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Bishop Michael Pfeiffer, OMI, leads a group of seminarians in prayer.

Back cover: The Oblates in Peru provide for the spiritual and physical needs of the poor.

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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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Dear Friend,

In January, the Missionary Oblates opened a new Oblate Retreat Center in the Diocese of Livingstone, Zambia. I was in Zambia at the time and was given the honor of celebrating the first Mass at the center. The Mass was held on the Feast of the Epiphany, the day we celebrate the three Wise Men bringing gifts to the Baby Jesus.

Joining me on the visit to Zambia were two other members of our provincial leadership team: Fr. Art Flores, OMI, and Fr. Jim Chambers, OMI. We are definitely not kings. And I’m pretty sure we have never been referred to as the three Wise Men. But like every member of the Oblate family, we do bring gifts — our talents and passion to be of service to our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Presiding at that first liturgy I was joined by 25 other Oblates. As I sat there, I had a small epiphany — we are all wise. We may not all be book smart, but we all have wisdom through our life experiences and through the expression of our faith.

Bishop Valentine Kalumba, OMI, was at the Mass. He is often referred to as My Lord or Your Excellency, titles he doesn’t like. He prefers to be a humble servant of the people in his diocese. Somehow, he has the wisdom to live on just a few hundred dollars a month.

Brother Wilbroad Kapembwa, OMI, has wisdom well beyond his age. I accepted his temporary vows while in Zambia. Five years earlier, I had accepted his First Vows when he was a novice in the United States. At First Vows I asked Bro. Wilbroad why he chose to join the Oblates. He said the Oblates are never phony, and that they are “sincere missionaries with an unflinching zeal to preach the Good News to the poor with their many faces.”

Please know that you too bring many gifts to Jesus Christ through your support of the Missionary Oblates. Our ministries in Zambia simply do not exist without our benefactors and co-missionaries. You are a wise person, and may God bless you for sharing your wisdom with us and the people we serve.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Studer, OMI
Provincial, United States Province
Oblate Shrines and the National Eucharistic Revival

From the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (June 2022) until Pentecost of 2025, the Bishops of the United States have called all the Faithful to participate in a Eucharistic Revival of celebrating, honoring, participating in, and living the great gift of Jesus to His Church.

At their shrines in the United States, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are taking part in this revival. Through this effort, the Oblates are also fulfilling their own Constitution which states: “In gratitude for this great Eucharist gift, we will seek the Lord in his sacramental presence.”
Here at Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto and Tepeyac de San Antonio, I want to share with you how we as a Marian Shrine are inviting people to re-center their attention to the Most Holy Eucharist during this three-year National Eucharistic Revival. In my time here at the Grotto, I’ve noticed people yearning for a deeper and intimate connection with Christ through the Holy Eucharist in spiritual practices. Our Lady of Lourdes serves as a conduit to this beautiful and meaningful Sacrament.

It was Our Lady of Lourdes who brought St. Bernadette closer to God through Her messages and in the end, to her First Holy Communion. Bernadette arrived at this wonderful sacrament because of her relationship to Christ through Our Lady of Lourdes. Years after her first Holy Communion, Bernadette said, “I was nothing, and of this nothing God made something great. In Holy Communion I am heart to heart with Jesus. How sublime is my destiny.”

To bring this same revitalization of the Eucharist to the people of God, we here at the Grotto must truly Journey with the people and help them to understand this Holy Sacrament. We must Evangelize the faithful on the importance of the Eucharist. Like the message from Our Lady to Bernadette, we too must serve as those messengers to the faithful who visit us here.

How do we do this? First and foremost, The Word must be Effectively Proclaimed. Secondly, through Faithful Preaching, followed by allowing Access for the faithful to be invited seven days a week for Eucharistic Adoration, daily Mass, Our Lady of Lourdes Rosary Procession with Anointing of the Sick, First Friday Anointing of the Sick, and Eucharistic Processions.

These are but a few practices that can serve as a catalyst to teaching the faithful why this sacrament is so beneficial to our lives as Catholics. We cannot assume that the people of God are already catechized. And even if they are, many have lost their fundamental understanding of what the Eucharist means. I make it a point to preach on the healthy practices and understandings of this Blessed Sacrament. In these avenues, we bring people closer to Christ and therefore enrich their relationship with Christ.†
attended Mass and celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation at St. Joseph’s. Some of these youth come from immigrant families from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

These new immigrants face challenges similar to those faced by people who have resided in America for a long time. The culture offers them reasons to drift away from God. The Shrine has bought flags of every nation of those who come here. At the May 29 procession, the youth carried the flag of their nation of origin. We hope this practice will continue in future processions.

Other processions are planned for coming months. On July 4, in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, there will be a procession to St. Patrick’s Church. On August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, the procession will go to St. Rita’s Parish. And on Labor Day, September 4, it will go to St. Michael’s Parish.

The staff of the Shrine is entrusting this Revival to the intercession of Servant of God Fr. Victor Lelievre, OMI, who was the great “Apostle of the Sacred Heart” and did much to evangelize Quebec City in the first half of the 20th century.
By Fr. Salvador Gonzalez, OMI, Director

The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows is known in the St. Louis area as a place of Healing and Hope. The economic downtown has particularly struck people in our community; inflation has made it difficult for people to make ends meet and put food on the table. People in the area are experiencing economic poverty right alongside spiritual poverty.

Many people come to the Shrine looking for spiritual guidance, direction and just a listening ear while going to confession. The greatest poverty is not knowing where to turn in difficulties and troubles.

The Oblates at the Shrine began having Eucharistic Adoration every first Thursday of the month since the beginning of the Eucharistic Revival. Adoration starts right after the 11:30 a.m. Mass and concludes at 5:00 p.m. with Benediction. There are two added elements to our time of adoration at the Shrine.

First, the Spanish-speaking community gathers at 4:00 p.m. with Fr. Raul Salas, OMI, and Sr. Marichui Bringas, CCVI, to pray for vocations to religious life. At 5:00 p.m., the Oblates at the Shrine gather as a community with lay people to pray Vespers followed by Benediction. The Vespers service allows people to pray with the Oblates and find comfort before Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The Oblates also staff two parishes in the Diocese of Belleville, Holy Rosary in Fairmount City and St. Stephen in Caseyville. Both parishes are staffed by Fr. Harold Fisher, OMI, and Fr. Jim Fee, OMI.

Holy Rosary has Eucharistic Adoration every Monday evening, with a different parish group leading the Rosary and songs for those in attendance. The Oblates are available for Reconciliation during the time of Eucharistic Adoration. St. Stephen's parish has a weekly bilingual Holy Hour. Regarding the bilingual Holy Hour, Fr. Harold says: “Eucharistic Adoration has brought the two communities together; they gather and build bridges.”
Father Tomasz Szafranski, OMI, has been ministering in Cuba for a year. Here he writes about his Oblate journey and the present work of the Oblates in Cuba.

I am Tomas, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. I come from Krakow, Poland, and I am currently living my missionary service in Cuba. But how did I get to Cuba? Here’s my story...

I remember graduating from high school and looking for my way in this world. On the one hand, I really liked being in school with a focus on geology. But on the other hand, I felt more and more strongly Jesus’ invitation to follow Him on the priestly and missionary path.

As I examined my life, more questions arose: Where? What? Eventually it became clear to me that I wanted to be a missionary. So, I started writing to various religious families that had the word “missionaries” in their name, believing that way I would find answers to my questions. The first to respond were the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, so now I am an Oblate.

While studying in the seminary, I believed that missions were only in Africa.

In 1998, six Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate were allowed to enter Cuba after a historic visit by Pope John Paul II. For decades, the Communist government had forbidden the practice of Catholicism. The Oblates began restoring churches and reintroducing residents to the Catholic faith.

Today, five Oblates minister in Cuba, including one American, Fr. Roger Halle, OMI. While there are still many restrictions placed on their work by the government, these Oblates have been able to make progress restoring Christianity to the island.
But gradually, growing and deepening my vocation, I became interested in serving the poor somewhere where priests are lacking.

One day, Fr. Gilberto Pinion, OMI, visited us at the seminary, looking for missionaries for his province of Mexico-Guatemala-Cuba. I remember saying to myself, “Why not Mexico?” And so, after two years spent in Poland as a priest, I left to fulfill my dream of a vocation in the missions.

I spent over 12 years in Mexico. It was a very nice time to get to know a new culture, completely different for mine. So many beautiful people welcomed me with open arms. I must also say it was a time of growing up, letting myself be “evangelized by the poor.” To be honest, it wasn’t always easy.

After 12 years in Mexico, it was time to ask myself, “What’s next?” Something made me believe that I could take on something new again. I had always heard about the need for missionaries in Cuba, and how difficult and demanding it is to be a missionary on this Caribbean Island. So, I decided to ask to be sent on a mission to Cuba.

Now, I have been in Cuba for about a year. A new mission, a new missionary adventure, and new responsibilities. The Cuban reality, you have to live it to believe it. But just like all those years in Mexico, here...

...OUR FIRST MISSION IS TO BE MISSIONARIES OF HOPE, BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE HERE WHO HAVE LOST IT.

I also find many beautiful people in need of God.

We Oblates have two communities here, one in the Province of Havana and another in the Province of Pinar del Rio. We come from Brazil, America, Sri Lanka, and Poland. This
A Patron Saint For Oblate Associates In The U.S.

The U.S. National Office of Oblate Associates has chosen Bl. Paul Thoj Xyooj as the group’s patron saint because of his commitment to oblation together with the Oblate missionaries in Laos. He is an example of how the Mazenodian family, Oblates and laity, can collaborate to be cooperators of Christ the Savior, sharing the charism of the founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, St. Eugene de Mazenod.

Blessed Paul Thoj Xyooj was born in 1941 in Laos where Oblate missionaries arrived to serve the poor and most abandoned. He was among the first catechumens taught by the Oblate missionaries. Although he initially felt the call to the priesthood and entered the minor seminary, he realized that his vocation was more towards marriage. He therefore left the seminary and became a catechist, cooperating with the Oblate missionaries who struggled to learn the language of the Hmong people.

When he was 19, he accompanied Bl. Fr. Mario Borzaga, OMI, in his evangelization of the poor in various villages. Both were captured by leftist rebels. Blessed Paul refused to leave Fr. Mario and suffered martyrdom.

year we also have with us a scholastic from Mexico who is living out his missionary experience. As a community, we serve five parishes.

For me, here in Cuba, our first mission is to be missionaries of hope, because there are many people here who have lost it. The second dimension of the mission is the ability to persevere.

It is worth mentioning that this year we are celebrating 25 years since the arrival of the first Oblates in Cuba. For us, it is a time to thank God, but also to dream, to seek new paths, and to renew our commitment to the missionary land.

As I look back, I never would have thought that a missionary dream would take me to Cuba. But here I am, Lord, to do Your will.

And finally, I ask all of you, do not forget the missionaries, pray for us a lot throughout the year. Pray that we may be witnesses of Christ, missionaries of mercy, and hope in this world.

—Fr. Tomasz Szafranski, OMI†
Oblate Crossings

Oblates Hold Large Pilgrimage In Cameroon

On January 1, a major pilgrimage takes place every year in Figuil, Cameroon, thanks to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The indulgence celebration on the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God attracts more than 12,000 pilgrims annually. Many of the pilgrims walk several miles to take part in the event.

This year the Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Faustin Ambassa Ndjodo of the Diocese of Garoua. A special guest for the celebration was Archbishop Mario Delpini of Milan, Italy.

The Marian sanctuary in Figuil was founded by Oblates from Poland. They brought to Cameroon the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. The Oblates have held the indulgence celebration every year on January 1 since 1975.
According to an internet description, Comfort, Texas, is “a Hill County gem.” Just a 30-minute drive from San Antonio, much of the town is designated a National Historic District.

Father David Ullrich, OMI, was born in that little town in 1942. While he wouldn’t exactly consider himself “historic,” in his 60 years as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, he has helped make Oblate history in the many ways he has fulfilled and continues to fulfill his missionary vocation.

When Fr. David entered the Oblates in 1962, he began a journey that would immerse him in many different cultures, far removed from that little town in Texas.

In the early 60s, the Oblates were experimenting with a program where they would send some of their young seminarians to complete their studies in a culture they were called to serve. Japan, Brazil, and Chile were just some of the places they would go, first to learn the language and culture, and then to study in the language of their new home.

After studying philosophy at the Oblate Scholasticate in Mississippi and a year of theology in San Antonio, Fr. David volunteered for the Oblate mission in Japan in 1967. After two years of language study, he resumed his theological studies at Sophia University in Tokyo and was ordained a priest in 1971. He then spent three years in parish and seminary formation ministry in Japan.
UNITED STATES

As important as the missionary presence in Japan was, Fr. David increasingly felt the need to respond to the rapidly growing need for Hispanic ministry in the United States. He returned home in 1975 and was assigned to the Western Province. There he exercised over 20 years of parish ministry, mostly in Latino parishes in California.

In his “free time,” he also obtained a Doctorate in Ministry in 1982 at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkely, with an emphasis on faith-based small communities. He also honed his skills in Spanish and community formation during his 12 years as pastor in San Fernando, California.

ADMINISTRATION

In 1996, his Oblate family called Fr. David to the ministry of administration as Provincial Superior of the Western Province. It was a time of challenge and change as the five provinces of the United States were in serious discussion about merging into one administrative entity. The merger took place in 1999 and Fr. David was asked to serve as one of the full-time Provincial Councilors, based in Washington, D.C., and oversaw the “Mission” in the new United States Province.

CHINA

In 2005, upon the end of his six-year term on the Provincial Council, Fr. David took a six-month sabbatical teaching English at the Sichuan International Studies University in Chongqing, China. His return to the U.S. was a brief stopover as he went to the border city of Tijuana, Mexico, to be part of the formation team at the pre-novitiate there for one year.

But the God of surprises intervened. After three months in Tijuana, he received a call from the Oblate headquarters in Rome. The Superior General was asking Fr. David to consider accepting an assignment as Superior of the Oblate Delegation in China. The base of the delegation ministry was Hong Kong, where it managed several schools and two parishes.
During his nine-year stint as leader of the China mission, Fr. David and other members of the delegation were able to open two new Oblate locations on the Chinese mainland. Of special significance was the collaboration between the Oblates and a group of lay Catholic volunteers, who arranged medical treatment and care for abandoned handicapped infants from impoverished parts deep within the mainland.

The relationship started one day when Fr. David was explaining to the lay group that the Oblate charism is to reach out to the most abandoned. Whereupon one of the leaders of the ground responded, “who can be more abandoned than an abandoned, handicapped infant left on a doorstep?”

Gradually the Oblates got involved in various aspects of caring for the children and the foster parents. As the infants grew, they were placed in several foster homes with native Catholic foster parents to provide them a semblance of family life until their future was clarified.

The Oblates were also able to reach out to the many Chinese migrant school children in the areas in which they worked. This took several forms. Small study centers were set up where students could do their homework and improve their English. Various activities began and parents were involved in multiple ways. Overseas students came and got involved with the orphan and migrant children.

**RETURN TO UNITED STATES**

After 13 years in China, Fr. David noticed that his body was telling him that it was time to come home. As he says: “I wanted to come back before I needed a walker to get on the plane.” So in 2018 he came back to the U.S. After a couple of months of re-charging, he received his new assignment to his native Texas, as part of the formation team at Borzaga House in San Antonio.

In 2021, Fr. David was presented with a new challenge. He and several other senior Oblates were called by the province to form
Father Dominic Fung King-ho, OMI, was ordained a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest on December 3 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Hong Kong. He is the first Oblate priest to have been born and raised in Hong Kong.

“My anointed hands belong to God and every one of you,” said Fr. Fung at the end of his ordination. “Let me serve you all. This is my mission. Let’s accept this grace together and serve the Church in our own positions.”

Father Fung, age 35, began his journey to the priesthood as an altar server when he was a young boy. He started to pursue his vocation in high school and attended several vocation camps. He later joined an Oblate youth group in 2006. He also participated in small vocation groups in the Hong Kong Diocese to strengthen his prayer life and to discern his vocation.

After graduating from high school, Fr. Fung worked for six years at the Oblate Primary School and was attracted by the spirit of the congregation. His formation as a novice and subsequent training in philosophy and theology took place in the Philippines after joining the Oblates in 2014.

Father Fung’s first assignment is at St. Alfred Parish in Hong Kong. He is also helping at the Oblate Store in To Kwa Wan, which was set up to support the congregation’s ministry for the poor by distributing food packets to low-income families.

The Oblates have been ministering in Hong Kong since 1966. In recent years, they have seen an increase in local vocations. One Hong Kong seminarian will take perpetual vows later this year while two other seminarians are in training in the Philippines.
The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate accepted their first ministry in San Antonio, Texas in 1884. They soon expanded their work to dozens of neighboring counties. In 1903 they founded Oblate School of Theology which today is one of the premier Catholic theology schools in the country.

In San Antonio, the Oblates are currently responsible for several multi-cultural parishes. They also operate the Oblate Renewal Center retreat house. The Lourdes Grotto and Tepeyac de San Antonio provides liturgies and other spiritual enrichment programs throughout the year and welcomes pilgrims from around the world as an eternal sign of hope for all who visit. †
From San Antonio!
Father Dale Schlitt, OMI, recently wrote a book that is 500 pages long. It wasn't his autobiography, that would have required more pages.

For more than 50 years as a priest of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Fr. Dale has been a much admired and honored theologian and educator. He has run two of the preeminent theology schools in North America. And today, at the age of 81, he writes books on theological issues that are read around the world.

Despite reaching such lofty academic achievements, Fr. Dale's Oblate journey has always been grounded in humility. He is first and foremost a missionary, someone who enlightens the mind and spirit.

Father Dale's Oblate journey began in the eighth grade when a vocation program was presented at his school. He decided to turn in a postcard asking for more information about the Missionary Oblates.

"The missionary aspect is what really appealed to me when I was a boy," said Fr. Dale. "The Oblates also impressed me with how they gave their whole life to living the Gospel."

His boyhood faith brought Fr. Dale to the Oblates. His intellectual gifts would help him, over many years, shed light on some of the deepest mysteries of the Catholic faith.

Born in St. Louis, Fr. Dale entered the Oblates’ minor seminary in Carthage, Missouri, at the age of 14. He became a professed Oblate in 1963 and was ordained in 1969 after spending three years studying in Rome.

His first assignment was as an associate pastor in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and then he spent three years working in parishes in Denmark.

“People always loved coming to me for confession,” said Fr. Dale. “I didn’t speak the language very well, so I wasn’t always sure what their sins were.”

When he returned to the United States, Fr. Dale ministered as a scholasticate formator and as a campus minister at the University of Illinois, Champaign. From 1983 to 2012, Fr. Dale was an important part
of the academic life at the Oblates’ Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. Besides teaching and research, he served as the Rector of the school for 15 years.

During his time as Rector many improvements took place at the university, including the creation of new programs designed to meet the needs of today’s society, such as conflict resolution, ethics, interreligious dialogue, leadership, and doctoral formation in ministry.

In 2012, Fr Dale experienced the ultimate climate change. He left Ottawa, where temperatures could dip to 40 below, to serve as the Acting President of Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, where it wasn’t uncommon for the temperature to reach 106. After six months as Acting President, Fr. Dale was a professor at the school for five years.

In 2016 Fr. Dale joined the Oblate St. Henry’s Residence in Belleville, Illinois, just a short drive from his boyhood home in St. Louis. The slower pace at St Henry’s allowed Fr. Dale to concentrate on his love of writing.

Father Dale has now authored eight books. Several have been focused on the Trinity. His latest book, Testimonials to Experience of the Trinity, took seven years to write. In his study of the spirituality of the Trinity, Fr. Dale presents 15 testimonials to experience the Trinity as a discipleship spirituality rooted in Jesus’ experience of God.

While the book won’t make any best-seller lists or Oprah’s Book Club, it has become a valuable tool for people who are doing research into areas such spirituality, theology, and philosophy of religion.

“People always loved coming to me for confession,” said Fr. Dale. “I didn’t speak the language very well, so I wasn’t always sure what their sins were.”

The book is distributed globally by Amazon.

Father Dale explains that theology usually develops over time, sometimes taking centuries. When he was an Oblate seminarian, he studied the work of the eleventh century theologian, St. Anselm who had a famous three-word definition of theology: “Faith seeking understanding.”

It’s a definition that can summarize Fr. Dale’s life as well.+

Information provided from OMI USA, the newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
GOD IS THERE FOR HIM

Each year Serving Hands International provides funds enabling us to put solid roof on 20 houses. These houses usually are ones using a tarp or other makeshift materials for a roof.

The first roof we did this year was for a friend we encountered three years ago while canvassing the area around one of our Oblate chapels in Rojo Gomez Alto. This area is difficult to traverse because it is hilly and rocky and requires a four-wheel-drive vehicle at times.

Gregorio lives there with his wife. They have many needs since his wife is disabled and cannot work and Gregorio is blind and has diabetes. We have enjoyed getting to know them. Despite their circumstance, they generally have smiles to greet us. We started by bringing them food baskets.

A couple of years ago, Gregorio stepped on a nail the wound got infected. We tried to get him to the hospital, but that did not work out for various reasons. Following the advice of a neighbor he tried a home remedy, but it did not help, and he ended up losing his leg.

Gregorio got really depressed and angry at God, his wife, and especially his neighbor. We arranged for our medical team to get involved. They taught his wife how to care for him during his recovery from the amputation. We also arranged for a parish psychologist to visit.

Today Gregorio is happy again and has come to believe God is there for him through the various volunteers who have helped. The new roof adds to his brighter days since the house in now dry, despite this season’s rains. He asks us to pray for him and his family.
PUT LOVE WHERE IT’S NEEDED

Our newest parish social outreach leader is Susana Ramirez. She is a strong woman with two children, a son 17 just entering college and a daughter just starting high school. Both children used to be in private schools and Susana was able to stay at home because her husband was a lawyer. Three years ago, her husband died, and everything changed. Susana, who was studying to become a lawyer, had to find a job and eventually started baking desserts from home. Her son dropped out of school to get a job to help support the family.

When a friend invited Susana to a parish retreat for adults, she did not want to go. She was still angry and confused with God. But she finally relented to go. At first her spirit was not open and she just wanted to go home. But then came the time for the exposition of the Holy Eucharist when Susana felt her husband was smiling at her. She was overwhelmed by feelings of forgiveness and love.

Soon after the retreat Susana accepted a job with us as a parish social outreach coordinator. She says her trials helped her to understand what others are experiencing. She is now always smiling and is always trying new ways to help others.

Susana is doing what she loves the most, serving God through helping others. She tries to follow the words of Mother Teresa every day: “Put love where it is needed.”

THEY BELIEVE THEIR PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED

One of the more difficult places to live in Tijuana is Antorcha. Most people live in make-shift houses with scrap boards and tarps. It is also a high crime area.

Maria Ramos is a 74-year-old woman who has lived with her husband and granddaughter in Antorcha for ten years. They started with a house made of cardboard, but today have a three-room wooden house. Maria told us that her roof leaked so bad that it was often wetter inside than outside. We put a new roof on the house which improved the situation tremendously.

Maria’s husband makes a meager income selling things that other people have donated to him to sell. Maria can barely walk and must use a cane, so she is unable to help. About five years ago their son went to work in another city, and they do not know what happened to him because they have not heard from him since.

Their 12-year-old granddaughter, Letty, lives with them and tells us that her grandmother spends hours praying to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Maria believes her prayers have been answered because the Oblates help out the family through our monthly food basket program. But Letty is still concerned. She believes her grandparents are malnourished. We want to continue to help this family so that their prayers are answered.
OBLATE TIJUANA MISSION 2022

We thank all our benefactors that make it possible for us to continue our various programs. Thanks to your support in 2022 we were able to provide help to children, youth, and adults in our different programs and ministries:

- Built 12 homes
- Built catechism classrooms in our “Beato Agusti Pro” chapel
- Various constructions in three chapels (walls, roofs, floors)
- 23 roofs added to homes for poor families
- 300 tarps to serve as roofs for families
- 2,500 blankets
- 1,200 toys
- 30 elderly residents served dinner every Saturday
- 2,100 plates of food distributed to homeless immigrants and those in need
- 118,500 people benefited from food pantries
- 1,024 patients served during home visits and health days
- 600 psychology sessions (individual, workshops, talks)
- 42 cases of legal advisory (50% in immigrant affairs)
- 150 college scholarships to local young people
- 31 students with special needs attended parish’s Inclusive Education School
- 100 students took part in after-school classes (English, folk dance, Taekwondo)
- 505 participants in SEARCH youth retreats

In fall 2022 we launched our website so that you can share it and know more about our Oblate Mission in Tijuana: missionwithyouth.com

New Location – Same Mission

King’s House Relocates to Shrine

Since 1951, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have strengthened the faith of thousands of retreatants at King’s House Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois. Recently King’s House relocated to the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows to take advantage of the Shrine’s unique ministries to allow people to discover healing and hope in their lives.

“The 70-year-old buildings at our former location needed extensive repairs along with updates to the guest rooms in order to meet the comfort and convenience expectations of today’s retreatants,” said Fr. Salvador Gonzalez, OMI, the current director of King’s House. “Our financial situation simply did not allow us to invest the huge sums of money required to make the repairs and renovations necessary to keep the facility open, and the shortage of Missionary Oblate personnel made it almost impossible to continue at the former location.”

King’s House at the Shrine will continue to offer a variety of retreats and faith development programs. The Shrine’s former guesthouse will now provide the lodging for retreatants. The visitor center will house most of the programs providing to participants during their retreats.

The closing prayer at the Dedication Ceremony held in 1951 is just as relevant today as it was on the opening day of King’s House:

“King’s House is now open. It welcomes all who feel drawn by the grace of God to embrace a life of penance and reparation. In the words of the Psalmists: ‘Oh Lord give victory to the King and hear us in the day we call upon you.’” (Psalm 19:10)

To learn more about King’s House at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, visit snows.org/kings-house.

22 Oblate World — omiusa.org
The Missionary Oblate Sisters of Mary Immaculate are a young religious institute that came into existence in Spain in 1997. Nine women came together at that time to live in community with the intention of following the charism of St. Eugen e de Mazenod, the founder of the Missionary Oblates.

The sisters make up part of the greater Oblate Family, and they see their institute as a grace flowing from the canonization of St. Eugene de Mazenod in 1995. As women consecrated to God, they live the same charism as the Oblates: “to bring the Good News to the poor.” This year marks the 25th anniversary since they first came together in community.

Back in 1997, a courageous group of young women, ages 19 to 24, commenced to experience community life in the Emmaus Retreat House in Pozuelo de Alarcon, Madrid. These women, who were deeply in love with Jesus the Savior and felt called to live out the charism of St. Eugene in religious life, set out to respond to God’s call, thereby embarking on a new journey in the Church.

This seed of the spirit has been growing in each of these sisters. Their communities are places of hospitality and welcome — places where they live and experience the joy of the Gospel, despite the ups and down of life. From the beginning of their existence they have lived the gift of internationality. They describe their mission in the following way:

“Our missionary spirituality, driven by our Oblation motivates our actions and keeps us continually available and open for mission. We carry it out as apostolic women following the example of Mary, virgin and mother, in communion with the Church and her shepherds and open to collaboration with other Gospel workers. Our way of carrying out the mission is characterized by the evangelization of the poorest from the personal experience of salvation, wanting to arouse or awaken faith in those we meet.”

As the sisters celebrate 25 years, the guiding theme which will accompany and inspire them into the future will be: “Giving life to the heart of St. Eugene in our times.”
When the Apostles first met Jesus and were curious about His mission, Jesus told them to come and see. Today, more than a dozen young men have accepted an invitation from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to come and see if they are called to religious life while studying in the United States.

Here are some brief profiles of Oblate seminarians along with the current vocation team. Anyone who wants to discuss their calling to religious life can contact the Oblate Vocation Office at 1-800-358-4394 or vocations@omiusa.org.

**PRE-NOVICE**

**Jesus “Jesse” Lopez**

Jesse Lopez told his mom when he was about five years old that he wanted to be a priest. Recently, he took the first formal step to reaching that goal by joining the Missionary Oblates pre-novitiate program. Jesse grew up in Los Angeles and attended an Oblate parish, Mary Immaculate. He was an altar server and member of the youth program. He always felt a nudge to religious life and that push intensified when he began making monthly mission trips to the Oblates’ ministries in Tijuana, B.C. Mexico. He would often take donations from his parish to Tijuana and was inspired by how committed the Oblates are to alleviating the physical and spiritual poverty of people most in need. “I have always felt a special attraction to the Oblates because they are so community oriented and mission focused,” said Jesse. “They change lives every day.”

**SCHOLASTICS**

**Brother Henry Zayamoe, OMI**

Brother Henry was born in Burma (currently Myanmar) in 1993 into a farming family. He was raised Catholic in a country where less than 1% of the people are Christian. His family was persecuted by the government because of their Catholic faith and his father’s political views.

When Henry was 13, his family left everything behind and slipped into Thailand, eventually finding safety in a refugee camp where a bamboo hut would be their home for six years.

In 2013 the Zayamoes immigrated to the United States and settle in Buffalo, New York where they became members of an Oblate parish. The Oblates helped the family adjust to life in the U.S. and Henry was so impressed by their missionary spirit that he began considering the priesthood. Today, Bro. Henry is a student at Oblate School of theology in San Antonio, Texas.

“The Oblates helped me and my family when we were new to a country, and I would love to help other refugees one day as an Oblate priest.”
Brother Mateusz Garstecki, OMI

Brother Mateusz is the first Missionary Oblate seminarian from the United States to study in Rome, Italy in 11 years. He is a student at the Oblates’ International Roman Scholasticate. Being selected to study in Rome is an opportunity given to only a handful of Oblate seminarians. The scholasticate is home to about 30 students representing roughly 15 countries. Brother Mateusz’s journey to Rome began as a child growing up outside of Chicago in a family very proud of their Polish culture. The Garsteckis traveled to Poland every couple of years and Bro. Mateusz connected strongly with his Polish and Catholic heritage. His formation would take him from New York to Illinois and Texas before arriving in Rome. Brother Mateusz’s journey has already taken him around the world and every step of the way he becomes even more convinced that he must continue to learn how to be a vessel of the Good News.

Brother Floriberto “Beto” González Castañeda, OMI

Last year Bro. Beto professed his First Vows as a Missionary Oblates in Guatemala. He is the first Oblate from the United States Province to complete his novitiate year in Central America.

Brother Beto was born in Alacatlazala, Mexico. As a teenager he worked as a taxi and bus driver. In 2005 he came to the United States and found work in New York City, first at a pizzeria and then at an electronics store. While in New York he was an active member of Ascension Parish in upper Manhattan. An Oblate priest, Fr. Daniel Leblanc, ministers at Ascension while also working at the United Nations. As he got to know Fr. Daniel, Bro. Beto felt called to life as a missionary priest. Today he is taking theology courses in Mexico City. His classmates are impressed by his perseverance and commitment to being a servant of the poor.

Brother Pablo Henning, OMI

Brother Pablo was born in Venezuela and moved to Houston as a child. He grew up in the world of computer gaming. Graphic design became one of his many interests along with Art History and Bio-engineering. In addition to working in not-for-profit areas, he studied art in Paris, and lived in Denmark and Brazil where he explored ways to meet the medical needs of people living far from medical facilities. While recovery from major hip surgery in 2017, he attended Mass and heard several readings about the Disciples. A spark was lit inside of him, and he began to feel like he might be called to religious life. He enrolled in the Oblate pre-novitiate program and last year completed his novitate year. He is currently in his first year of studying theology as a scholastic.

Brother Dogo Anaguedeu, OMI

When Bro. Dogo decided to pursue a calling to become a Missionary Oblate, he was a little apprehensive to tell his dad. His father was a pagan and a polygamist. He had five wives and 50 children. When Bro. Dogo told dad about his intentions to become a priest, the response was simple: “Do it and be happy.” Brother Dogo grew up in Garoua, Cameroon. Though his dad was pagan, his mom was Catholic, and she and her children attended an Oblate
parish. When Bro. Dogo realized that he wanted to be a priest, he only wanted to be a Missionary Oblate. “The Oblates are close to the people, especially the poor and abandoned,” said Bro. Dogo. “That was exactly what I wanted to be.” Brother Dogo is currently a student at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

**Brother Rafael Banda, OMI**

When Bro. Rafael was exploring a calling to religious life, he looked at joining the local diocese in Zambia or the Missionary Oblates. The decision came down to something simple — 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 completed his pre-novitiate program in Zambia then spent his novitiate year in South Africa where he also attended the Oblates’ St. Joseph Scholasticate. In 2021, he continued his studies in the United States as a member of the Blessed Mario Borzaga Formation Community in San Antonio, Texas.

**Brother Etienne Kabemba, OMI**

Brother Etienne Kabemba, OMI is near the beginning of his journey as a Missionary Oblate. But he has probably already traveled to more countries than any other Oblate in the world. Etienne has visited 92 countries and 686 cities in an adventurous life which included spending last year at the Oblate novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. “I have been blessed to experience so many cultures during my adult life,” said Bro. Etienne, age 47. “But now it is time for me to get back to my first desire, and that is to become a priest.” Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Etienne spent years traveling the world working odd jobs and experiencing an abundance of cultures. Eventually he settled in Canada for 15 years where he earned a nursing degree and work in hospitals. If everything goes as planned, Bro. Etienne will be ordained in about five years. When he becomes a missionary priest, he will be abundantly qualified to be a minister to the poor anywhere in the world.

**Brother Jacques Marie Liba, OMI**

When he was a boy growing up in Chad, Bro. Jacques Marie Liba, OMI used to tag along with his parents as they taught Catechism classes at a Missionary Oblate parish. Watching his parents teach the Catholic faith left an impression on young Jacques, and today he is studying for the priesthood so that he can continue that family tradition of sharing the faith as a Missionary Oblate priest. “I see the role of a priest as being a teacher,” said Bro. Jacques. “I want to teach the Bible to people in their own languages.” Brother Jacques grew up in a small village where the Oblates ran a parish. His parents were active members there and instilled a strong faith in their eight children. Today, Brother Jacques is studying for the priesthood at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He arrived in 2021 and is the first Oblate from Chad to study in the United States.
Father Victor Patricio-Silva, OMI  
*Vocation Director — U.S. Province*

Originally from Acapulco, Mexico, Fr. Victor grew up in a Catholic family of ten children. At age 16, he started his own Catholic youth group and would serve in youth groups for nine years. He felt a calling to the priesthood as a teenager but at first resisted it. He then decided to spend a year in the Oblate formation program to see what might happen. “My vocation had its struggles and battles. But when you love something, these circumstances take second place,” said Fr. Victor. “Love is the key to my vocation. I know it is God Who first loved me. I am only responding to this infinite love of God.” Father Victor was ordained in 2018. He takes great pride in being not just a priest, but an Oblate priest, someone who concentrates on helping the most vulnerable in society. Today, Fr. Victor is the Oblate Vocation Director in the United States, helping the next generation of Missionary Oblates begin their Oblate journey.

Father Jesse Esqueda, OMI  
*Part-Time Vocation Director for the Border District Tijuana/San Diego*

Father Jesse grew up in El Monte, California. After high school he felt a strong calling to do missionary work and spent two years in Honduras working with young people. “The experience of sharing my life with the poor, the sick and the suffering changed my life,” said Fr. Jesse.

Upon returning to California, Fr. Jesse became the Youth Minister at the Oblates’ Santa Rosa Church in San Fernando. The Oblates’ compassion and zeal for mission inspired him to join the formation program. He was ordained in 2014 and ws assigned to the vast Oblate mission in Tijuana, B.C. Mexico.

Today, as Superior of the Tijuana mission, Fr. Jesse oversee a vast network of spiritual and humanitarian ministries to the poorest of the poor. He is also a part-time Vocation Director for the Mexico/United States border region.

Father Steven Montez, OMI  
*Assistant Minister for Oblate Vocations*

Father Steven Montez, OMI became an Oblate priest on September 17, 2021. As the newest Oblate priest in the U.S., Fr. Steven understands that he is continuing a legacy of serving the poor and needy established by generations of Oblates. Father Steven was born into the Oblate family. His uncle is an Oblate priest who performed Steven's Baptism. Father Steven grew up in St. Martin de Tours Parish in Kingsville, Texas which was staffed by the Oblates. While a student at the University of Texas — Austin, Fr. Steven felt that something was missing in his life, so he turned to prayer. “While praying about what it was that God wanted me to do, a very clear idea came to me: religious life. It then became obvious that God placed wonderful Oblates in my life to show me their charism in action, caring for the poor and abandoned. At the thought of becoming an Oblate I felt a quiet peace.”
“I’m just a humble person who loves God and I want to live my life for Him.”

Wilma Baumgartner always has a smile on her face. The 100-year-old woman from Chicago firmly believes in the power of happiness.

“What is life without humor?” she asks. “I think you should laugh out loud every day. It’s very healthy for you!”

On April 25, Wilma had much to smile about when she was honored as an Honorary Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. The title is granted by the Superior General of the Missionary Oblates and was given to Wilma for her more than 20 years as a generous benefactor of the Oblates in the United States and around the world.

Wilma was born in 1922 in Austria and grew up on a family farm. She came to the United States in 1948 as a war bride,
marrying Joseph Baumgartner. They settled in Chicago and raised two daughters.

Wilma’s first job was as a cashier in the cafeteria of her daughter’s high school. She was also an active member of her parish and volunteered at a neighborhood nursing home and with the Little Sisters of the Poor who had a residence for the elderly. In 1998, Joseph passed away and Wilma continues to remain actively volunteering in the community.

Over time, Wilma was blessed with some wealth and began sharing her blessings with several organizations, including the Missionary Oblates. Wilma knew about the good works of the Oblates because she was a close friend to the late Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop Emeritus of Chicago.

“God blessed me, and I decided to pass it on to those in need,” said Wilma.

Over the past 20 years, Wilma has made sizeable gifts to support a variety of Oblate ministries. Much of her focus has been on the training of the next generation of Oblates. She has funded the construction of a seminary residence in San Antonio, Texas, and the renovation of the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. She has also made substantial gifts to support the education and formation of seminarians who come from around the world to study and discern their calling in the United States.

In addition to helping Oblate seminarians, Wilma has also made gifts in support of the care of elder and infirmed Oblates; the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows; and foreign missions in Zambia, Bangladesh, and Tijuana, Mexico. In 2016, Wilma and her daughter Betty came to the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

“I LOVE THEM DEARLY BECAUSE THEY HELP THE POOR AND NEEDY – AND THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT!”
Sr. Brenda Rose Szegedy, OSF
NAMED HONORARY OBLATE

In April, Fr. Louis Studer, OMI, Provincial of the Missionary Oblates in the United States, conferred the title of Honorary Oblate on Sr. Brenda Rose Szegedy, OSF, at the Oblates’ Christ the King Retreat House in Buffalo, Minnesota.

Raised in Detroit, Sr. Brenda Rose is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, Ohio. Her first ministry was that of a teacher, but she was soon attracted to retreat ministry. Sr. Brenda Rose ministered in retreat houses in Buffalo, New York, and the Cenacle in Lanana, Florida, before teaming with the Oblates at Christ the King beginning in 2008.

Father Richard Sudlik, OMI, Director of Christ the King, said of Sr. Brenda Rose, “She was a vital part of the preaching team for 14 years. She not only was a source of wisdom for the retreat center, but also brought a feminine dimension to ministry. In September of 2022, she returned to her community in Sylvania.”

Wilma is very concerned about the future of the Church and has always been devoted to helping the Oblate priests, brothers, and seminarians in whatever way she can,” said Jamie Green, an Oblate Charitable Gift Advisor who has worked with Wilma to ensure that her wishes are being fulfilled.

“If someone is in need, Wilma wants to help. She has never said ‘no’ to a request that the Oblates have made to her.”

Wilma said she supports the Oblates simply because she loves them. “I love them dearly because they help the poor and needy — and that is very important!”

Wilma is proud to be part of an Oblate legacy of helping the poor that dates back more than 200 years. Through her generosity, she is helping that legacy continue for generations to come.

Wilma truly brings to life the words of the Oblate Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, who wrote in his diary: “I do not understand how anyone can love God if they do not know how to love human beings.”

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**Good News!** We are pleased to announce an increase in the rates for an Oblate Gift Annuity. You will now get a higher rate of return on your new charitable gift annuity, and you will be benefiting the ministries of the Missionary Oblates.

The rate is based on your age at the time the charitable gift annuity is established. You will receive a one-time charitable deduction for the year the gift is made. To learn more about a charitable gift annuity fill out the form below or you can visit oblatesusa.org/annuities and watch a short video explaining the program.

To receive more information, contact Kim at 1-877-398-7687 or email charitablegifts@oblatesusa.org.

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