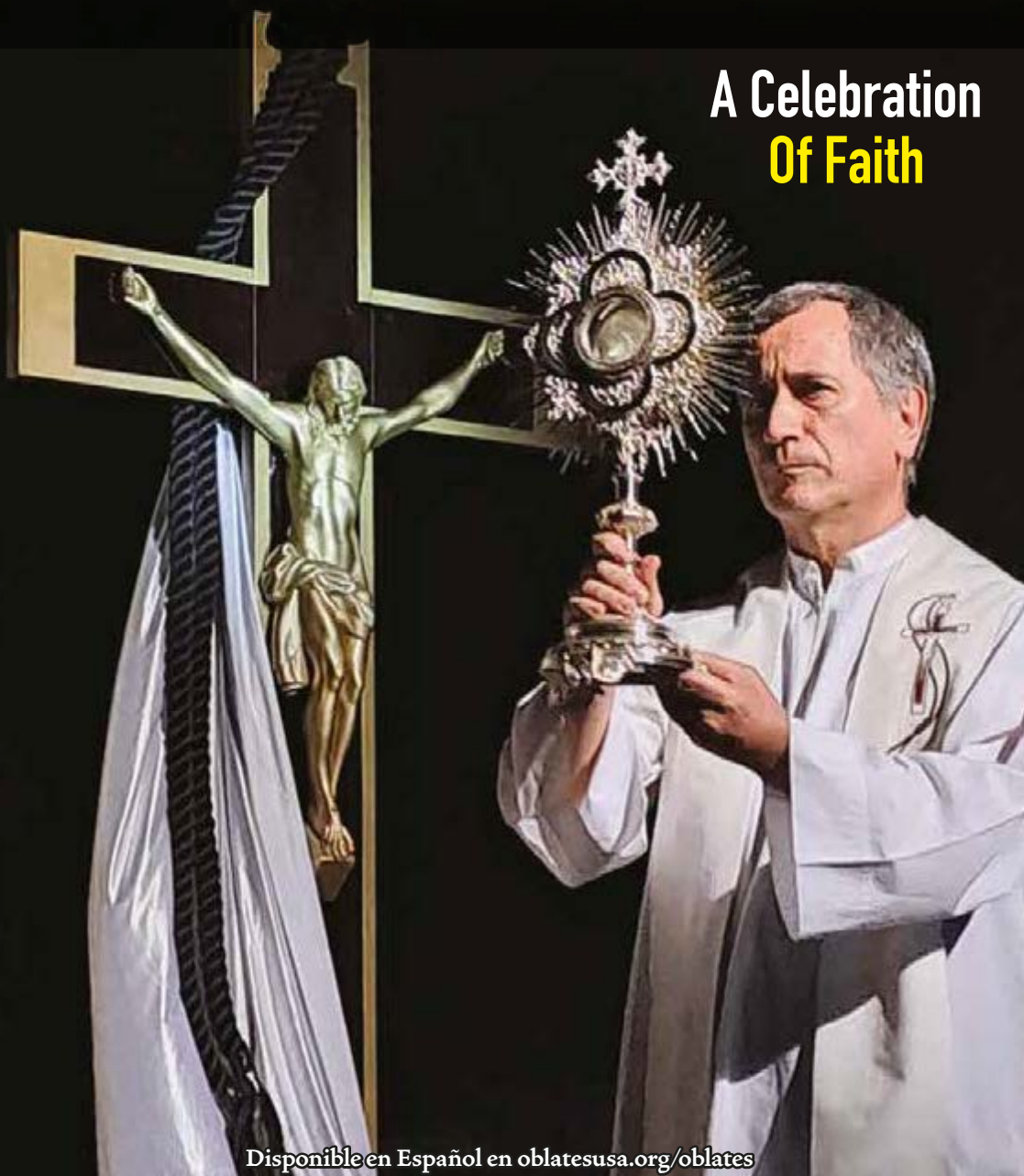




# *Oblate*WORLD

MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

**A Celebration  
Of Faith**



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Father Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI, Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, takes part in a special liturgy for young people at World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal.

## Back Cover:

Missionary Oblates in Haiti use makeshift chapels to spread the Word of God.

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*OBLATE WORLD* magazine seeks to *inform* our readers about the mission to the poor in which Oblates engage around the globe; to *educate* our readers about the teachings of the Catholic faith and the Missionary Oblates; and to *inspire* our readers so that they may enhance their own spirituality.

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MISSIONARY  
**OBLATES**  
OF  
MARY IMMACULATE

# From the *Provincial* Fr. Louis Studer, OMI



***Dear Friend,***

As I write this letter, my assignment as Provincial of the Missionary Oblates in the United States is coming to an end. It has truly been an honor to serve in this position. As I look back on my time as Provincial and as a Missionary Oblate, I am reminded of the saying: The Lord works in mysterious ways.

I grew up on a farm in Iowa and there was a sign in the area that read, "Iowa, A Place to Grow." I didn't like that sign because I struggled with farm life. When the Oblates visited my grade school to talk about vocations, I jumped at the invitation to leave Iowa and attend Our Lady of the Ozarks Seminary in Carthage, Missouri.

I was 13 years old when I left Iowa to join the Oblates. After a short time of homesickness for my parents, I realized that the Oblates were my place to grow.

I grew in my faith as an Oblate seminarian. After ordination, I grew in my understanding of the needs of young people as a teacher, principal and formation director. And while working at our shrine and retreat ministries, I grew in how to better meet the spiritual needs of people who come to us seeking healing and hope.

While working on our provincial leadership team, I was reminded often that my personal growth, and the growth of the Oblates, is only because of our lay partners like you. Your prayers and generosity have allowed us to grow ministries not only in the United States but in Tijuana, Mexico; Zambia and Turkmenistan.

As I begin my new Oblate chapter, I ask you to continue supporting the Oblates as our new leadership team begins their work. Together, we can grow our Oblate ministries well into the future.

Scripture tells us: "The seeds that fell on good soil represent those who truly hear and understand God's word, and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as has been planted." (Matthew 13:23)

I have been blessed to land on some good soil all my life. Sixty years ago, I couldn't wait to get away from Iowa. Now I realize that the rich soil of our family farm was truly a good place to grow.

Thank you, Iowa. Thank you, Missionary Oblates. And thank you. May we continue to grow because we are blessed to be on good soil.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

*Fr. Louis Studer, omi.*

Fr. Louis Studer, OMI

Provincial, United States Province

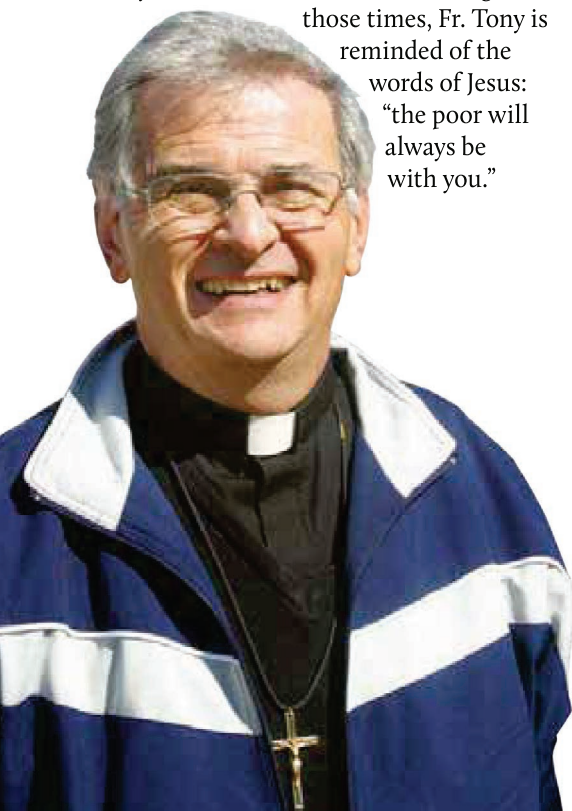
# Turning Lives Around ✠ in New Orleans ✠



When Fr. Tony Rigoli, OMI, was ordained a Missionary Oblate priest 50 years ago, he dreamed of opening a shelter and food pantry for the homeless. That dream finally became a reality in 2005 in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Since then, Fr. Tony has often thought what did he get himself into. The homeless population is large in New Orleans and it is a ministry that can become overwhelming. At

those times, Fr. Tony is reminded of the words of Jesus: “the poor will always be with you.”



Father Tony has been ministering in New Orleans for the past 21 years as Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish which also includes the International Shrine of St. Jude. Located on the outskirts of the famed French Quarter, Fr. Tony and the Missionary Oblates minister in a world far removed from the tourist attractions just a few blocks away. Their ministry is in large part to the homeless, addicted and people who have lost hope.

People like Jacob, who has struggled with trauma and hopelessness nearly all his life. He was just four years old when his father killed his mother in front of him. Jacob struggled in foster care and eventually began living on the streets. Father Tony found Jacob living in a car behind the local library. He started bringing him food and eventually began building trust with him. Jacob, after years of rejection and abandonment, began taking the first steps to recover his life.

“I often ask myself, How do people like Jacob survive, especially when they don’t have a family that can step in and help,” said Fr. Tony. “And that’s where we come in, through faith and social outreach.”

Faith is experienced in unique ways at the parish. There are “jazz Masses” with their distinctive New Orleans sound and look. There is the popular St. Jude Novena four times a year which attracts many people, often not Catholic, who are looking for a path to a better life.





One of the visitors to the Novena who found hope in his hopelessness was Grammy-winning singer Aaron Neville. As his life was spiraling out of control, he found strength and healing through prayer at St. Jude Shrine. He still wears a St. Jude medal as an earring and stops by the Shrine whenever he is back home in New Orleans.

While the shrine attracts some tourists and celebrities, Mark Wahlberg once stopped by for ashes on Ash Wednesday, it is the people who nobody knows their names that Fr. Tony and the Oblates focus most of their attention on.

The beneficiaries of this work are the hundreds of men, women and children who receive breakfast and lunch at the parish community center. They are the ones who receive direction on how to turn their lives around.

"Our neighbors are our parishioners," said the late Fr. John Morin, OMI, when he ministered at St. Jude. "They just aren't registered."

Everywhere Fr. Tony and the Oblates look there is another story. Everywhere they look there is someone else in need. It might be



someone living in an abandoned car down the block. Or someone in the back of the church praying for a miracle to turn their life around. It might be a simple knock at the window or door.

"We can't fix it all. We do what we can, and maybe it will provide a little hope for some people," said Fr. Tony. "This is truly Oblate work here because we are caring for the most abandoned." †



## ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Forming ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *The Next Generation* of Missionary Oblates

The calling to religious life is not a short-term endeavor. Years of discernment and formation are necessary before a man can become a Missionary Oblate priest or brother.

Helping men on this journey is a dedicated team of Oblate formators who minister at the Oblates pre-novitiate, novitiate and scholasticate communities in the United States. Here are profiles of the current Oblates involved in forming the next generation of Missionary Oblates.

### **Father Abraham Chimese, OMI** **SUPERIOR — HENRI TEMPIER PRE-NOVITIATE COMMUNITY**

Father Abraham was born in 1983 in Zambia and grew up in a family of 13 children. He joined the Oblate family in 2006 and completed most of his formation and education for the priesthood in South Africa.

Ordained in 2017, Fr. Abraham was first appointed Associate Pastor at Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka, a vibrant parish with a very active youth ministry. He also served as the community treasurer and as a regency coordinator at the delegation level for four years.

In May 2021, Fr. Abraham came to the United States to be a formator at the Borzaga Scholasticate Community in San Antonio, Texas. He was appointed Superior of the Henri Tempier Pre-Novitiate Community in 2023.

“I have been warmly welcomed at my new Oblate homes in America,” said Fr. Abraham. “There is just something special and enjoyable about this Oblate life, and you find it no matter where you go.”





## **Father Raul Salas, OMI**

### **FORMATOR — HENRI TEMPIER PRE-NOVITIATE COMMUNITY**

Father Raul was born in 1953 in Brownsville, Texas. His interest in becoming a priest began early. At the age of ten he announced he was going to convert Russia. He didn't accomplish that goal, but since his ordination in 1980 he has been influential in developing missionaries who are today working around the world.

For 16 years Fr. Raul ministered at St. Anthony High School, the Oblates' minor seminary in San Antonio, Texas. He then ministered as a parish priest in Texas and later started the Hispanic Ministry at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

In 2007 he was assigned Associate Director at the Oblate scholasticate in San Antonio and the next year became its Superior. He served there for 13 years before returning to the Shrine in 2020 where he also assisted with pre-novitiate formation. In 2022 he returned to San Antonio when the pre-novitiate program moved there.

"I have been blessed to visit many Oblate missions throughout the world in my role as a member of the General Formation Committee," said Fr. Raul. "With much need for clergy, this ministry is quite a challenge. The prayers from our friends and benefactors are greatly appreciated."



## **Father Bill Antone, OMI**

### **DIRECTOR — PRE-NOVITIATE PROGRAM, TIJUANA, MEXICO**

Father Bill was born in 1952 and from a young age knew he wanted to be a priest. At 14 he entered the local archdiocesan seminary but eventually felt that ministering as a diocesan priest was not his calling. He felt a desire to be a missionary and heard about the Oblates through his brother, Fr. Tom Killeen, OMI, who was serving as a chaplain's assistant in the Army.

Father Bill was ordained in 1980 and much of his ministry has taken place in Mexicali, Mexico. He was founding Pastor of Sagrada Familia Parish and helped build Catholic communities from the ground up, in places where there were no religious or social service program available to people living in shacks.

In 2011, Fr. Bill was elected Provincial for the Oblates' United States Province. After serving in leadership, he returned to Mexico where he now leads the pre-novitiate program.

"I have learned so much from the poor. It has been an honor for me to share in their everyday lives, to struggle with them," said Fr. Bill. "As Oblates we must advocate for them, we must give them a voice."



## **Father Eleazar Manuel-Lopez, OMI** **FORMATOR — PRE-NOVITIATE PROGRAM, TIJUANA, MEXICO**

Father Eleazar was born in Mexico and as a young man his life lacked focus. He was distant from God and attended church sporadically. He joined the Mexican Army and worked to curtail drug trafficking.

After moving to the United States, Fr. Eleazar's life changed dramatically when he stumbled across the Oblates' Santa Rosa Parish in San Fernando, California. He got involved with the youth ministry and found his calling in serving people through Christ.

"The people at Santa Rosa welcomed me to their community in a powerful way," said Fr. Eleazar. "I truly am a vocation created by lay people."

Father Eleazar was ordained in 2020 and his first assignment was at the Shrine of St. Joseph the Worker in Lowell, Massachusetts. He is currently a formator at the pre-novitiate program in Tijuana, the same place where he first joined the Oblates.



## **Father Frank Kuczera, OMI** **NOVICE MASTER — IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY NOVITIATE**

Father Frank grew up in a very Catholic and religious family in a small village in the south of Poland. He began his Oblate formation in Poland but joined the Canadian Oblates and was ordained in Canada in 2001. Father Frank's ministries have been primarily in Edmonton and points even farther north including serving the Inuit on King William Island and Baffin Island in the Arctic.

"The priesthood is about washing feet, it's about walking and journey with the people and trying to be human, compassionate and authentic," said Fr. Frank.

Oblate novices in Canada spend their novitiate year in the United States at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate. Father Frank became part of that novitiate team and was installed as Novice Master in 2020.

"Being an Oblate is important to me because you belong to a very specific family. It's a wonderful community of imperfect people like me," said Fr. Frank.



## **Brother George Litiya, OMI** **FORMATOR — IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY NOVITIATE**

The Oblates have been part of Bro. George's life since he was born in 1983. He was baptized by Bro. John Kaplinger, OMI, one of the first Oblates to minister in Zambia. He grew up in the Oblates' Sancta Maria Parish in Lukulu where he was an altar server. In high school he was active in youth ministries at the parish.

Brother George joined the Oblates and took final vows in 2013. His first assignment was at St. Michael Parish in Kalabo. The parish has numerous mission centers in remote villages. Brother George would spend weeks at a time visiting these villages to bring them the Word of God.

In 2020 Bro. George was assigned to the Oblate novitiate in the United States. Each year, several Zambian novices come to the U.S. for their novitiate year. At the novitiate, Bro. George teaches a class on the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates.

Every day, Bro. George tries to follow the instruction of St. Eugene: "Let us bow down, listen respectfully, admire in silence."





## **Brother Pat McGee, OMI** **FORMATOR — IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY NOVITIATE**

Brother Pat grew up as a typical Catholic school boy, serving Mass for seven of the eight years of parochial school. He was impressed by the Oblates he met because they were down to earth and friendly, 'close to the people.' After joining the Oblates, his vocation deepened, and he began to experience the Oblate call to proclaim the Good News to the poor with their many faces.

As a professed Oblate, most of Bro. Pat's ministries have focused on retreat work and helping men discern their calling to religious life. He spent ten years in Recife, Brazil as a member of the formation team there. Since 2017, Bro. Pat has been part of the Oblate novitiate staff in Godfrey, Illinois.

"At the novitiate I get to accompany young men in their process of discernment and growth in commitment to life as Oblates," said Bro. Pat. "It is a privilege and a source of grace for me."



## **Father Juan Gaspar, OMI** **SUPERIOR — BORZAGA SCHOLASTICATE COMMUNITY**

Father Juan was born in Houston in 1977 and is the oldest of seven sons in a family of Mexican immigrants. Before joining the Oblates in 2006 he was working as a teacher in elementary schools in Houston.

"I loved teaching the children. But I felt something was missing in my life," said Fr. Juan. "I made a promise to God that if my future didn't become clear in a year, I would consider religious life. Well, you can't tell God something and then back out of the deal. God has had His way on me and is still working on me."

Father Juan's first assignment as an Oblate priest was at Santa Rosa Parish in San Fernando, California. He then ministered at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows before becoming the Director of the Henri Tempier Pre-Novitiate Community. Last year he was appointed Superior of the Borzaga Scholasticate community which consists of Oblate seminarians from throughout the world who study at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

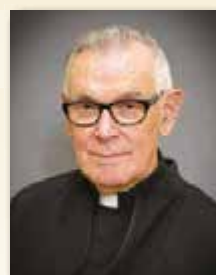


## **Father Ron LaFramboise, OMI** **FORMATOR — BORZAGA SCHOLASTICATE COMMUNITY**

Young people have much to be thankful for when it comes to Fr. Ron. For 30 years, he was a missionary in Japan where he was the administrator of several schools. He also established some of the first kindergartens in the county.

After his time in Japan, Fr. Ron served as the Superior of the Oblate General House in Rome for 12 years. He then returned to the United States and has spent most of his time mentoring young men on their Oblate journey. He is currently a formator at the Oblate scholasticate community in San Antonio, Texas.

"I look with no little bit of paternal pride and much hope at the new (younger) generation in whose formation I am privileged to be a part," said Fr. Ron. "May they be blessed with the same support I received, and may they give themselves courageously to bring the Good News and love of God to all who cross their path."



## **Father Arun Rozario, OMI**

### **FORMATOR — BORZAGA SCHOLASTICATE COMMUNITY**

Born in Bangladesh in 1973, Fr. Arun's Oblate journey has taken him around the world. After his ordination in 2002, his first assignments were in his native country where he was a parochial vicar and then Rector of the Oblate Juniorate in Dhaka. In 2007 he was assigned as a formator at the International Roman Scholasticate in Italy.

When the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, needed a new secretary in 2014, Fr. Arun accepted the position. At the end of his term, Fr. Lougen assigned Fr. Arun to be a formator at the Borzaga Scholasticate Community in San Antonio, Texas.

Father Arun has cheated death twice. He survived a fatal accident when he was an Oblate seminarian. In Rome, colon surgeries put him into critical condition.

"My family and the Oblates unceasingly prayed for my recovery," said Fr. Arun. "I firmly believe God gave me a second life. It is a miracle that I am alive today."



## **Father Frank Santucci, OMI**

### **FORMATOR — BORZAGA SCHOLASTICATE COMMUNITY**

Father Frank was born in South Africa, where he ministered in education, formation and parish ministries for 17 years. He was subsequently based in Rome and Aix-en-Provence, France (the birthplace of St. Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates) for 20 years as he traveled the world as an Oblate charism and spirituality animator.

Today, Fr. Frank holds the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. The Chair is the first of its kind and is dedicated to the study and dissemination of the history, charism and spirituality of the Missionary Oblates and their founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod.

"Saint Eugene did exactly what Mary did, he received Christ in order to share Him with all the world," explains Fr. Frank. "The Oblates continue to live their founder's inspiration and serve as the Savior's co-workers in bringing the hope of salvation to the most abandoned."



## **Father Antonio Ponce, OMI**

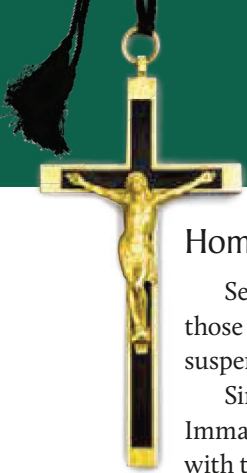
### **FORMATOR — BORZAGA SCHOLASTICATE COMMUNITY**

Father Antonio is a native of Mexico. He joined Oblate formation in Tijuana and was ordained to the priesthood in 2009. In 2010 Fr. Antonio was named Associate Pastor at Santa Rosa Church in San Fernando, California. He also served as the Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office for the Oblates in Washington, D.C. In 2017 he became a member of the Oblates' Provincial Council while also serving as the Superior of the Borzaga Scholasticate Community.

In 2021 Fr. Antonio became a U.S. citizen. He has been an advocate for compassionate immigration reform throughout his Oblate journey, including his time leading the scholasticate community which welcomes Oblate seminarians from around the world.

"The Oblates continue to champion immigration reform and push against harmful enforcement practices that separate families," said Fr. Antonio. "Our faith and charism believe in the dignity of every human being, especially that of children and youth. Compassion, family unity and opportunity for newcomers from one generation to the next are foundations of this nation."





# Oblate Crossings

## Homeless Ministry Restored in Texas

Several years ago, Fr. Mike Amesse, OMI, developed an extensive service to those living on the streets of downtown Brownsville, Texas. The ministry was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since Lent of 2023, the Missionary Oblates and their parishioners at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Brownsville have resurrected this outreach with the name “Cristo en la Calle” (Christ in the Street).

The visits consist in offering sandwiches, fruit and water, prayer and friendship. If volunteers encounter refugees on the way, they orient them to the parish respite center in the gym. However, the main focus and priority are those who live long-term on the sidewalks and in alleys, having substance abuse issues, mental illness or no income or family.

The ministry begins at 8:30 p.m. with a prayer and then volunteers walk with red wagons loaded with sandwiches prepared by rotating groups.

One elderly lady named Angelina recently told the volunteers: “I feel I do not exist, but when you come it makes me feel I exist.” †



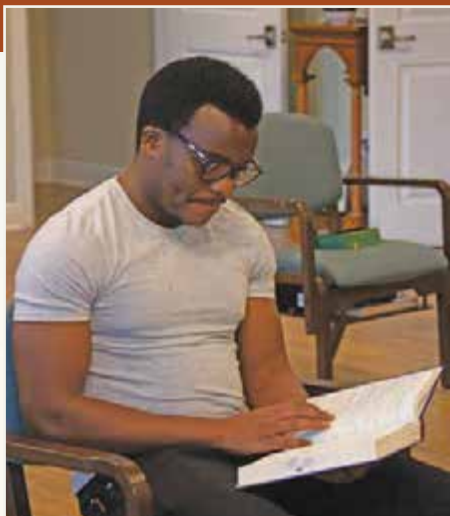
## General Statistics of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

The following information is provided by the General Administration of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In recent years, the Oblates have seen increased numbers in Africa and Asia, with Latin America remaining steady and declines in Canada/USA and Europe.

The below statistics for Fathers include one cardinal, eight archbishops, 36 bishops and two apostolic prefects. †

2022					2023			
Fathers	Brothers	Scholastics	Total		Fathers	Brothers	Scholastics	Total
36	2	0	38	Gen. Adm.	39	2	0	41
595	47	266	908	Africa	597	51	271	919
327	28	57	412	Latin America	325	26	54	405
597	36	215	848	Asia	610	40	194	844
437	59	4	500	Canada/USA	415	54	5	475
656	86	45	787	Europe	632	79	35	746
2648	258	595	3493	Total	2618	252	560	3430

# EASY ACCESS TO A PRIEST



When Bro. Rafael Banda, OMI, was exploring a calling to religious life, he looked at two options, joining the local diocese or the Missionary Oblates. The decision didn't come down to theology or philosophy. Rather, it was a decision made on something much simpler — access.

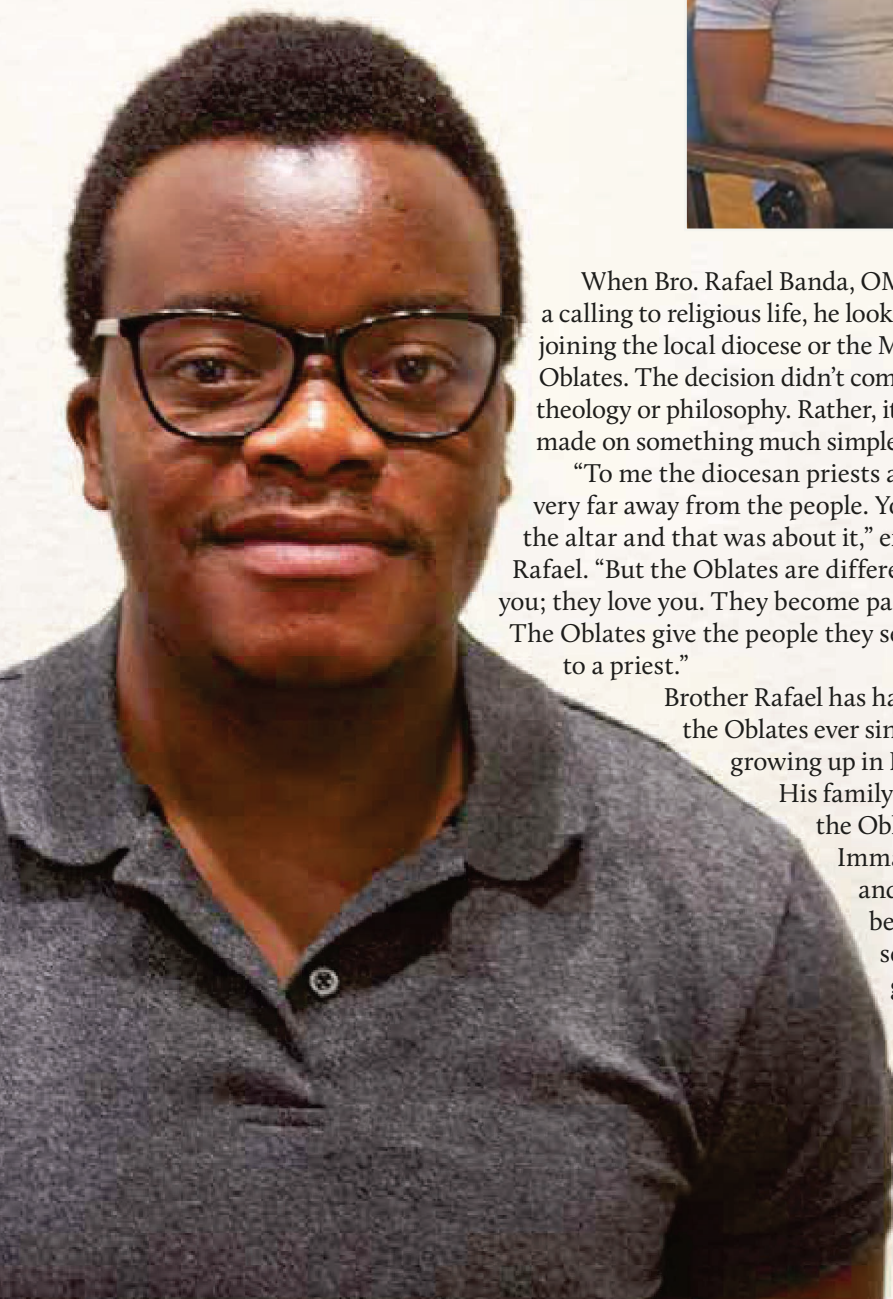
“To me the diocesan priests always seemed so very far away from the people. You saw them at the altar and that was about it,” explained Bro. Rafael. “But the Oblates are different. They greet you; they love you. They become part of your family. The Oblates give the people they serve easy access to a priest.”

Brother Rafael has had easy access to the Oblates ever since he was a child growing up in Lusaka, Zambia.

His family are members of the Oblates' Mary Immaculate Parish and Bro. Rafael became an altar server while in grade school.

Later he joined the choir, youth group and vocation club.

In the vocation club Bro. Rafael







examined a variety of options for his future including marriage and maybe a medical career. But he kept being drawn back to the



idea of religious life. He then contacted the Oblate Vocation Director in Zambia, Fr. Ron Walker, OMI.

"I became very close to Fr. Ron who was truly a friend to everyone," said Bro. Rafael. "He was wonderful in showing me the way to find happiness as a Missionary Oblate."

Brother Rafael joined the Oblates' pre-novitiate program in Zambia. He then spent a year in South Africa attending the novitiate, and then took theology courses at the Oblates'

St. Joseph Scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa.

In 2021, Bro. Rafael was given the honor of becoming a student at the Oblate School of Theology (OST) in San Antonio, Texas. He is now part of a global community of the Oblate seminarians studying at OST.

In his studies Bro. Rafael says he has become especially drawn to a legendary Oblate missionary — Bl. Joseph Gerard, OMI. At the request of the Oblate founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, Bl. Joseph left France at age 22 to become a missionary in southern Africa. Over the next 61 years he would never see his native country again.

***"Saint Eugene calls us to go out and serve, to be missionaries," said Bro. Rafael. "That is what I want to do, whether it is back home serving in Zambia or in a far-off place like Brazil or the Philippines."***

And wherever Bro. Rafael's Oblate journey takes him, he will always be providing people with easy access to a priest. †



## Celebrating 140 Years of the Oblate Lourdes Pilgrimage

In 1883, Missionary Oblates from England and Ireland led the first pilgrimage to Lourdes from a country other than France. A total of 310 pilgrims took part in the pilgrimage. Prior to the trip, the Oblates had circulated a parchment throughout England and neighboring countries on which more than 100,000 faithful had written their intentions of prayer.

Today, the Oblates' Anglo-Irish Province still coordinates an annual Lourdes pilgrimage involving nearly 1,000 pilgrims.

An account of the first Oblate Lourdes pilgrimage appeared in *Mission des Oblats* in 1883. Here are some excerpts from that account, translated by Fr. Liam Griffin, OMI.

The pilgrims were more than 300 and among them were men like the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Denbeigh, Lord Arudel, Lord Harries, aristocratic women, models of simplicity and charity, converts to Catholicism, who, by accepting the Catholic faith, had sacrificed all their personal fortunes and close relations and family. They came from: England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India.

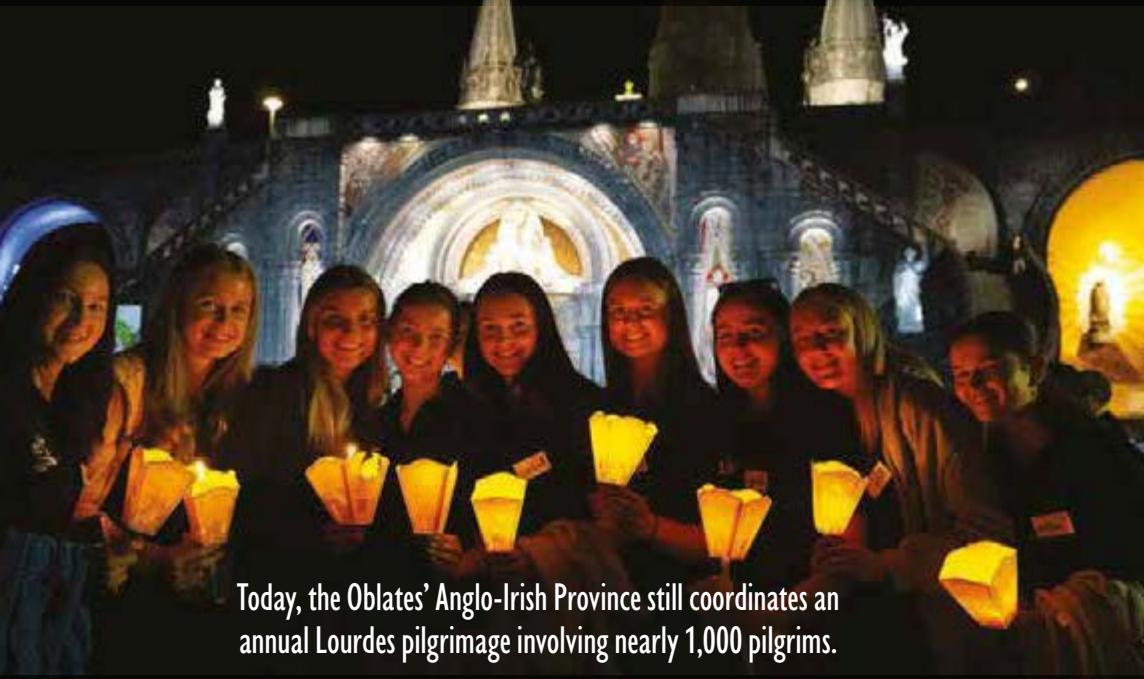
When the pilgrims processed for the first time to



the Basilica, a thrill of emotion passed through the hearts of those attending and tears were flowing. They believed to be taking part in the dream of Catholic England and foreseeing the Kingdom of God brought there. The

pilgrims celebrate a Triduum of Reparation and of Supplication.

Each morning they received Holy Communion, they had Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the afternoon and in the evening a time of prayer at the Grotto. Nothing was more beautiful than the recitation of



Today, the Oblates' Anglo-Irish Province still coordinates an annual Lourdes pilgrimage involving nearly 1,000 pilgrims.

the Rosary each evening at the Grotto and their solemn and sorrowful singing of the Miserere with lighted candles; nothing was more touching than their prayers for the sick in front of the Baths; arms outstretched, kissing the ground.

On the evening before their departure, they came together in the Basilica for their last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; two tables were covered with votive offerings and letters or petitions. They distributed the petitions, the letters and the offerings, carrying them in procession to the Grotto and placed them on the altar. In the evening they held their own torchlight procession; it was a triumphant prayer following the atonement and supplication.

The following day they received Holy Communion a last time at the Grotto. Oh, how so many generous promises went up to the Blessed Virgin! Father William Ring, OMI, put forward the suggestions to the pilgrims that they recite the Rosary each day until the month of May next year: all raised their hands in agreement. One could feel that these pilgrims embraced in prayer

once again more fervently their entire families and a great nation.

In the air of solemnity, rosary beads in hand, they dragged themselves from the Grotto to bathe their sick pilgrims, to pray once again at the Baths, on their knees, arms outstretched, in the presence of numerous pilgrims who were drawn by the Solemnity of Corpus Christi and who never tired of admiring this simple and intense piety.

The pilgrims said to Our Lady "see you again" and made a solemn promise that their next pilgrimage would last at least eight days. They are confident that healings were obtained, and that there was an effect on the whole of England which will continue to grow. England came to meet, at Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Immaculate Queen; Our Lady of Lourdes will bring forward the moment where England will become again, according to the promise of the pilgrims, one of the brightest jewels in the crown of Holy Church. †









# Oblate Youth CELEBRATE Their Faith

More than 1,000 young people who are members of Missionary Oblate parishes traveled from around the world to attend World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, in August. In addition to celebrating the Universal Church, the Oblate youth also took part in programs specifically designed to share in the charism of the Oblates and their founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod.

# Snapshots from the Tijuana Mission

## It's the First Time in 20 Years They Have a Decent Roof

Rosario Luna is a 66-year-old lady who lives with her 38-year-old son. Rosario earns a little money selling food outside her house on weekends. She must always be concerned about falling because if she broke something, healing would be complicated by her diabetes. The diabetes has also affected her vision

Rosario used to get government help to buy her medicine, but since the change in government programs, she no longer knows how to get that help. Accordingly, she has had to pay for her medicine, which is quite a burden for her.

Rosario has helped in the parish for the last eight years, cleaning and helping serve in other capacities. However, when Covid-19 came, the parish, concerned for her health, asked her to stay home. She did not want to, but accepted it, even though it was probably a blessing given her diminishing eyesight and the danger of walking.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate parish program receives donations specifically for putting roofs on deteriorated houses. Since receiving a roof recently, Rosario says that it's the first time in 20 years they have a decent roof and she doesn't have the loud noise of rain, wind flapping tarps, and buckets for catching the leaks. Now she is sleeping much more peacefully and feels it is helping her energy level. †



## A Very Special Angel

Ángel Roberto was born on June 13, 2013, and has Down syndrome. He is a very active child who likes to eat pizza and listen to music.

His parents met in Jalisco and decided

to migrate to Tijuana to have a better-quality life.

A short time later Ángel was born. From then his family has faced many challenges. His diagnosis required therapy, constant consultation and checkups, all which was very costly for his family, but Ángel was a strong motivation to keep moving forward.

Ángel's father works in construction and sweeping streets making minimum wage, and his mother works at the swap meet. When

Ángel's younger sister was born, his mother decided to stay at home to take care of Ángel and the new baby.

Ángel started school when he was 5 years old, but it was very far from his house. Ángel's parents found out about our program







## Inviting God Into Their Marriage

Felix is a 29-year-old man who recently married the mother of his three children after nine years living together. His wife works in a factory making \$100 a week and that is what the family lives on.

Felix has a kidney condition requiring him to travel for treatment three times a week over the past seven years. His wife applied to donate one of her kidneys to Felix. So far, the tests look positive, and they are working through the paperwork and need to line up blood donors to help with the cost. The Oblate parish helps by being the place where the youth come to donate blood in order to help the family. Felix recalls that he was angry at God asking “Why me?” when he was first diagnosed.

Felix says his two-year-old toddler motivates him to keep going and try to recover from his illness because he wants to always see her smiling. The family has been coming to church. The social ministers at the church encouraged them to get married.

Father Lucio Castillo, OMI, helped them with pre-marital talks. They really liked hearing that inviting God into their marriage would change things. They also liked the attention the church was giving their family. Given the urgency of the situation, Fr. Lucio was able to make the path to marriage easy and the church community rented a tuxedo for Felix and bought a modest dress for his wife. Another person donated a cake and a small reception.

Today people visit the family, bringing diapers, medicine, and other supplies. It is not a lot, but it is very welcome. †

Transforming Lives With CARES, an education program for children with special needs, and decided to enroll him there as it was closer to home. More importantly they believed that Ángel would obtain quality care and education from the professors. Ángel's mom tells us — “Ángel has had much growth since he joined the special education program with the Oblates, he is much more obedient, orderly and is able to take care of responsibilities at home.”

Ángel's house is not in great condition. They all live in a single bedroom, measuring 9 feet by 12 feet, that is also their living room. Their bathroom is in a state that doesn't allow



them to shower or fulfill their basic necessities. For this reason, a group of volunteers has begun to collect funds to begin construction of a new room and bathroom for Ángel's family. Ángel is a very special child and we want to be able to make his home a special place for him and his family. †

# Ukraine Snapshots



## Oblates Honored for Service to Victims of War

During a special meeting of the State Administration of the Kiev Military Administration, recognitions were presented to representatives of churches and religious associations involved in humanitarian aid to victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Oblate Father Pawel Wyszowski, OMI, and Bro. Sebastian Jankowski, OMI, were honored for their heroic work during the war. Father Pawel is the Pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Kiev and Bro. Sebastian is the director of Kitchen for the Homeless, a ministry to people living on the streets of Kiev.

"I am pleased that the State Administration of Kiev noticed the activities of the parish of St. Nicholas during the Russian invasion," said Fr. Pawel. "Yes, we stayed, we didn't run away, we try to serve the best we can. We distribute and deliver humanitarian aid to those most in need, even when Kiev and Chernihiv regions are under fire."

Brother Sebastian and his team of volunteers cook and distribute as many as 500 meals a day to people living on the streets in Kiev. He also works tirelessly to deliver gas cookers to people living in surrounding villages. The war in Ukraine has had one unexpected positive effect on the Oblates' ministry at St. Nicholas Parish. The church had been converted into a music hall when the Communists were in charge of Ukraine. When Communism fell, the Oblates were allowed to enter Ukraine and began using the building on a limited basis as the facility was still under the control of the owner of the music hall. When war broke out, the owner fled, and the Oblates now have complete freedom to use the church as they desire.

"The church is open, active and alive, always full of people in need of help and those who, despite being tired can help," said Fr. Pawel. "This is yet another proof that the house of God must function as intended." †







## Obuchow — Place Where You Can Get Help

Churches of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Ukraine have become asylums for the needy. War refugees have found shelter there and humanitarian aid campaigns are also carried out at the churches.

The Oblates minister in Obuchow, located in the Kiev region, continuously distributing aid that flows in from all over the world. A shipment of nearly 5 tons of aid arrived from the Oblates in Germany consisting of clothing, footwear, hygiene products, blankets, bedding and other everyday items. †



## Transforming Armor to Icons

A unique exhibition is talking place at an Oblate parish in Ukraine.

The exhibit, "Spiritual Victory," consists of 12 icons that were made of armor plates from Russian weapons. Some of the plates contained bullet holes. Artists from the Art Armor Project painted the icons with images of Christ and holy protective elements.

The exhibit opened at St. Nicholas Church on June 1, International Children's Day in Ukraine. A prayer service was held at the opening of the exhibit for the children of Ukraine, particularly those who have been killed, injured or displaced. †





# Filipino Oblates Launch “Project Grace”



By Fr. Eduardo C. Vasquez, Jr., OMI

The acronym G.R.A.C.E. stands for Garden Ready Always for Consumption of Everyone.

This is the name of the project initiated by the Oblates at the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Caloocan City in the Philippines, in response to food scarcity brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdown.

It was on March 12, 2020, when the Philippine government announced to the public that the whole region would be placed on lockdown for at least 30 days to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. But this 30-day

lockdown was extended for many months. It was this context that gave birth to Project G.R.A.C.E.

Food availability in every home through container gardening is the main goal of the project. In an urban setting the big challenge is the limited space and lack of availability of garden soil. Almost everything in Caloocan City is cemented.

To address this challenge, I made an appeal to people to start planting vegetables in their homes using recycled containers. I also called







for donations of scrap containers that I could use for planting.

Many people responded to my appeal. They brought many kinds of containers to the parish such as empty soft drink bottles, egg trays, coffee containers, ice cream containers, old vehicle tires and everything that can be used for planting. One parishioner immediately donated packs of vegetable seeds to be distributed to people who were interested in gardening.

Some people also started to donate funds for the installation of a rainwater reservoir, solar equipment and the construction of a greenhouse in the church compound. Politicians, private citizens and other civic organizations also donated cash and aquaponic facilities. The support was indeed overwhelming.

Many people in their houses and in their village also began to plant vegetables, and this snatched the attention of those in the media. Project G.R.A.C.E. became popular because of the media coverage made by both local and international media outfits.

Within six months, the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace became an urban organic farm model in Caloocan City. The vegetables that can be found in the church compound are spinach, eggplants, okra, moringa, lettuce and other herbal plants. The vegetables are used to feed the hungry on the streets and offered to volunteers who help in the parish feeding program.



Farm animals such as goats, sheep, pigs, ducks, chickens and rabbits are now also being raised in the church compound to make people aware of the interconnectedness of God's creation. The whole compound of the church is now designed in a way

that demonstrates a food ecosystem. The manure of the animals is used as organic fertilizer for vegetables and these vegetables are also used to feed humans and animals.

With the untiring support of the people, Project G.R.A.C.E. will continue to grow and inspire the people to produce their own food and to care for our common home. †



In 1952, an ad appeared in a Minneapolis newspaper announcing the estate of Joseph Lethert was for sale in Buffalo, Minnesota. The property was in a picturesque location along Buffalo Lake and caught the attention of the Missionary Oblates, who were looking to create a retreat ministry in the Twin Cities area.

The Oblates purchased the property and on June 16, 1952, Fr. Boniface Wittenbrink, OMI, arrived to take possession of the property. He immediately began converting the estate into Christ the King Retreat Center.

Father Boni transformed the music room into a chapel, and within two weeks the first Mass was held there. Two months later, the first retreat took place at Christ the King. Twenty-eight retreatants attended, full capacity for the center.

Today, 70 years later, Christ the King Retreat House has welcomed hundreds of thousands of retreatants to the shores of Buffalo Lake to discover a deeper understanding of their faith. The current staff recently completed a celebration of the retreat center, one of the Oblates' premier ministries in the United States.



"You hear a lot of noise in the world and a lot of competing voices," said Fr. Richard Sudlik, OMI, the retreat houses' current director. "To be able to go to a place where things are quiet and still, and that you get hopefully fed spiritually by the preaching that we offer, I think, is what people are looking for in a time of chaos."

Since it opened in 1952, Christ the King has undergone four major renovations and expansions. Today, as many as 130 retreatants can use the facility at one time. In addition to the guest rooms, the center includes two conference rooms, two chapels and two dining rooms.

Shortly after the retreat house opened, the Oblates were pleased to learn of a local story about the land upon which the center is built. According to an Ojibwa Native American legend, they called the land *Dabinawa*, a word meaning a place of shelter, solitude and peace. The Oblates are proud to use the land in the same way as its original "owners."

Retreatants to Christ the King come seeking sacredness, peace, tranquility and the opportunity to find comfort in the Lord. Many retreatants "come back home" year after year. There are a variety of retreat



# Christ the King Retreat Center

## *A Place of Shelter, Solitude and Peace for 70 Years*



formats for men, women, couples and specific groups. Individuals can also receive spiritual direction either in-person or using virtual platforms such as Zoom and FaceTime.

All members of the preaching team at

Christ the King are spiritual directors who have received formative training in the spiritual life, human development, theology, scripture, as well as supervision in the ministry of spiritual direction. They value their own spiritual journey and are trained in listening to the impact that life has on the spirit.

Christ the King offers hospitality to Catholic and non-Catholic individuals and groups. Nonprofit programs who do good work in the community also use the facility. Retreats for the dioceses of Minnesota, discernment retreats for religious life, Marriage and Engaged

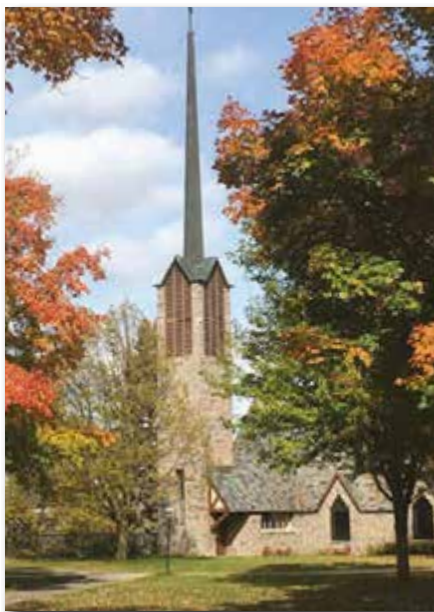
Encounter, parish retreats and 12-Step programs are also held at Christ the King.

During the past 70 years, the Christ the King community has had to persevere during some uncertain times. This perseverance was

most necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic when retreats were cancelled or had very limited availability. Over the past year, Fr. Sudlik has been encouraged that many faithful retreatants have returned to Christ the King. He is especially encouraged by the number of first-timers coming to the retreat center.

"We recognize 70 years of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is almost unbelievable to see how that tiny seed in 1952 has grown into our reality today," said Fr. Sudlik.

"With the help of the Christ the King community, we continue to be *Dabinawa* — a place of shelter, solitude and peace." †



# The Face of the Good News



presented to him during a celebration of his 50th Anniversary as a Missionary Oblate priest.

In the poster, hundreds of photos of friends and parishioners of Fr. Paul form a collage over an image of the priest. At the bottom is a quote from St. Eugene de Mazenod,

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a poster in Fr. Paul Nourie's room is worth an infinite number of words.

The poster was given to Fr. Paul by his parishioners at Most Precious Blood Parish in Chula Vista, California. It was

founder of the Missionary Oblates: "We must act as if success depends on our ability, and to put in God all our confidence."

For more than 60 years as a Missionary Oblate, Fr. Paul has accomplished many successes because of his abilities as a priest,





mentor and friend, and he has done it always with confidence in God.

Father Paul was born in Massachusetts and grew up in a family that was active in their parish. After learning about the missionary work of the Oblates, Fr. Paul joined the community and was ordained in 1964.

Father Paul's first assignment took him far away from his Massachusetts hometown. He was assigned to a high school in southern California where he taught everything from religion to typing. Except for a few years in vocation ministry, he would spend most of his priestly life in California.

In Oakland, Fr. Paul was Pastor at St. Mary's Parish. Located downtown in one of the poorest sections of the city, Fr. Paul led efforts to get more than 100 housing units built for senior citizens. He also created an extensive soup kitchen program serving hundreds of meals every day.

Father Paul would later serve eight years at St. Ferdinand Parish in San Fernando and

another eight years at Most Precious Blood Parish in Chula Vista. He would also serve as Provincial for the Oblates in the western part of the United States.

At Most Precious Blood Fr. Paul was at the forefront of the energy conservation movement. He had 260 solar panels installed on four roofs in the church complex. The monthly electric bills at the parish were running about \$1,500. After the panels were installed, the monthly electric bill was just \$12.

In 2018 Fr. Paul retired to the Oblate Madonna Residence in San Antonio, Texas. Today he helps with daily Mass and is always available to talk with visitors who come by seeking a friend with a listening heart.

And occasionally he looks at that poster in his room and is reminded of the countless lives that he has touched over the years. †



# Terry Martin — *Honored to Partner with the Oblates*



Terry Martin has been willing to travel thousands of miles to be part of the Missionary Oblate family.

Terry was born in Baltimore and spent most of his childhood living at an orphanage run by the Sisters of Charity. Even as a child, Terry always had a positive attitude and considered himself fortunate to live at the orphanage.

“It was actually a good life,” said Terry. “I really don’t know what would have happened to me if I didn’t grow up in the Church.”

After earning a degree in government and education from the University of Oklahoma, Terry did post-graduate work at various institutions and served in the Marines for four years. Terry then decided that he was up for a new adventure. He chose to move to Alaska where he thought he would stay for maybe two years. He stayed there 40 years.

Terry worked for the Public Health Services in Alaska, teaching people across the state how to prevent communicable diseases. His home base was usually Anchorage, but he would travel

throughout the state to more than 200 different villages.

Terry traveled by dogsled, boat and plane to reach these isolated communities. He found Oblates who staffed the only Catholic church in these remote locations. Terry became friends with numerous Oblates including Archbishop Roger Schweitzer, OMI, of the Diocese of Anchorage.

In addition to being a health educator, Terry was also a member of the state legislature for 20 years. He also served as president of the Alaska Right to Life anti-abortion movement.

While in Alaska, Terry noticed there was a lack of recreational programs for children. So, he did something about it. He founded the Boys Club of Alaska which later expanded to include the Girls Club.

Terry served as the Executive Director of the Boys Club for 10 years and started



nights,” said Terry. “Otherwise, they would become much more tempted to do drugs or other unhealthy activities.”

When Terry was looking to retire, he read an article in the Oblates’ magazine about their retirement community at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. He had visited the Shrine several times before and was convinced it would be the perfect place for the newest chapter to his life. He moved nearly 4,000 miles to Belleville, and the Shrine has been his home for nearly 20 years.

Over the years, Terry has taken part in several charitable giving options with the Oblates. The

income from these investments pays his rent at the retirement community.

“Partnering with the Oblates has been the best decision in my life,” said Terry.

“I am honored to partner with the Oblates because I know that I will still be doing missionary work with the priests for many years to come.” †



programs such as Babe Ruth baseball, intramural basketball and an after-school program. Clubs began popping up through the state, and today thousands of Alaskan youths take part in recreational and academic programs through the club each year.

“You have to provide something for these kids to do, especially during those long winter

# Oblate Crossings



## New Fundraising Office Dedicated

The needs of the Gospel and those who preach it continue to be great. The Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate — USA continues to help the missions of the Oblates, not only in the United States but throughout the world.

Over the past few years, there has been an effort to restructure the U.S. fundraising operations of the Oblates to stay in tune with the financial realities of the times, the demographics of the Church in North America and the modern means of communication.

A significant moment in this reorganization took place in April with the opening of a new home for a significant sector of the fundraising ministry. The Guild Center at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, originally used for multi-media presentations, now houses several departments of the fundraising operation. Other offices at the Shrine have also been turned over to fundraising.

The fundraising offices located at the Shrine in Belleville, Illinois, work together with those located in San Antonio, Texas. Their goals are threefold:

- 1) To share information about the many ministries of the Oblates in the United States and 70 countries,
- 2) To elicit spiritual and financial support so the Oblates can continue to live their motto: "To preach the Gospel to the poor,
- 3) To promote the mutual support of Oblates and their friends through prayer and good works. †



## Diplomas and Certificates at OST

In May, diplomas and certificates were given to men and women who achieved important academic goals at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

There were 31 graduates this year who received diplomas. Among them was an Oblate seminarian, Deacon Solomon Gaja, OMI, who is originally from Nigeria. His first assignment after ordination will be to the United States Province.

A total of 70 students received certificates in faith formation and pastoral leadership from OST. These graduates are certified as leaders for passing on the faith in a wide variety of important positions in their local churches, in many cultures and countries. †



# Funding a Charitable Gift Annuity with your IRA



On Dec. 23, 2022, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (now signed into law), which includes a package of retirement reform bills including the SECURE 2.0 Act.

SECURE 2.0 encourages taxpayers to use their IRAs to make qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) that support their favorite charity like the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. SECURE 2.0 enhances QCDs by providing:

- For tax years beginning in 2023, a one-time opportunity to make a gift of up to \$50,000 from an IRA to a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, provided the income interest is held by the taxpayer or the taxpayer's spouse, or both.
- Amounts distributed as a QCD can count toward satisfying the taxpayer's required minimum distribution ("RMD"). Donors must be at least 70½ to utilize the QCD provision.

In addition, rates for a charitable gift annuity increased effective January 1, 2023, as reflected in the rate table below.

## Gift Annuity Rates Effective January 1, 2023

Age	Rate	Age	Rate	Age	Rate	Age	Rate	Age	Rate	Age	Rate	Age	Rate
60	4.9	65	5.4	70	5.9	75	6.6	80	7.6	85	8.7	90+	9.7
61	5.0	66	5.5	71	6.0	76	6.8	81	7.8	86	8.9	*Based on your age at the time of the gift.	
62	5.1	67	5.6	72	6.2	77	7.0	82	8.1	87	9.1		
63	5.2	68	5.7	73	6.3	78	7.2	83	8.3	88	9.3		
64	5.3	69	5.8	74	6.4	79	7.4	84	8.5	89	9.5		
Not available in all states.													

For additional information about funding a charitable gift annuity with your IRA, contact Kim in the Office of Charitable and Planned Giving at 1-800-233-6264 or visit [oblategiving.org](http://oblategiving.org).



For more information about the  
ministries of the Missionary Oblates,  
scan this code on your digital device.

**“We must spare no effort to  
extend the Savior’s empire.”**

— St. Eugene de Mazenod