



Newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

JANUARY 2020

Vol. 23, No. 1

From the Provincial

Young Oblates Meeting

25 Oblates (five each from the U.S. and from the four provinces of Canada) gathered at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Canada, the third week of September 2019 to: 1) continue to build and foster Oblate relationships among the younger members of the region and 2) to begin the discernment process to identify one or more ministries in the region which we could staff as a region. Leadership from each province likewise attended.

While the goals of the meeting seem clear, the process was more complicated. The facilitator, Michelle Miller, said that the process is as important as the product of the meeting.

The Canada-U.S. region has a rich history of working together through CROCUS, the leadership team of Provincials and Vicar Provincials of the four provinces. CROCUS leadership initi-



Facilitator Michelle Miller, Oblate Frs. Fernando Velasquez and Ken Thorson prepare to address the group

ated this dialog with younger Oblates to meet together to become better acquainted with each other and to discern about we can minister more closely with one another.

With the numbers of Oblates in the region declining, the opportunity to more clearly identify which ministries take

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L-r: Oblate Frs. Jerzy Kotowski, Rafal Chilimoniuk, James Chambers, Andrzej Madej, Pawel Zajac, Louis Studer, James Brobst.

U.S. Oblates visit fellow Oblates in Turkmenistan

by Fr. Lou Studer, OMI and Will Shaw

“Humble presence”. Those were the words **Fr. Andrzej Madej, OMI**, Superior of the Oblate mission in Turkmenistan, used to describe the Oblates mission there. He has been ministering in this former Soviet bloc country since 1997.

Turkmenistan’s population is largely Muslim but a few Catholics living there in the early 1990s wrote to Pope John Paul II, asking him about the possibility of sending priests to minister to them. They were aware that Catholic priests had come to some of the other Soviet bloc countries.

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priority to bring the good news to the poor and abandoned takes a sharper focus. For this purpose, each of the provinces identified three or four ministries it embraces and presents as possibilities for a regional focus.

The U.S. Province listed four: the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows; the parish ministry in the White Earth Reservation; the ministry of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; and Our Lady of Refuge parish in Eagle Pass, TX. While many other ministries could be identified as regional commitments, these four were the initial ones suggested.

Each province, in identifying its priority ministries, was asked to review the six foci of the 2016 Oblate General Chapter as a basis for the ministries for presentation at this meeting.

Of these six foci, three seemed to stand out most clearly in identifying the *priority ministries*: mission and new faces of the poor; mission with youth; and mission and interculturality.

In his presentation, **Oblate David Muñoz** posed the question,



Left-r: Oblate Frs. Bogdan Osiecki, Daniel Janulewicz Paul Patrick

“Where is the Oblate charism leading us, compelling us, to minister in the region?” Reflecting that Oblates do good work all over the world, we must still ask ourselves if we are authentically living that charism in our lives? “The focus must be primarily on ‘the man-the missionary’ rather than on the mission.” We are consecrated men with a passion for Jesus Christ and that must come first, before the mission we undertake,” he said.

Addressing the topic of interculturality in mission, **Oblate Fernando Velasquez** spoke of the importance of reflecting on our expe-

rience of mission in order to invigorate young Oblates to go to places and missions outside of their home country. Reflection also helps ensure a prioritizing and evaluating of the value of the ministry.

Adequate preparation for an Oblate going to a foreign land to mission is of utmost importance. “Pope Francis often speaks about an encounter, a reciprocity, of cultures which changes both the missionary and the people the missionary comes to serve,” Fr. Fernando said. “Interculturality doesn’t mean the missionary becomes one with the new culture where he serves but rather means that both the missionary and the people to whom he ministers are changed, enriched, and renewed by this exchange,” Mistakes have been made in the past when one culture was thought to dominate another. The way Oblates mission cannot be like that in the future.

The Superior General has made it known that often times Oblates have not been adequately prepared to minister in a new culture or have felt the new culture has not accepted or embraced his culture.



Left-r: Oblate Frs. Steven Montez, Gerard Tsatselam, Alfred Ravelomampisandraibe, and Facilitator Michelle Miller

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“Oblates must acknowledge their prejudices and biases and be willing to move beyond those prejudices in order to minister effectively in a new cultural context. This can be a very difficult and challenging and long-lasting process,” Fr. Velasquez said.

On a more positive note, Fernando mentioned there are many Oblate intercultural success stories and they need to be carefully studied and applied, where possible, to future missionary endeavors.

On Wednesday, each of the ministry priorities chosen by the four provinces was shared with the entire

in community provided a good background toward choosing a regional ministry.

The thought was expressed that simply our planning together is also an important way of being regional. The planning itself necessarily involves choosing Oblates who are leaders, capable and excited to work with other Oblates and ready to leave nothing undared for the sake of the mission.

Several possibilities for a regional ministry site were more carefully considered. Such criteria were: viable community life, ministry with the materially poor, opportunities for further outreach to the new poor in the area, opportunity for youth ministry.

The dialog continues. CROCUS will make final decisions about future regional ministry possibilities.

The participants agreed that this meeting helped in getting to know each other better and that formation for ministry (one of the key foci of the General Chapter), was a key element of this meeting, as well as greater knowledge about the topic of intentional interculturality.

The young Oblates were very positive about future collaboration and they felt they had taken some significant steps toward that collaboration.



Oblate Frs. Lucio Castillo and Humphrey Milimo
Office Managers Meet with
Oblate Leadership Team

The Oblate Leadership Team met with the Provincial Administrative Assistant, Laura Glasgow, and three Office Managers on October 23, at King's House, Belleville, IL.

This annual meeting provides the opportunity to speak about issues of concern, share information, formulate common policies among province leadership and the office managers, located in Lowell, MA, San Antonio, TX and Belleville, IL.

These Office Managers are responsible for organizing and preparing for all province meetings, Oblate personnel concerns of power of attorney, end of life issues, keeping files up to date, personnel booklet and ensuring that employee policies and procedures are uniform throughout the province.

Their contribution to the smooth running of the province is invaluable. As we discovered at our recent meeting, it is often they who remind leadership about “next steps” needing to be done regarding an upcoming meeting or putting final touches on a plan to be implemented in the province.



Oblate Frs. Rusty Gardiner and Harley Mapes

group, explaining how that ministry fosters and speaks to the six foci of the General Chapter. From these ministries, the group was tasked with choosing the most desired ministries to be considered for possible regional collaboration.

Thursday found the group evaluating the meeting thus far. There was general consensus that being together, getting to know each other better, becoming better acquainted with each others' ministries, backgrounds, way of living our Oblate life

CROCUS members meet in San Fernando

by Fr. Lou Studer, OMI



L-r: Oblate Tom Rush, Ms. Danielle Brisson, Oblates Luis Valbuena, Ken Thorson, Luc Tardif, Richard Beaudette, Louis Studer, Jim Brobst, Carlos Alarcon, Marcin Serwin, Raymond Carriere, Warren Brown, Alfred Grzempa, Juan Ayala.

The United States Province hosted the Canadian Provincials and Vicar Provincials at the Franciscan Retreat Center in San Fernando, CA, just 10

try day at the Oblate parishes where **Oblate Frs. Juan Ayala**, pastor of St. Ferdinand's and **Tom Rush**, pastor of Santa Rosa, spoke about their ministry.

Five other Oblates are also stationed there. These seven Oblates celebrate 17 Masses each weekend and hear Confessions for five hours. This ministry does not include the wedding and funeral Masses. Their busy schedule also includes the regular ministerial re-



Frs. Ken Thorson and Tom Rush

minutes from the two Oblate parishes of Santa Rosa and St. Ferdinand's.

New leadership was chosen at this meeting. **Fr. Lou Studer** was elected President of the Conference with **Fr. Ken Thorson** elected Vice President. They will serve a term of two years.

The leadership of the Canada-US region spent the minis-



Fr. Luis Valbuena, OMI



Frs. Juan Ayala, Richard Beaudette
sponsibilities of counseling, sacramental preparation, spiritual direction, hospital visits and anointing of the sick.

Besides their regular parish ministry, Oblates also spoke about



Frs. Lou Studer, Victor Patricio-Silva, Luc Tardif

some of their other pastoral responsibilities. **Fr. Luis Valbuena, OMI**, e.g., has been engaged in television media for over 40 years.

New Oblates to the Conference include **Frs. Richard Beaudette, OMI**, Vicar Provincial of the Canadian Lacombe Province and **Marcin Serwin, OMI**, Provincial Consultor for the Canadian Assumption Province.

Fr. Jim Brobst, OMI, Vicar Provincial of Mission and Ministry, also attends these semi-annual meetings, representing the U.S. Province.

MN parishes hold celebrations

by Fr. Lou Studer, OMI



Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Oblates Cyprian Czop, Michael Powell, Louis Studer

Oblate parishes of St. Casimir's and St. Patrick's in St. Paul, MN, celebrated two main occasions at each parish the weekend of Oct. 12-13, 2019.

Pastor Mike Powell, OMI, invited **Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Cozzens to preside and preach at St. Patrick's, honoring the 135th anniversary of the founding of the parish.** Several former parishioners returned for the first time in several years for the celebration

Bishop Cozzens congratulated the parishioners for the lively way they have kept the faith strong. He thanked the Oblates for the faithful service and the generosity they show to the people in their pastoral outreach.

Polish Oblate Fr. Cyprian Czop serves as Associate Pastor of both parishes. Fr. Cyprian arrived in the U.S. only one month ago, having served in Ukraine for the past 16 years. Before that, he missioned in Thailand for four years. While in Thailand, he ministered to the Hmong peoples and now feels at

home at St. Patrick's where many Hmong have settled. His missionary life as an Oblate has taken him to many parts of the world in his missionary work.

Fr. Cyprian spent his junior year of high school in the United States with a family, living in the state of Georgia, through a student exchange program between the U.S. and Poland. He is quite fluent in English.

This same weekend, St. Casimir's parishioners celebrated their annual Fall festival with a Polka Mass.

Oblates have served at St. Casimir's for 103 years! Several former parishioners returned to the parish for the festival.

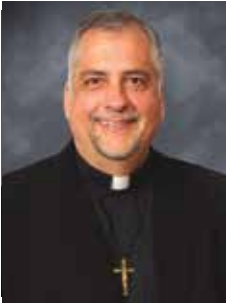
Later in the afternoon, Frs. Powell, Fr. Czop and I paid a visit to **Archbishop Bernard Hebda**, Archbishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis. Like Bishop Cozzens, he thanked the Oblates for the ministry they provide in the archdiocese. He specifically mentioned the hospital ministry of **Fr. Ron Harrer, OMI**, chaplain at Regents Hospital and thanked **Oblates Jim Deegan, Dick Sudlik, Lon Konold, Bob Morin, Dan Bozek, Ray Kirtz, Al Svobodny**, for their ministry at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo.

The Archbishop remarked that he has often heard many positive comments about the quality of the preaching and the compassionate pastoral ministry of the Oblates stationed there.

"You are a much appreciated presence here," he told Cyprian, Mike and me and asked us to convey that message from him to all the Oblates in the Archdiocese. **"The Oblates are a great gift to the archdiocese,"** he told us.



Archbishop Bernard Hebda with Oblates Czop, Studer and Powell.



These days I find myself sitting on a Southwest Airlines jet quite often. I usually use the time in the air to catch up on emails or peruse my calendar to see what's coming up.

On my way to St. Louis one time, I took a gander at the Southwest magazine, and was struck by the message of one of its articles entitled "Finding Joy." Written by the chief operating officer of Southwest Airlines, the article pointed out quite nicely the many ways he finds joy in his life. **There was nothing complicated about his methodology – my takeaway is that it is a choice we make.**

Confronted with the many challenges we face; I realize that choosing to find joy can be difficult. Having just finished our five Area Meetings, the whole idea of joy can be a rather distant concept, or even senseless, in the midst of hearing news of our relinquishing of ministries or the continuing and ever-growing threats that lawsuits pose to our financial sustainability. We can choose to dwell on outcomes of which we are unaware, or not.

As the dust continues to settle from the merger of provinces from over twenty years ago, there are some things I see which do give me joy.

♦ We are continually engaged in conversations on how best to live in community. While they may seem exhausting or repetitive, their absence in our mindset would point to something rather grim.

♦ Ministry choices, and the healthy dialogs needed, are strived for.

♦ The charism of our Founder is ever more the focus of our many of deliberations, whether within an Area Meeting or a Council Meeting.

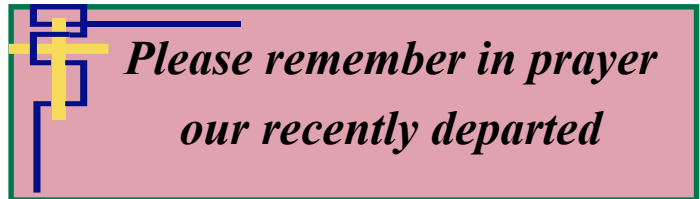
♦ We have four formation programs with men in them! Our Mazenodian Family is vibrant and alive!

As we become the province we need to become, as difficult as that may be, I'm convinced we are becoming a province that will continue to be relevant far into the future.

At the beginning of this new year, as we celebrate the founding, and enduring existence of Eugene's charism, I am very hopeful, and very grateful.

-Fr. Art Flores, OMI

***For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.-Jer. 29:11
BLESSED NEW YEAR!***



Theresa B. Pelletier, 86, sister of the late Donat Daigle, OMI, died on Feb. 13, 2019 in Merrimack, NH.

Archbishop Harry Flynn, HOMI, died in St. Paul, MN on Sept. 22, 2019.

Bishop Thomas Flanagan, HOMI, died in San Antonio, TX on Oct. 9, 2019.

Fr. Hubert Lagacé, OMI, 87, died on Oct. 10, 2019, in Richelieu, Que.

Elizabeth A. Ruhmann, 80, sister-in-law of Bro. Tom Ruhmann, OMI, died in Livingston, IL on Oct. 20, 2019.

Rick Ramirez, 65, brother-in-law of Fr. Ramiro Cortez, OMI, died on October 21, 2019 in Dallas, TX.

Richard Inman, 84, brother-in-law of Fr. David Kalert, OMI, died on Nov. 18, 2019.

Joseph Dummer, 80, brother of Fr. Leo Dummer, OMI, died on Nov. 19, 2019, in Madelia, MN.

Fr. Raymond Steen, OMI, 87, died suddenly on Dec. 4, 2019 in Abington, MA.

Fr. Aloysus Svobodny, OMI, 96, died on Dec. 4, 2019 in Buffalo, MN.

Eugene Wilhelm, brother of Fr. Paul Wilhelm, OMI, died on Dec. 5, 2019

Fr. John St. Cyr, OMI, 84, died on Dec. 7, 2019 in Tewksbury, MA.

Fr. Eugene Prendiville, OMI, 87, died on Dec. 8, 2019 in Belleville, IL.



Fancie Lor, Cha Lor, Fr. Lou, Jova Ly, Fr. Mike Powell, OMI, Kou Ly, and Kua Vang.

While visiting the Oblate parishes in St Paul, MN, Fr. Studer met with members of the Hmong community at St. Patrick's on Oct. 13, who presented him with a beautiful tapestry. >See story, p. 5.

Turkmenistan visit

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The Pope responded by sending an ambassador from the Vatican to determine the need. Following up on the Holy Father's response, the ambassador asked 38 religious communities in Rome if they might be able to send a couple priests to Turkmenistan. Everyone said "no".

The ambassador also contacted then Superior General of the Missionary Oblates, Fr. Marcello Zago, who said "yes." Aware that Oblates who spoke Russian would be key to help this mission get started, he asked Fr. Madej, a Polish Oblate working in Ukraine, to visit Turkmenistan.

Fr. Madej, upon arriving, discovered that the Catholics who had originally written to the Pope, no longer lived in Turkmenistan. So, thumbing through the telephone directory for Polish names of people that might help him begin the mission, he discovered there was a significant number of Catholics who wanted to receive the Sacraments and the ministry of the Church. Fr.



The Oblates celebrated Mass on top of an ancient Church, Haraba Koshk where, Fr. Andrzej said, "No Mass had been celebrated for 1,500 years."

Madej decided there still was a need for Catholic priests in Turkmenistan.

Three Oblates are currently serving there **Fr. Madej, Fr. Rafal Chilimoniuk and Fr. Jerzy Kotowski**. Officially Vatican diplomats living at the Vatican Nunciature, they minister to a group of faithful Catholics who come to the small parish connected to the Nunciature. The government does not allow them to do public outreach to Catholics, although officially the political system is democratic and religion can be practiced freely, at least in theory but often not so much in fact.

The Oblates are aware they are watched and cannot publicly invite people to come to the Sacraments. Those who do come, however, often let others know and the government doesn't interfere, so long as they attend on their own.

The group has begun a weekly Bible study and they do visit people in their homes, when invited. Many other requests are made for assistance as well, such as transportation, food, and counseling. The people know very little about their Catholic faith, so the Oblates have truly been a blessing in their 23 years of ministry in Turkmenistan. There have been some conversions from Islam to Catholicism but such a move usually means their family will have nothing to do with them, even refusing to attend the funeral of a family member who converted to Catholicism.

"The Muslim faith has many beautiful rituals but it typically does not deal with the existential questions of the meaning of life: such as death, evil, sin, eternal life, for which people are looking for answers," Fr. Andrzej said.



At the U.S. Embassy, L-R: Fr. Zajak; Lisa Scaglione; Paul Thacker (Oblate supporters); Fr. Studer; Deputy Chief of Mission, Andrea Brouillette-Rodriguez; Frs. Chambers, Madej, Brobst

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Turkmenistan visit

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Searching for such answers sometimes becomes the catalyst for which a conversion happens.

The Oblates now celebrate Mass in three languages on Sundays to accommodate the people who have spread word of their presence around the capital city of Ashgabat.

While the words “humble presence” might adequately describe the Oblate mission, the devotion, appreciation and vibrant faith of the people who worship at the Nunciature is strong testimony to the success and importance of these Oblates ministering in Turkmenistan.

The United States Province supports this mission financially and the Polish Province ensures there are at least three available to minister in Turkmenistan.

Oblate **Frs. Jim Brobst, Jim Chambers and I** came to Turkmenistan to evaluate the success of the mission, along with Fr. Pawel Zajac, Provincial of Poland. Our meetings resulted in positively affirming the continuance of the good work begun here 23 years ago.



On the final night of the visit, all the Oblates celebrated Mass with a crowd of locals whose children performed a “Piccolo Concerto” (little concert) in honor of the visitors.

Pope Francis continues to ask missionaries to go to the peripheries. Turkmenistan is truly one such country.

“Jesus is at work in Turkmenistan,” Fr. Madej assured us. That was confirmed again and again as the people told us how appreciative and thankful they are for the Oblates ministering in Turkmenistan and for the opportunity for them to practice their faith and receive the Sacraments.

The Oblates are ready and willing to continue their presence in Turkmenistan for many years to come.

Fr. Henault writes from Haiti



Although written in October 2019, the Haiti situation has not changed substantially as we go to press.

Huge manifestations continue in Port au Prince and throughout the country of Haiti. There are road blocks everywhere, making it difficult to get to a hospital for an X-ray for the lung infection that has been plaguing me for three weeks now.

There is no more electricity from the national grid. The Sisters (Missionaries of Charity) put on their generator from 7:30 until 9:30 in the evening but they are starting to run short of fuel. The Sisters tried to go get some supplies a couple of weeks ago. The hood of their car was smashed, 3 windows broken and it is only because one person yelled for

them to duck down that none of them were injured

No one and nothing is sacred or spared. You can't get to the stores to buy anything and the shelves are empty. We have enough food in the house to get by. Everyday there are violent demonstrations, looting, road blocks, burning tires, rock and bottle throwing. Cars are set afire along with businesses, and in some instances the police run out of tear gas so they start using live ammunition.

I've seen many, many demonstrations to overturn Haitian regimes in my past 55 years but NOTHING on this scale. Unless President Jovenel Moise loses the support of the police, we are at an impasse. The president refuses to leave, and the opposition says he has to go as there

is no dialogue or compromise possible. It is already a humanitarian crisis. I don't know how much further this can go before there is some kind of foreign intervention.

Please keep us and the Haitian people in your prayers. Love and God bless you all!

Fr. John (Henault) O.M.I.



Sr. M. Anthony, MC, Fr. Henault and Bro. Richard

Victorious Missionaries meet in Belleville, IL



Standing, l-r: Jeff Payne, Fr. Jim Allen, OMI, Kathy Catchings, Sr. Linda Hylla, Melvin Fleischmann, Alicia Kirkland, LPN, Bette Meyer, VM Ministry Assistant, Amy Bird, Danielle Ray, CNA, Mike Wojtowicz, Bro. Tom Ruhmann, OMI, VM National Director. **Seated, l-r:** Sue Collins, Bessie Gietl, Linda Poynter, Diana Braun, Debbie Thomas, Kevin Leuchtefeld

Fr. Jim Allen, OMI, led the Victorious Missionaries (VM) in their annual retreat Oct. 18-20, 2019 at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL.

"I was touched by the strong faith of the VM's who came to the retreat," Fr. Allen said. "I remember when it was a fledgling organization

back in the sixties. The faith of the VM's founding members is still alive and well in today's members."

According to the VMs current director, **Bro. Tom Ruhmann, OMI**, they've held a retreat every year since the group was founded:

"The retreats are an opportunity for the members and non-mem-

bers to come to the Shrine, enjoy fellowship and have a day of reflection. Though most of the attendees were local, some came from other states including Kentucky, Indiana and West Virginia," he said.

The VM's, dedicated to providing spiritual support for all those with disabilities or who are chronically ill and those who wish to journey with them is the first movement that was formed and run by persons with disabilities. Today, the VM's have six chapters throughout the United States.

The next major event for the VM's will be the Annual Conference at the Shrine May 1-3, 2020, when the chapters come together for a national business meeting, and **Fr. David Muñoz, OMI** will lead a day of recollection. At that time, the Fr. John Maronic Achievement Award will be presented during Mass at the Church of Our Lady of the Snows.

-by Will Shaw on website:

<https://www.omiusa.org/index.php/2019/10/page/4/>

Bro. Methé renews vows as an Oblate Brother

On Oct. 17, 2019, **Bro. Joey Methé, OMI** renewed his second vows in the presence of U.S Oblates at "391" and his Provincial, **Fr. Luc Tardif, OMI**, of Notre-Dame-du-Cap Province in Quebec, Canada, during a prayer service presided over by **Fr. Tom Coughlin, OMI**.

Bro. Methé, was the 2019 summer intern at the JPIC USA office and has now become a part of the office staff. As an Oblate brother in formation, he hopes to learn from the expertise of the JPIC staff, continue his work studying and analyzing the mining/extractives industry,

and offer his creative media production skills to the Oblate Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation ministry. He was elected President of l'Association des étudiantes et étudiants francophones (AEF) at Laurentian University in Sudbury (Canada), went on to work for the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa for over 9 years as the Communications Director.

After years of leadership in the student movement in Canada, he joined

the Oblates on August 1, 2018. This was his way to answer Jesus' call to be in solidarity with those who are forgotten, abandoned and oppressed.



‘Come and See’ Weekend held in Buffalo, NY



Frs. Greg Gallagher and Paul Dass, (front), with group at Niagara Falls

Young men from around the U S and Canada attended a “Come and See” weekend experience at Bishop Fallon prenovitiate community in Buffalo, NY.

Among the weekend’s activities were: prayerful liturgies, a card game night with ice-cream social, a *Mission with Youth* experience, and faith sharing. **Oblate Frs. Greg Gallagher and Paul Dass** also accompanied the group on a trip to Niagara Falls

The weekend allowed the prenovices to convey their personal understanding of the goals of this

stage of formation and transmit important Oblate values such as com-



Frs. Jesse Esqueda (front, l) and Juan Gaspar (front, r) with group.

Fr. Wright named missiology chairholder

Fr. Bob Wright, OMI, who has taught at Oblate School of Theology since 1984, has been chosen as the first holder of the Oblate School of Theology’s newest endowed chair, the *Elena S. Kenedy Chair in Missiology*.

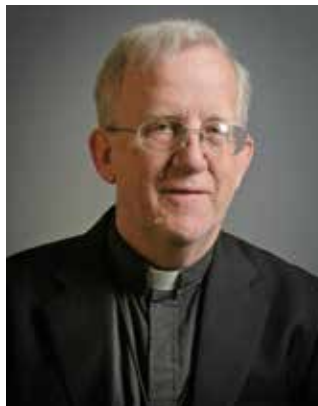
For about 30 years, Fr. Wright has taught an introductory course on missiology and about the interaction of faith and culture in the past and present. He has also taught the history of Hispanic Christianity, first in the Southwest and more recently throughout the United States.

He hopes to publish a textbook on Hispanic Christianity in the United States. He has written many

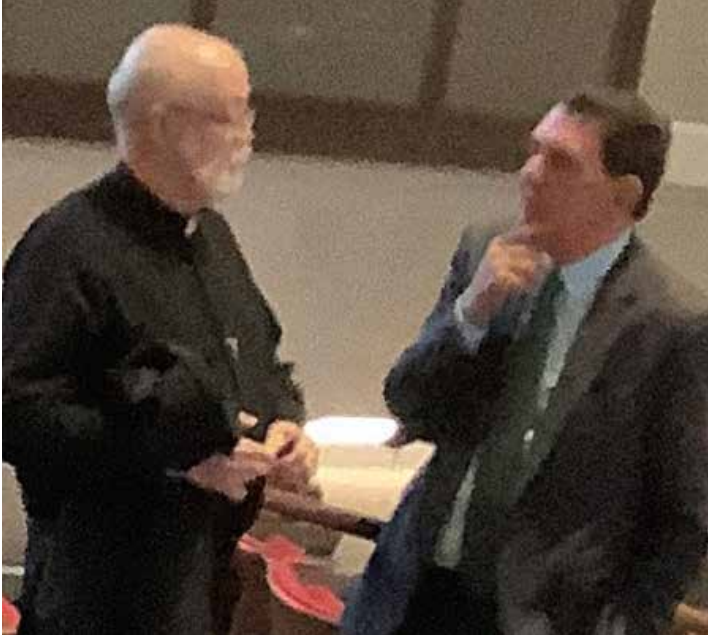
essays on the missionary work of the Oblates in Texas and New Mexico, and has been invited to speak in Rome and the Philippines about the Church’s mission today.

Fr. Wright has participated in mission gatherings in Guatemala and Mexico.

He sees the new endowed chair as a welcome recognition of OST’s preparation of many people for the Church’s mission for more than a century and the work of many past professors, such as **Frs. Bernard Doyon, OMI, and Ronald Young, OMI.**



Card. George documentary shown at CUA



Fr. Bevil Bramwell chats with Robert Royal

On Nov. 12, 2019, Oblate Frs. Bevil Bramwell, Ray LeBrun and Charles Hurkes joined Catholic University students and others to a screening of a new documentary on the life and witness of the late **Card. Francis George, OMI**, “Glorious Lives – Cardinal Francis George,” produced by Shalom World with Mike Stark.

The documentary was followed by a panel discussion moderated by **Prof. Chad Pecknold, PhD**, of CUA’s School of Theology and Religious Studies. It included:

- ♦ **Bishop Thomas Paprocki** of Springfield, IL, who served as Auxiliary under the cardinal;
- ♦ **Robert Royal**, president of the Faith & Reason Institute and editor-in-chief of The Catholic Thing website;
- ♦ **Michael Heinlein**, presently researching and writing a life of the cardinal;
- ♦ **Mary Hallan FioRito**, first female vice-chancellor and a great

friend of the cardinal,

In a column published in The Catholic Herald the following day, Dr. Pecknold emphasized a point Bishop Paprocki had made, that, “At the heart of Cardinal George’s faith as an Oblate was oblation.”

He also wrote: “Watching the inspiring documentary of

his life, I saw something new in the man I once met, and admired from afar. I saw more clearly the secret of his life.

I saw the secret of his joyful perseverance. Facing suffering in himself with realism, intelligence and joy was possible because this was his oblation. His offering to God through Jesus Christ, meant a suffering life could be transfigured into something holy that heals and elevates a person. ...Cardinal George, pray for us.”

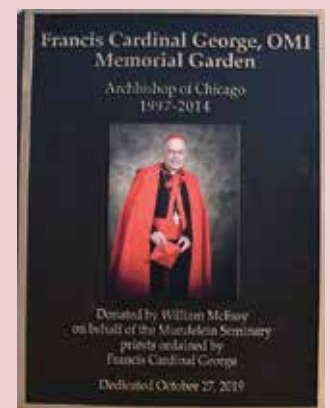
Among those in attendance were **Fr. Dan Flens**, Cardinal George’s secretary over the years, **Joan Lewis**, EWTN’s Rome bureau chief and **Mike Stark**, Executive producer and host of the documentary.

Documentary available at \$19.95 from: <https://saintjoe.com/products/glorious-lives>
The Catholic Herald column is found at: <https://catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2019/11/12/the-cardinal-who-shows-the-church-how-to-face-suffering-with-divine-charity/>

In honor of **Cardinal Francis George’s** chancellorship of Mundelein Seminary from 1997-2014, more than 500 people joined Chicago’s Cardinal Blaise Cupich and rector Rev. John Kartje in blessing the **Francis Cardinal George, OMI Memorial Garden** at the seminary on Oct. 27, 2019. Cardinal George, the eighth archbishop of Chicago, died in 2015.

During Mass, Cupich said about George, “He was an individual who was very much in touch with his humanity.”

According to an article by Karie Angell Luc in the **Lake County News-Sun**, the keystone piece is a pillar with a large plaque and full color portrait of George (pictured at right) located at an entrance along a path leading to a recently refurbished grotto.



“This monument is a way of honoring not only Cardinal George himself, but also the dozens of men he ordained to the priesthood and diaconate,” Fr. Kartje said. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/lake-county-news-sun/ct-lns-cardinal-dedicates-garden-st-1028-20191027-7hqpno26wfhdxdgwh5uaa5ajpti-story.html>

Superiors/Directors meet



21 Superiors attended the four-day meeting. front: Oblates Richard Hall and Lawrence Mariasoosai; back, l-r: Oblates Jim Allen, Juan Ayala, Emmanuel Mulenga, Frank Santucci, Lon Konold, John Hanley.

Superiors and Directors met from Sept. 30-Oct. 3, 2019 at King's House, Belleville, IL, to receive updates on happenings in the province from the Provincial Leadership Team and to participate in a two-day workshop that helped identify talents and skills for leadership for each participant. The Lead-

ership Team of Canada's Lacombe, Province joined the 21 participants.

Oblate Fr. John Malazdrewich and colleague Bruce Swan led the group in the leadership process. This "Coach Approach to Leadership" helped each participant identify key strengths and talents for leadership and also the change in such gifts that takes place in moments of stress and anxiety which leaders often face.

Various scenarios were presented to the Oblates to help us understand how, through role playing, we respond to situations we will likely come across in our ministry as Superiors and Directors. We were helped to recognize how stressful, anxiety-ridden

situations can change our approach and response.

Participants found the process informative and personally insightful as they willingly shared the problems and successes in their ministry.

Oblate Fr. Greg Cholewa explained to the Superiors that the U.S. Province has engaged the services of the National Religious Retirement Organization (NRRO) to guide the province in identifying what services/facilities will be needed for our retired Oblates into the future. NRRO will hopefully assist us as well in seeing where there is unnecessary duplication and how we can offer a healthier, more creative way of life for our Oblates in retirement.



L-R: Mark Dean, Jim Chambers and Paco Gomez

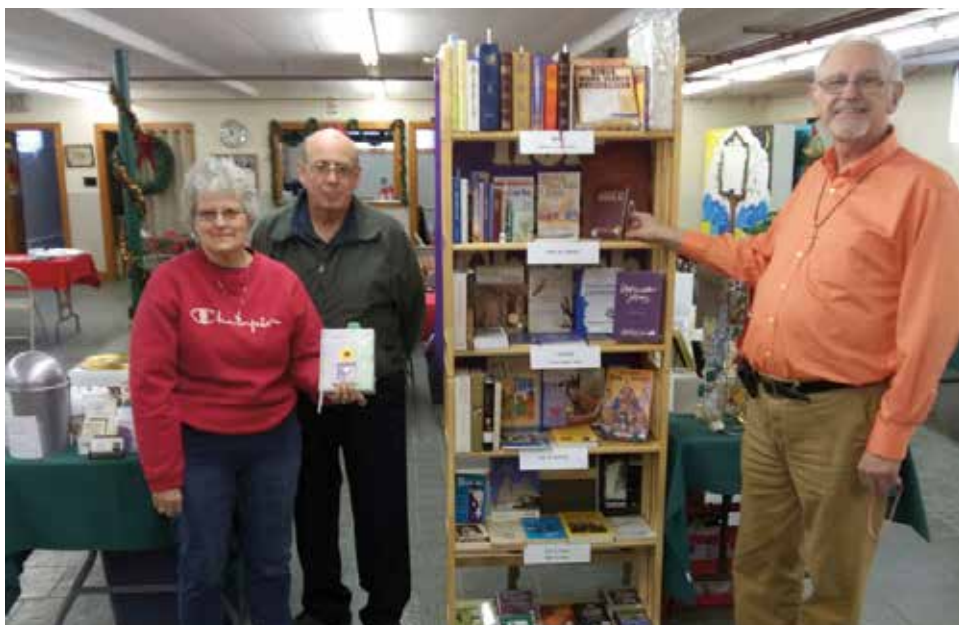
Oblate Fr. Frank Santucci updated us about the upcoming Convocation 2020. The theme is "*They Will Constantly Renew Themselves In The Spirit Of Their Vocation.*"

At the 2020 Convocation, members of the Mazenodian Family will be joining us for part of our time together. This quote of St. Eugene from the Introduction to the Constitutions and Rules applies to all mem-



Frs Tom Coughlin, Ray Cook

Continued on page 13



Louise, Larry Dagesse, founding members of the group with Bro. Richard Colebrook Associates assume new ministry

By Bro. Richard Coté, OMI

With the closing of the former Our Lady of Grace Shrine Gift Shop and Good Shepherd Parish Gift Shop in Berlin, NH, Catholics of the North country have no where to go to purchase religious goods.

To help alleviate this problem, the Colebrook NH Associates

are undertaking a new outreach ministry by selling Catholic books, statues, crucifix and rosaries provided by the Rosary Makers of Mary Immaculate, Augusta ME, headed by **Roger Jean, HOMI**.

Their first outreach ministry was at the St. Brendan's Church Christmas Fair held on Nov. 2,

which proved very successful. The group also set up a table of religious articles at St. Albert Church in West Stewartstown, NH at their Christmas Fair on December 7.

The Colebrook Associate Community welcomed a new member on Nov. 16, 2019. **Bro. Richard Coté, OMI**, accepted the initial commitment of 56-year old **Mr. Price Brandt**, and presented him with the Oblate Crucifix.

Fr. Michael Lauze, OMI, long-time acquaintance of Mr. Brandt, blessed the Crucifix and witnessed the ceremony.



Back: Bro. Richard, Fr. Lauze; front: Mr. Price Brandt

Superiors/Directors meet

Continued from page 12

bers of the Mazenodian Family in renewing their chosen vocation, as they share in the Oblate charism.

Our time together ended with a renewed sense of our individual qualities and gifts as leaders in the various communities we represent and lead. *-by Fr. Lou Studer, OMI*

*LEAVE NO STONE
UNTURNED IN YOUR QUEST
FOR GOD'S ETERNAL
KINGDOM*

St. Eugene de Mazenod



Fr. Bill Antone, OMI, makes a point of clarification as Facilitator Bruce Swan and Fr. Bill Mason, OMI, listen.

CA. Oblate Associates celebrate Thanksgiving

The Oblate Associates from Chula Vista (CA) Most Precious Blood parish gathered for an early Thanksgiving celebration. The Chula Vista Oblate Associates are a very active group which meets every month and find many ways to reach out to the poor.

The group's leader, Herminio Alignay, who works closely with his wife, Marina, summed up their activities during 2019 thus: "In case you are not aware, in 2019 ...

♦ "we helped our Parish Feeding of the Homeless by providing soup spoons throughout the year. We achieved it all without doing Fundraising;

♦ "we continue to make a difference in the life of the Filipino in-



Bro. Peter Vasquez, (2nd from left) and Fr. Bill Antone (back, middle)

digenous students of the Notre Dame of Kulaman school; and contributed in the repair of the Cathedral of Jolo that was bombed last January 27, 2019.

♦ "we provided food, clothing, socks and shoes for the poor and homeless in Tijuana. "

More recently, the group has sponsored a dinner for the homeless in Chula Vista. They have moreover been very supportive of the care of elder Oblates in the Philippines.

-by Fr. Bill Antone, OMI

Tijuana youth engage in active ministry

Oblate Frs. Jesse Esqueda, Lucio Castillo, Weibert Merilan, Marek Stroba and Eleazar Manuel-Lopez are presently in the Baja mission ministry in Tijuana, BC, Mexico. Their active youth group puts out an interesting account of their own ministry in the parish area, to which you are invited to subscribe. Following is an article edited by David Rizo and Rich Reader.

Hello from the Youth Ministry, formerly in the Parish of San Eugenio, and now at the site of the new parish, María Inmaculada (located at the Youth Center).

Fr. Jesse has asked that the Youth Social Ministry begin sending updates on our efforts to care for families, with a focus on the medically indigent, and other needs in our parish. Fr. Jesse provided us with a list of names of people he thought might appreciate these reports.

When we visit these people, we provide food, household items, and medical supplies. Sometimes we clean their house, change diapers, give a bath, offer to pray with them, or whatever else might help.

We also spend considerable time just visiting and listening to their concerns. In some cases, we feel this is a much more appreciated service than the material things we bring. We are caring for stroke and cancer victims, a boy in need of a kidney transplant, a woman with severe arthritis, a family with an adult who has cerebral palsy, and many other such cases. We also

have two orphanages that we help.

Occasionally we host groups from the US that come to help, sponsor health related fairs, work with US donors that provide scholarships, help kids with school packages and classes, and build roofs.

If you wish receive these emails at some future time, please let the editors know at the following email address: rich.reader.ranch@gmail.com



Dwellings at the outskirts of the new parish

Final Fall area meetings held

As reported in the November 2019 issue, the Fall area meetings included an evaluation of the province ministries, the presence and ministry of the leadership team to province Oblates, and the challenges the province must face in the next three to five years as the province membership begins the process of choosing leadership to serve the next three years (2020-2023) in the U.S. Province. *Fr. Studer took photos of those in San Antonio (Oct. 7-9) and the Pacific (Oct. 21-23) areas.*



Oblates Marek Stroba, Luis Valbuena



Oblates Lucio Castillo, Webert Merilan



Oblates Jerry Orsino and Lawrence Mariasoosai



Oblates John Collet, Eleazar Manuel-Lopez, Porfirio Garcia



Oblates Democracy Mudenda, Dwight Hoeberechts, Andy Sensenig



**Oblates Tom Ovalle,
Raul Salas**

**Oblates
Pablo Hughes,
Jim Fee**



✓ On January 11, 2020, **Eleazar Manuel-Lopez, OMI**, was ordained to the priesthood by **Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI**, at Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos Parish in San Antonio, TX.

✓ In a letter of condolence to Archbishop Bernard Hebda of St. Paul, on the occasion of the death of **Archbishop Harry Flynn, HOMI**, **Fr. Lon Konold, OMI** wrote, "It may be of interest to know that Archbishop Flynn asked specifically for the Oblate Cross from the deceased **Fr. Wilfrid (Will) Upson, OMI**. The two of them worked closely together, serving the needs of the very poor in St. Paul. A deep friendship based on mutual love and brotherhood during those many years ministering together bound the two of them together. May they now enjoy eternal life together!"

✓ The US Province Convocation will take place on April 14-17, 2020, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL.

✓ The New Orleans Archdiocesan newspaper, *Clarion Herald*, carried a front page story and photos by Peter Finney Jr. which featured **Oblate Fr. Tony Rigoli**. Many of the photos accompany a commentary by Mr. Finney on the *Clarion Herald's* website. <https://clarionherald.org/2019/10/22/thanking-ignatius-for-nudging-us-toward-gratitude/>

✓ The Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL, will host an Oblate Youth Encounter, aimed at those 15-35 years of age from July 13-17, 2020. The fee, covering all accommodations and meals is \$410.US; \$545 Canadian. For more information: **JUSTYNA:OBLATEYOUTHCANADA@GMAIL.COM**.

✓ **The 2020 Oblate Retreat schedule has been determined:**

San Antonio, TX: Monday, Jan. 20- Friday, Jan. 24; Oblate Renewal Center (Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI)

Sarita, TX; Monday, March 16-Friday, March 20; Lebh Shomea House of Prayer (Oblate Frs. Roger Bergkamp & Andrew Sensenig)

Tewksbury, MA; Monday, Aug. 31-Friday, Sept. 4; Immaculate Heart of Mary Residence (Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI)

Belleville, IL; Monday, Sept. 14-Friday, Sept. 18; King's House (Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI)

✓ On Nov. 2, 2019, the Oblate community at St. Henry's Residence in Belleville, Il, gathered to celebrate the 99th birthday of **Fr. Clarence Zachman, OMI**. Age hasn't slowed him down. He still goes out and rakes leaves and trims trees.

Right, l-r: Oblate Frs. Jim Allen, Clarence Zachman, Joe Ferraioli.

-Photo by Fr. David Kalert, OMI.



"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."

OMI - USA

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