

CONSULTATION ON WORLD CONGRESS OF OBLATES 2013

Montserrat 22nd -25th October, 2010

Present were:

Brunnhuber Thomas	United Kingdom
Collins Joyce	United States
Feliziani Caterina	Italy
Gammon Michel	Canada
Grüger Martin	Germany
Gubern Prat Jordi	Catalonia
Liberini Laura	Italy
Luise Raffaele	Italy
Marte Giorgio	Italy
Moberg Carla	United States
Morey Pam	United Kingdom
Nicklas Mary Lynn	United States
O'Shea Henry	Ireland/Sant'Anselmo
Panton Patricia	Australia
Primola Franco	Italy
Salgado Chia Eva	Catalonia
Visser Anne-Marie	Netherlands

Apologies were received from Agathe **Eguavoen** of Nigeria and Jacques **Thomas** from France who were unable to be present because of circumstance beyond their control.

Documents:

In addition to the two documents provided by the Organizing Committee, i.e. the letter from Raffaele Luise [Doc 1] and the 59 themes arising from the Congress of 2009 [Doc 2], written suggestions and/or reports were received from: The German preparatory group [*Vorschläge der deutschen Vorbereitungsgruppe v. 8.10.2010* = Doc 3] ; two documents from Joyce Collins (U.S.A) [Docs 4 & 5]; Document *Recent thoughts received from Oblates who attended 2009 Congress* from the UK oblates' group [Doc 6]. Following the Consultation suggestions were received from Jacques Thomas and Agate Eguavoen [Doc 7]

Report:

The Consultation took place in an atmosphere of great friendliness and openness, made possible not least by the warmth of the welcome received in Montserrat and the liaison team of Father Jordi Castanyer, and oblates Eva Salgado Chia and Jordi Gubern Prat.

At a **first session** [Moderator: Henry O'Shea] impressions, positive and negative, of the Congress of 2009 were shared. While the positive impressions and evaluations were in the majority the members of the Organizing Committee agreed with and took to heart the legitimate complaints about the arrangements for meeting participants. [See further on this under 'Conclusions/Decisions' below.] The difficulties of the physically disabled were also mentioned as well as the difficulties experienced by more elderly participants. Among other matters mentioned were: the language of the liturgy – especially the need for translations of the homilies; the need for more free time; the composition of the workshops and, connected with this, the possibility of a greater language-mix in these; the need to give more opportunity to participants to speak.

Although many of the participants had known one another from the 2009 Congress it was suggested in a **second session** that all participants should make a brief presentation of the situation of oblates in their own monasteries of affiliation and – to the extent possible – in their own countries or regions. From this it became very clear how different the situations are as well as how difficult it is to speak of 'oblates' as an homogeneous group. We were reminded that these facts needed to be kept in mind when planning the next Congress.

In a **third and lengthy session** [Moderator: Sergio Portelli] possible themes were discussed. The documents mentioned above were taken as impulses for this discussion but the Organizing Committee were at pains to point out that their own documents and in particular the letter from Raffaele, were not an attempt to pre-empt discussion or decisions. After much backwards and forwards consensus on the following theme emerged. **Obsculta: The Oblate Listening in the World.** It was agreed that this is a provisional title and will need to be refined, particularly in the light of nuances in different languages. Underlying the choice of theme was agreement on the need to discover/learn/re-learn a Benedictine way of listening which is capable of wisely engaging with and where possible influencing contemporary society. It was felt that of the many themes suggested such as marriage and family, youth involvement, the need for initial and continuing formation of oblates, oblate life and everyday life, chant, interreligious dialogue etc. could be dealt with – at least partly – in workshops. It was also suggested by some that it is not possible for one congress to cover everything.

The fourth and fifth sessions [Moderator: Sergio Portelli] were devoted to suggesting the names of possible speakers and themes for workshops. The undesirability of confining workshops to national groups was underlined although the language-difficulties that mixed groups would present were not underestimated.

Among themes suggested for workshops were:

Obedience; Listening in the family; Silence as a power; Humility; Formation; Peace: Gregorian chant; Lectio Divina; Living life in a Benedictine way; Benedictine history; Music and dance; Oblate Identity; Icons and Meditation; Levels of silence; The Oblate in the workplace; The oblate as witness; How to attract young people to the Benedictine ideal; St Benedict and Eastern Monasticism; The relations between oblates and their monasteries; Care of elderly oblates; Oblates and the future; Oblates in marriage; The single (i.e. unmarried) oblate.

Conclusions/Decisions

At a **sixth and final session** Henry O'Shea summed up what had been done and (most of) what had been said. Two important interventions were made by participants:

- 1) National directors/assistants should not be excluded from the process.
- 2) The Congress should not be solely 'European/North American' but should try to involve oblates from South America, Africa and the East.

Henry O'Shea presented the following as decisions of the Consultation and asked for comments/agreements/disagreements:

- 1) The Congress of 2013 will take place in Rome from to October 2013
- 2) The overall theme of the Congress will be **Obsculta: The Oblate Listening in the World.** (working title).

- 3) The Consultation participants will constitute a contact-group which will be consulted by email and other means of communication including conference-calling. Given the differences of time-zones there can also be regional consultations.
- 4) The purpose of the contact-group will be to draw up a general plan and time-table for the Congress and, in particular to decide on themes for the workshops.
- 5) The contact-group will meet again. This meeting will be in Douai Abbey in London in early 2012 , if this can be arranged or at another venue if Douai is not available.
1. Henry O'Shea will draw up a draft report which will be circulated to all participants for comments, corrections and suggestions, after which an agreed report will be sent to the national assistants/directors for their reactions. The Abbot Primate will also receive the draft report.

Henry O'Shea OSB
Sant'Anselmo December, 2010