God Has Been Good To Fr. Frank
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Front Cover: Father Frank Demers, O.M.I. greets visitors at the Oblate Residence in Tewksbury, Massachusetts.

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Searching for a Better Future in Tijuana
Rich Reader and David Rizo

Philippine Priest Brings Garden To Life
Licas News

Leaving A Lasting Legacy
Du Quoin Call

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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,

Recently I received our annual Oblate Vocation Calendar. In this calendar are profiles of Oblate seminarians at various stages on their path to becoming Oblate priests and brothers.

Looking through the calendar I came across a testimonial from Bro. Jean Emmanuel Meloncourt, O.M.I. who is currently studying at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. Brother Jean said he has a simple goal in life: “I want to be able to serve as a connecting bridge between God and His people.”

In that modest statement, Bro. Jean beautifully summarized what it means to be a Missionary Oblate. And in this magazine we see this “connecting bridge” existing in many wonderful ways.

We connect God with His people when we bring the sacraments to the homebound on a Native American reservation. We connect God with His people when we feed the homeless in Korea. And we connect God with His people when we help young people bring their faith to life in Tijuana, B.C., Mexico.

As a co-missionary with the Missionary Oblates, you are also a connecting bridge between God and His people. Through your prayers and support you allow the Oblates to bring the Good News to some of our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Please do me a favor. Take some time to pray for Bro. Jean and our other Oblate seminarians as they discover how best to connect God and His people for years to come. And know that we will continue to remain connected with you through our common goal to be missionaries among the poor.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Studer, O.M.I.
Provincial, United States Province
We Are Lucky To Know Fr. Benny

How does someone who grew up in Zambia become a missionary to Native Americans? He joins the Missionary Oblates.

Father Benny Lipalata, OM.I. is part of a team of three Oblates currently ministering on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. His arrival at the Tekakwitha Indian Mission is just the latest chapter in an Oblate journey that has already taken him around the world.

But while the locations have changed, the purpose of Fr. Benny’s Oblate life has always remained the same.

“Being an Oblate means you cannot focus on just one area of ministry,” said Fr. Benny. “We are committed to the poor with their many faces, and that commitment is what drew me to want to become an Oblate.”

Father Benny grew up in Zambia in a non-Oblate parish. But there was one nearby, and Fr. Benny became friends with Fr. Evans Chinyemba, O.M.I. Father Evans would eventually become Bishop of Mongu and preside at the ordination of Fr. Benny.

“Bishop Evans was really the one that discovered me and set me on the path to becoming a priest,” said Fr. Benny. “He was the one that introduced me to Fr. Ron Walker, O.M.I. who was our Vocation Director at the time.”

Father Benny officially joined the Oblates in 2006 when he began the pre-novitiate program. He later continued his studies in South Africa and Cameroon where he learned to speak fluent French.

After his ordination, Fr. Benny’s first assignment was at a parish in Kalabo,
Zambia. He ministered there for two years and his work included serving as the Treasurer of the mission. Then Fr. Benny got the biggest surprise of his life, he was being sent to the United States.

Father Benny joined the Oblate team at St. Jude Shrine in New Orleans. The shrine is located on the edge of the famed French Quarter, but serves a much different group of people than the famed tourist destination.

Many of the people who come to St. Jude Shrine are the abandoned and forgotten of New Orleans. Father Benny and the other Oblates provide for both the physical and spiritual needs of these people.

Ministering in the United States did create one challenge for Fr. Benny. In Zambia a typical Sunday Mass could last three or four hours, a timeframe unheard of in the United States.

“I had to start doing shorter homilies, or else I would have become very unpopular real fast,” said Fr. Benny.

But Fr. Benny didn’t have to worry about popularity. His warm and outgoing personality made him a much-loved member of the St. Jude community, and that affection continues now at his parishes on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota.

As an Oblate priest for the past three years, Fr. Benny says he has been a very lucky man. That luck was evident on his first day as a priest. He was ordained on July 7, 2018 — the seventh day of the seventh month as one of seven Oblates ordained in Zambia on that day.

And since that lucky day, people around the world have been lucky to have Fr. Benny help them reach a deeper understanding of God’s love. †
The Oblates' Native American Ministries

The Missionary Oblates have been caring for the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of Native Americans since 1923. Today the Oblates are responsible for six parishes on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. White Earth is the poorest reservation in the state and is plagued with food shortages and homelessness.

An important part of the Oblates' work is to help the Native American people retain their traditions and heritages. For many years Native Americans were taught to abandon their language and rich customs. Missionary Oblates incorporate Native American traditions into their liturgies, pastoral care and religious education.

The three Oblates currently serving in the Tekakwitha Indian Mission bring a wealth of cultural diversity and sensitivity to their ministries.

Father Benny Lipalata, O.M.I. brought an African perspective to the reservation from his native Zambia. Father Daniel Nassaney, O.M.I. had ministered to native people in Tahiti for 15 years. And Fr. John Cox, O.M.I. served in a diversity of ministries in the United States ranging from helping parishioners and visitors at a New England shrine to ministering in African American communities in Miami.
Oblate Named Archbishop in Bangladesh

Pope Francis has appointed Bp. Bejoy D’Cruze, O.M.I. as the Archbishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Bishop D’Cruse was born in Dhaka in 1956 and was ordained an Oblate priest in 1987. He ministered as a Pastor at several parishes, Rector of the Oblate Juniorate, Superior of De Mazenod Scholasticate and also the Oblate Delegation Superior from 2001–2005.

As a Bishop he served the Diocese of Khula from 2005–2011 and then was then installed as the first Bishop of Sylhet. Under his leadership, Oblates carried out numerous evangelizing missions in the diocese and established several parishes and educational institutions.

The Archdiocese of Dhaka has a Catholic population of over 80,000. There are 26 parishes and 20 missions with over 100 priests and 600 lay religious serving there.

New Provincial Council Announced

The Provincial Council for the Missionary Oblates has been named and will serve for the next three years. The administrative team remains the same with Fr. Louis Studer as Provincial, Fr. James Brobst as Vicar-Provincial for Mission and Ministry, Fr. Art Flores as Vicar-Provincial for Personnel and Fr. James Chamber as Treasurer.

Fathers Raymond Cook and Antonio Ponce return as Councilors. Two new Councilors are Fr. Emmanuel Mulenga, currently Pastor of St. Augustine Parish in New Orleans, and Fr. Mark Dean, currently assigned to King’s House Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois.
During the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, I painted an icon. The work began on Holy Thursday, April 9, and the last brush stroke was made on the feast day of Catherine of Siena, April 29.

For the basis of this icon I used a pattern based upon the icon of the Virgin of the Burning Bush, which shows an icon of Mary and the Christ Child lodged in a tree on an island. The tree has leaves with a flame.

I had made an icon several years ago in memory of my youngest brother, Jim, who died in 1992. I added in at that time a single iris flower, in honor of him because the iris was his favorite flower. The iris is indeed pretty, but unfortunately they don’t last long. My brother, who was in his last weeks of life at the time said, “And that is what they will say of me… ‘Jim Dean, he didn’t last long, but he was pretty while he was here.’”
The Icon of the Virgin of the Burning Bush is in reference to the story of Moses and the Burning Bush, which was on fire but not consumed. The early Church saw this as a symbol of Mary and the Virgin Birth, she who gave birth yet remained a virgin.

One of the first changes I made to this pattern was to use the main Marian image the icon of Our Lady of Tenderness as displayed in the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir, perhaps the most famous example of this style. I also brought into the icon the two angels depicted in the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

In the halo of Mary are included 12 abstract stars. Only nine are visible, for three are hidden by Mary and the Christ Child. While stars are not uncommon in icons of Mary, these stars were placed in a reference to Mary, Mother of Divine Mercy.

In the foreground I added a field of irises, for me a symbol of our dearly departed, who while out of sight, are not out of heart or mind or reach. Finally, in reference to the Covid-19 pandemic, I placed a symbol of the coronavirus on the cross borne by the angel on the right and later on I added in a bat, in reference to the origin of the virus. †

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Our Lady of Tenderness, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mother of Divine Mercy, Intercede for us unto God to bless and aid all who are afflicted and affected by the coronavirus pandemic. May all who gaze upon this image know the healing touch of God. Amen.
St. Eugene Scholarship Program

Father Jesse Esqueda, O.M.I. recently celebrated a special Mass for the 38 graduates of the St. Eugene Scholarship Program. About half of the graduates were graduating from college and the other half from pre-college level programs.

Since schools were shut down, all of the students had to complete their assignments online to graduate, a further exercise in self-discipline.

At the end of the Mass, each student was called forward and a special blessing was administered. Some of the students took the opportunity to say a few words:

Dylan Gonzalez: “I would love to have had a graduation party, but since we couldn’t, I am really happy and thankful for this Mass. I want to take this opportunity to publicly tell my family how appreciative I am for everything you have done for me while I was studying to be an engineer. I finally did it. Thank you so much.”

Dylan graduated with a degree in nanotechnology, which deals with the manipulation of atoms. This science allows data to be miniaturized to the point of having billions of bits of data on a small chip. Dylan has been in the Oblates’ youth ministry programs for several years and led one of the most recent youth retreats.

Mildred Juarez: “I just want to thank everyone that has been part of my life for these four years of college. Thanks to your support and help, today I am a psychologist. Thanks to the scholarship program and the donors that the Oblates have, we have been able to see our dreams to become professionals come true.”

Searching For A Better Future In Tijuana  Compiled by Rich Reader and David Rizo
Mildred has long served the Church teaching Catechism, focusing on young teenagers. She already is applying her psychologist skills in the Oblate parishes.

**SEARCH Retreats Continue To Grow**

The Tijuana mission recently celebrated the eighth anniversary of providing SEARCH Retreats to young adults in the community. Today there are about 15 youth retreats and five adult retreats coordinated by the SEARCH group each year.

The program has been a huge success in transforming the lives of hundreds of people in Tijuana. To celebrate the eighth anniversary, the group livestreamed a rosary each day for a week with more than 100 prayer companions taking part each night.

A livestreamed Mass was celebrated at the end of the rosary week with nearly 200 people participating.

Through Facebook, SEARCH alumni were able to post some reflections about their involvement in the youth ministry. Here are some of their comments:

**Jahir** — SEARCH is a commitment to a lifestyle of trying to walk with God’s hand all the way. You get to know yourself through service to others and use your talents to support your community.

**Daniel** — SEARCH is a service to God and learning to allow God to guide your life.

**Vicki** — Attending a SEARCH retreat is like attending Christ’s feeding of the 5,000. We are all so blessed and thankful. Now I feast on prayer and service, and I love working with my SEARCH family. Christ lives!

**Angela** — SEARCH has become my new family that helps me grow as a person. It has inspired me to serve the most needy. I try to share God’s love by being in His image, a role model for others.

Some of the youth in the SEARCH program recently took part in a workday at a senior citizen center that was in need of some repairs. One group repaired electrical connectors. Another replaced a toilet and several other volunteers replaced screens. During the afternoon the group of young people played Christian songs over a large speaker which turned into a sing-along with their elders.

At the end of the day the group took time to share their experiences. One young person observed that while he thought that he was bringing God to the elderly, in reality God was already there, and all he had to do was share God’s love with the people he encountered. †
Dear Oblates, friends and people of good will,

Wake up and get involved!

The best scientific calculations about our earth’s climate tells us that the human family has at most 10 years before the deterioration of the earth will become irreversible. We have to act now and together, or this precious gift of God will be destroyed by our ruthless exploitation.

The major focus for the Oblates is the launching of a plan for various types of communities/institutions to make a commitment to become totally sustainable over the next seven years. This is a challenge for all our communities and units. Get involved!

The cry of the poor and the destruction of the environment go hand-in-hand. The present pandemic is but a small sign of the chaos we have wreaked on nature. Future global disasters will multiply if we do not choose to act effectively and immediately in favor of the gift of God’s creation.

Many Oblates and collaborators around the world are already acting to care for our common home in many prophetic initiatives, and for this I thank you. All of us, in all instances of our life and ministry, must embrace fully this urgent concern to act now, to alter the course of human history and opt for the care of God’s precious creation.

Thank you for your commitment. We place this critical opportunity before Our Lady, Mother of the Creator, asking her to move us into action in a significant way.

Father Louis, O.M.I.

Fr. Louis Lougen, O.M.I. Superior General
Recently the Oblates’ General House installed solar panels as part of a seven-year project to make the congregation’s headquarters more green. A total of 332 photovoltaic panels have been fixed on the rooftop and are expected to generate over 90 kilowatts per day.

Father Marc Dessureault, O.M.I., the Treasurer General, expects the solar panels to result in energy savings that will allow the Oblates to get their investment back in six or seven years. “The electricity produced by the solar panels will be solely for the usage of the General House, and we are now seeing its advantage with the reduction of our electricity bills” Fr. Marc said.

During the summer there is an added advantage. The three heat pumps, which produce the air-conditioning, will be sending the heat they produce to the boilers, and they in turn will help produce hot water for the house. In that sense, it will be a double recycling of electricity.
Reaping the fruits of one’s labor is taking place at a Missionary Oblate parish on the outskirts of Manila in the Philippines.

The urban gardening project, called “Project Grace,” is being spearheaded by Fr. Eduardo Vasquez, O.M.I. and the other Oblates at Our Lady of Holy Grace Parish.

“I want to prove that it is possible to plant vegetables in an urban community and in your own home despite the absence of a backyard or a piece of land,” said Fr. Vasquez.

During the Covid-19 lockdown many poor families told Fr. Vasquez they did not have enough food to eat. So he developed a program at the parish aimed at helping poor families secure their own food.

Father Vasquez uprooted all the decorative plants around the parish compound and replaced them with plants that can be harvested and eaten. He urged the staff and church volunteers to collect used plastic containers and empty cans that they later used for planting.

In a few months’ time Fr. Vasquez was able to transform his parish into an urban gardening hub that people come to visit to learn how to grow their own food at home. He also built a small greenhouse where seeds are grown before being replanted in hanging and ground plant pots.

Today the urban garden produces various fruits and vegetables including bananas, peppers, tomatoes, spinach, okra, taro, grapes and various herbal plants.

Father Vasquez said to respond to the call of Pope Francis “to care for our common home” should not be complicated.

“To translate the message of the Holy Father for people to understand, we need to show them what concrete ecological action really means,” he said.
La Vista Learning Garden

Since its inception in 2001, the La Vista Ecological Learning Center has taught that how we eat determines, to a great extent, how we care for creation.

The La Vista Learning Garden, located on the grounds of the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois is one of the learning center’s primary education programs.

The Learning Garden allows Oblate novices, along with members of the community, to learn and practice:

- Sustainable gardening skills like creating a garden plan, organic soil preparation, fertilization, crop rotation and harvesting vegetables and fruits.
- Raising and caring for chickens
- Backyard beekeeping
- Cooking and nutrition
- Hand carving kitchen utensils
- Do it yourself recycled garden decorations

Rebirth of a Garden in Oakland

When a charter school in Oakland, California went to virtual learning, gardens at the school were abandoned and eventually overgrown. That’s when Fr. Jack Lau, O.M.I. and parishioners at Sacred Heart Parish stepped in.

Father Jack and his volunteers revitalized the gardens which began to provide a bounty of vegetables. The fresh vegetables are now being distributed to parishioners who may have been laid off or otherwise are in need of help.

As a multicultural parish, some parishioners have enjoyed touring the gardens just to remind themselves of gardening back in the Philippines, Vietnam or Nigeria.

In addition to his gardening skills, Fr. Jack also recently became a Laudato Si’ animator which involves training in how to help the community care for creation.
The formation and education of a Missionary Oblate requires a significant investment of both financial and human resources. The Oblates rely on the generosity and co-missionary spirit of benefactors to sustain and grow our formation program — to shape the future of the Oblates together.

Currently there are 25 men in the United States who are on the path to becoming Missionary Oblate priests and brothers. Several of these men...
Pre-novices (left) spend much of their time learning the charism of the Missionary Oblates. As they journey further along the seminarian program, these men learn in greater detail the history and characteristics of the Oblates and their unique missionary ministry in the Church.

are from foreign countries because the Oblates there do not have the funds to cover their education. It takes about $1,000 each month, over the course of several years, for an Oblate seminarian to complete his formation program.
Father Frank Demers, O.M.I. is smart — very smart. He is a canon lawyer who has presided over court cases around the world. He is a former retreat master who traveled to many countries to teach people a deeper understanding of Missionary Oblate spirituality.

But Fr. Frank doesn’t have to be real smart when asked to summarize his faith. In fact, he can do it in just three words — God is good.

Recently Fr. Frank celebrated 70 years of Oblate vows. God has truly been good to him during that time and in return, he has helped others experience the Good News in their lives.

Father Frank felt a calling to the priesthood when he was in high school. He went to a retreat that was led by two Missionary Oblates and it was at that time he decided he wanted to join the Oblate congregation.

Father Frank was ordained in 1955 and then spent three years earning a doctorate in Canon Law, becoming one of only a handful of canon lawyers in the United States to have such an advanced degree. He handled cases for diocese across the country.
and also taught at several of the top theology schools in the United States and Canada.

For Fr. Frank, canon law was not something to be confined just to people in the legal community or the world of academia. It was also a way to help disadvantaged people and he found them on the other side of the world.

“For three months out of the year I would go to Tahiti and preside at a type of marriage court,” said Fr. Frank. “I went there every year for 20 years and presided over more than 600 annulments.”

When physical limitations prevented Fr. Frank from traveling to Tahiti, he would be sent cases to review through the mail or Internet. Since he retired from reviewing cases last year, there hasn’t been a single successful annulment in Tahiti.

Father Frank’s knowledge of church law made him a regular at General Chapters in Rome where Missionary Oblates from around the world would gather to select leadership and plan a course for the future. Father Frank impressed Oblates so much at the General Chapters that they started asking him to come to their countries and give retreats on Oblate spirituality.

Beginning in the 1980s, Fr. Frank led more than 60 retreats for Oblates all over the world. His passport was so filled with stamps and visas that he had to have pages added.

Today, at age 91, Fr. Frank lives at the Oblate Residence in Tewksbury, Massachusetts for elder and infirmed Oblates. Occasionally people will come by the home or contact him for advice, which he gladly offers.

Every morning, Fr. Frank attends Mass at the residence’s chapel. After Mass he spends time talking with visitors and neighbors who come to the liturgy. And when they leave he always reminds them — God is good. †

Father Frank enjoys taking time to talk with his brother Oblates and visitors to the Oblate residence.
A few years ago Fr. Vincenzo Bordo, O.M.I. was visiting his beloved homeless friends on the streets of Seongnam, South Korea. A man approached him with an unusual request.

The man didn’t ask Fr. Vincenzo for some food or clothes. Instead, he asked the priest for his business card. The man explained that he had no family or friends, and wanted Fr. Vincenzo’s business card in case something ever happened to him.

Recently, Fr. Vincenzo received a call from the police. They had discovered a homeless man frozen to death. There was no way to identify the man. He had no possessions, except for Fr. Vincenzo’s business card in his pocket.

“I went to the hospital and checked my friend’s face at the body archives. Yes, this was someone I knew,” said Fr. Vincenzo. “I gave a prayer for my friend who was part of our family. There was nobody else. My heart hurt so much that tears kept flowing from my eyes.”

Devastated that someone would die alone, Fr. Vincenzo vowed that any future unknown homeless people would be buried with love and dignity. So he told the police to contact him and his staff at Anna’s House whenever someone dies alone.

“Now if an unknown homeless person dies in Seongnam, I along with my staff go and have a funeral for this person,” said Fr. Vincenzo. “Our homeless friends live hard lives and when they die they are often alone with nobody there to love them.
They are filled with pain and loneliness. Nobody should ever die without being loved.”

Providing funerals for the forgotten is just part of an extensive homeless ministry that Fr. Vincenzo has overseen in Korea for the past 28 years.

When he arrived in Korea as a young priest from Italy, Fr. Vincenzo was surprised to see the urban poor living in shantytowns on the outskirts of Seoul. So he created Anna’s House, a soup kitchen to provide food to those living on the streets.

Over time, Anna’s House has grown to become the largest agency in Korea helping the homeless. Every day more than 550 meals are distributed to the poorest of the poor. Anna’s House also includes a shelter for runaway teenagers.

“We do not see the people who come to Anna’s House as poor people, we see them as human beings,” said Fr. Vincenzo. “We call them family and we tell them ‘I love you.’”

When the Covid-19 pandemic began, the dining facilities at Anna’s House had to be closed. So Fr. Vincenzo and his team began to distribute hundreds of lunch boxes every day to people living on the streets, along with face masks and other safety equipment.

Covid-19 is just the latest roadblock placed before Fr. Vincenzo and his fellow missionaries. But they are undeterred, knowing they have an army of volunteers and supporters from around the world committed to their ministry.

“I spend many sleepless nights trying to figure out what we can do and how to do it,” said Fr. Vincenzo. “So I ask for your prayers. We cannot abandon and turn our backs on these poor brothers and sisters in times of their greatest need.”

In both life and death.†
Father Richard Sudlik, O.M.I. ministers today as the Director of Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota. In his 48 years as a Missionary Oblate priest, Fr. Richard has ministered as a Pastor, Vocation Director, Formation Director and has served on the provincial council for the Oblates’ United States Province.

I grew up in Buffalo, New York and went to Bishop Fallon High School, which was a diocesan high school that was staffed by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. How I got to Bishop Fallon was a little interesting.

When I graduated from grammar school in 1959, the diocese had just built a brand new high school not too far from where I lived. Everybody in my class went to Bishop Turner High School. But I was the only one to go to Bishop Fallon, because my older brother had gone there ahead of me and had arranged for me to work in the bookstore. That way I didn’t have to pay tuition, which in 1959 was $70 a year. So to save $70 I went to Bishop Fallon and got to meet the Oblates. If I had gone to Bishop Turner I would have never met the Oblates and my life would have been totally different.

During my first year at Bishop Fallon, Fr. Bob Colfer, O.M.I. came up to me in the hallway and told me that he and the Oblates were really impressed with me. Later on I found out that Fr. Bob told every student the
same thing. He invited me to go to our seminary in Newburgh, New York to play seminarian for a week. And that is what I did. I went to class, did manual labor and enjoyed recreation.

The scholastics at the time were our co-teachers for the week and I was really impressed by these men. That’s when I decided this is what I wanted to do. So when graduation came I moved on to Our Lady of Hope Minor Seminary and the rest as they say is history.

One of the things about a vocation discernment is that they give you a lot of time. From the time I entered to the time I was ordained was nine years.

And throughout those nine years you are discerning, the Oblate community is discerning about you too. You go through a process of being evaluated and then invited on.

A lot of time when people are thinking about a vocation they think it is all about them — but it is also about the community. Fortunately for me the community was very affirming. The affirmation I received from the Oblates took a lot of pressure off of me and it was also a sign that maybe I was on the right track.

For nine years the Oblates said they appreciated who I was and what I was doing. And that approval culminated in 1972 when I was ordained. So now, all these years later here I am. Amen. †
Fr. Pierre Kéralum, O.M.I. — Headed For Sainthood?


An important early missionary in the history of the Church of Texas is Oblate Fr. Pierre Yves Kéralum. Born in France in 1817, he was ordained a priest in 1852 and was immediately sent to Texas along with six other young Oblate missionaries.

The first Bishop of Texas, Msgr. Jean Odin, remarked to the Oblate Superior: “The first time I met your Fr. Kéralum, I took a liking to him: he is so good, so candid and above all so respectful that one cannot help but love him with a singular affection.”

Everyone who met Fr. Kéralum had the same response. His fellow priests and visiting bishops spoke of him with reverence, while the Mexican people he served called him “El Santo Padre Pedrito.”

His skills acquired as a carpenter were put to good use in the construction of what is today the cathedral church and other church buildings in Brownsville and Roma, Texas. He was also called upon to assist with building what is now the cathedral church in Laredo. But he was most renowned for his religious life of humble faith and exemplary charity, especially to the poor and most abandoned in the missions of the Rio Grande Valley.

Assigned the most difficult territory of the brush country, Fr. Kéralum spent most of his life on horseback visiting the scattered
ranches. He lived a life of great trust in divine providence and religious poverty. He often spent the night sleeping under the stars. He would spend weeks at a time celebrating Mass and other sacraments, catechizing, praying with the sick, burying the dead and bringing consolation to poor families.

His mysterious disappearance and death in 1872 caused great sorrow in the community. The trails in the brush country were often narrow, and Fr. Kéralum’s eyesight had worsened over the last few years. He began to become lost for days until finally finding a settlement. His superior was all too aware of this, but had no one to take his place.

Ever devoted to the people, Fr. Kéralum was last seen on November 12. Searches were made for him without any success. It was not until ten years later that some cowboys looking for lost cattle came upon a saddle hanging in a tree in the thick brush. The remains of Fr. Kéralum, known as the “Lost Missionary,” were found below the tree.

Father Kéralum lived to the fullest the prayerful wish of Oblate founder St. Eugene De Mazenod, “They must wholly renounce themselves, striving solely for the glory of God, the good of the Church and the growth and salvation of souls.”

Father Kéralum continues to be revered as a model of saintly and selfless dedication to those seeking the blessing of God in their lives. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, supported by Bp. Daniel Flores of the Diocese of Brownsville, are prayerfully promoting his causes to be declared a saint by our catholic church. The faithful are encouraged to pray to our Heavenly Father through the intercession of Fr. Kéralum to grant the special favors of strength, healing and consolation that they seek.

It will be most appreciated if those receiving special miraculous favors would make them known to Fr. Roy Snipes, O.M.I., Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Mission, Texas olgparish@sbcglobal.net or (956) 585-2623.
Brother Solomon Gaja, O.M.I. is a pioneer Missionary Oblate. And he is still four years away from ordination.

Brother Solomon is the first Nigerian Oblate to study for the priesthood in the United States. He is currently in his first year of studies at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. As a scholastic, Bro. Solomon lives, prays and studies with other Oblate seminarians from around the world.

“When they told me I was going to the United States I didn’t know what to expect,” said Bro. Solomon. “But it has turned out to be such a nice, multicultural experience for me.”

Brother Solomon’s journey to San Antonio, and to the priesthood, began in Nigeria as the son of a mother who is
a business woman and a father who works in construction. The family has a strong Catholic faith and Bro. Solomon was an altar server from an early age.

“I thought about becoming a priest even in grade school, but it was in high school that I really decided that I wanted to become a priest and join the Missionary Oblates,” said Bro. Solomon.

Because the Oblates have a small presence in Nigeria, Bro. Solomon needed to leave his homeland in order to begin studies for the priesthood. He learned how to speak French, which allowed him to spend six years at the Oblates’ pre-novitiate and novitiate programs in Cameroon.

In addition to becoming fluent in French, Bro. Solomon also learned English. His skills in language made him the likely choice to be the first Nigerian seminarian to study in the United States.

Brother Solomon said he felt right at home in San Antonio. Six of the 12 seminarians currently living at the Oblate Seminary Residence are from Africa.

Brother Solomon has spent his entire adult life away from Nigeria, good preparation for a missionary who could be sent nearly anywhere in the world. But no matter where he goes, Bro. Solomon will always be a pioneer Missionary Oblate, blazing a new path for others to follow. †
Margaret Ruppert was a trailblazing member of the U.S. Navy. And today her generosity is helping young men blaze new trails as the next generation of Missionary Oblates.

Margaret was born in 1915 in Pinckneyville, Illinois. After earning a registered nursing degree she enlisted in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps in 1945. She served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars, often in dangerous conditions.

In Korea she worked on a ship that traveled unescorted into enemy territory to rescue wounded Marines.

Leaving A Lasting Legacy

In Vietnam she was sent to an aircraft carrier that had been attacked so she could care for severely burned victims.

Margaret served for 30 years in the Navy and rose to the rank of Naval Commander. Her assignments crisscrossed the United States and included several foreign deployments.

“Her family was very proud of her military service,” said Steve Grobl, Margaret’s great-nephew. “She was a pioneer.”

When Margaret passed away in 2017 at the age of 101, the family discovered that she had been a benefactor of the Missionary Oblates for many years. She routinely sent in donations and also remembered the Oblates in her will.
“We really don’t know how her connection to the Oblates started but she donated to them for decades, … When we began to settle her estate it just made sense to involve the Oblates.”

Margaret had designated a significant amount of her estate to charity and she had a discretionary fund for her family to distribute. As Steve and other family members began to consider different charities, they kept coming back to the Oblates and how Margaret had been a benefactor for so long.

Margaret’s family decided to build a seminary residence in her honor at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. The residence is now used by dozens of Oblate seminarians from around the world as they discern and study to become Oblate priests and brothers.

One of the current Oblate seminarians who is benefiting from Margaret’s generosity is Bro. Jean Emmanuel Meloncourt, O.M.I. Originally from Haiti, Bro. Jean moved to the United States at the age of 24 and began to know the Oblates because his local pastor, Fr. John Morin, O.M.I. was a longtime Oblate missionary to Haiti.

When the Oblate Seminary Residence was complete in 2018, Bro. Jean thanked the Ruppert family for their generosity in helping him and other seminarians on their path to ordination.

“The new Oblate seminary residence is making a major difference in my life,” said Bro. Jean. “In this international community I am discovering my true self and I hope that when I complete my formation as a priest I will understand God better and will be able to create a connecting bridge between God and His people.”

Margaret Ruppert and Bro. Jean are truly part of that connecting bridge, blazing trails and leaving lasting legacies. †
Zambia Delegation Builds Apartment Complex

For over a year the Zambia Delegation of the Missionary Oblates has been working to further its goal of being relatively self-sustainable financially. When it became apparent that they had a parcel of land near an area with an increasing need for housing, the Oblates took that opportunity and wedded it with their land resources.

Recently the Zambian delegation finalized the construction of a new apartment complex replacing the former Oblate Central House. This allows the Zambian Oblates to come closer to self-sufficiency and reflects the rapid growth in the number of Oblates in the delegation.

Masses Streaming Online

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Oblate parishes and shrines across the United States have been streaming daily and Sunday Masses. These livestreamed liturgies are being broadcast in English and Spanish.

To view the available livestreaming Masses, visit the homepage of the U.S. Province at omiusa.org. A list is continually being updated of the available Masses.
A DONOR ADVISED FUND (DAF) is a simple, flexible and tax-advantaged way you can make charitable donations, so you make the biggest impact. You can quickly and easily designate a grant from your DAF to the Oblate Missionary Society, Inc. (our legal title) through your financial institution’s website (such as Fidelity or Schwab Charitable). You can also locate our organization by using our Tax ID # 26-0634043.

A donor-advised fund is like a charitable investment account, for the sole purpose of supporting charitable organizations that help people in need, like the Oblate Missionary Society. When you contribute cash, securities or other assets to a donor-advised fund at a public charity, like Fidelity or Schwab Charitable, you are generally eligible to take an immediate tax deduction. Then those funds can be invested for tax-free growth and you can recommend grants to an IRS-qualified public charity.

Donor-advised funds are very popular and are the fastest-growing charitable giving vehicle in the United States because they are one of the easiest and most tax-advantageous ways to give to charity. You can also consider leaving a legacy gift from your DAF to continue helping people in need.

What is a Donor Advised Fund?

If you have any questions about how to give from your Donor Advised Fund, to help people in need, please contact the Office of Charitable and Planned Giving at 1-800-233-6264. You can also email charitablegifts@oblatesusa.org or visit oblategiving.org for more information.
Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all His glory was not arrayed like one of these.