Dear Friend,

Recently I visited the Missionary Oblates in Zambia. Oblates from the United States established the mission in 1983, and numerous U.S. Oblates have ministered there over the past 36 years, particularly in the areas of leadership and first formation, getting the mission established.

Today there are over 60 Oblates ministering in Zambia, and there are Zambian Oblates ministering or studying in Italy, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa and an additional nine in the United States. The Oblates are now the largest male religious community in Zambia!

A highlight during the trip was a celebration of the one-year anniversary of the founding of the Church of St. Paul in the Diocese of Livingstone, where an Oblate, Bishop Valentine Kalumba, O.M.I., leads the diocese.

The parish became a reality because of the generosity of benefactors in the United States, including one donor who made possible the construction of the beautiful church building. Previously, the faithful had been worshiping in a run-down, small building, hardly adequate for the 500 regular worshippers in this community.

At the Eucharistic celebration, Bishop Kalumba conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on five young parishioners. The Mass included lively, traditional music, dancing and even the gift of a live goat and chicken to Bishop Kalumba in appreciation for him presiding, preaching and confirming the young persons.

Throughout that memorable day, parishioners kept coming up to me offering hugs and thanks for their new place of worship. Today, I forward this gratitude on to you, because it is your prayers and support that makes places like the Church of St. Paul a reality in Zambia and other impoverished countries around the world. Please know that the Oblates and their parishioners at St. Paul are honored to pray for you at this special Oblate mission.

Fr. Louis Studer, O.M.I.
Provincial, United States Province
Father Quilin Bouzi, O.M.I. is thrilled to be a Missionary Oblate priest. And he has two special women to thank for his joy.

The first is his mother, Anne Marie, who instilled in Fr. Bouzi the importance of faith at an early age. The second is St. Therese, whose autobiography had a great influence on Fr. Bouzi becoming a priest.

“My mom was a cook for priests back home in Haiti and she knew the Oblates and their reputation for working with the very poor,” said Fr. Bouzi. “And when I was 16 years old I read St. Therese’s book and it was very powerful. After reading it I came home and said to my mother, ‘Mom I want to be a priest.’”

Father Bouzi was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1959, the third child of Robert and Anne Marie Bouzi. He grew up in a deeply Catholic family. In addition to his mom working for priests, his dad helped to prepare parishioners for First Communion and other sacraments.

Father Bouzi moved to New York City in 1987 and studied architecture for four years at State College of New York. The calling to the priesthood was always present, but Fr. Bouzi kept resisting. He was very shy, and couldn’t imagine himself standing in front of a large group of parishioners at Mass.

But the calling persisted, and eventually Fr. Bouzi decided to leave college even though he was nearing completion of his degree. He concluded that his future was not in erecting buildings, but rather in building better lives by spreading the Good News.

Father Bouzi inquired about joining the Oblates after attending a Healing Mass by Fr. Richard McAlear, O.M.I. Father McAlear’s healing ministries were very popular, taking him around the world. The two men began corresponding with each other and Fr. McAlear helped Fr. Bouzi discern his calling, which eventually led to Fr. Bouzi entering the Oblates’ prenovitiate program in 1999.

“I felt close to the Oblate charism because our mission is to help people to become human first and then to become Christians, and eventually to become saints,” said Fr. Bouzi. “We are called to be with the poor, to lift them up and tell them that they are the children of God and that they are loved by God.”

As a prenovice, Fr. Bouzi earned a BA in Philosophy from D’Youville College in Buffalo, New York. After his novitiate year, he attended Oblate
School of Theology. He also spent a yearlong internship ministering in Zambia before being ordained in 2007.

Father Bouzi’s first assignment was as an Associate Pastor at St. William’s Parish in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. He then spent a couple of years working in the Miami area, including starting a French Mass for Haitian immigrants at an Oblate parish. Later he would spend six years ministering in Buffalo, New York in both the Oblate formation program and as a Pastor at three parishes. Two years ago, he returned to St. William’s Parish as Pastor, where he currently ministers today.

Ministering in Tewksbury, Massachusetts may be physically very far away from Haiti. But spiritually, Fr. Bouzi can return to Haiti just by walking next door to the Oblate Residence for infirmed and elderly Oblates.

Finding Happiness In Haiti

When Fr. Bouzi visits with Fr. John Morin at the Oblate Residence in Tewksbury, Fr. Morin is quick to remind his brother Oblate that he is more Haitian than the native son. Father Bouzi may have been born in Haiti and lived there for 28 years, but Fr. Morin spent 41 years ministering on the island.

“During those 41 years I could have left many times and returned to the United States,” said Fr. Morin. “But I never wanted too, because Haiti is where I found my happiness.”

Father Morin has been a mentor to Fr. Bouzi since the early days of the younger Oblates’ priesthood. In fact, Fr. Morin preached at Fr. Bouzi’s first Mass. He was not scheduled to preach, but Fr. Bouzi’s mom insisted, and you don’t tell a Haitian mom no.

During his four decades in Haiti, Fr. Morin ministered at parishes throughout the country. When he did move back to the United States because of health issues, he continued to work with Haitian communities in

After this article was printed, Fr. John Morin, O.M.I. passed away at the Oblate infirmary in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. Please remember his family in your prayers.

Continued on page 6
New Orleans and Boston. Today, some of Fr. Morin’s Haitian friends will come by the Oblate Residence and bring the 94-year-old missionary a few of his favorite Haitian meals.

Also living at the Oblate Residence in Tewksbury is Fr. Charles Héon, O.M.I. Father Héon spent more than 40 years ministering in Haiti.

On the first day he arrived there, Fr. Héon was shocked at the extreme poverty and chaos he saw on the drive from the airport to the Oblate house. He thought to himself, “What the heck am I doing here!”

But soon the poverty and chaos became secondary as Fr. Héon found much joy in ministering at parishes serving the poorest of the poor.

“I fell in love with the people because they were always willing to help me out,” said Fr. Héon. “If I was healthy enough I would go back there tomorrow.”

In addition to Frs. Morin and Héon, several other elder and infirmed Oblates living in Tewskbury have also served in Haiti for shorter durations. Brother Gus Cote, O.M.I. never ministered in Haiti but he was the main contact for American Oblates there for nearly 20 years. Brother Gus coordinated hundreds of shipments of donated materials to the Oblates in Haiti.

Today Bro. Gus still tries to communicate with four American Oblates ministering in Haiti, three of whom have been there for more than 50 years each.

Father Real Corriveau, O.M.I. has administrative responsibilities with the Haitian Province and also helps out at his beloved St. Anthony Parish in the mountains, a church that has been destroyed several times by natural disasters.

Father Fred Charpentier, O.M.I. ministers as the Director of Foyer St. Etienne, a nursing home in Les Cayes for the elderly poor. Without Foyer St. Etienne, many of the current residents of the nursing home would be living, and dying on the streets.
Father John Henault, O.M.I. has pastoral responsibilities in the city of Dolan and also works with Mother Teresa’s sisters to care for the sick. Father Henault lived 25 years on Ile-a-Vache (Cow Island) where he filled in a huge swamp to avoid malaria, built a 50-foot wharf, enlarged the church, kept two schools open, built several roads and bridges and directed a cholera center. He also drilled many wells and set up a solar panel water pumping system that provides fresh water to 11 public wells on the island.

Back in Massachusetts, Fr. Morin said people are always surprised to learn that these American Oblates chose to spend most of their entire adult life living in the poorest country in the western hemisphere. But for Fr. Morin, there is no surprise about the choice they made. It all came down to one word – happiness.

“I have lived a very, very happy life,” said Fr. Morin. “You are the one who makes your own happiness and it is not something you find in money, things or where you live. Some of the happiest people I ever met were some of the poorest people I ever met. You can be very happy anywhere, even in a place like Haiti.”

Father John Henault, O.M.I. Fr. Fred Charpentier, O.M.I.

Fr. John Henault, O.M.I.
Because I’m Happy

Celebrating 50 Years of Oblate Priesthood

If Fr. Jim Gibbons, O.M.I. had not become a priest, he should have been an investment banker.

When Fr. Jim was a teenager, he spent 5 cents to send a postcard to the Missionary Oblates inquiring about joining the congregation. That 5-cent investment has returned decades of happiness and joy for Fr. Jim, including his celebration in May of 50 years of priesthood.

“I have spent 50 years as an Oblate priest and I am very happy. I have also spent 50 years ministering in Brazil and I am very happy,” said Fr. Jim. “I found my spot when I joined the Oblates, and I have been very happy ever since.”

Father Jim was born and raised in Massachusetts and began thinking about the priesthood while in high school. In particular, Fr. Jim was interested in the foreign missions, and the nuns at his high school encouraged him to look at various religious congregations.

Father Jim was drawn to the Oblates because of their worldwide missionary work, so he decided to send a 5-cent postcard to the Oblate Vocation Director with a few sentences explaining his interest in becoming a missionary priest. His life would never be the same.

Father Jim joined the Oblates and was ordained on May 31, 1969. He wrote a letter to the Superior General requesting his first assignment – Brazil. He was so happy. Four months after ordination Fr. Jim was on his way to Brazil, which became his home ever since.

“When I got there I was told to just put my head down and go forward,” said Fr. Jim. “I didn’t know the language so here I was with this theology degree and I couldn’t even teach the kids the Our Father.”

When Fr. Jim arrived in Brazil in 1969, it was a very tense time for the Oblates. A few Oblates had been kicked out of the country for speaking out in support of the poor. The police and military were constantly harassing the Oblates because they refused to be silent in opposing the government.

Father Jim would spend his 50 years in Brazil ministering primarily in two areas – formation work to help men discern and fulfill their calling to religious life and pastoral work at parishes in poor parts of the country. Father Jim has served throughout Brazil,
from the south to the north, the coast to the Amazonian interior.

As a formator, Fr. Jim works with seminarians at various levels on their journey to religious life. Along the way he is always upfront with the candidates, explaining that life as a Missionary Oblate is going to be a challenge. Most Oblates are called to minister outside of their home area, and if a candidate has trepidations about leaving home then they should probably consider a different religious community to join.

For Fr. Jim, there was no trepidation about leaving the comfort of life in Massachusetts to live in the poorest parts of Brazil. He rather easily adjusted to life without television, poor sanitation and erratic electricity. What his life lacked in comfort was made up with the joy of being one with the poor.

Father Jim also discovered that the role of a priest in Brazil was much less authoritarian than the role of a priest in the United States.

“The Oblates in Brazil are all committed to the poor, and it is the people who are more important than the priest, especially the poor people,” said Fr. Jim. “We accompany our parishioners, we do not direct them.”

Father Jim explains that throughout his 50 years in Brazil he has never had a key to any of the chapels. Instead, the keys stay at the home of a parishioner. This simple act of trust reinforces the idea that the chapel does not belong to Fr. Jim or even the Oblates. Instead, it belongs to the community.

During his five decades in Brazil, Fr. Jim has been a towering figure – literally. At 6 feet 4 inches and very thin, Fr. Jim makes quite a first impression. When he met Pope John Paul II, the Holy Father offered him a word of advice, “You need to eat more.”

But Fr. Jim, who is in excellent health at age 79, just can’t seem to add any weight. It might be the only thing he’s not good at.
Today, after spending part of his summer in the United States visiting with family, Fr. Jim has joined the Oblate community in Aparecida de Goiania, located near Brasília. There are eight Oblates who make up the community there, five Brazilians, one from Ireland and two from the United States.

Father Jim has a multitude of responsibilities at the mission site. He ministers at a formation house where eight seminarians are taking their early steps to becoming Oblate missionaries. He also helps out at about 30 community chapels, bringing the Good News into the lives of the poorest of the poor.

And whether he is discussing philosophy with seminarians, presiding at Mass in a humble chapel or simply listening to a person in need who needs a sympathetic ear, Fr. Jim reminds all that he meets of one simple message.

“God wants everybody to be happy, and that includes you.”

And for Fr. Jim, he has found much of his happiness among the poor in Brazil.
Wecks Named Honorary Oblates

For Jack and Sandy Weck, more than 50 years of work and service to the Missionary Oblates was celebrated in April as they were honored as Honorary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (HOMI).

Jack was hired by the Oblates the day after he graduated high school in 1960, by Fr. Edwin Guild, O.M.I. the founder of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. Jack began his career in the Production Department where the fundraising letters were printed and mailed. He then worked 35 years as the Oblates’ photographer before moving into the acquisition of premiums (thank-you gifts for donors) and finally in the Charitable and Planned Giving Department.

Jack and Sandy were married in 1963. Sandy became active in helping out in Shrine and Oblate ministries while raising six children. Sandy even got the children involved by filling Holy Water bottles in the basement which earned the children one penny for each bottle filled.

“This is such a great honor for us,” said Jack. “I felt all my life like I was part of the Oblates, now I guess Sandy and I really are!”

Father Wittenbrink Inducted into Media Hall of Fame

Father Boniface Wittenbrink, O.M.I. (1914-2017) was recently inducted into the St. Louis Media Hall of Fame.

Father Wittenbrink was the founder of the Talking Book program for the St. Louis metropolitan area in 1972. It was called Radio Information Services and provided sight-impaired individuals with special receivers allowing them to hear an audio stream consisting of news and features from the daily newspaper, as well as readings from books and magazines.

Father Wittenbrink went on to establish similar services in ten Illinois cities, as well as in Texas, Canada and the Philippines. The service founded by Fr. Wittenbrink continues today under its new name, MindsEye.
Father Andy Sensenig, O.M.I. ministers at Lebh Shomea House of Prayer in Sarita, Texas. Lebh Shomea (Hebrew for Listening Heart) is an eremitical-inspired retreat center where guests spend most of their time in solitary prayer and reflection. Here Fr. Andy writes about how the desert silence has enriched his life.

Lebh Shomea is a special ministry of the Missionary Oblates, with over 1,100 beautiful acres in South Texas dedicated to one virtue: praying in silence. Here at Lebh Shomea, for over 45 years, our ministry has been making that experience available not only to Oblates but to lay people as well.

Praying in silence is never dull, and offers opportunities to develop new appreciation for even commonly used devotions like the rosary. I pray the full rosary each day. That means I pray the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries each day. I often pray my rosary while walking from the main campus of Lebh Shomea towards our entry gate and back.

My rosary of choice is usually my Paracord (parachute cord) rosary or one of my finger rosaries. As the mysteries grow in my heart, I pray for all of us to know God as personally as our founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod, did in his life. And what better way to journey along with Jesus and Mary than in the rosary?

Praying the mysteries as I walk along the country road, the vast landscape gently pulls me into a deeper sense of each mystery. But lately, this practice has helped me to appreciate all the good work my Mazenodian Family
Which are my brother Oblates, Oblate employees, Oblate Associates and benefactors) do each and every day.

The item that has brought this to mind is the fence line that runs along the road and the gate itself. Fences are special, because they are boundaries for land. But boundaries are also important for us and our world. To have healthy boundaries is a key element in maintaining our human dignity.

So as I walk along, I pray for my Mazenodian Family, who are ministering in different cultures from their own. I pray for those who are ministering to people whose boundaries have been violated, as well as for those who are helping people break through unjust situations.

To journey well with people on their spiritual wanderings is to walk with them slowly and carefully. This rosary practice teaches me how to live not only along the fence lines of my own heart, and the hearts of others, but along the fence lines where my heart meets God as well.

So if you need some time to discover or rediscover those fence lines in your spiritual wanderings, please consider coming to Lebh Shomea. The silence of this sacred place is always a magnificent simple joy. Just know, when you see me walking on road with a rosary in hand, that I am praying for you and your intentions.
When Fr. Paul Horrocks, O.M.I. made his first pilgrimage to Lourdes, France he was just three years old. His parents took him there after visiting an uncle in England. Young Paul wasn’t impressed.

Father Paul can still remember a few things about that visit. The water in the baths was very cold and he wanted to get out immediately. He also remembers a lady scolding him for wasting water when he tried to wash his feet at the taps.

Father Paul may not have been too impressed with Lourdes as a child, but today, after ministering there for 15 years, he has a much different opinion.

“Many pilgrims come to Lourdes seeking a new beginning or for light that will give meaning to their lives,” said Fr. Paul. “They come to find a new freedom in and through Christ, and this I find extremely enriching.”

Father Paul was born on November 20, 1955 in Durban, South Africa into a family with a strong Catholic faith. He began to ponder a vocation to the priesthood during his teenage years and joined the Oblates’ pre-novitiate program in 1974. He was ordained in 1982.

“I chose the Oblates because my parish was run by them and I saw them as holy, down-to-earth men,” said Fr. Paul.

After ordination Fr. Paul worked as a Chaplain at a 5,000-bed hospital in South Africa. A year later, he accepted an assignment to Zimbabwe and would spend the next 20 years there, providing pastoral services and managing a large farm.

In 2003 Fr. Paul’s superior was in Rome and learned that there was a vacancy for an English language Chaplain at Lourdes. “Being aware of my great devotion to Mother Mary, he recommended me for the position,” said Fr. Paul. “I was accepted, and arrived in Lourdes the same year, on my birthday, to take up my duties.”

At Lourdes Fr. Paul said the Gospel is present more in action
than in words. He was amazed that people were so willing to sacrifice their time and money in order to come to the place where Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette.

Father Paul remembers a man who traveled all the way from Singapore to make his confession at Lourdes. The man felt that Lourdes was the place where he could best seek reconciliation with the Lord and His Church. Father Paul said it was an honor to hear this man’s confession.

“I was surprised that he would travel such a long distance to be here,” said Fr. Paul. “But on reflection it simply shows a power, or more accurately a mother’s love, behind the message of Lourdes.”

Over the past 15 years, Fr. Paul said he discovered that Lourdes was not so much a church built of stone and mortar, but a spiritual temple where pilgrims can experience healing, acceptance, protection and other qualities associated with a nurturing mother.

“At Lourdes, I discovered Mary as the Mother of the Church,” said Fr. Paul. “Where do children who are experiencing the harshness of life go first for help and relief – their mother.”

Father Paul also said that Our Lady’s choice to have St. Bernadette be the visionary of her message reminds him of his identity as a Missionary Oblate. The Oblates give preference to ministering to the poorest of the poor, and St. Bernadette lived in extreme poverty when Our Lady appeared to her in 1858.

“As an Oblate I am challenged to give priority to the poor,” said Fr. Paul. “I see St. Bernadette as an image of our Blessed Mother; someone who may have been poor but who had a strong character, totally dedicated to the Lord and His Gospel.”

Soon Fr. Paul will take his priority for the poor to a new ministry. His time at Lourdes is coming to an end, and he will be moving to Ireland for a yet to be determined assignment. Father Paul’s new missionary work will unquestionably be influenced by his last 15 years at Lourdes.

“I am sure that whatever my next assignment will be, my experience in Lourdes will help me to serve those I minister to in a caring and supportive way, witnessing to Gospel values and based on service that is so evident here at Lourdes,” said Fr. Paul.
The Missionary Oblates have a long affiliation with Lourdes. It was at the request of an Oblate, Fr. Ferdinand Gondrand, that St. Bernadette created the first written account of the apparitions she witnessed. Another Oblate, Cardinal Joseph Guibert, consecrated the upper basilica at Lourdes in 1876.

Oblates in France led the first diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. The Oblates in Ireland and England led the first international pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1883. This pilgrimage continues to this day, bringing about 1,000 pilgrims to Lourdes annually.

Today the Oblates minister at Lourdes with four priests serving there full-time. During the busy season, additional Oblates come to minister at Lourdes for a few weeks or months. The Oblates celebrate Mass for the faithful and provide the Sacraments in a multitude of languages.
Construction of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois began over 60 years ago, in the summer of 1958. The Oblates began by creating devotional sites that Shrine visitors have come to love: the Lourdes Grotto, Way of the Cross, Outdoor Amphitheatre, chapels and rosary courts. Over time the grounds were expanded – the results are what you see today when you visit the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

The first novena celebrated on the grounds of the Shrine was in 1961 at the Lourdes Grotto. In 1962 – with the completion of the spectacular Outdoor Amphitheatre – some 45,000 worshipers gathered for the nine nights of devotion and prayer. That Annual Novena of Healing and Hope continues to this day.

Healing and Hope. These two simple words embody the mission of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. Though simple, these words hold profound meaning. Pilgrims come to the Shrine for healing – whether emotional, spiritual or physical – and they leave with hope that they will have the faith and courage to deal with their struggles and challenges.

In this tradition of bringing spiritual growth to Shrine visitors, the Oblates began offering inspiring programs and religious events year-round, all designed to enrich the spiritual lives of our pilgrims. Thousands of pilgrims
take advantage of the Shrine’s beauty, retreats, Masses, novenas and programs annually.

The Shrine’s most popular tradition is the Way of Lights.

Celebrating its 50th year, the Way of Lights invites Shrine guests to celebrate the birth of Jesus by taking “a journey to Bethlehem.” The Way of Lights is the only large-scale, purely religious Christmas light display in the region. Nearly 50,000 cars drive through the display of over 1.5 million lights every Christmas season.

The event has become an annual tradition for countless families. Rachel of St. Louis, Missouri has known of the display since she was a little girl. “I grew up in a small farming town in central Illinois and my family – along with our church youth group – would drive down to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows to visit the Way of the Lights at Christmastime,” she explained. “It seemed like such a long trip at the time, but worth it! I had never seen so many beautiful lights depicting the whole Christmas story. I remember feeling so awed and inspired,” she said.

The Way of Lights offers a drive-through light display that allows visitors to follow the Holy Family on their journey to Bethlehem. The journey winds guests through the Shrine grounds, ending at the Lourdes Grotto where a striking Nativity scene can be found. Along the route, visitors watch in awe as they witness artistic stretches of lights and free-standing light sculptures.

Visitors are also invited to stop for “extra” activities. The Shrine Church parking lot offers camel and pony rides, a petting zoo and food trucks. The Shrine’s Visitors Center is home to the Christmas Tree Room, Wreath Display, Children’s Christmas Cove and Christmas choirs. A stunning Lego® display is also available for viewing.

The 50th Annual Way of Lights will begin on November 22 and will run through December 31. The outdoor light display is open every night (including holidays) from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The indoor activities are open 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. but closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Guests who visit on Tuesdays will be treated to discounts on kettle corn, camel and pony rides, Lego® bricks display and more!
I was born in Kempenich, Germany in 1934 in a house across the street from the Catholic church. I was baptized there the day after my birth, the third son of Peter and Katarina Mauer.

My mother was a victim of World War II. I have only one mental picture of her. My dad spoke of her with great affection and pride. While dad was in the war our grandma and later our aunt raised us.

Church was the center of my childhood. In the 18 years I lived in Germany I missed Mass once. At age three we moved to a village a mile away from church. It involved a good half hour walk to get there. For religion classes and preparation for First Communion and Confirmation we made the trip twice on Sunday.

After eighth grade I went to a trade school to become a tailor. During my second year at the tailor shop, the call to the priesthood became strong, or, I listened to it more intently. God had been calling through different voices and situations but I didn’t pay attention.

My mother’s brother, Fr. Peter Minwegen, O.M.I. was a Missionary Oblate in America and became the person God used to awaken my vocation. When I joined the Oblates he said I had to choose to either study in Germany or America. I chose America.

At the age of 19 I arrived by boat at Ellis Island. I didn’t know anybody there and didn’t speak English. Somehow a lady that had been paid by my uncle found me on Ellis Island and took me to a train headed for St. Louis. Another lady found me at the St. Louis train station and drove me to Starkenburg, Missouri where Uncle Peter was the Pastor and Director of the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows.

My uncle insisted that I only speak English or nothing at all. While it may have seemed harsh at first, it was the best way to learn the language.
In 1954 I began attending the Oblates’ St. Henry’s Preparatory Seminary in Belleville, Illinois. I spent five of the happiest years of my life at St. Henry’s. I also worked there during summer vacations, scrubbing floors and mowing lawns.

Next came the novitiate year to deepen my spiritual life and learn about the Oblate charism. This was followed by six years of studies at the Oblate Scholasticate in Pine Hills, Mississippi. I was ordained a priest on December 19, 1964.

My first assignment was as a missionary to the small Mohammedan Island in the southern Philippines. I was the Director of the high school operated by the Oblates. There were only a few Catholics on the island. It was very primitive but for me it was wonderful. It prepared me to face almost anything in life and to do so with dignity and grace.

When I returned to the states I ministered at parishes, the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows and as a member of the Oblate Youth Mission Band. I also spent two years working in Copenhagen, Denmark. For 18 years I was part of the Pastoral Care Department at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Belleville, Illinois and still help out occasionally as a volunteer.

I have met many wonderful people on my Oblate journey and they have deepened my faith. It is the people I have met and the friends I have made that rate the highest in the story of my life.
The murder of an Oblate priest in Guatemala was the genesis of an artistic movement to bring awareness to the victims of gun violence.

Father Larry Rosebaugh, O.M.I. was a living witness to non-violence and concern for the poor. He spent many years living on the streets in South America to minister to people most in need. In the United States, he was active in the peace movement and opposition to nuclear weapons.

On May 18, 2009 Fr. Larry was killed by two men attempting to steal his van in Guatemala. The murder deeply affected Fr. Larry’s admirers around the world, including Christine Ilewski.

Christine and her husband, Gary Huelsman, had become good friends with Fr. Larry when he lived at the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. Gary is a member of the Oblates’ Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee and along with Christine have been active for many years in the Oblate community garden and ecology programs that are based at the novitiate.

“When Fr. Larry was living at the novitiate he would often come over to dinner at our house,” said Christine. “His life was devoted to the resistance of violence and injustice and he was truly a gift to us and to everyone who met him.”

Christine turned her sorrow over the death of Fr. Larry into a cause to put a face on the tragedy of gun violence. An accomplished artist and art instructor, Christine painted a watercolor portrait of Fr. Larry to memorialize him.

As she grieved for Fr. Larry, Christine began to do research about gun violence and was
horrified to learn that so many young people are gunned down every year. She came across a website about William Jenkins, who at age 16 was killed in Chicago by robbers on his first day of work at a fast-food restaurant.

Christine contacted William’s father and asked if she could paint a tribute to his son. That painting started a passion for Christine to honor children, age 20 and under, who had died because of gun violence. The passion eventually became a non-profit program – Faces Not Forgotten.

Christine began receiving requests for paintings from across the country. She painted about 15 and then realized that she needed the help of other artists in order to meet the demand.

The volunteer artist paints a portrait, the “face” of each child, and the painting is then donated to the family. A copy is made which is then sewn into a Faces Not Forgotten quilt. Each quilt features eight portraits, symbolizing that eight children die each day from gun violence.

In recent years, quilts have been displayed throughout the country including at universities, houses of worship and cultural centers. Christine said it is a goal of the volunteers to have a quilt (eight portraits) made for every state.

“These children are not just numbers or statistics,” said Christine. “Each one of them was a life ended. Each one has a face.”

For more information about Faces Not Forgotten, visit the group’s Facebook page where you can also fill out a submission form to have a portrait painted of a child killed by gun violence. The group is also looking for more volunteer artists and anyone interested can contact Christine Ilewski at christine.ilewski@gmail.com.
Mark Anthony Hernández was making a name for himself in the investment banking field. He had a good job and a nice paycheck. He had been selected for an exclusive program dedicated to training future leaders in the banking industry. His mentor at the time even told him: “You may not understand fully now, but the stars have aligned in such a way to make this possible. Many of us here are working in the minor leagues of banking, but you are going to the major leagues of banking.”

Six months into this new position, Mark began to realize the investment that really mattered was not in his career, it was an investment in living the gospel. He asked God one night, “God this is the work I believe you are calling me to do, but perhaps I am blinded by my own desires to grow successful and rich. Please give me a sign that this is not the place where you are calling me to spend my life.”

Shortly after this plea with God, Mark was inspired to open his Bible. He opened to Haggai Chapter 1 and read: “On the second year of the sixth month God spoke to His people.” Mark recalls pausing as he was in the second year of his banking career, and he had held this new position for six months already. He told God, “Lord whatever it is You want to speak next, allow it to really touch me, please let it speak Truth.”

As he continued reading he was touched by the words: “You have worked long hours, yet you have borne little fruit. You have attempted to carry your money bag home, but it is filled with holes. Your house is well built, while my house is in ruins. Reflect on your experiences; you have told yourself that the time has not yet come to help build the house of the Lord, but I tell you the time is now.”

These words struck Mark like a lightning bolt. He broke down in tears at the realization that his true calling was not in the field of banking. At that time a seed was planted within Mark’s heart, a seed that would push Mark to invest his time, energies and entire life to help rebuild God’s Church and to bring the talents God has given him to the service of God’s people. Mark then took a giant leap of faith; he resigned from his comfortable job in order to deepen in his relationship with God.

With his newfound passion to serve God, Mark turned to the Missionary Oblates. He had been part of the Oblate family from an early age. He received his first few Sacraments in an Oblate parish in Eagle Pass, Texas. Oblate Fr. Richard Guerra presided at Mark’s First Communion and
remembers a child who was very serious, maybe even too serious. It took all of Fr. Richard’s unique sense of humor just to get Mark to smile for a photo.

Growing up in a family of migrant workers, Mark’s family would travel from Texas to Wisconsin and Montana during the summer months to work in the fields as laborers. His mother became a high school teacher for people with special needs and his father became an Assistant Supervisor for the Texas Department of Transportation.

As a student at Texas A&M Mark encountered many more Oblates. These Oblates left lasting impressions on Mark as they gave him advice, encouraged him and walked with him on his journey. During his transition from banking to exploring religious life, Mark remembered these relationships and was reminded that his roots in the Oblate family go deep and are part of his life story.

Father Roberto Peña, O.M.I. who recently turned 95 years old, was deeply influential to Mark. The role he played in Mark’s life was that of a grandfather. Mark’s grandfathers passed away before he was born, and he always longed for a grandfather. During his time in college Mark’s mother would invite Fr. Peña to Eagle Pass to come celebrate special occasions. He saw Fr. Peña as a man of joy and a person that spoke out on behalf of the voiceless.

These experiences brought Mark to the realization that God had been sending him gifted and talented spiritual companions on his journey. It was God that opened Mark’s eyes to see that it was not him that would choose his spiritual community, but it was God that had been weaving his story alongside the stories of influential Oblates.

Mark recently finished discerning his calling at the Oblate novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. He is encouraged by his experiences. Even though he still finds himself serious when learning about God and the faith, Mark is overjoyed at the invitation to follow Christ and no longer needs to think twice about smiling when striving to show others the love of Christ, and the love God has shown him.

The process of his cause for canonization began in Edmonton in 1952 with 44 witnesses: 21 Oblates and 23 non-Oblates. On June 1, 1979 his cause was opened in Rome. After 34 years Pope Francis signed the Decree.

The next phase of the canonization process for Bro. Anthony is known as beatification. Beatification and canonization are the final steps in the lengthy and complicated path toward becoming a saint.

Anthony Kowalczyk was born June 4, 1866 in Dzierzanow, Poland. After apprenticing in Poland as a blacksmith, he traveled to Germany to pursue work in that field. His travel to Germany changed his life: he became acquainted with the work of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and joined the Oblate order as a religious brother in 1892.

Excited to work in a foreign land, he was eventually assigned to Lac-la-Biche in Alberta, Canada in 1896. There he was sent to work among the indigenous people. This changeover happened so quickly that Anthony was unable to prepare himself psychologically for such a radical change. He grew homesick and found that prayer was the only
way for him to cope with the sudden changes in his life. Prayer became a staple in his life and seemed to be the only thing that could ease his worries.

In July of 1897 Bro. Anthony had a terrible accident at the mission’s sawmill: his hand was caught in a pulley. The brave Oblate withstood a rough 120-mile journey by horse and buggy to Edmonton to receive treatment. He made the journey without complaint, but by the time he reached Edmonton six days after the accident, gangrene had set in and his arm had to be amputated. The surgery took place without anesthetics; Bro. Anthony meditated on his Oblate cross and gave no indication of being in pain.

Again, prayer helped him through a difficult part of his life. He became aware that the accident had changed him not only physically, but also spiritually. Even though he had lost his hand, he felt as if he had also lost his homesickness. A new passion was born in him for the people of Canada.

After recovering from the accident Bro. Anthony moved to St. Paul, Alberta where he worked with the native people, praying with them and helping them with their basic needs.

Brother Anthony’s longest ministry was at St. John’s College in Edmonton where he served from 1911 to 1947. To the students and staff he was known as “Bro. Ave.” They grew to love him for his devotion and love to Mary, our Blessed Mother. When students requested his prayers during examinations, he would remind them to say an “Ave” (Hail Mary). When the washing machine refused to work, he would drop to his knees, say an “Ave” and the machine would begin working. He spent long hours, after his many jobs at the college, in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Brother Anthony was beloved by all. He was a humble, devout and obedient brother, truly living his religious vows. He died on July 10, 1947 but his spirit lives on through prayer and his intercession in the lives of those who pray for his guidance.

Prayer for Brother Anthony Kowalczyk, O.M.I.

We praise you, Lord and Father, Who in a wonderful way have led Bro. Anthony along the path of Your Holy Will. You gave him strength to imitate Jesus Christ in carrying faithfully his many crosses and fulfilling his responsibilities.

I praise You, Lord, for his heroic faith and trust, which have opened the treasures of Your goodness. Grant me, O Lord, the grace . . . which I beg through the intercession of Your Servant, Anthony. May his sanctity be confirmed and may I be ever more faithful in fulfilling Your Holy Will.

Our Father… Hail Mary… Glory Be…
Brother Bill Lundberg, O.M.I. has been a survivor since day one.

Brother Bill was born premature in 1938. He weighed only three pounds and doctors didn’t expect him to live. A nun at the hospital even performed a quick Baptism ceremony for the infant.

But Baby Bill was a survivor. Days in the hospital became weeks, and weeks became months. Eventually he was big enough and healthy enough to go home.

Home for young Bill was Richfield, Minnesota outside of Minneapolis. He spent much of his childhood attending a parish run by the Missionary Oblates. The Oblates and his family instilled a strong faith in Bro. Bill. After a few years serving in the Navy and Reserves, Bro. Bill joined the Oblates and took vows as an Oblate Brother in 1963.

Brother Bill’s early ministries included serving as a staff member at King’s House of Retreats in Henry, Illinois; a member of the parish team at Holy Cross Parish in Orr, Minnesota; and he was part of the hospitality staff at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois.

In 1973 he accepted the responsibility of being the Assistant Director of Blandine House in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. At the time Blandine House was a new residential program providing counseling for men who were recovering from alcohol and drug dependency. Brother Bill and another Oblate created many of the recovery programs at Blandine House which still exists today.

“Men would stay at Blandine House for three to six months after their primary treatment for addiction,” said Bro. Bill. “I would help them get back on their feet, help them find work and get them to reconnect with their families.”

In 1979 Bro. Bill accepted an assignment to work in the Oblates’ Native American ministries. He would spend nearly 23 years ministering to Native Americans on reservations in South Dakota and Minnesota.

Brother Bill worked in a variety of parish ministries including helping adults and youth discover their faith through R.C.I.A. and P.S.R. programs. He also worked as a bursar at the Tekakwitha Children’s Home and was responsible for a variety of outreach programs including director of a local food pantry.

During his time in South Dakota and northern Minnesota, Bro. Bill was again a survivor – of the brutal winters. It was not unusual for the temperature to dip to 30 below zero. One day the temperature dropped to 52 degrees below zero, and Bro. Bill proudly notes
that he still got out and went to work.

In 2012 Bro. Bill moved into St. Henry’s Oblate Residence in Belleville, Illinois a community for elder and infirmed Oblates. In 2016 he suffered a major heart attack and wasn’t expected to survive. He again proved the doctors wrong.

Today Bro. Bill lives at the St. Francis Assisted Living Center located on the grounds of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. More than 50 years ago, Bro. Bill started his hospitality ministry at the Shrine, and today he is ministering through hospitality to residences at the St. Francis Center. “I guess you can say I’m still doing my ‘snow job’ after all these years,” joked Bro. Bill.

In Bro. Bill’s room at the St. Francis Center, the decorations are pretty sparse. There are a few family photos and artifacts from the Tekakwitha Indian Missions. Above his favorite chair is the item that he is most proud to display. It is a picture of him just a few days old, a little baby struggling to survive.

Brother Bill Lundberg has been a survivor throughout his life, and because of that toughness he has blessed countless people through his compassionate heart and gentle soul.
Oblates Join Effort to Fight Opioid Addiction

On average, 142 people die each day from opioid-related causes. So severe is the epidemic that in some places it has been declared a public health emergency.

The Missionary Oblates, by way of the Oblate International Pastoral Investment Trust, is partnering with Investors for Opioid Accountability in calling for pharmaceutical and related companies to take action to stem this national crisis. Backed up by more than $2.2 trillion in total assets, the nearly 50 members of the coalition include faith-based organizations, state, city and labor funds and asset managers.

In a National Catholic Reporter article on the coalition’s activities Fr. Séamus Finn, O.M.I. agrees that faith-based coalitions can play a positive advocacy role.

“Corporations pay attention to faith-based groups simply because we have been around so long,” said Fr. Finn. “Since the 1960s, when Vatican II produced the document Gaudium et Spes, the Catholic Church has been called to look outward, toward the world.”

Oblate Honored for Cave Exploration

On May 18, more than 100 people gathered in a rural part of Monroe County, Illinois to celebrate the work of Fr. Paul Wightman, O.M.I. Father Paul was recognized for a roughly 70-year career as a spelunker, surveyor and mapper of caves, most notably, Fogelpole Cave, the largest and most biologically diverse cave in Illinois.

Father Paul began exploring the cave system as a teenager. After his ordination in 1955, he would take his students at St. Henry’s Prep Seminary to explore Fogelpole Cave. Eventually he mapped about eight miles of passages in the system.

Today, the cave is part of a 27-acre nature preserve owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. It has now been named the Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve in honor of Fr. Paul’s legacy of exploration and preservation of the caves of Monroe County.

At the age of 90, Fr. Paul does not explore caves anymore. He ministers full-time in the light, helping people in his five rural parishes in the Missouri Ozarks discover the Light of Christ.
By remembering the Missionary Oblates in your Will or Trust, you will:

• Feel a sense of peace knowing your loved ones and favorite charities are being remembered exactly the way you want.
• Leave a final loving gift, so family and friends have a clear understanding how your estate is to be distributed after your passing.
• Have pride in knowing that the earthly blessings you acquired are now being used to help us minister in some of the poorest and neediest places in the world.
• Be remembered perpetually in the Masses and prayers of Oblates around the world every day.

Request Our Free Brochures

To help you prepare your Will, the Missionary Oblates have created these resources to help you make sure that you properly preserve your legacy.

Share Your Blessings

This 12-page booklet explains how to get started in making or updating your Will and the various options you have in regards to planning. A quick checklist is also provided for gathering information that you will need before seeing an attorney who will help you distribute your assets.

Will and Trust Planning Workbook

This 48-page workbook is a thorough resource that will help you gather vital information regarding your assets, values, priorities and directives – all in one location. You will be fully prepared to meet with your attorney, thus allowing for a more efficient and thorough planning of your Will or Trust.

To learn more about how you can benefit the Missionary Oblates, and/or to receive one of the above estate planning resources, please contact the Office of Charitable and Planned Giving at 1-800-233-6264.

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“Many pilgrims come to Lourdes seeking a new beginning or for light that will give meaning to their lives. They come to find a new freedom in and through Christ.”

Fr. Paul Horrocks, O.M.I.