීමට, සියලුම ආගම්වල ළමුන් සඳහා අධ්‍යාපනය ලබා දීමට සහ අසරණයන්ගේ අවශ්‍යතාවයන්ට සංවේදී වී කල සේවාව සිහිපත් කිරීම හා සැමරීම භාග්‍යයි.

ලන්දේසි තාඩන පීඩන මැද ශ්‍රී ලාංකික කතෝලිකයන් තිස්වසරක් පුරාවට පූජකයෙකු නොමැතිව දුක්විඳි කාලය අවසන් වූයේ, ක්‍රි.ව 1687 දී ගරු ජුසේවාස් පියතුමන්ගේ ආගමනයත් සමඟය. ඉංග්‍රීසියටත්විජිත සමය තුළ එනම් ක්‍රි.ව 1806 මැයි මස 27 වන දින දී කතෝලිකයන්ට යම්තාක් දුරට ආගමික නිදහස හිමි වූවද, ඉන්දියාවෙන් සහ යුරෝපයෙන් පියතුමන්ලා පිළිගැනීමට ශ්‍රී ලාංකික කතෝලිකයන් අපොහොසත් විය. මේ කාලවකවානුවේ දී යාපනයේ ගරු මරාසියෝ බෙටකිනි රදගුරුතුමාට සිදුවූයේ 1845 දී යුරෝපයට ගොස් ධර්මදූතීකවරුන්ගේ සහය පැතීමයි.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික ධර්මදූතවරුන්ගේ පැමිණීම.

රෝමයෙන් සහය නොලත් ගරු බෙටකිනි රදගුරුතුමා ප්‍රංශයට ළඟාවිය. ප්‍රංශයේ ධුල් හී විසූ ගරු බර්ටෝ රදගුරුතුමාගේ මෙහෙය වීම මත මර්සෙල්හි නව නිකායක් ආරම්භ කළ ගරු එව්ජින් ද මැසනොද් රදගුරුතුමාව සම්බන්ධ විය. ඔහුගේ හදවත සාන්ත පාවුලුතුමාගේ ආදර හදවත මෙන්ය. දුප්පතුන් සිටින රටක් යැයි කී විට ධර්මදූතීකවරුන් එවීමට එතුමා කැමති විය. ගරු ස්ටීවන් සමෙරියා නි.ම.නි පියතුමාගේ නායකත්වයෙන් නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික ධර්මදූතීකවරුන් සතර දෙනෙකු ලංකාවට එවීය. ක්‍රි.ව 1847 නොවැම්බර් 28 වන දින ලක්බිමට පැමිණි ඔවුහු යාපනයේ සිට ධර්මදූතීක සේවාව ආරම්භ කළෝය.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික ධර්මදූතවරුන්ගේ වැදගත් සේවාවන්,

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික සහෝදරතුමන්ලා හා පියතුමන්ලා කල දේ සිහිපත් කිරීම වැදගත්ය. 1869 දී ගරු ක්‍රිස්ටෝපර් බොන්ජින් රදගුරුතුමා යාපනයේ සාන්ත මර්ටින් දෙවසක්හල ආරම්භ කර, ශ්‍රී

ලංකාවෙහි ප්‍රථම දෙවිසත්හලෙහි ආරම්භකයා බවට පත්වූනේය. මල්වත්තේ ශ්‍රී සරණංකර සුමංගල හිමියන්ගේ සහෝදරයෙකු වූ ගරු ජොන් පහමුණි පියතුමා සාන්ත මාර්ටින් දෙවිසත්හලට ඇතුල්ව තිබූ පළමු කණ්ඩායමෙහි සිසුවෙකු විය. 1883 දී ගරු බොන්ජින් රදගුරුතුමා කොළඹ අගරදගුරු පදවියට පත්වීමෙන් අනතුරුව **සාන්ත බර්නාඩ් දෙවිසත්හල** ආරම්භ කළේය. මෙම දෙවිසත්හල මඟින්, 1955 දී අම්පිටිය ජාතික දෙවිසත්හල බිහිකරන තෙක්, විශාල වශයෙන් දේශීය පූජකවරුන් බිහිකිරීමට හැකි විය.

පදවි සහ පැවිදි එසෙරුන් බිහිකිරීමට නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකයින්ට හැකිවිය. ඔවුන් (නි.ම.නි) යාපනය, කොළඹ, හලාවත, බදුල්ල සහ අනුරාධපුර රදගුරුතුමන්ලා බවටද පත්විය. පූජකවරුන් යාපනය, කොළඹ, හලාවත, ගාල්ල, ත්‍රිකුණාමලය, මන්නාරම, සහ බදුල්ල පදවිවල රදගුරුතුමන්ලා බවට පත්විය. **නිමල මරිය නිකායික ගරු තෝමස් කුරේ අගරදගුරුතුමා ශ්‍රී ලාංකීය පළමු කාදිනල්තුමා බවට පත්විය.**

කතෝලික අධ්‍යාපනය වෙනුවෙන් සටන් කළ බොන්ජින් රදගුරුතුමා, 1865 දී රජයේ ආධාර ලබා, හැම ආගමකටම (බෞද්ධ, හින්දු, මුස්ලිම්) පාසල් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයක් යෝජනා කළේය. එතුමාගේ උපදෙස් අනුව, ඕනෑම ආගමික කණ්ඩායමකට පාසල් විවෘත කළ හැකි වන අතර රජයේ ආධාරයක් ද ඒවාට ලැබෙන බව 1869 දී රජය තීරණය කළේය. **බොන්ජින් රදගුරුතුමා ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ උපකෘත පාඨශාලා පද්ධතියේ පියා ලෙස හඳුන්වනු ලැබේ.**

ගරු ඔරාසියෝ බෙටකිනි රදගුරුතුමා විසින් ආරම්භ කළ යාපනයේ කතෝලික පාසල් සංගමය **සාන්ත පැට්‍රික් විදුහල** ලෙස පරිවර්තනය කළ අතර එතුමා කොළඹ **සාන්ත ජෝසප් විදුහලක්** ආරම්භ කිරීමට පුරෝගාමී විය.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික පැවිදිවරුන් විසින් ආරම්භ කළ පාසල් බොහෝය

උදාහරණ වශයෙන් යාපනය පදවිය තුළ සාන්ත පැට්‍රික් විදුහල (යාපනය), සාන්ත හෙන්රි විදුහල (ඉලවාලෙල), සාන්ත අන්තෝනි විදුහල (කයිට්ස්); කොළඹ පදවිය තුළ, සාන්ත ජෝසප් විදුහල, සාන්ත පීතර විදුහල, ඇක්වයිනාස් උසස් අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය, ද මැසනොද් විදුහල (කඳාන), සාන්ත ජෝන් විදුහල (දෙමටගොඩ),

දොන් බොස්කො විදුහල (හංවැල්ල); ත්‍රිකුණාමලය පදවිය කුළ සාන්ත ජෝසප් විදුහල (ත්‍රිකුණාමලය); අනුරාධපුර පදවිය කුළ සාන්ත ජෝසප් විදුහල (අනුරාධපුර) යනාදී ලෙස හඳුන්වා දිය හැකිය.

සෑම කතෝලික මිසමකම පාසැලක් ආරම්භ කිරීමට හැකි විය.

ශ්‍රී ලාංකික අධ්‍යාපනය වෙනුවෙන් සේවාවක් කල චාර්ල්ස් මැතිව්, තිමති ලෝං, මොරිස් ලේගොක්, පීටර් පිල්ලෙලෙ නම් අමරණීය නාමයන් බවට පත් වී හමාරය.

2019 ජනවාරි 03 වෙනිදා මැසනද් විදුහල නමින් නව ජාත්‍යන්තර පාසලක් අනුරාධපුරයේ දී ආරම්භ විය.

යහපත් එඬේරාණන්වන ජේසුස් වහන්සේ අනුගාමීව යමින් නිහමානි එඬේරික නායකත්වයක් දැරූ නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික පැවිදිවරුන් අතරම වී සිටි කතෝලිකයන් සොයා ගැනීමටත්, විවිධ වන්දනාමාන ස්ථාන නිර්මාණය කිරීමටත් කැප වූහ. මුහුදුබඩ සහ අවට ප්‍රදේශ වල මිසමි නිර්මාණය කර දුප්පතුන්ට හා අසරණයන්ට පිහිටවෙමින් ඔවුන් දිවි ගෙවීය. යුරෝපීය ධර්මදුකිකවරුන් අප ජනතානට සේවය කිරීම සඳහා දේශීය භාෂාවන් ඉගෙන ගත්තෝය.

අගරදගුරු නිවස, ඇක්වයිනාස් උසස් අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය, සාන්ත ඇලෝසියස් දෙවිසත්හල සහ කතෝලික මුද්‍රණාලය පිහිටා ඇති භූමිය ගරු බොන්ජීන් අගරදගුරු ප්‍රංශ ජනතාවගෙන් ලැබූ පරිත්‍යාග වලින් මිලට ගත්තේය.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායික පියවරුන් ඔවුන්ගේ සේවාවන්හී ඉතාමත් නිර්මාණශීලී විය.

උදාහරණ ලෙස ගරු පීටර් පිල්ලෙලෙ පියතුමා, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සමාජ සාධාරණය (SOCIAL JUSTICE) ව්‍යාපාරයෙහි අපොස්තරුවරයා බවට පත්විය. ගරු කිස්ස බාලසූරිය පියතුමා එතුමාගේ කාර්යයට උදව් වෙමින්, වතිකානු දෙවන මන්ත්‍රණ සභාවෙහි ඉගැන්වීම් ගිහි පැවිදි සහ පූජක සියල්ලන් හට හඳුන්වා දීමට මූලික වූ අතර ඔහු විසින් සමාජ හා සාමයික කේන්ද්‍රය (CSR) හරහා සමාජ සාධාරණය උදෙසා මහත් මෙහෙයක් කරවීය.

ගරු ඇන්ඩ්‍රො පීටර් පියතුමා ශුද්ධ වූ බයිබලය සිංහලට පරිවර්තනය කිරීමට සහය විය. ගරු ජේ. බී. ඇන්ටෝනියස් පියතුමා වැවිලිකාර

ශ්‍රීමතීන්ගේ ජීවිතය නංවාලීමට නුවර සෙටික් (SETIK) ආයතනය පිහිට විය. ගරු හෙන්ක් සක්‍රාම් සහ ගරු ස්ටැනිලස් ප්‍රනාන්දු පියතුමන්ලා ක්‍රිස්තියානි ශ්‍රීමතීන්ගේ ව්‍යාපාරයට සහය දැක්වීය. ගරු මයිකල් රොද්‍රිගු පියතුමන් විසින් බුක්තල ග්‍රාමීය ජනතාවගේ ජීවන තත්වය නංවාලීමට කටයුතු කල අතර අවසානයේදී එතුමා ඒ ජනතාව වෙනුවෙන් තම ජීවිතය පවා පුද කළේය. ගරු ෆීලික්ස් මෙවල් පියතුමා ළ.ක්‍රි.වි. (LAKRIVI) ළමා අපෝස්තලික සේවාව මෙරටට හඳුන්වා දුන්නේය.

දේශනාවාදී අපෝස්තලික කාර්යය සඳහා නිවාස දෙකක් ස්ථාපිතකරවීය. “නාසරෙත්”(වෙන්නප්පුව), “අමෙදි අහම්” (වව්නියාව). 2019 දී නේවාසික ශ්‍රේණිකාන්ති මධ්‍යස්ථානයක් (SANGAMAM) යාපනයේ කෝපායි නගරයේ පිහිටු වන ලදී

රෝහල් උපද්‍රව්‍යවරුන් ලෙස බොහෝ නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන් කොළඹ ජාතික රෝහලට අනුබද්ධව සේවාව කරන ලදී. පැරණි පා පැදියක් පාවිච්චි කරමින් ගරු ක්ලෝඩ් ලෝරන්ස් පියතුමන් වසර 45 කට වැඩි කාලයක් රෝහල් උපද්‍රව්‍ය ලෙස සේවය කළේය.

මඩු, තේවත්ත, ඉදිගොල්ල සිද්ධස්ථාන, මග්ගොන වර්තසෝදනාගාරය, වෘතීය පුහුණු මධ්‍යස්ථානය සහ අනාථ නිවාසය, තේවත්ත ශ්‍රේණිකාන්ති මධ්‍යස්ථානය, තම්මිට ධර්ම නිකේතනය, නුවර එළියේ නිවාඩු නිකේතනය (Underbank) නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන්ගේ මූලිකත්වයෙන් බිහි වූ ස්ථාන කිහිපයකි.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන්ගේ ආරාධනයෙන් කන්‍යාරාම සහ විවිධ සේවාවන් සපයන ස්ථාන රාශියක් බිහිවිය.

නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන් මරිය හමුදාව, චින්සන් ද පාවුලු සමිතිය, දිව්‍ය හෘදයේ සමිතිය වැනි ගිහි අපෝස්තලික සේවාවන් වල සාමාජිකයින්ව අධ්‍යාත්මිකව පෝෂණය කල අතර විවිධ සමිති හරහා ගිහියන්ගේ කැපවීම වර්ධනය කිරීමටද, සමාජ හා ආර්ථික සංවර්ධන කේන්ද්‍රයක් ඇති කිරීමටද උදව් විය.

බොහෝ ශ්‍රී ලාංකික නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන් විවිධ රටවල

ධර්මදැනික සේවාව සඳහා නිරතව සිටිති.

කොළඹ සාන්ත ජෝසප් විදුහලෙහි සහ ඇක්වයිනාස් උසස් අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනයෙහි අදියුරු වූ ගරු. ඩබ්ලිව්. එල්. දොන් පීටර් පියතුමාගේ අදහස: 'මැසනොද් රදගුරුතුමාගේ මහත් උනන්දුව ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන්ගේ සේවය සාර්ථක කරලීමට සාධකයක් විය.'

අත්වැල් බැඳගැනීමේ අවශ්‍යතාව

වර්තමානයේ නිර්මල මරිය නිකායිකවරුන් අනෙකුත් පැවිදිවරුන් මෙන් නව ගැටලු රාශියකට මුහුණ දෙමින් සිටී. අපහට අත්වැල් බැඳගැනීමටත් එතුලින් ජේසුස් වහන්සේ පොරොන්දු වූ පූර්ණ ජීවිතය ජනතාවට ලබා දීමටත් ශුද්ධාත්මයාණන් වහන්සේගේ පිහිට යදිමු.

ගරු එම්මානුවෙල් ප්‍රනාන්දු නි.ම.නි පියතුමා

**கடந்த 175 ஆண்டுகளில் இலங்கையில்
அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் அர்ப்பணிப்புள்ள சேவைகள்.
(1847 – 2022)**

இலங்கையில் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் பிரசன்னத்தின் 175ஆவது ஆண்டு நிறைவை முன்னிட்டு உள்ளூர் மற்றும் வெளிநாடுகளைச் சேர்ந்த அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் அளப்பரிய சேவைகளான கத்தோலிக்க நம்பிக்கைக்கு புத்துணர்ச்சியூட்டியமை, அனைத்துமத மக்களுக்கும் கல்வி பணியாற்றியமை, மற்றும் ஏழைகள், அநாதைகள், முதியவர்கள், சிறைக்கைதிகள் போன்றோரின் தேவைகளை உணர்ந்து செயற்பட்டமை என்பவற்றை நினைவில் கொள்வதும் அவர்களுடைய சேவைகளை மகிழ்ச்சியுடன் கொண்டாடுவதும் இன்றியமையாததாகும். இலங்கையில் கத்தோலிக்கர்கள் ஒல்லாந்தர்களின் ஆட்சியின் கீழ் துன்புறுத்தப்பட்ட காலத்தில் 30 வருடங்கள் எந்தவித குருவின் வழிகாட்டலமின்றி தமது நம்பிக்கையை பேணிப்பாதுகாத்து வந்தவேளையில் அவர்களின் நம்பிக்கைக்கு வழிகாட்டும் நோக்கில் **புனித ஜோசப்வாஸ் அடிகளார்** இலங்கைக்கு 1687 இல் இந்தியாவிலிருந்து வருகைதந்தார். பின்நாட்களில் 1802 இல் இலங்கையை தம் ஆட்சியின் கீழ் கொண்டுவந்த பிரித்தானியர் இலங்கையில் கத்தோலிக்கர்களுக்கு 1806 மே 27இல் மதச்சுதந்திரத்தை வழங்கினர். ஆயினும் அந்நேரத்தில் கத்தோலிக்கர்களால் இந்தியாவிலிருந்தோ அல்லது ஐரோப்பாவிலிருந்தோ எந்தவித குருக்களையும் பெற்றாடியாத சூழ்நிலை இருந்தது. அவ் இக்கட்டான சூழ்நிலையில் தான் **அருட்தந்தை. ஓராசியோ பெற்றாகினி** அவர்கள் இலங்கைக்கு வருகை தந்து பின்நாட்களில் யாழ் மறைமாவட்டத்தின் முதல் ஆயராகி அங்குள்ள கத்தோலிக்கர்களுக்கு பணியாற்ற குருக்களைத்தேடி ஐரோப்பாவிற்கு சென்றார். ஆயினும் அவரால் உரோமில்

விசுவாசப்பரப்புதல் சபையிடமிருந்து எந்தவித உதவியையும் பெறமுடியவில்லை. பின்னர் அவர் பிரான்ஸ் சென்ற வேளையில் அங்கே அவர் தூலேயின் ஆயர் பெர்டேட் அவர்களை சந்தித்தார். அவர் ஆயர் பெற்றாகினியிடம் மார்சேலில் அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் எனும் துறவற சபையை நிறுவிய **ஆயர் இயூஜின் டீ மசெனொட்டை** அணுகும்படி எடுத்துரைத்தார். “புனித பவுலின் இதயம் கொண்ட அவரிடம் ஏழை ஆன்மாக்களை மீட்கும் பணி எனச் சொல்லுங்கள்” என்றும் அறிவுறுத்தியிருந்தார். அந்த வார்தைகளை கேட்டதும் ஆயர் டீ மசெனொட் எதிர்க்க முடியாது உடனே பதிலளித்தார். அதன் காரணமாக ஆயர் ஓராசியோ பெற்றாகினியுடன் **அருட்தந்தை .ஸ்ரீபன் சமேரியாவின்** தலைமையில் நான்கு அமலமரித்தியாகிகளை அனுப்பி வைத்தார். 1847ஆம் ஆண்டு நவம்பர் மாதம் 28ஆம் திகதி வந்தடைந்த அவர்கள் யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் தம் மறைபரப்புபுனியை தொடங்கினர்.

ஆமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் அரப்பணிப்புள்ள குறிப்பிடத்தக்க சேவைகள்

இலங்கையில் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் சில குறிப்பிடத்தக்க முக்கியமான சேவைகளை நினைவில் கொள்வது முக்கியமானதொன்றாகும். ஆயர் கிறிஸ்தோபர் பொஞ்ஜின் அடிகளார் அவர்கள் 1869ஆம் ஆண்டு இலங்கையில் முதல் குருமடத்தை யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் நிறுவினார். அங்கே கண்டி மல்வத்து பீட பிரிவைசேர்ந்த வண.சரணங்க சுமங்கல தேரரின் சகோரதரரான அருட்தந்தை. ஜோன் பஹாமுனி அமதி அடிகளார் அவர்கள் **புனித மடுத்தீனார் குருமடத்தின்** மாணவர்களின் ஒருவராவார். பின்னர் 1883இல் ஆயர் கிறிஸ்தோபர் பொஞ்ஜின் அடிகளார் அவர்கள் கொழும்பு பெருநகர போராயரான போது 1955இல் கண்டியில் தேசியகுருமடம் அமைவதற்கு முன்னர் சுமார் முக்கால் நூற்றாண்டுகளாக பெருமளவான குருக்களையும்

அமலமரித்தியாகிகளையும் ஏனைய துறவிகளையும் உருவாக்கிய புனித பேனாட் குருமடத்தினை நிறுவினார்.

ஆயர் கிறிஸ்தோபர் பொஞ்ஜின் அடிகளார் அவர்கள் இலங்கையில் கத்தோலிக்க கல்வியின் வளர்சிக்காகப் போராடினார். அதற்காக அவர் 1865இல் ஒவ்வொரு மதத்தினராலும் (இந்து, இஸ்லாம் மற்றும் பௌத்த) நிர்வாகிக்கப்படும் அரசு உதவி பெறும் பாடசாலைகள் என்ற திட்டத்தை முன்மொழிந்தார். அதற்கேற்ப 1869ஆம் ஆண்டு அன்றைய அரசாங்கம் இலங்கையில் அனைத்து மதத்தினருக்கும் சுதந்திர சுயாதீன கல்வி முறையை வழங்க முடிவு செய்தது. **அதன்பால் ஆயர் கிறிஸ்தோபர் பொஞ்ஜின் அடிகளார் அவர்கள் இலங்கையின் அனைத்து மதத்தவருக்குமான சுதந்திர சுயாதீன கல்வி முறைக்கு தந்தை ஆனார் அப்போஸ்தலிக்க பரிபாலகர் ஓராசியோ பெற்றாகினி அடிகளார் அவர்களால் அறிமுகப்படுத்தப்பட்ட யாழ்ப்பாண கத்தோலிக்க சமுதாயத்தின் கல்வி முறையினை புனித பத்திரிசியார் கல்லூரியினூடாக மாற்றம் கொண்டுவந்தார். அதன்பால் தம்மை கொழும்பில் புனித ஜோசப் கல்லூரியை நிறுவுவதற்கான வழிக்கு இட்டுச்சென்றார்.**

அமலமரித்தியாகிகளினால் நிறுவப்பட்ட மற்றும் நிர்வகிக்கப்பட்ட இக் கல்லூரிகள் மற்றும் பாடசாலைகளை பற்றி குறிப்பிடுவோமானால் எடுத்துக்காட்டாக யாழ்ப்பாண மறைமாவட்டத்தில்புனித பத்திரிசியார் கல்லூரி(யாழ்ப்பாணம்), புனிதஹென்றியரசர் கல்லூரி(இளவாலை),புனிதஅந்தோனியர் கல்லூரி(ஊர்காவற்றுறை),கொழும்பு மறைமாவட்டத்தில் புனித ஜோசப் கல்லூரி, புனித பூட்டர் கல்லூரி, 16 மசெனோட்கல்லூரி(கந்தாளை),புனித ஜோன்போஸ்கோ கல்லூரி (ஹங்வேல்ல) மற்றும் அக்குவினாஸ் உயர்கல்விக்கல்லூரி, திருகோணமலை மறைமாவட்டத்தில் புனித ஜோசப் கல்லூரி(திருகோணமலை) மற்றும் அநுராதபுர மறைமாவட்டத்தில் புனித ஜோசப் கல்லூரி(அநுராதபுரம்) ஆகியவற்றை எடுத்துக் கொள்ளலாம். அத்தோடு சில

கல்விமாண்களான சார்ள்ஸ் மத்தேயு, திமோத்தி லோங், மொறில் லீ ஹோக் மற்றும் பீற்றர்பிள்ளை ஆகிய அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கோர் ஆவார். இலங்கையில் எந்தவொரு மறைமாவட்டத்திலுமுள்ள ஒவ்வொரு பங்கிலும் ஏதாவதொரு பாடசாலை காணப்படுகிறது.

அப்பணி இன்றளவும் தொடரும் நோக்கில் 2019 ஆம் ஆண்டு ஜனவரி மாதம் 03இல் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளினால் மசெனொட் கல்லூரி எனும் புதிய கல்லூரி அநுராதபுரத்தில் தொடங்கப்பட்டது.

அப்பொரும்பாலான பங்குகள் உள்ளூர் மற்றும் வெளிநாடுகளைச் சேர்ந்த அமலமரித்தியாகிகளினால் நிர்வகிக்கப்பட்டவை ஆகும். உள்ளூர் மற்றும் வெளிநாடுகளைச் சேர்ந்த ஒவ்வொரு அமலமரித்தியாகிகளும் நல்லாயனான இயேசுக்கிறிஸ்துவைப் போன்று (யோவான்11:52) பணிவுள்ளம் மிக்க நல்ல மேய்பர்களாக கத்தோலிக்க மக்களை தேடும் நோக்கில் யானைகளும் கரடிகளும் பாம்புகளும் நிறைந்த காடுகளினூடாகவும் கானகங்களினூடாகவும் மாட்டுவண்டிகளில் அச்சமேதுமின்றி பயணம் செய்து வழிபாட்டுத்தலங்களையும் வழிகாட்டி நிலையங்களையும் நிறுவினர். மீன்பிடி பிரதேசங்களிலும் புறந்தாழ்ப்பட்ட பிரதேசங்களிலும் ஏழைகளினதும் ஒதுக்கப்பட்ட மக்களினதும் வாழ்கையை மேம்படுத்துவதற்காக பங்குகளை நிறுவியும் தம் சுயநலமற்ற வாழ்கையை அவர்களுக்காக வாழ்ந்தனர். அதற்காக மக்களுக்கு சேவை செய்யும் நோக்கில் ஐரோப்பிய அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் நம் நாட்டு தேசிய மொழிகளையும் கற்றனர். அமலமரித்தியாகிகளினால் யாழ்ப்பாணம், கொழும்பு, சிலாபம் மற்றும் அநுராதபுரம் போன்ற மறைமாவட்டங்களை உருவாக்கவும் அங்கே சுதேச குருக்களை பயிற்றுவிக்கவும் இயலுமானதாக இருந்தது.பின்நாட்களில் சில அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் அம்மறைமாவட்டங்களுக்கு ஆயர்களாகவும் தெரிவுசெய்யப்பட்டனர் (யாழ்ப்பாணம், கொழும்பு, சிலாபம், பதுளை மற்றும் அநுராதபுரம்).

அவர்களில் ஒருவரான பேராயர் தோமஸ் கூறே அவர்கள் இலங்கையின் முதல் கருதினால் ஆவார்.

சொத்துடமைகள்

பேராயர் இல்லம், அக்கவைனஸ் கல்லூரி, புனித அலோசியஸ் குருமடம் மற்றும் கத்தோலிக்க அச்சகம் போன்ற சொத்துடமைகள் அனைத்தும் ஆயர் கிறிஸ்தோபர் பொஞ்ஜின் அவர்களால் பிரான்ஸிலிருந்து பெற்றுக்கொள்ளப்பட்ட நிதியின் வழியாகப் பெறப்பட்டவை ஆகும்.

அமலமரித்தியகிகள் தமது பணி முயற்சிகளில் புதுமையானவற் படைத்தவர்களாக கணப்படுகிறார்கள். உதாரணமாக **அருட்தந்தை. பீற்றர் பிள்ளை** அடிகளார் இலங்கையில் சமூக நீதியின் செயற்பாட்டாளராக திகழ்ந்தார். அதனைத்தொடர்ந்து இரண்டாம் வத்திகான் சங்கத்தின் படிப்பினைகளை பொதுநிலையினருக்கு அறிமுகப்படுத்த முனைந்தவரான **அருட்தந்தை. திஸ்ஸ பாலசூரிய அமதி அடிகளார்** தமது சமுதாய சமய நடுநிலைய நிறுவகத்தினுடாக அப்பணியை முன்னெடுத்துச்சென்றார். **அருட்தந்தை . அன்று பீட்டர் அமதி** அவர்கள் சிங்கள மொழியில் கத்தோலிக்க திருவிவிலியத்தை மொழிபெயர்பதற்கு உதவிபுரிந்தவர் ஆவார்.

அருட்தந்தை.ஜே.பி.அன்ரோனைனஸ் அவர்கள் 'செட்டிக்' (SETIK) என்ற அமைப்பை தேயிலை தோட்டத்தொழிலாளர்களின் வளர்ச்சிக்காக கண்டியில் நிறுவினார். **அருட்தந்தையர்களான ஹேங் ஸ்க்ராம் அமதி அடிகளார்** மற்றும் **ஸ்ரனிஸ்லாஸ் பர்னாந்து அமதி அடிகளார்** ஆகியோர் 'கிறிஸ்தவ தொழிலாளர்களின் இயக்கம்' என்ற அமைப்பு ஊடாக தம் அப்போஸ்தலிக்க பணியை ஆற்றி வந்தனர். **அருட்தந்தை.மைக்கல் றொட்றிகோ அமதி அடிகளார்** தாமாக முன்வந்து புத்தல விவசாயிகளின் முன்னேற்றவேண்டுமென்பதை உணர்ந்துகொண்டு அப்பணியை முன்னெடுத்துச்சென்றார். **அருட்தந்தை. பீலிக்ஸ் மாவெல் அடிகளார் அமதி** அவர்கள்

இலங்கையில் ‘லக்ரிவி’ எனும் குழந்தைகளுக்கான சிறுவர்களுக்கான இயக்கத்தை அறிமுகப்படுத்திவைத்தார்.

அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் மாகாளுநொடுக்கம் மற்றும் நவநாள் மறையுரைகளை வழங்கும் பொருட்டு வவுனியாவில் ‘அமதி அகம்’ மற்றும் வென்னப்புலவில் ‘நாசரேத்’ எனும் இரு மறையுரை குழுமங்களை நிறுவினர்.

பல அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் கொழும்பிலுள்ள வைத்தியசாலைகளில் நோயாளிகளுக்கும் பலவீனமாக்கப்பட்டவர்களுக்கும் ஆன்மீககுருக்களாக இருந்துள்ளனர். அவர்களில் ஒருவரான அருட்தந்தை. குளோட் லோரன்ஸ் அமதி அடிகளார் அவர்கள் 45 வருடங்களாக துவிச்சக்கரவண்டியில் பயணம் செய்து வைத்தியசாலை ஆன்மீககுருவாக பணியாற்றினார் என்பது குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது.

மடுவில் திருத்தலங்களையும் தேவத்தை மற்றும் இந்திகொல்ல ஆகிய இடங்களில் சீர்திருத்த மையங்களையும் மக்கோனவில் ஒரு அநாதை இல்லமும் தேவத்தையில் தியான இல்லமும் தமிழ்த்தவில் மறைக்கல்வி நடுநிலையமும் நுவரெலியாவில் விடுமுறை இல்லமும் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளினால் முன்முயற்சியின் காரணமாக நிறுவப்பட்டவை.

பல்வேறு துறவற சபையினரால் நடாத்தப்பட்ட பெரும்பாலான கத்தோலிக்க மகளிர் பாடசாலைகளும் பராமரிப்பு நிலையங்களும் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் அழைப்பின் பெயரில் தொடங்கப்பட்டவை.

அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் பொதுநிலை மக்களை ஆன்மீக வழியில் இட்டுச்செல்லும் பொருட்டு மரியாயின் சேனை, வின்சென் டீ போல் சபை மற்றும் திரு இருதயநாதர் குழுமத்தினர் போன்றவற்றை ஏற்படுத்திக்கொடுத்தனர். அத்தோடு அவர்களை பலப்படுத்தும் நோக்கில் இளையோர் கத்தோலிக்க மாணவர் அமைப்பு, இளையோர் கத்தோலிக்க பெண்கள் அமைப்பு மற்றும்

கிறிஸ்தவ தொழிலாளர் சம்மேளனம் போன்றவற்றை ஆரம்பித்தனர். ஏழை மக்களின் சமுதாய பொருளாதார நிலைகளை அபிவிருத்தி செய்யும் நோக்கில் கொழும்பில் ‘செடெக்’ என்ற அமைப்பை உருவாக்கினர்.

முன்னைநாள் புனிதஜோசப் கல்லூரியினதும் அக்குவைனஸ் உயர்கல்வி கல்லூரியினதும் அதிபரும் வரலாற்று ஆசிரியரும் கல்விமானுமான **அருட்தந்தை. டபிள்யூ. எல். ஏ. டொன் பீட்டர் அடிகளார்** அவர்களின் கருத்தின்படி ஆயர்ம மசெனோட் அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் மீதும் இலங்கை மக்கள் மீதும் அளவற்ற அக்கறையும் அவரது அமலமரித்தியாகிகளின் பணிகளும் இலங்கையின் முன்னேற்றத்துக்கு பெரும் பங்களிப்பை வழங்கியுள்ளன.

உறவுப்பாலத்தின் தேவை இன்று

இலங்கையின் அமலமரித்தியாகிகள் ஏனைய துறவற சபைகள் மற்றும் குருக்களைப் போன்று புதியவரலாற்றுச் சூழலில் புதிய விடயங்களை எதிர் கொண்டு இருக்கின்றார்கள். இவர்கள் அனைவரும் இயேசுக்கிறிஸ்து தம் மக்களுக்கு அருளிய உண்மையான வாழ்வை பெற்றுக்கொடுப்பதற்கு தம்மிடையே உறவுப்பாலத்தை ஏற்படுத்திக் கொண்டு தூய ஆவியாரின் துணையோடு செயற்படுவார்களாக (யோவான்10:10)

ஆக்கம் : *அருட்தந்தை. இம்மனுவேல் பர்னாந்து அமதி,*

மொழிபெயர்ப்பு : *அருட்சகோதரர். அமரசிங்கம் ஜெயகுமாரன் அமதி*



THE OBLATE MADONNA

“We shall always look on her as our mother (OMI C 10).

