



From the Provincial

Introduction

Oblates came to the country of India in 1968 from Sri Lanka. The Founder sent Oblates to Sri Lanka in 1841, the same year Oblates came to the U.S.

The Province of India celebrated 50 years of Oblate Ministry in 2018 and much has been accomplished since India became its own Province in 2010.

There are 120 Oblates in the Province, with another 100 seminarians. Oblates minister in 35 parishes; have established schools, orphanages, prayer centers (Ashrams), and their own formation programs for seminarians. They have also begun many social, educational and spiritual programs for the poor. Oblates minister to the Indigenous peoples, who are



Fr. Studer is welcomed by Oblate Students of Philosophy in India.

The Visit

least cared for by the government and society.

The Ashram, founded by the Oblates in 1992, is a center of Indian Christian Spirituality and interreligious dialog. Fr. Jack Lau, OMI ministered here for a year in 2007-2008.

I visited St. Eugene Province, accompanied by **Oblate Lawrence Mariasosai**, a native of India who has been ministering in the U.S. Province the past seventeen years. Lawrence

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Oblates participate in March for Life



Preparing to join the marchers: L-r: Fr. Jim Loiacono, OMI, Henry Zayamoe, Chris Din, Chris Streetman, Stephen Gorham, Mateusz Garstecki

Oblates joined tens of thousands of participants in Washington, DC for the January 17-18, 2019 annual March for Life, marking what Justice Bryon White termed the “raw exercise of judicial power” in the Supreme Court’s *Roe v Wade* and *Doe v Bolton* decisions eradicating all protections for the human being developing in his/her mother’s womb through all nine months of pregnancy.

Mateusz Garstecki, one of the five pre-novices from Buffalo, NY accompanying **Fr. Jim Loiacono, OMI**, for the March, wrote the following edited report.

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 spent part of his vacation time accompanying me and acquainting me with the Province of India.

The Indian Oblates showed me many of the ministries of the province. Oblates Varam, Varghese and Jeeva drove me many miles over several days during my two weeks in the province.

I was honored to be presented the traditional welcome when I visited the

Oblate ministry sites. A colorful shawl was placed on my shoulders, my forehead was painted in bright colors and in a small circle; a bouquet of flowers was handed to me. All this took place while the hosting group sang songs of welcome and their desire for good health and happiness for their guest.

The Seminaries

I spoke to the philosophy students about our ministries in the U.S.



At the ashram with Fr. M. Chinnappan, Director



At the orphanage of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. Back l-r: Frs. Pragasam, OMI, pastor, Studer, Fr. Varghese, a parish catechist.

Province and I took the opportunity to ask if any of them might be interested in ministering here someday. The majority enthusiastically responded positively to the request. I didn't appreciate some of the quiet snickering about my American accent, however!

The Ashram

The Oblates founded the Ashram in 1992 to promote *spiritual awakening* as the brochure says, "for people of all faiths." In this country, home to many faiths, religions, and approaches to the Divine, this place of prayer strives to model a respect and reverence for all the diversity of ways to approach God. The many religions in India are often not in harmony nor

respectful of one another. The Oblates were men of foresight in establishing this place where dignity and respect for all life and everyone's beliefs are honored, especially with a caste system that often shows little dignity and honor for some of India's population.

Oblate Parishes and Schools

Parishes where the Oblates minister serve the poor. A typical example is St. Thomas Parish where some of the parishioners cannot afford to care for their own children. Many of them are day laborers, looking for work each morning to provide food for their family on a daily basis. Helping to meet this crucial need, the Oblates have established a youth hostel (orphanage) which houses and feeds 35 boys and girls. Fr. Pragasam, Pastor, told me, "for the most part, their parents love them; they come often to visit them but they cannot afford to feed them, at least not every-day so we have to take them in."

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From the Provincial

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The day labor work typically consists of cleaning toilets or open sewers, harvesting crops by hand, herding cattle and buffalo but often times, no work is available at all. Oblates minister in parishes in which many of their parishioners are day laborers.

The pastors told me that typically about 80% of their parishioners attend Mass on a weekly basis. Their faith is strong despite the hardships they face each day.

Education is also an important ministry of the Oblates in India. Oblates minister in 12 schools in the Province: 10 primary schools and 2 high schools. "Catholic schools offer a more rigorous education program; the discipline is more strict and the formation in the Catholic faith helps to provide a purpose and meaning in the lives of the students that the state schools do not offer" Fr. Joseph Thambi, Principal, said.

300 students are enrolled in St. Eugene English Medium School. "Parents are well aware of the value of this formation in the Catholic faith for their children," Fr. Thambi said.

Oblates subsidize much of the cost of tuition for the parents in these



Fr. Studer addresses women receiving tailoring certificates, as Fr. Brian, pastor of St. Thomas looks on.

schools where Oblates are teachers and administrators.

Trade Schools

One of the unique ministries of the Oblates in India is the trade schools. Recognizing the need for employment, especially for women and girls, the Oblates have established trade schools for women and girls to learn a marketable skill to help them earn money for their families, particularly when the husband is not able to provide or is absent.

At St. Eugene Parish, I was honored to confer certificates of completion to 35 women who had just finished the six month course of certification to become tailors. This was the third such program offered through their parish. A new program was scheduled to begin the following morning.

The women were "all smiles" as they received their certificates. They become state certified, professional tailors.

The pastor, Fr. William, told me: "The majority of them will find employment. This is a skill highly valued here."

Ordination to Priesthood

On January 17, twelve Indian Oblates were ordained priests at St. John the Baptist Church, an Oblate Parish, in Chennai. The four hour ceremony was replete with beautiful music, joyful shouts of praise, tears, laughter and resounding clapping.

Many in the congregation of over 2,000 remarked often about "these twelve" being reminiscent of the first twelve apostles—"which one is Peter, which



Fr. Studer congratulates a new tailor.

is Thomas or Andrew," they asked. No one dared ask which one might be Judas!

Over 200 priests attended, the majority of whom are Oblates. Afterwards, a festive lunch was served for all.

Meeting with Provincial and Council

The chief purpose of my visit was to strengthen the relationship between the Province of India and the U.S. Province. The U.S. Province has benefitted for several years from the presence of Indian Oblates ministering and studying in the U.S.

Currently, Oblates Lawrence Mariasosai, Pauldass Selveraj, and Peter Antonisamy minister in our province; Vincent Adaikalasamy completes his studies at Oblate School of Theology in May and will return to India to be ordained to the priesthood there.

The Province of India faces challenges in financially supporting its formation programs as well as providing stipends for Oblates ministering in parishes. Dioceses provide very little in the way of support. We looked at various possibilities to meet these chal-

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lenges. The U.S. Province has been generous in its support in the past.

Provincial Fr. Chinnappan and the Council are very positive about sending seminarians and novices to study in the U.S. Province. Our formation programs provide a rich opportunity to learn about a different culture, way of life, spirituality and theology.

Two of the seminarians in theology told me how much they appreciated their year at the novitiate in Godfrey, although they both mentioned the “culture shock” that was part of that experience. Both of them have shared with their classmates about “Western Ways” and how this formation experi-



At St. Eugene English Medium School with Fr. Thambi, OMI, Principal out as experiences I will not soon forget. **tant and meaningful part of their** Night driving, even day driving in India, **lives.**

is a scary nightmare! The blaring of horns is constant, warning trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, cattle and buffalos to get out of the way! **Cows always have the right of way and they wander aimlessly wherever they please, even on the busy highways.**

Indian people smile easily and often. They are patient, polite and aim to please. Hospitality seems to be their special gift. The Oblates were remarkably hospitable to me at

each ministry site I visited.

India is an excellent example of a poor country in which the people are religious and their practice of their faith is an impor-

In ministry after ministry I visited, the people actively participated, joyfully and enthusiastically in the religious ceremonies. Their participation was edifying and confirmed for me that the good work of the Oblates these past 50 years has borne much fruit. I have no doubt that the same good work will continue for many years into the future.

One of the Sisters who works in an Oblate Parish told me “I love working with the Oblates. They love the poor and their hearts are with them.”

That summed up for me what I saw and experienced in Oblate St. Eugene Province, India.

-Fr. Lou Studer, OMI



L-r: Frs. Jeeva, Varghese, Studer, Brian, Varam, at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. **The other Oblates accompanied me.**

ence was fulfilling for them and a good introduction to the internationality of the Congregation. Hopefully, in the future, some of the U.S. seminarians will be able to take advantage of formation programs in India.

Cows, Driving and Summary

Although my time in India was rather brief, some aspects clearly stand



Memorial bust honors Fr. Pfeifer in Mexico

On December 11, 2018, **Bishop Miguel Pfeifer OMI**, presided at a Mass paying homage to his brother **Fr. Francis Theodore Pfeifer, OMI**, who labored for many years as a missionary in Mexico. The occasion was marked by the unveiling and blessing of a bust of Fr. “Chico,” in the atrium of the parish of San Pedro Mártir, Quiechapa, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Following the ceremony the community provided a simple meal to those present, including some Oblates, his sister Judith, and hundreds of parishioners and friends of the Oblates.

Born in the Rio Grande Valley, Alamo, TX, Father Francis arrived in Mexico in 1963 to begin his missionary life in Mexico. He served in the parish of San Pedro Huamelula, La Magdalena Tequisistlán and San Pedro Mártir Quiechapa in the diocese of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca.

As well as providing for the spiritual and sacramental needs of his people, he attended childbirths, built a clinic and provided medical service to the mountain communities in Quiechapa. He was a mechanic, a carpenter and above all a great father to the people.

Because of his defense of the indigenous people against the drug cartel, he became the target of an attack on March 8, 1987, when 12 bullets penetrated his truck on the



way to Oaxaca. Placing himself in the care of the Lord and Our Lady of Guadalupe, he refused to abandon his flock (See **OMIUSA, July 2012, p.4, for information on a DVD “When the Wolves Came,” for information on this time of his life.**)

After many years in the parish of San Pedro Mártir Quiechapa and later more than ten years in the parish of Cristo Salvador y Señor in Mexico City, he retired to Texas, where he died on April 19, 2018.

-From an article by Fr. Roberto Tolentino, OMI, posted on 1/23/2019. See website OMIUSA January 23, 2019 for full story.

Fr. Nick Harding, OMI ministers to the people living in remote parts of Peru. He sent these photos from his Christmas visitations in the Peruvian highlands in 2018. *Below, left:* A family in an old, beat-

up van I encountered December 25th while descending from the mountains, we gave some panetone and some gifts for the kids. *Right:* A family I visited on the way to Christmas Eve Mass high in the Sierra San Juan.





Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make Me a Match!

For a year and a half, the “new” United States Province leadership team and council have continued the project begun under the previous administration, “Renewing our Province Mission.” Our province has come a long way in balancing the moving pieces of our personnel, ministry commitments and finances in a way that seeks to live our charism.

We are making good progress. While total numbers of professed members are decreasing, there continues to be an active core of new members joining us, promising a vibrant future. *(Thanks, Vocation and Formation personnel!)* We are finding new sources of revenue, eliminating unnecessary costs through “rightsizing” our overhead, collecting full salaries and benefits, and using properties to provide income where possible. *(Thanks, Finance Team and generous Oblates!)*

There remains another challenge: matching our ministry commitments to our personnel. This isn’t simply a mathematical question of a having enough Oblates for a given number of positions. It’s a fine art of matching the gifts and talents of Oblates to ministries that can profit from those gifts. It sometimes calls Oblates to develop or discover new skills and talents. Oblation requires us to be open to new roles according to the needs of the poor and the Congregation. Humility also requires us to know we might not be able to do everything we like. As we become fewer, each is more likely to be stretched beyond his comfort zone.

When we had more ministries and Oblates it was easier to find a helpful “fit” between minister and mission, but finding an obvious match is harder as numbers on both sides diminish. This requires greater flexibility, and sometimes greater sacrifice, by Oblates in ministry today. But how much can we expect our membership to stretch? It can seem like every single Oblate needs to be a highly versatile and unusually capable leader to be assigned anywhere. That has never been a reasonable expectation.

The provincial and council are exploring the needs we have in our province ministries, internal and external. We are simultaneously trying to look at province personnel (including ourselves) with our many gifts and limitations. The purpose is to predict reasonably what kinds of ministries we can lead well. *Internal ministries* include province leadership, four formation houses, vocations, three centers of care for our retired members, fundraising and finance. Our larger

***Please remember in prayer
our recently departed***

Lillian F. Speed, 100, sister of the late Oblate Frs. Charles, Maurice and Joseph Buckley, died on Dec. 25, 2018, in San Antonio, TX.

MaryAnn Svobodny, 91, sister-in-law of Fr. Al Svobodny, OMI, died on Jan. 10 in Brooklyn Park, MN.

Rita Toland, 91, sister of the late Fr. Dan O’Leary, OMI, died in S. Weymouth, MA on Jan. 26.

Bro. William Johnson, OMI, 71, died on Jan. 27 in Belleville, IL.

Fr. Richard Bolduc, OMI, 92, died on Feb. 2 at the IHM residence in Tewksbury, MA.

Fr. Robert G. Levesque, OMI, 84, died on Feb. 4 in Lowell, MA.

external ministries include three retreat houses/houses of prayer, four shrines/grottos, a graduate school of theology (with conference center and sabbatical program) and a Catholic retirement center. (Let’s not get into which parishes make the “challenging” list!)

It has become apparent in our council discernment that the leadership needs of our ministries, both internal and external, are outpacing the number of available, appropriately skilled leaders. This is partly the consequence of being generous to-a-fault in our desire to serve the poor, whatever the cost. It is also partly due to our reluctance to let go of ministries we have been in for a while.

We still have more work to do in maintaining a sustainable Oblate ecology in the U.S. Province. Despite missionary zeal, no one is qualified for every role our province needs to fill. But we can still do a lot with a little, as the poor show us time and time again. **I am humbly reminded that each former province was built by hard-working missionaries who had little to work with. Our U.S. Province has MUCH more than they did – members, finances, education and support for ministry. The same spirit of our Founder is with us, not to mention the growing Mazenodian Family to support us. Under it all is the call of Jesus to evangelize the poor, in the spirit of St. Eugene, leaving nothing undared.**

Dare we? I dare say we do. -Fr. Jim Brobst, OMI

March for Life

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A National Prayer Vigil for Life, attended by many bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious brothers and sisters, and many, many pilgrims, young and old, followed the Mass.

It included a Rosary, Night Prayer, and then Holy Hours throughout the night in the Crypt Church of the Basilica, led by groups of seminarians.

Our Pre-Novitiate participated in helping to lead one of the Holy Hours. From 1:00 a.m. - 2:00 a.m. we joined St. Charles Borromeo Seminary from



JPIC office coordinator Bayor Chantal

Wynnewood, PA, for the second year in a row. Their group led various parts of the Holy Hour, including the prayers, petitions, and Benediction. We contributed by playing and singing two contemporary, prayerful songs. **Fr. Jim Brobst, OMI**, assisted us by playing the organ during the Holy Hour. The time we all spent in prayer and adoration was very peaceful.

A transitional deacon from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary preached for a short time during the hour. The question he asked was very relevant (paraphrasing): *‘What could possibly bring everyone together at a Holy Hour in the middle of the night? Many times, we come to God to pray because we have our own needs. But, that is not the case tonight. We have come, instead, to pray for the*



Fr. Jim Brobst (middle) who with **Frs. Art Flores, George Kirwin, Charles Hurkes and Jim Loiacano** joined more than other 100 priests at the concelebration of the Vigil Mass, also assisted the prenovices at the Holy Hour, playing the organ.

unborn, who are desperately in need because their lives are put in danger by the evil of abortion in our nation.”

We were blessed to be able to join so many other people by standing up for the weak and

vulnerable in our midst. It is encouraging to know that so many people are willing to sacrifice in order to participate in the Prayer Vigil and March for Life.

Fr. Powell adopted into Hmong Community

As 2018 came to a close, the Hmong Catholic Community along with the parishioners at St. Patrick Church in St. Paul, MN gathered with their pastor, **Fr. Mike Powell, OMI**, for a Hmong New Year celebration, during which Fr. Mike was adopted into the community.

The celebration began with Holy Mass, at the conclusion of which Fr. Mike blessed rice and eggs placed in front of the altar, signifying the offering of their harvest of the year.

After Mass, the community enjoyed a meal together with a multitude of activities, entertainment ranging from Hmong traditional dance, Hmong fashion show, folk songs, music and skit. The community took delight in the tra-

ditional celebration, their time together and the visit of their relatives and friends. **Happy New Year 2019.**



Mor Her, Fr. Powell, Yi Yang

Charism Congress draws eight Mazenodian Family groups

In recent years the Church has promoted the establishment of “families” of groups of people around the charism of the founders/ foundresses of religious congregations. Within this context, the US Province celebrated the *Year of Oblate Vocations* to make all those involved with the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod more aware of their vocation.

The US Mazenodian Family consists of eight groups who exist because of St. Eugene’s charism: the Oblate priests/ brothers, Honorary Oblates, Affiliates, Associates, Employees, Mission Supporters, Partners, and Youth.

Under the guidance of **Fr. David Muñoz, OMI**, and his committee, 34 delegates and 10 members of three Canadian provinces gathered in the Whitley Center at the Oblate



School of Theology on January 22-25 to reflect, celebrate and discern ways of collaborating on their different expressions of the Mazenodian charism.

REFLECT:

Dr. Tom Bushlack, lay Benedictine Oblate and professor of theology, opened the reflection with a keynote public lecture exploring the concept of “oblation” and its meaning in the context of developments of a lay theology of ministry since Vatican II.

On the second evening, **Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI**, stimulated the reflection with his public lecture: *The Oblate Charism Today: Its Essence and Its Urgency*.

Fr. Frank Santucci, OMI, presented the origins and foundational principles and ideals of the vocation to the Mazenodian Family as it has developed in the province. **Sandy Prather, HOMI** presented her own journey with the charism over many years as an Associate and Honorary Oblate in Canada.

The first morning ended with a video call and interchange with Frs. **Louis Lougen**, Superior General, **Warren**



Ms. Sandy Prather with Fr. Frank Santucci.

Brown, Regional Councilor for North America, and **Peter Stoll**, Councilor for Asia-Oceania who is responsible for lay associates.

The delegates spent the afternoon reflecting and sharing on such questions as: *What is it about the charism that draws me? How can I deepen my connection to the charism?*

COLLABORATE

The final afternoon invited each group to reflect on the future with two questions: *“What are the possibilities for growth in the Mazenodian Family for the group I am a part of, and for the whole Mazenodian Family, and “What are some next steps for my group and the whole Family?”*

The ideas which emerged are being collated to be studied by the Committee in charting the future course of the Charism Family of St. Eugene.

CELEBRATE

There were many opportunities to celebrate our vocations and to enjoy each other’s company throughout the gathering. One morning was spent visiting two of the San Antonio missions and the Riverwalk.

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Mazenodian Charism Congress

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The climax of the congress was the celebration of the Eucharist recalling the anniversary of our foundation. The evening ended with a celebratory meal.

A high level of enthusiasm at the beauty of our charism and at what we learnt from one another pervaded the days we spent together. This was accompanied by a high level of energy to continue to grow as a charism family dedicated to working together to bring the Good News to the



most abandoned. Many dreams and ideals were expressed. Now it is up to us to journey together and put them into practice.

In his lifetime, St. Eugene's enthusiastic and zealous heart was described as being "as large as the world." The charism congress proved that his heritage continues to be alive and strong as all the members of the Mazenodian Family grow in their cooperation with his same missionary zeal.

Adapted from omiusa.org website article by Frank Santucci OMI, Coordinator of the Mazenodian Family Committee. Photos by Will Shaw and Janice Cooke. Video presentations of the public lectures available on the website, beginning with February 20 issue.

Close of Charism Congress marked by special events

Three special events occurred in the Immaculate Conception Chapel of the Oblate School of Theology at the end of the Mazenodian Charism Congress on January 24: a new group of Oblate Associates made their formal commitment; two Oblate Scholastics renewed their vows, continuing their journey toward religious life (*Go to p. 12*); and the Provincial accepted the gift of a beautiful new icon of the Founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod (*Go to page 14*). Finally, the new com-



munity of Oblate Associates affiliated with the Oblate Grotto came forward to make their one-year commitment and receive their Oblate Associate's crosses. This new community of Associates began their period of formation under the direction of **Fr. David Muñoz, OMI** in April of 2018.

Above: Fr. Studer gives Oblate cross to a new Associate as Ms. Geri Furmanek looks on.

Generous supporters aid Tijuana Youth Group

Nineteen members of the Youth Group at the Oblate Mission Church of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish in Tijuana attended the World Youth Day in Panama January 22-27, 2019 after a nail-biting event that could have left them emotionally devastated.

For a year and a half, the youth group led by Fr. Jesse Esqueda, OMI at the parish sponsored car washes, selling tamales, raffle tickets and doing work of all kinds to raise funds for a trip to World Youth Day.

After raising over \$20,000, the money was placed with a Mexican Travel Agency which was handling travel arrangements for eleven Mexican dioceses which had collected a total of \$500,000.

All seemed in order until Fr. Jesse got the shocking news on January 14 that all the money for all the groups was gone. They had been the victims of an elaborate scam.

Fr. Jesse's account:

A group from the Diocese of Zacatecas planned to attend the WYD pre-events and was instructed to make a bus ride to Mexico City airport to transport them to Panama. When they arrived at the airport, they were met with confusion by airport personnel about their promised chartered plane to Panama. Attempts to contact the company for explanations were



Fr. Esqueda (front, r), youth group & chaperones at departure.

unanswered and their contact person was nowhere to be found.

"The youth were devastated," Fr. Jesse said. "We paid over \$20,000 to the company for arrangements for airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals.

On Tuesday, Fr. Jesse called an emergency meeting to inform the kids. He said the kids were crying, and heartbroken, and expressed doubt that they could go. Some said they gave up hope knowing they won't be going.

In this seemingly hopeless situation, some individuals who deal in hope went to work: Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop emeritus of the Texas Diocese of San Angelo, began canvassing his impressive list of contacts. Fr. David Uribe, OMI, Director of the Oblate Missionary Society, the fund-raising arm of the Oblates, asked Dennis Kempf, Director of Charitable and Planned Giving at OMSI-Belleville, who turned it over to his team with the goal of replacing the money within 24 hours.

On Wednesday, phone calls by Bishop Pfeifer and Fr. Uribe to donors began

replacing the lost travel funds at a surprisingly fast pace. The calls continued and the group inched toward the goal. On Thursday, Dennis received a text saying a donor pledged the remaining amount! Dennis's text message in response speaks for itself:

"When my phone dinged with this text, most of my team was within earshot, and they all asked 'What did does it say?'"

"I read the GREAT news out-loud, and everyone in CPG yelled 'YEAH' all at once! Several of us experienced goose-bumps with this great news."

"THANK GOD," Fr. Jesse said, "we were able to buy flight tickets, get lodging and register for the WYD events at the last minute. However, the only possible journey for us was Tijuana to Mexico City to El Salvador to Costa Rica then 19 hours on a bus from Costa Rica to Panama City! It was a long journey but we were HAPPY TO TAKE IT!"

In the span of four days, a heartbreaking act of thievery was overwhelmed by prayer and even greater acts of generosity and love.

(From OMIUSA website for Jan. 23 & 30)



Fr. Healy delivers invocation at Pearl Harbor anniversary



Fr. Pat Healy, OMI; Fr. Harry Winter, OMI, Michael Creasy, Superintendent, National Parks of Boston; Fr. Jim Flavin, OMI. Photo by Kristin LaFratta, Courtesy of MassLive

The National Parks of Boston, USS Constitution Museum, and USS Constitution invited **Fr. Patrick Healy, OMI**, to give the invocation at the commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The ceremony took place adjacent to USS Cassin Young, a Fletcher-class destroyer named for Commander Cassin Young, recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions during the attack.

Fr. Healy, chaplain at nearby St. Michael's Chapel, Chelsea, MA Soldiers' Home, prefaced his invocation by

recalling the memory of Commander Robert L. Gillen, (Commander of the USS Constitution, *Old Ironsides*, from 1978-80) who died on July 7, 2018. The Cassin Young is berthed about 100 yards from Old Ironsides.

For the invocation, Fr. Healy prayed Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd psalm, adding the verse "May perpetual light shine upon them, O Lord, and may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace."

When taps was played, rifles shot, and a wreath placed on the harbor waters from the stern of USS Cassin Young, the final gun salute was the deeper sounding cannon from the USS Constitution. A luncheon followed in the USS Constitution Museum, courtesy of the City of Boston's Veterans Services Department.

Cassin Young was the captain of the destroyer Vestal, which was berthed in Pearl Harbor next to the battleship Arizona on Dec. 7. Young was blown off the Vestal when the Arizona exploded, but swam through the oily and flaming waters, climbed back on board and succeeded in beaching the destroyer where it did not block the harbor. He later commanded the USS San Francisco and was killed in the Battle of Guadalcanal. In his memory, the destroyer built in 1943 was named the Cassin Young. --Condensed from an article by Fr. Harry Winter, OMI, in the OMIUSA website-December 11, 2018; Photos by Kristin LaFratta, Courtesy of MassLive



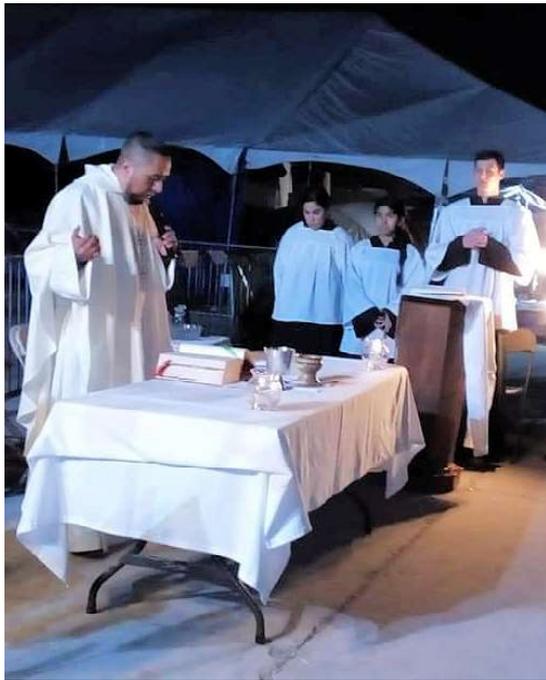
Two Oblates from Africa renew vows

At the close of the first Mazenodian Charism Congress, Provincial, **Fr. Louis Studer, OMI**, celebrated Mass and received the renewal of vows of two scholastics: **Sch. Bro. Justinus Moloji** from Lesotho, and **Sch. Bro. Fani Zane Nong**, from Botswana.



Both young men are in the U.S. for the first time studying at Oblate School of Theology during their first year of Theology at the Blessed Mario Borzaga Formation Community.

Left l-r: Sch. Bro. Justinus Moloji and Sch. Bro. Fani Zane Nong pose next to the new St. Eugene icon by Artist, Loretta Agolli, which was presented to Fr. Studer during the Mass. **Above:** Fr. Studer, flanked by Deacons Jack Kareem (left) and Robert Kusenberger.



Above: Fr. Jesse Esqueda, OMI celebrates Mass for migrants. **Right:** Some of the migrants still in Tijuana in January 2019.

Oblates offer spiritual, bodily aid to migrants

Text, photos by Fr. Jesse Esqueda, OMI

We've had the great blessing of celebrating Mass at the migrant camp here in Tijuana every week. After Mass we give refreshments to 700 – 1000 people. Our young adults take food, clothes and other donations to the camp every week. I also had the honor of baptizing a few of the children from Honduras.

There are now about 1,000 people left in the camp. Most of the other migrants went back to their countries, others processed their asylum case and others decided to stay in Mexico. Sharing our time with the migrants has been a true blessing for the Oblates and our youth.



Bombing in Jolo kills 21, wounds c. 111

Just a day after two bombs went off at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Jolo, the Philippines, killing 21 people and wounding at least 111 others, **Angelito Lampon, OMI**, was installed amid tight security as Archbishop of Cotabato on January 31, 2019. The new archbishop replaces retired **Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, OMI**.

"I have a heavy heart, and this heart is bleeding for my people who perished in the Jolo cathedral bombings," Lampon said in a brief



interview after his installation. He had served in that cathedral for 21 years, regularly celebrating the 8:00 a.m. Mass. But last Sunday, a diocesan priest took over because Lampon was in Manila attending a meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference.

On February 10, Fr. Peter Stoll, OMI General Councillor for Asia/Oceania received the following update from the Philippines.

This morning I will fly onward to Jolo with Fr. Charlie Inzon. I have spent Sat and Sunday here in Zamboanga City, visiting the 7 injured who are still in two hospitals.

One Muslim man who was among these seven died last night from his head injuries. He had a shoe-repair stall just outside the Cathedral when the second bomb exploded. I met his wife and 2 daughters.

Among the six remaining in the hospitals are 2 members of the Coast Guard who suffered severe burns, and one Army soldier who had his leg amputated. There is also a mother who had both her

legs amputated. Her 10-year old daughter is also still recuperating in the hospital. Sadly, her other 14-year old daughter had died in the blast. The mother was told of this only the other day. Aside from those in the hospitals, there are 8 more who are under the direct care of the Vicariate and OMI. They are staying at the dormitory of Notre Dame College. One is a 17-year old girl who had her right leg amputated.

One couple is recuperating from their injuries. Another mother also has shrapnel injuries.

Former Provincial Larry de Guia is here in Zamboanga looks after the injured in the dorm. He himself dresses their wounds everyday. An Oblate of Notre Dame sister also assists the victims in need.

Several government and non-government agencies have extended assistance to the victims. **The OMI Province has probably spent the most for the victims and is continuing to do so.** More to follow later, but am not sure about the internet signal once I am in Jolo. Thank you for your prayers. -Ramon

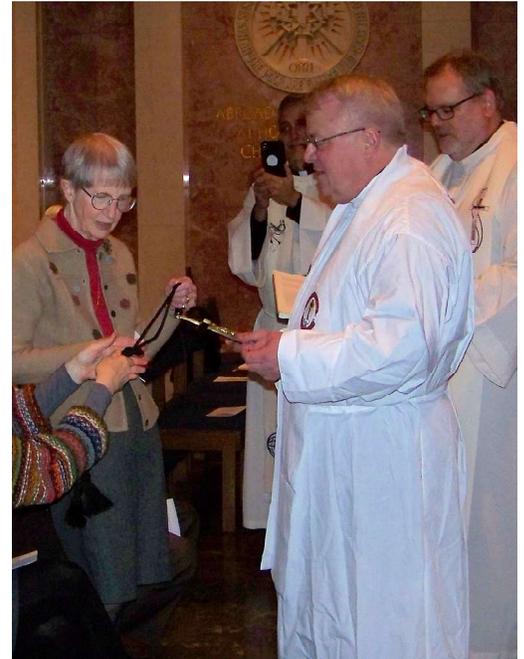


After the ceremony Mary poses with (l-r): Frs. Studer, Bill O'Donnell, OMI, Antonio Ponce, OMI, Mr. & Mrs. O'Herron, Fr. Séamus Finn.

On December 14, 2018, the 33 years of service and commitment to the ministry of the Oblates, (especially in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office) of **Mrs. Mary O'Herron** was recognized, as she was made an Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

The ceremony, attended by the Oblate community, her husband, family, and friends, as well as members of the provincial staff (who also did the readings of the Mass), was held in the Oblate Chapel of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception here in Washington, DC.

Mary O'Herron made an Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate



Mary receives the Oblate cross from US provincial Fr. Louis Studer as the vicar provincials (l-r) Frs. Art Flores and Jim Brobst witness the ceremony.

Oblates featured in book on Recife settlement

-Reviewed by Sr. Ann Diehl, CSJ

Rights of Way to Brasília Teimosa: The Politics of Squatter Settlement

Charles J. Fortin Chicago:

Sussex Academic Press, 2014, 2015

Charles Fortin first went to Brasil in 1968 as a Peace Corps volunteer, where he had his first experiences with life under constant threat from military and local police. After finishing his graduate studies in urban planning in the United States, he returned to Brasil in 1974 and settled in Recife. He taught at the Federal University of Pernambuco in their graduate program in Urban and Regional Development. A key area of interest in this program was the study of squatter settlements and the challenges facing local residents to stay in their neighborhoods.

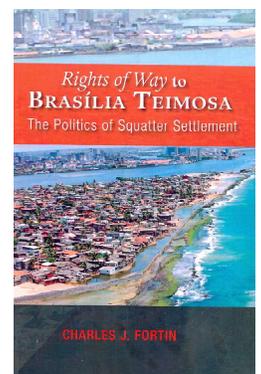
The favela (slum) called Brasília Teimosa ("Stubborn Brasília") in Recife was unique in how it had managed to survive in a prime area of the city through many years of opposition. This book is Fortin's description of their struggles from 1934-1984.

The main sources for his research are personal interviews with several key figures in the story, including Fr. James Kohmetscher, OMI (Padre Jaime), who with Oblate Frs. Darrell Rupiper and Peter Grams came to establish a mission in Brasília Teimosa in 1963. Padre Jaime, especially, was very instrumental in helping to establish the favela's Resident Council to work for improvements in the neighbor-

hood and to protect the residents' rights.

While this book is not about Fr. Kohmetscher or the Oblates in Recife, it provides the context for and deeper insight into the work

Padre Jaime was doing with the people to claim and defend their rights, and the forces they were working against. For this reason it may have a special appeal to those familiar with the Oblate mission in Recife, even apart from its scholarly contribution to understanding a significant social issue.



Come and See Weekend held in San Antonio

Sixteen young men came from Utah, California, Illinois, Tennessee, Virginia, and Texas to attend the *Come and See Weekend* in San Antonio, TX from Jan. 18-20, 2019. In addition, a native of Sri Lanka who discovered the Oblates while doing research for a Ph.D. at Oblate School of Theology joined in.

Oblate Vocation Director, **Fr. Richard Hall** emphasizes that the weekends are not retreats, but more of a practical, pastoral, way of getting

to know who the Oblates are through prayer, through ministry, and through interactions, e.g. with our scholastics.

Activities at the weekend included daily morning and evening prayer, liturgy and a presentation by **Fr. David Muñoz, OMI**, on the charism and St. Eugene.

The group often connected with Oblate Associates from San Juan de los Lagos Church who have an outreach, feeding and clothing the poor and homeless of San Antonio. The men prepare meals and clothing and interact with the poor



listening to their stories and getting to know them.

Fr. Hall notes that seven or eight of this group are applying for admission to the formation program. “I think the spirit of St. Eugene really looked down upon us this time,” he said. “I noticed that during the year of Oblate Vocations we increased numbers in the *Come and See Weekends* and in those entering our formation programs.”

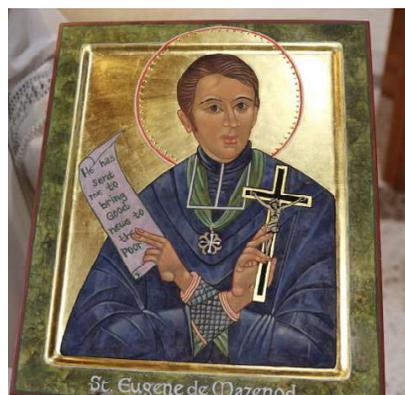
The next *Come and See Weekend* will be held in the summer of 2019 with an exact date to be determined.

Above: preparing food for the homeless. **Left:** The visitors pose with some of the scholastics and the two Oblate vocation directors, **Fr. Richard Hall** (on left) and **Fr. Harold Fisher** (on right).



The final special event of the Mazenodian Charism Congress was the presentation of a new icon of Oblate Founder St. Eugene de Mazenod. Artist, Lauretta Agolli, (*below right*) presented

the icon to Fr. Studer. After Ms. Agolli made a few remarks about the icon, Fr. David Muñoz, OMI, announced that the image of the icon had been made into prayer cards that would be available to everyone in attendance.



Tijuana mission plans finalized

by Fr. Lou Studer, OMI



Archbishop Moreno and Fr. Studer at Communion time

Frs. Jim Brobst, Jim Chambers and I traveled to our Oblate mission in Tijuana to continue to work out some of the details of handing over San Eugenio Church, seven mission chapels, the medical clinic, community center, and Oblate residence to the archdiocese of Tijuana on July 31st.

We met with **Archbishop Francisco Moreno** and the Oblates ministering in Tijuana to finalize this plan, as well as to determine where the Oblates will minister in the future. The Oblates are moving “lock, stock and barrel” to an area near the railroad tracks where the new poor from several Central American countries are locating. (Cf. *March 2018 issue of OMIUSA, pp.13-14.*) for an extended account of the planning for this move.



Frs. Castillo, Esqueda, Brobst, Archb. Moreno, Frs. Studer, Chambers, Bro. Vasquez at planning meeting.

After this meeting, the Oblates joined Archbishop Francisco and more than 300 consecrated men and women serving in the archdiocese for Mass on the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. The Archbishop thanked these men and women for their dedication, hard work and fidelity to the good news of Jesus Christ.

That evening the Oblates traveled to Casa Estudiantil to visit **Fr. Bill Antone, OMI**, and **Bro. Peter Vasquez, OMI**, formators at this pre-novitiate community, for dinner. Four pre-novices are presently in the program. One of them, **Brandon Ontiveros**, plans to go to the novitiate in August. One of the apostolic activities of the community is distributing sandwiches and a cold drink each week to the homeless at the Tijuana bus station where they tend to congregate.

During our visit, we also saw the construction of the new Oblate residence, due to be completed June 1st. Soon after, work will begin on the construction of a new parish church. The Oblates also plan to renovate a clinic, providing medical, dental and optical care for the folks in this area.

Oblate Fr. Webert Merilan will be installed as the new Pastor of the parish and the mission chapels, assisted by Oblate Frs. **Marek Stroba**, **Lucio Castillo** and **Jesse Esqueda**. **Fr. Jesse** is the superior of the community and **Fr. Lucio** will be director of the refurbished



Fr. Esqueda at the construction site.

clinic. **Fr. Marek** is parish vicar.

On Sunday afternoon we attended the Youth Mass at which the Oblate Affiliados, young men contemplating a vocation to the Oblates, plan the liturgy each week. The music was festive and lively. The young people participated with a lot of enthusiasm.

Our mission in Tijuana continues to provide Oblate vocations. Our work among the poor, including the recent caravans arriving from the politically unstable Central American countries, has increased the workload of the Oblates here.

Two gentlemen, one from Costa Rica and one from Honduras, happily told me that the Oblates put them to work soon after they arrived, helping to build the Oblate residence, thus enabling them to provide food for their families. They repeatedly expressed their gratitude for this opportunity!

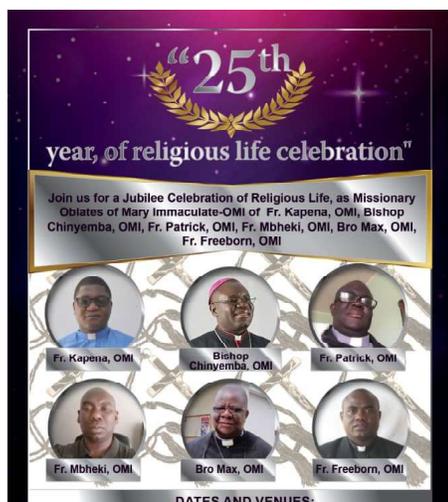
✓ Declaring that “For more than 25 years (he) has served as the spiritual leader of his congregation, has transcended his role over time, and is now much more to the surrounding communities, his parishioners and the people of the Rio Grande Valley,” the Editorial Board of The Monitor, newspaper of McAllen, TX, nominated **Fr. Roy Snipes, OMI**, for the 2018 Rio Grande Citizen of the Year award. For full story: <https://www.themonitor.com/2019/01/03/rgv-citizen-year-nomination-father-roy-snipes/>.

✓ **Fr. Scott Hill, OMI**, joined a sizable community of faiths gathered on the sidewalk outside the San Francisco ICE Processing Center for its monthly Vigil. This month’s theme was *Compassion Has No Walls*. Stories of abuse were told, solidarity was shared, and the intrinsic dignity of the many people assembled along the US Southern border was affirmed.

✓ Many Oblates and Oblate youth from different Units around the world such as Australia, Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar, Poland, Germany, Spain, Canada, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Venezuela and Peru attended the 2019 World Youth Day.

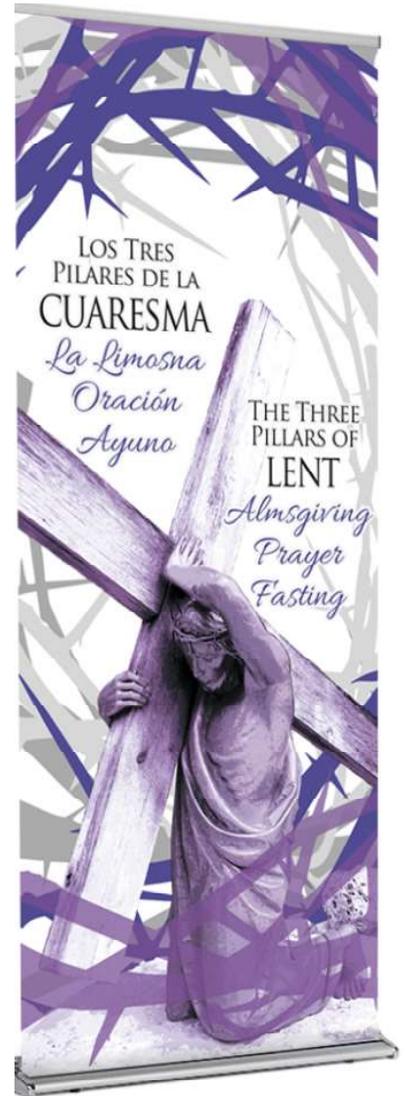
✓ **Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI** is among those quoted extensively in the January 2019 issue of St Anthony Messenger article, *Making Money, Making a Difference*, which examines the ways in which religious congregations are investing their assets in institutions which follow basic Gospel values. “*Instead of just focusing on avoiding harm that I might do and evil that I might cooperate in, ...is there a way that I can put money into projects or into institutions or into funds that are actually trying to do good things?*” https://issuu.com/franciscanmedia/docs/st_anthony_messenger_january_2019/36

✓ Among the priorities of the first U.S. Oblates on settling in the poorest province of Zambia in 1984 was to establish a native Oblate clergy. The first still active Oblate to make first vows was Fr. Joseph Phiri, in 1993. This year, four Zambians celebrate the 25th anniversary of first vows, together with one from Namibia and another from South Africa:



Bishop Evans Chinyemba Chinyama (Bishop of Mongu); **Frs. Patrick Chiso** (Lusaka), **Freeborn Kibombwe** (Cedara), **Bro. Max Mwakacheya** (Lukulu), **Erastus Kabena Shimbomeh** (provincial in Namibia), and **Fr. Anthony Mbheki Ngcobo** (superior of the Oblate retirement house in Natal).

CONGRATULATIONS JUBILARIANS!



ASH WEDNESDAY: MARCH 6

OMI - USA

Newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.-391 Michigan Ave., NE Washington, DC 20017-1516

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Published six times a year for Oblate personnel and their friends and supporters; distributed from the U.S. Provincial Offices in Washington, DC.

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