

By Jennifer Brailey

Oblate wins Award of Distinction



In 2004, the Niagara Catholic District School Board introduced the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction to recognize the valuable contribution made by individuals and groups to Catholic education in the Niagara Region.

The presentation of the award takes place each year at the Bishop's Gala hosted by the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education. The recipient this year was the late Fr. Stanley Puchniak O.M.I.

Fr. Puchniak was the first Oblate to come to the Archdiocese of Toronto in 1935 at the invitation of Cardinal McGuigan to serve the Polish community. He was the founder of St. Stanislaus/St. Casimir's parishes Credit Union in Toronto, which is the largest parish Credit Union in the world.

In 1947, Fr. Puchniak became pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Wellend. He was instrumental in establishing the first Roman Catholic school in 1953 and, along with Msgr. Vincent Ferrando, the Catholic School board in Wellend. He was responsible for building three schools, two in Wellend and one in Fenwick.

It was at his request that the Felician Sisters (honoured with the Award of Distinction in 2004) came from Toronto in 1954 to teach at the new school, which was called Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Elementary School.

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Fr. Puchniak's First Mass

Following his retirement, Fr. Puchniak was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal for his many years of service to the Church. He died in 1989.

Marco Magazzeni, in his submission to the Niagara Catholic District School

Board requesting that Fr. Puchniak be recognized as a true pioneer of Catholic Education in the Niagara region, said “Fr. Puchniak is what Catholic education was, what it is today and what it needs to be into the future – sacrifice and determination.”

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Fr. Puchniak with his parents

Members of Fr. Puchniak's family came in from Winnipeg for the event. Fr. Chris Pulchny and Fr. Stan Jaworski accepted the award on behalf Fr. Puchniak and the Missionary Oblates of Immaculate Mary. In accepting the award Fr. Chris Pulchny said of our honouree: *“It is an honour to be here this evening to receive the award and recognition for Fr. Stanley Puchniak as the recipient of the 2011 Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction. As you know he was the 1st Oblate to come to the Archdiocese of Toronto. He was invited by Cardinal McGuigan in 1935 to serve the*

Polish community. He had a tremendous love and care for immigrants, the poor and abandoned. He was the founder of St. Stanislaus - St. Casimir's Parishes Credit Union which is the largest parish Credit Union in the World. He was instrumental in bringing the Felician Sisters to Canada from the USA. He built three schools, 2 in Welland and one in Fenwick. And he received the “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” medal. He was a priest, teacher and preacher but above all he was a missionary. He was a proud member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate...

A religious community of men which contributed much to the building up of Canada and helped in weaving the fabric of our society.

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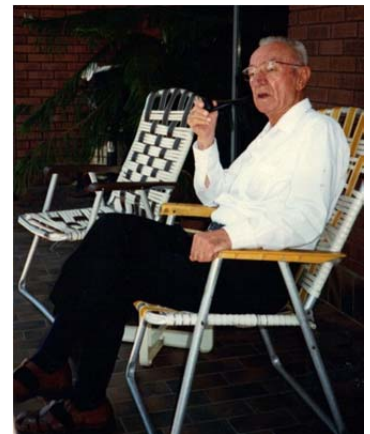


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Most Rev. Gerard Bergie, Bishop of St. Catharines, along with Oblates and members of the family at the celebration

Whatever he did, he did with the support of his religious community and without that support I don't think he would have been able to accomplish all that he did. He was a visionary, a man full of humour and down to earth. He was able to dream dreams and bring them to reality. If he were here tonight, I think he would be speechless but in his heart he would be saying that he was only an instrument and did only what he thought should be done for the betterment of the people he was sent to serve. But I think he would also say.... Thank you. Thank you for continuing to believe in dreams and thank you for continuing to make them a reality!!! On behalf of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I humbly accept this recognition for Fr. Stanley Puchniak and all Oblates who have served in this region".

Father Puchniak dedicated his life as a priest of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate for the sake of Polish communities in Niagara and Toronto. In addition to dedicating his spiritual gifts to those he served, Father Puchniak devoted his time, energy, and passion for the advancement of Catholic education to the communities where he lived. For his dedication to Catholic education Father Puchniak has been acknowledged with the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction 2011.



Enjoying smoking his pipe at the Provincial House, Toronto

Oblate Day in San Antonio



Bro. Paul Patrick being instituted to the ministry of Lector

Nearly 40 Oblates gathered in San Antonio on February 17 at the Benson Residence to celebrate the 185th anniversary of the papal approval of the Oblate Constitutions and Rules. Fr. Tom Ovalle, OMI, the Southwest Area Councillor, presided at the Eucharist, held in the living room to accommodate the large assembly.

Adding to the joy and solemnity of the occasion, during the Mass, some of the

scholastics from the George Sexton House of Studies

celebrated significant steps in their formation process. Bro. Kasonde Michael Musaba (Zambia) renewed his temporal vows for another year. Then Fr. Ovalle instituted five of the young Oblates in the ministries of Acolyte and Reader.

The new Acolytes are second year theology students: Brothers David Uribe, Jesse Esqueda and Lucio Castillo. The newly instituted Readers are first year theologians: Brothers Jason Rossignol and Paul Patrick (Assumption Province).

Fr. Art Flores prepared a meal for the Oblates who had come to share their common origins about which the Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, wrote to the Oblates in France on February 18, 1826: “This is not a mere trifle; they are no longer simply rules, mere pious directions. The Rules are approved by the Church, after the closest scrutiny. They were considered sacred and highly capable of leading those who have embraced them to their goal. They have become the property of the Church which adopted them.”

Fr. Jim Allen OMI

SENIORS' GALORE AT QUEEN OF APOSTLES!



Our Ash Wednesday retreat day was ordinarily attended by approximately 60 seniors. This year felt like a miracle as upward of 150 seniors, men and women, arrived at the Renewal Centre to begin the Lenten season in prayer and song.

Amid many “oohs” and “aahs” from the retreatants

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about the new facility, a meeting room that can accommodate 200 plus, and our newly renovated dining room, the retreat team, Father Wojciech, Father John, and Mrs. Anne Hales, got things under way.

The theme this year was “The Prodigal God” based on Luke’s Gospel, Chapter 15. This story of the prodigal son is one we’ve all heard many times, yet the presentations given shed new insights and meanings on this parable.

In our reflections we were challenged to look at ourselves sometimes as the younger son and sometimes as the elder son. The twist to the story was that both sons were lost. Both sons cared about the Father’s things, but not about the Father.

God seeks us out. Whoever you are, whatever you’ve done, I forgive you, I love you, Come Home! Home is where we know we belong. And how do we do that? We need the help of our elder brother, Jesus.

Instead of a robe – Jesus was stripped of his garments.

Instead of a calf to feast on – Jesus was given vinegar to drink.

Instead of a ring – Jesus was given a crown of thorns.

Salvation is a free gift for us but it is very costly for Jesus – it cost him his life to bring us home.

It was exciting to see and hear these seniors freely sharing their personal experience of the Prodigal God in their lives. After a closing Mass, upon departure, many promised to come back again with a friend next retreat. Praise God!



100 Years of the Parish...

St Stanislaus Kostka began its preparations for its 100th Jubilee in November of 2010. The yearlong celebration started with a special preparation with a Holy Mission beginning Saturday, November, 13 to Sunday, November 21. Fr. Robert Skup OMI from Poland, preached this special Holy Mission. The response from the parishioners was exceptional. Many attended each night, braving the drive into the city. More people than the parish sees during the annual Advent or Lenten Retreat consistently attended the Mission. Fr. Robert, through his sermons and the nightly “Apel Jasnogórski” led the faithful to a greater understanding of their relationship to God and each other.



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On Sunday, November 14, during the high Mass, Fr. Robert blessed the painting of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which was specially commissioned for the 100th Jubilee. The oil painting was painted by Elizabeth Michalczak. During the length of the Mission, the painting graced the altar, so that the presence of the Madonna would move the faithful even closer to God. The painting is currently on a yearly pilgrimage to the homes of the parishioners.

To end the mission, the Provincial, Fr. Janusz Blazejak OMI celebrated Mass on Sunday, November 21. In his introduction, Fr Janusz underlined the importance of celebrating such a Jubilee in the life of the parish and in the life of Polonia. At the conclusion of the Mass, Fr. Janusz blessed a special brass plaque, which will be mounted at the front doors of the church to commemorate this special Mission and the opening of the Jubilee Year. Fr. Rocky Grimard preached an English mission on Saturday November 27 and Sunday, November 28.

There are many Jubilee events planned during the year where it is hoped that our parishioners and the entire Toronto Polonia will come to be more familiar with the role St. Stanislaus has played over its 100 years. Certainly, the parish was not the only one because in 1914, a second Polish Parish, Our Lady of Czestochowa was founded on Davenport Rd., yet the truly unique leadership role of St. Stanislaus needs to be told and remembered.

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On March 6, 2011, parishioners came to renew marriage vows they had made at the time of their marriage in the parish. The Jubilee Committee also invited those who had celebrated significant anniversaries to once again renew their promises to each other. 150 couples registered. As well as over 50 widows and widowers who had received the sacrament of marriage in the parish, received a special blessing on the occasion of the Jubilee.



The church looked like it had years ago. It was full of the faithful who had come to be a part of this special ceremony. The Mass was celebrated by Fr. Wojciech Blach OMI and assisted by the pastor, Fr. Jan Wadolowski OMI and Fr. Richard Kosian OMI. Fr. Wojciech preached the homily in both Polish and English, and the service was also bilingual so that all could feel a part of the ceremony.

After the Mass, everyone was invited to the parish hall for a “wedding reception” and toast. There were only a few tables for those who had difficulty standing and the hall was filled to the brim with guests. The table was set with a buffet that people could eat standing up, while they mingled meeting old friends. There was plenty of food for everyone. All were welcome as no admission was charged.

The biggest attraction of the afternoon was the display of the actual wedding photos of those who had participated in the ceremony earlier. The first photo was from 1924 and represented the grandparents of one of the participants. The photos were hung by decades and everyone was moved by how universal the sacrament of marriage truly is.

There are many more beautiful and important events planned. The next one under consideration is a “Clergy Day” where those priests and nuns who have served at St. Stanislaus will be honoured. As well other clergy within the Oblate Congregation and other Polish Parishes will be invited. The Mass and banquet will be held on June 7, 2011.

The culminating Jubilee event will be the Mass and Banquet to be held on Sunday, October 23, 2011.

A very kind thank-you must go to the 100th Jubilee Committee who has organized all these events. With our faith in God we go through our earthly pilgrimage.

Fr. Jan Wadolowski OMI



Bishop makes a Canonical Visitation to St. Casimir's Parish

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Bishop William McGrattan, who is responsible for the Central Zone in the Archdiocese of Toronto, conducted a canonical visitation of St. Casimir's parish on March 11-13, 2011. The bishop also visited Copernicus Lodge where he met with representatives of the administration, employees and residents. The visit made a deep impression on the bishop as he made reference to it

throughout his visitation. 500 people live at Copernicus Lodge, receiving both medical and pastoral care. Fr. Michael Smith's OMI vision, to take care of the elderly and sick was realized in great measure during his own lifetime. Today we can be grateful that we had such dedicated and visionary Oblates - remarked bishop McGrattan.

Next, our guest visited St. Stanislaus - St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union. The meeting with representatives of the Board of Directors, the administration and employees concluded not only with a group picture, for the bishop decided that he too wished too become a member of the Credit Union. When he was told that the founders of this institution included Fr. S. Puchniak OMI and Fr. M. Smith OMI, he said that many ethnic communities would be envious of achieving such successes!

We also remembered to pay a visit to the Catholic Youth Studio where the employees, along with the director Fr. Paweł Ratajczak OMI, showed off not only their studio, but also the many events which the studio has put on over the past years and those



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upcoming in the near future. Bishop William listened with enthusiasm to the history of Catholic Youth Studio's media work and noted that in today's world, such media ministry plays an integral role in the new Evangelization.

The meetings in the parish began a long marathon of talks with various parish organizations, groups and committees. The meeting with young

9 people, who came despite being on March Break, proved to be very fruitful. There were both university students present as well as high school students. They asked the bishop: How did he discern his vocation? Is it easy to become a bishop? Can a priest leave the priesthood? The young people listened with great attention when the bishop told the story of his own journey to the priesthood and eventually episcopal ministry. They were delighted to hear that the bishop had a crozier (the bishop's staff) given to him by his seminarians that was made from a hockey stick; they insisted that he bring it the following day so that they could see it. After the Sunday masses, many of the kids and young people came to see the bishop and his unusual crozier.

At the end of the visitation, the parish community presented the bishop with a chalice and paten, as well as a stained glass portrait of St. Casimir, asking the bishop that he remember the parish community when he celebrates Mass. In his farewell the bishop said: "I thank you for all the good works that you do here, but most of all for your faith, which is a great encouragement for me."

Fr. Marian Gil OMI



Canada's main event for honouring the Beatification of John Paul II & St. Eugene De Mazenod



Catholic Youth Studio is pleased to present the „Totus Tuus “ gala concert in honour of Blessed John Paul II and Saint Eugene de Mazenod, which will take place on Sunday, May 8th, at 7PM, at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall. The gala concert will celebrate the much awaited beatification of John Paul II. We will also commemorate the 150th anniversary of death of Saint Eugene de Mazenod – the founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Missionary Oblates have continued to play a major role in Canada's Catholic Church.

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In the first half of the concert we will be entertained by light classical and popular hits performed by Jan Lisiecki, Kinga Mitrowska, Christopher Dallo, Kornel Wolak and Quartetto Gelato. In the second half of the concert we will reflect on the deep themes presented by the “Divine Mercy Oratorio” performed by Zbigniew Malkowicz, Marek Balata, and other soloists from Poland. English translations will be shown on screens. The Toronto Silver Symphony Orchestra and choir will be directed by Michael Newnham. This gala concert will be Canada's main event for the beatification of John Paul II and St. Eugene de Mazenod Jubilee.

Fr. Pawel Ratajczak OMI

“I have decided to give up drinking for Lent:”



Lenten penance: There is a story of a father trying to explain Lent to his ten-year-old son.

At one point, the father said, "You ought to give up something for Lent, something you will really miss, like candy.

" The boy thought for a moment, then asked, "What are you giving up, Father?" "I'm giving up liquor," the father replied. "But before dinner you were drinking something," the boy protested. "Yes, but that was only sherry," said the father. "I gave up hard liquor." To which the boy replied, "Well then, I think I'll give up hard candy."

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“I have decided to give up drinking for Lent:”

An Irishman moves into a tiny hamlet in County Kerry, walks into the pub and promptly orders three beers. The bartender raises his eyebrows, but serves the man three beers, which he drinks quietly at a table, alone and orders three more.

As this continued every day the bartender asked him politely, “The folks around here are wondering why you always order three beers?”

"It's odd, isn't it?" the man replies, "You see, I have two brothers, and one went to America, and the other to Australia. We promised each other that we would always order an extra two beers whenever we drank."

Then, one day, the man comes in and orders only two beers.

As this continued for several days, the bartender approached him with tears in his eyes and said, "Folks around here, me first of all, want to offer condolences to you for the death of your brother. You know-the two beers and all..."

The man ponders this for a moment and then replies with a broad smile, "You'll be happy to know that my two brothers are alive and well. It's just that I, myself, have decided to give up drinking for Lent."

CROCUS meets in Vancouver



The Provincials as well as their vicars from the Canada-US Region (CROCUS) met in Vancouver for their meeting from March 14 - 20. Many items were tabled and discussed, among them the theme from the last chapter: Conversion - Apostolic Community. The statutes and policies of CROCUS were also updated and since the two year term of Fr. Janusz as President ended with this meeting, elections took place with the following

results: Fr. John Malazdrewich (Lacombe) was elected President and Fr. Bill Morell (US Province) was elected Vice-President.

The members of CROCUS also had a chance to visit St. Casimir's Parish where they celebrated the Eucharist which was followed by true Polish hospitality hosted by Fr. Jacek Nosowicz.

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Fr. Antoni Degutis has sent us this photo and he claims this is the daily view in Saskatchewan. Thank you Antos!