



OBLATE MISSION FRIENDSHIP CLUB

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CARING FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE POOR AND MOST ABANDONED

Young Adult Group in Buffalo Follows St. Eugene

This article was written by Oscar Donahue, a leader of the Young Adult group at Holy Cross parish in Buffalo, New York.

When I was 17 years old, I started becoming involved with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Buffalo, New York.

I did not understand what the Missionary Oblates meant at the time, but I remember always feeling welcomed to join. I made friends with the seminarians who would come through, some of whom I still talk to.

I have always been surrounded by good, caring, loving and selfless people.

In 2016, with the help of the Missionary Oblates, I had the opportunity to attend World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland, which was an incredible experience that was only possible through God and the wonderful Missionary Oblates.



Here I am with my friend Solomon, who served at Mass, and his little sister Valentina



Being able to help others and being present for them makes us appreciate the life we have been given. We receive blessings because of the goodness that God wants us to show others

Thanks to the Missionary Oblates and our community, last year our Young Adult group had the opportunity to attend World Youth Day in Portugal, which helped us understand what it is like to be a young person in the Church. We felt a sense of family and unity.

Starting Oblate Young Adults

At the beginning of 2022, I was inspired by Fr. Felix Nyambe, OMI, and Michele Divito to become more involved with the Oblates. Father Felix is Pastor of Holy Cross, Our Lady of Hope and Coronation of the

Perseverance and Respect in the Philippines Mission

In a recent tour to the Philippines, Father Salvador (Chava) Gonzalez, OMI, saw that the traits of perseverance and respect help the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in their ministry.



Father Chava (left) was invited to lead a retreat in the Philippines by Fr. Gerry de los Reyes, OMI, Provincial Superior of the Philippines

Fr. Chava visited the Philippines at the request of Fr. Gerry de los Reyes, OMI, Provincial Superior for the nation of many islands.

“I was impressed by how the Oblates persevere to remain faithful to their ministry as Catholic missionaries and yet still are good neighbors and show respect for the local customs and traditions,” said Fr. Chava, Director of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. “That’s the idea behind what it means to be a missionary.”

The Missionary Oblates serve in more than 70 countries around the globe, and none of their work is easy. Like most areas, the Philippines presents

challenges for the Oblates to overcome in order to spread the message of God’s love.

Challenging Roads, Differing Faiths

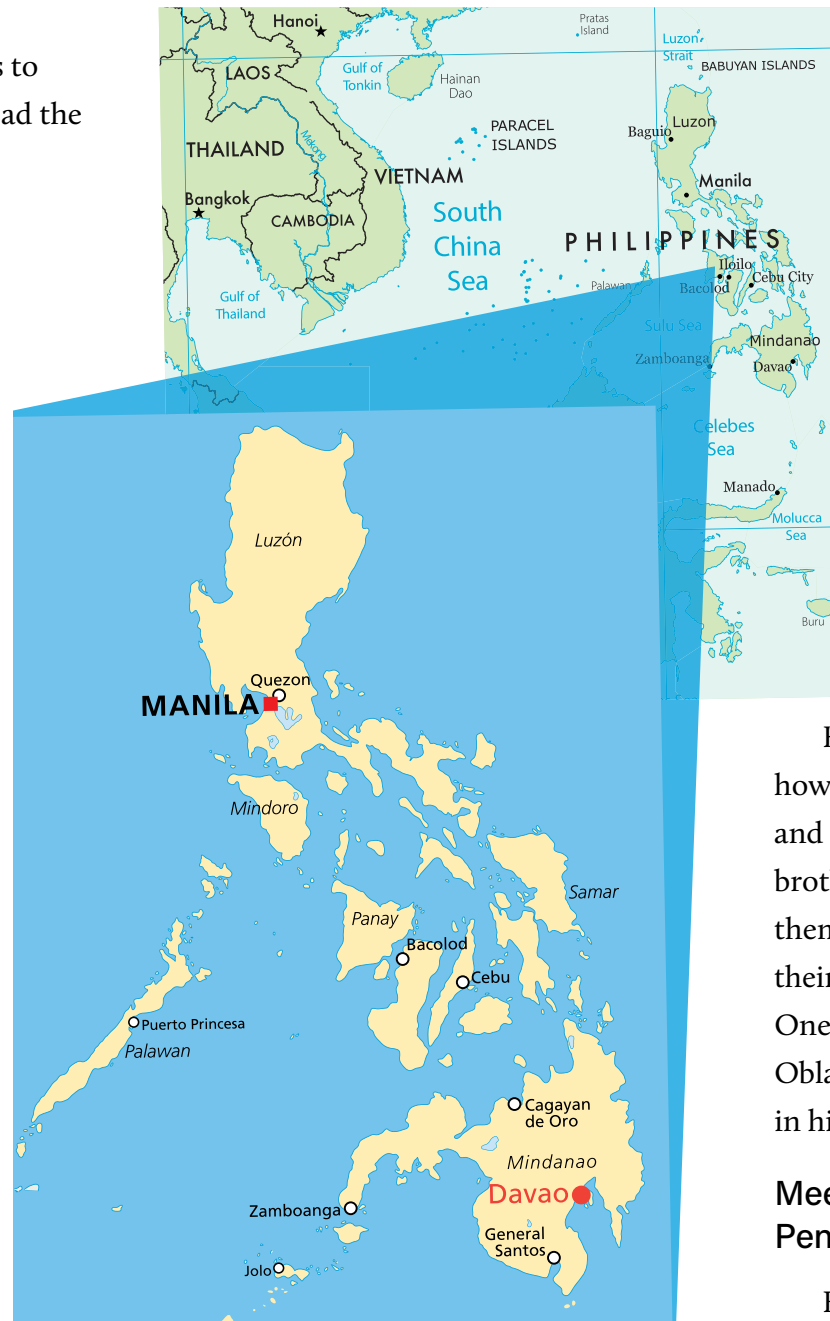
The Philippines comprise 7,641 islands, some up to a 10-hour boat ride from another—and that’s if seas are cooperating. On top of that, the infrastructure on each island is often limited.

“Simply getting around is a challenge,” Fr. Chava said. “The roads are not reliable. It’s easy to get stuck in the mud. Communities become disconnected through natural disasters like floods and storms.”

But the challenges go beyond geography and severe weather.

The Missionary Oblates serve mostly in the southern portion of the chain, which features a heavily Islamic and indigenous population. This presents practical challenges the Missionary Oblates address with grace, Fr. Chava witnessed.

For example, many Missionary Oblates schools are the only educational institution on some of the



islands, yet the students and their families nearly all practice Islam. The schools teach the Catholic faith while ensuring there are separate wash facilities and prayer spaces for Muslim students to keep to the tenets of their religion, Fr. Chava said.

He was happy to see how the perseverance and respect shown by his brother Oblates have led them to be accepted into their local communities. One such Missionary Oblate holds a special place in his heart.

Meeting A Longtime Pen Pal

Brother Mauricio Zuyco, OMI, was the first Missionary Oblate assigned to the Philippines, making his First Vows in 1960. Father Chava and he began exchanging letters while the former was a seminarian who hoped he one day would be assigned as a missionary to the Philippines.

The opportunity for Fr. Chava to meet Bro. Mauricio, who has worked for years with

the indigenous population, was among the most memorable moments of his journey, he said.

“Brother Mauricio’s constant presence in the community and dedication over the years brought the respect of the local chief of the people and they include him as part of the community and in the decisions of the tribe,” Fr. Chava said. “They saw him as one of them because he’s been there and stayed there, no matter the difficulties.”

Oblates “Share in the Lives of the People”

Father Chava said he found that dedication among all the Missionary Oblates in the Philippines.

“There’s a difference between visiting a place and becoming a place,” he said. “Missionaries are sent to share in the lives of the people and become one with the place they serve, to the extent they can. That can only happen by living our vow of perseverance. You can’t just leave when the first difficulty occurs.” +



Brother Mauricio Zuyco, OMI, (left) was the first Missionary Oblate in the Philippines and had corresponded with Fr. Salvador (Chava) Gonzalez, OMI, (right) for decades prior to their first meeting last year

Buffalo

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Blessed Virgin Mary. Michele Divito, a Consecrated Virgin, is Coordinator of the Oblate Associates in Buffalo, reporting to Fr. Muñoz.

I was asked by Ms. Divito to help start a Young Adult group in our community. Through that, I started to realize that young people are so crucial in the Church, and we needed to have something that helped us get closer to God besides our own personal practices.

I grew closer to many members of the Young Adults group, whom I consider some of my best friends. What drives us is the dedication and faith that we have, and the perseverance to know more about the Missionary Oblates and being true disciples of God.

The St. Eugene de Mazenod Charism

Learning about St. Eugene has been incredible. He said, “We must lead people to act like human beings first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints.”

That phrase truly touches the soul because we often become judgmental of others even when we think we are doing things for God. We forget there are people who are marginalized and don't have a voice. Saint Eugene teaches us we must be loving and never treat anyone as less, because we have all been made in the image of God and we are all precious in His eyes.

I have learned the charism of the Missionary Oblates is to take God's Word to the poor and abandoned. Oblate Associates have a special bond with the Oblate Congregation, sharing in that mission and spreading the charism of St. Eugene. I am currently in formation to become an Oblate Associate.

Carrying Out That Charism

On Sundays you can find two or more members of our Young Adult Group participating in Mass and trying to invite others to join us.

The Young Adult group carries out several events. On the first Friday of every month, we set up and organize Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This has been opened to our community and receives a great turnout.

Our Bible Study group meets on the third Saturday of every month. Afterward we have our monthly



We meet for Bible Study once a month and follow it with our monthly organizational meeting

meeting where we discuss the activities we plan on doing.

On the fourth Saturday of every month our group goes to St. Luke's Mission of Mercy and helps serve a meal to those who are in need. We help prepare meals, pass the meals out and talk to those in the community, which is what St. Eugene instructs.

Helping others brings joy. Being able to help others and being present for them makes one appreciate the life we have been given. We receive blessings because of the goodness that God wants us to show others. †



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