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Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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To: Oblate Information Rome
From: George F. McLean, OMI
Subject: A New Mode of Oblate Mission

It was a banner day for Oblate missions when Father George F. McLean, OMI opened the day's emails to receive the approval of three present initiatives of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) (www.crvp.org), an international network of scholars which he founded:

(1) Fudan University, among the top three universities of China, has approved a joint center with the RVP to be located on its main campus in Shanghai.
(2) The Gregorian University in Rome is working on a joint RVP-Gregorian University meeting for the Fall of 2011 on "Religion in Public Life: Secular and Sacred," with a list of the world's great thinkers.
(3) Notre Dame University in Lebanon will hold Spring seminars at the RVP Center in Beirut to match the six to ten week Fall seminars in Washington**.**

Each of these is a key advance in the cumulative RVP missionary efforts at the world's most difficult frontiers:

- in the 1960s and 1970s to bring St. Eugene's message of human dignity and comity to the post colonial Southern Hemisphere;
- in the 1970s and 1980s working with Cardinal Wojtyla (later John Paul II) to bring that spiritually inspired vision of the human person and of society to the Marxian materialism of Eastern Europe and then to restore the Christian cultural heritages of the region;
- in the 1980s and 1990s to help China in its nation-building with studies of the range of value issues from the humanization of technology and the economy to urban life and international relations;
- in the 1990s and 2000s to help Islam live faithfully in modern times; and
- now with the Gregorian University in Rome to help the Church in its effort to heal the damage of the scandalous inability to mirror Christ in and for today's secular culture, mirrored already in the mass exodus of the younger generation of Catholics from the Church.

We have conceived the charism of our Founder and hence the Oblate mission as being to the materially poor and marginalized immigrants whom we are serving magnificently from St. Patrick's in the Northeast to the Valley in the Southwest.

But today in relation to the gospel message the abandoned are perhaps less the marginalized than the masses in the cities of the relatively prosperous "first world". They are confused by recent scandals while so many young people had already left the Church. This has been the major concern of the Pope Benedict for Europe; in the US it is said in ecclesial terms that the largest "denomination" in the country consists of young ex-Catholics. Have they abandoned the Church; has the Church abandoned them; has the world simply moved on? In any case, these are now the abandoned as regards the gospel and its values – and their secular mindset is being diffused throughout the world.

In the areas of our prime responsibility in the U.S., as well as in Canada and Europe, must we not say that today the people are massively abandoned in the sense that our old ways no longer adequately communicate the Gospel message, and that our beloved Church is struggling to be able to fulfill its major mission of being a credible witness to Christ in our times. Truly in the opening words of our Founder's rule: the Church most urgently calls out for missionaries.

For this the experience of the RVP might suggest a new and contemporary approach.

(1) It is a *proven mission* to secularity for the secular and materialist "first world" of the North Atlantic for it is directed to cultures as the mode of life of the people of our day.

(2) It is an *accomplished mission* to the "second world" of post Marxist and still Marxist countries.

(3) It is a *thriving, inculturating and hence interreligious mission* extending to all the great religious cultures and peoples of the "third world": Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian, to whom as well we are sent by Christ when he sent His disciples to all peoples and nations. It is only in our global times that for the first time this mission to all becomes a concrete possibility.

(4) It is a *transformative mission* concerned with the poor especially as the abandoned in our society who are positively confused and deceived by the media and prejudiced against religious values. In these conditions to share the salvific message of Christ our mission must evolve to combat the pervasive errors about the authentic goals of human life, to enlighten the mind and move the heart i.e. the culture, and to reach all human communities: global, national and local.

(5) It is a *penetrating mission* to centers where ideas are formed and their implications charted in order through, e.g., educational and public administrative structures to reach the local and global dimensions of contemporary society.

(6) It is a *mission for these secular times* which are taking younger Catholics out of the Church.

(7) It is a *mission urgently needed by the Church* both:
- *internally*, as it faces the difficult task (illustrated by the present scandals) of shifting from a past culture which conceived the Church top-down to the new bottom-up vision of the Church as the people of God; and
- *externally* in order to serve all peoples of all religious in these newly global times.

(8) It is a *mission that requires minimal personnel* because it is directed to evoking local lay capabilities to explore and articulate the working of the Spirit in their cultures and its meaning for living the Gospel in our times.

As the General Chapter approaches, in which as Missionary Oblates the issue of our mission must ever be a central concern, this RVP model may suggest a feasible and needed missionary path ahead for these changing and global times.

Sincerely yours in JC & MI,
George F. McLean, OMI