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# Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.42, 17th February, 2019

When I was appointed to serve in the Oblate mission on Anglesey in 2000 I was surprised by the discovery of the connection with St Brigid or St Ffraid as she is known in Welsh. Indeed there is a Celtic Cross erected in her name in Trearddur Bay just outside Holyhead. Today there are many who look to Brigid of Kildare as a patroness of those who have a care for the earth, for justice and equality, for peace and reconciliation.

The feast of St. Brigid on 1st of February is a celebration of the wonderful springing back of the earth from its winter sleep in our Northern Hemisphere. It is the season when we celebrate new beginnings and new life on earth. Indeed, how often do we talk about the days getting a little bit longer. Yet Brigid also held a leadership position in the early Irish church. Scholars tell us that she presided over the local church of

Kildare and was head of a double monastery for men and women. Brigid challenges all of us today to create a church and a society where men and women are equally respected.

With Lent just around the corner maybe we can ask ourselves what lessons St Brigid might have for us, as individuals and as local parish communities, in our calling to both care for the earth, our common home, and to build a community where the talents and diversity of all God's people are recognised and cherished.

Finally I pray that as we begin our journey towards Easter we may each grow in awareness of the deep love God holds for each and every one of us.

– Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly OMI

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">The Power of a Compliment</a> .....	2
<a href="#">The Oblates Respond to Tijuana Migrant Crisis</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Novena to Our Lady of Caacupé</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Why I left the United Church To Become a Roman Catholic</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Christmas in Laos</a> .....	10
<a href="#">From the Provincial Archives</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Did St. Eugene and Karl Marx Rub Shoulders</a> .....	14
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a> .....	15



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# The Power of a Compliment

– Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Thomas Aquinas once suggested that it's a sin to not give a compliment to someone when it's deserved because by withholding our praise we're depriving that person of the food that he or she needs to live on. He's right. Perhaps it's not a sin to withhold a compliment but it's a sad impoverishment, both for the person deserving the compliment and for the one withholding it.

We don't live on bread alone. Jesus told us that. Our soul too needs to be fed and its food is affirmation, recognition, and blessing. Every one of us needs to be healthily affirmed when we do something well so as to have resources within us with which to affirm others. We can't give what we haven't got! That's self-evident. And so, for us to love and affirm others we must first be loved, first be blessed, and first be praised. Praise, recognition, and blessing build up the soul.

But complimenting others isn't just important for the person receiving the compliment, it's equally important for the person giving it. In praising someone we give him or her some needed food for their soul; but, in doing this, we also feed our own soul. There's a truth about philanthropy that holds true too for the soul: We need to give to others not just because they need it but because we cannot be healthy unless we are giving ourselves away. Healthy admiration is a philanthropy of the soul.

Moreover, admiring and praising others is a religious act. Benoit Standaert submits that "giving praise comes out of the roots our existence." What does he mean by that?

In complimenting and praising others, we are tapping into what's deepest inside us, namely, the image and likeness of God. When we praise someone else then, like God creating, we are breathing life into a person, breathing spirit into them. People need to be praised. We don't live on bread alone, and we don't live on oxygen alone either.

The image and likeness of God inside us is not an icon, but an energy, the energy that's most real inside us. Beyond our ego, wounds, pride, sin, and the pettiness of our hearts and minds on any given day, what's most real within us is a magnanimity and graciousness which, like God, looks at the world and wants to say: "It is good! It is very good!" When we're at our best, our truest, speaking and acting out of our maturity, we can admire. Indeed, our willingness to praise others is a sign of maturity, and vice versa. We become more mature by being generous in our praise.

But praise is not something we give out easily. Mostly we are so blocked by the disappointments and frustrations within our lives that we give in to cynicism and jealousy and operate out of these rather than out of our virtues. We rationalize this of course in different ways, either by claiming that what we're supposed to admire is juvenile (and we're too bright and sophisticated to be impressed) or that the admirable act was done for someone's self-aggrandizement and we're not going to feed another person's ego. However, more often than not, our real reason for withholding praise is that fact that we ourselves have been insufficiently praised and, because of that, harbor jealousies and lack the strength to praise others. I say this sympathetically, all of us are wounded.

Then too in some of us there's a hesitation to praise others because we believe that praise might spoil the person and inflate his or her ego. Spare the rod and spoil the child! If we offer praise it will



go to that person's head. Again, more often than not, that's a rationalization. Legitimate praise never spoils a person. Praise that's honest and proper works more at humbling its recipient than spoiling him or her. We can't be loved too much, only loved wrongly.

But, you might ask, what about children who end up self-centered because they're only praised and never disciplined? Real love and real maturity distinguish between praising those areas of another's life that are praiseworthy and challenging those areas of another's life that need correction. Praise should never be undeserved flattery, but challenge and correction are only effective if the recipient first knows that he or she is loved and properly recognized.

Genuine praise is never wrong. It simply acknowledges the truth that's there. That's a moral imperative. Love requires it. Refusing to admire when someone or something merits praise is, as Thomas Aquinas submits, a negligence, a fault, a selfishness, a pettiness, and a lack of maturity. Conversely, paying a compliment when one is due is a virtue and a sign of maturity.

Generosity is as much about giving praise as about giving money. We may not be stingy in our praise. The 14th century Flemish mystic, John of Ruusbroec, taught that "those who do not give praise here on earth shall be mute for all eternity."



## We are all ministers of the Mercy of God

*"Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things."*  
- Pope Francis

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# The Oblates Respond to Tijuana Migrant Crisis

People living around Tijuana, Mexico are grappling with an unprecedented influx of migrants. The number of Central American migrants at the shelter in December was estimated at 6,000. Fr Jesse Esqueda, heads the Oblate Mission near La Morita, just outside of Tijuana and has been sharing about the Oblate effort in response to the situation...



Given the political situation in the USA there has been a lot of talk by President Trump and others combined with related news coverage about the migrant caravan staying in Tijuana. It has been a very political issue, but regardless of your views about this issue there are thousands of people (children, women and men) who are in desperate need of food, water, clothing and shelter. They are staying outdoors in tents and wait in very long lines to get a little food. The Oblates are giving shelter to a group of children, women and young adults at their Youth Retreat Centre. They invite us all to pray for the safety of everyone, especially the children! “For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in” (Matthew 25:35)

In her report for Vatican News, Sr. Bernadette Mary Reis, fsp, writes: During this migrant crisis in Tijuana, there are a total of six Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate attempting to respond to the thousands of desperately poor as best they can. For three weeks, the Oblates have been offering basic necessities to a group of the migrants at their Youth Centre. “We have provided shelter, meals, clothing, lawyers—so they can look at each of them if they have a case for asylum or even seeking residency in Mexico—and then jobs”, Fr Esqueda said. On Tuesday, the Oblates found four places for rent. “We thought it was better for them to be a bit more independent”, the priest said. We have also found them jobs so that they can pay for their rent. “We are still providing them with food and any other type of needs that they have”, he said.

In December, Fr Esqueda said that Catholic Charities were organizing the collection of supplies for the camp providing shelter for the rest of the close to 6,000 Central American migrants. Many people in the Tijuana area are dropping off blankets, water and food there. He said “I am very moved by our parish community here in Tijuana. Even though they themselves are very poor, they’ve been bringing clothes and shoes and blankets, different things they have at home, whatever they can spare to help.



“For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in”

(Matthew 25:35)



Reflecting on these changes Fr Esqueda writes, “We’ve had the GREAT blessing of celebrating mass at the migrant camp every week. After mass we give refreshments to 700 – 1000 people. Our young adults take food, clothes and other donations to the camp every week. I also had the honour of baptizing a few of the children from Honduras. From the group that was staying with us, 9 of them got an asylum interview and are now in the U.S. Their asylum case will continue but they are now in a safe place because their lives were in danger in their home countries. Sharing our time with the migrants has been a true blessing for the Oblates and our Youth. It has been an HONOR walking with them during this very difficult process. THANK YOU to all people who’ve helped our migrant sisters and brothers!! WE ARE ONE HUMAN FAMILY!!

This is a very political issue and I know this has created a lot of anger on both sides of the border. There are thousands of people in need of water and food and shelter. It is our duty as Oblates and as priests to try and respond to those basic human and spiritual needs as best we can. However, with 5,000 people it’s difficult for a lot of them to stand in line for hours to get food. So, many people on their own are actually cooking a meal and then they go and they open up their car and from their car they distribute food. We’ve done that. We prepared a hundred meals the other day and we took that. So people lined up and we give them a warm plate of food.”

In recent weeks the situation in the camp has changed and there are now about 1,000 people left in the camp. Most of the other migrants went back to their countries, others processed their asylum case and others decided to stay in Mexico.





# Novena to Our Lady of

**The devotion to Our Lady of Caacupé dates back to 1600, when an indigenous Guarani engraved an image of the Madonna on wood. Popular devotion, over the years has increased the fame of the shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Caacupé, which has become the busiest in the nation. The main feast, on December 8, is preceded by a novena during which groups of pilgrims from all over the country flock to the Shrine.**



In 1987, as a first-time experiment, some indigenous representatives were invited to be present and to read a reading at the Sunday Mass during the novena in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a big celebration in Paraguay. Paraguay is one of the most “Catholic” countries in the continent, with the Basilica of Our Lady of Miracles, Caacupé, its national shrine, which is filled with devotees in December. That Mass with indigenous representatives was so impressive that it was repeated the following year, without even thinking of creating a tradition that would have an ever greater participation with each passing year.

In December, there were 3,500 indigenous people who, for months, prepared to pay for more than 50 buses that were needed to transport them to Caacupé. The great majority come from the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo in the Chaco (which, since 1925, has been entrusted to the Oblates), which is about 500 km away.

There was a coordinating team, led by the first indigenous priest, who prepared the Mass in detail, making space for the representatives of each ethnic group present at the occasion. Various languages, dresses and typical costumes, dances, symbols: everything had its place in the celebration. The choir is normally entrusted to one of the many “Nivale” choirs; they are not only the ethnic group with the highest percentage of Catholics, but also born musicians.

This year, it was the choir of “Corazón de María”, whose 80 members managed to get uniforms and special folders. It was feast for the eyes and for the ears as well! Every year, it is Bishop Lucio Alfert OMI, head of pastoral care for the indigenous in the Episcopal Conference (since 1986!), who preaches and presides at the Mass, which is broadcast throughout the country.

Bishop Alfert is convinced that every indigenous people and every church must have their own face, their own expressions, organizations, symbols, liturgies and their own ministers. According to Bishop Alfert “Indigenous people have a holistic vision: human beings are an integral part of the world, but they are not the masters”. As in many other peoples around the world, humans are seen by the natives of Chaco as a being in symbiosis with “Mother Earth”. They consider themselves in a relationship of interdependence with the other occupants of the earth. This implies for the human being to respect the earth and to grant her a status, in particular juridical, equal to his. Mother Earth is sacred because she is the great life-giving force.

Previously Bishop Alfert has spoken forcefully of the situation of indigenous peoples, who are discriminated against and excluded from their land, while in the past even the capital and the metropolitan area belonged to them. He has also highlighted the grave risks posed to the natives when they arrive in the



Bishop Lucio Alfert, OMI,



Pope Francis touching the Statue of Our Lady of Caacupé

# Caacupé

capital and often fall into addiction and are sexually exploited. Once again his inspiring homily is always a much-anticipated feature of the day. Despite his age and illness, he was able, once again, to put his finger on the wounds of our society and awaken us: lack of respect, expulsion of the indigenous from their lands, and corruption (even within the communities themselves). He urged young people not to fall into drugs and vices, but to know how to be proud of their origin and serve their communities.

There is no doubt that the people have learned how to take their place, since they discovered that the “Virgin of Caacupé” is the Mother of all.  
- Fr. Miguel Fritz OMI (updated)

## Summer Camp 2019



**July 29th - August 2nd 2019**

This year, why not give your child a Summer Holiday with a difference?

Young people from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, aged 12-14, will come together for 5 days of outdoor activities and teambuilding, with time for reflection and prayer each evening. The camp will take place in Lilliput OEC, near Mullingar Ireland. Chaperoned transport will be provided from Edinburgh, London and Dublin. Centre staff are fully trained, and all staff and volunteers will be Garda Vetting/DBS certified. The subsidised cost of the camp includes all travel, meals, accommodation and equipment hire.

**The cost of the camp is £225 / €225**

**For more information about the camp, contact:**

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**Bookings now  
being taken  
for Summer  
2019**

# Why I left the United Church to become a Roman Catholic



Deirdre Pike was Pastoral Associate for St. Joseph's Oblate Parish in Ottawa and is currently a social justice advocate based in Hamilton. In this short article she shares her faith journey:



St Joseph's Church Ottawa

I have often said in a singy-songy way, "I left the church that would have ordained me and joined the church that seemed to sustain me".

The truth is I didn't intentionally leave the United Church when I officially became a Roman Catholic in 1978, at least not the way people leave their faith communities these days for their varied and mostly valid reasons. Another truth is I didn't know at the time that the Catholic Church wasn't a big fan of women in leadership or LGBTQ2 inclusion. I also didn't know it was covering up sexual abuse or that those three things would eventually matter so much to me.

What did matter when I walked into All Saints Parish in Strathroy, Ont. at the age of 15 was that I had landed in a place where I found refuge for what was becoming a cruel world in my queer, teenaged head.

Thankfully, my parents had given me a good grounding when they had me baptised as a baby at St. John's United in Stratford. The baptismal certificate is right there, on the second page of the scrapbook they lovingly created for me. On the first page is a letter dated Nov. 16, 1962, from the Perth County Children's Aid, sent to them while they were vacationing in Florida. It announces my earthly arrival three days earlier and invites them to trade in their umbrella-drinks and beach gear for formula and diapers.

Those two pages provide the roots to all that would follow. Knowing two people chose to bring me into their home and love me the very best they could, unconditionally, has given me sure footing. Knowing I had Jesus on my side was a life saver.

My parents stopped going to church when I was still in the single digits - but I was hooked. I went to Sunday service with various neighbours as often as I could: Presbyterian with the Smiths, United with the Butlers, Baptist with the Wiltons. But never a Catholic mass until I hit high school and my best friend said, "Come and see."

I have never left, I found deep comfort in the words, songs and actions that formed the rituals of mass. I loved all the "smells and bells" in our robust liturgies. The nuns and priests empowered me by involving me in music and readings. They shared their prayers and wisdom and assured me as in Psalm 139, that I was fearfully and wonderfully made.

That idea was a contradiction to how I was experiencing the world. I wasn't thriving in high school, for myriad reasons: ongoing trauma related to many #MeToo experiences during elementary school, my stepbrother's death by suicide when I was 17 and my increasing understanding of how being a lesbian was going to negatively impact me. I'd already been banned from two of the big Catholic family homes I used to visit. The parents were concerned, given my propensity to wear overalls and short haircuts, that I might corrupt their daughters.

While mass became part of my daily spiritual routine, so did alcohol and pot. Seeing my struggle, my mom worked with my parish priest to get me out of town to attend Mount St. Joseph Academy, a Catholic high school in London, Ont., when I was 17. There, some very good Sisters nurtured me and introduced me to a larger world view of social justice and liberation theology.

I went on to university, graduating with a religious studies degree and, through a series of graces, worked for 14 years in parish ministry. The struggle

isn't over, but I have found the tools I need to face the darkness in my life, in the church and in the world, and try to turn it into light.

So while it's true I left a church that may have ordained me, I am grateful I joined a church that has sustained me.

– Deirdre Pike (United Review Magazine)



St Joseph's Church Ottawa

# Pilgrimage to Krakow, Poland

## 18th–24th June 2019

Walk in the footsteps of St John Paul II, St Maria Faustina Kowalska, and Oskar Schindler. Krakow is a city with a rich, vibrant heritage and history. During our days we will include as much as possible.

**This guided pilgrimage will take in visits to:**

- The Divine Mercy Sanctuary
- The Shrine of St Faustina
- The Shrine of Saint John Paul II
- Auschwitz-Birkenau
- The Schindler Factory

With flights from London and Dublin, this pilgrimage is sure to be a fascinating encounter with history, and a powerful reminder of our call to be faithful Christians.

**Dublin: €675** (single room supplement is €195 = €870)  
**London: £595** (single room supplement is £175 = £770)  
**Manchester & Edinburgh: £620** (single room supplement is £175 = £795)

**For more information please contact:**  
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**Ireland:** Pdraig Corcoran 0877723255 padraig.oblate.partners@gmail.com

# Christmas in Laos

## *Renewing faith in Christ, in memory of the blessed martyrs*

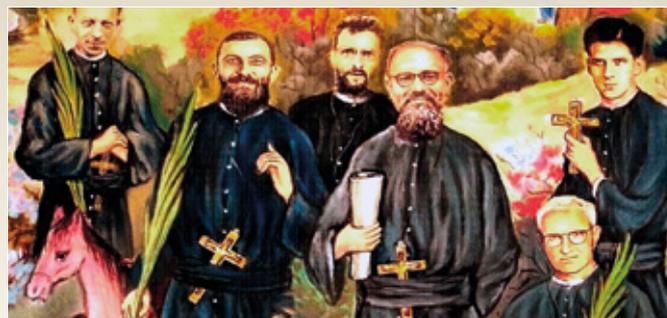
The nuns from of the Sisters of Charity remember and “are grateful to the missionaries who with their blood planted the seeds of faith in Christ in the heart of Laotians”. Christmas celebrations are held in Nasay, a village whose residents were once all animist and are now almost all Catholic.

For Laotian Catholics Christmas celebrations are a joyous occasion to “strengthen their faith in Christ and remember the sacrifice of martyrs,” said Sister Anna, of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret. She spoke about how the faithful spent Christmas in Nasay, a village in the central province of Savannakhet.

Fr Philippe Thin, an 83-year-old diocesan priest, has been responsible for the pastoral care of this community for many years. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret have helped him in his work. Although foreign missionaries have been banned from Laos since 1975 and the number of vocations has dropped in recent years, men and women religious continue to promote the Catholic faith in the cities but especially in the villages. Christmas is the most visible expression of this commitment.

In Nasay, most of the 1,500 residents, once animists, are now Catholic and every year they celebrate the baptisms of children and adults. “The faith of these Christians is strong,” said Sister Anna. “Every year, they celebrate the birth of Christ with great joy and throughout Advent they prepare their hearts to welcome the Word of God,” she noted.

Christmas celebrations begin with the sacrament of confession, followed by a procession and adoration of the Child Jesus. The community then meets for

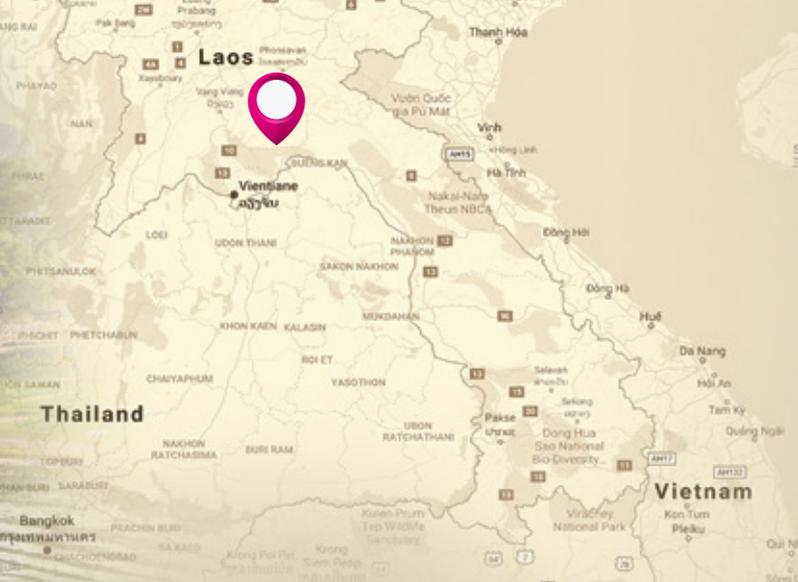


Christmas Eve Mass. They end the celebrations with a Christmas show that includes dances and games. “In the village of Nasay, Christmas is a truly exceptional festival,” Sister Anna explained. “Everyone takes actively part. Laotians often like to repeat ‘Muan lai!’, which means ‘so much joy’.”

“We always remember and we are grateful to the missionaries who planted with their blood the seeds of faith in Christ in the heart of Laotians. Canonised in 2016 by Pope Francis, the 17 blessed martyrs of Laos are a beautiful testimony for the local Church.”

“We give thanks to God for so much grace received, that the Child Jesus may continue to be born in our hearts and fill us with joy and faith, so that we are his witnesses in daily life,” the nun added.

The Pathet Lao killed the 17 martyrs in Laos between 1954 and 1970: a young Laotian priest, 5 priests of the Foreign Missions of Paris, 6 Oblates of Mary Immaculate—an Italian and 5 French, 5 Laotian laymen. The list includes Fr Mario Borzaga OMI, and catechist Paul Thoj, who were killed in 1960 at a very young age – 28 and 19 respectively – by communist guerrillas whilst visiting Hmong villages.



The Sisters of Charity have been present in Laos since 1934. Currently, they work in 14 communities in the country's main cities: Luang Phrabang, Vientiane, Thakhek, Savannakhet and Paksé. They are involved in the pastoral care of children, young people, and the sick. They host young girls in need in four family homes to enable them to study. The nuns also run a school for the hearing and speaking impaired in Luang Phrabang, as well as nursery schools in Vientiane and Savannakhet.

On Sunday, April 24, 1960, after Mass, Fr. Mario was getting ready to treat the ill at the dispensary. A small group of Hmong presented themselves and asked him to come to their village, situated a three-day walk to the south. They said they were interested in religion. Mario Borzaga promised these people he would follow them the next day. His plan was to visit several villages in the same area and go up the Mekong valley to the west to Luang Prabang. He invited the young catechist to go with him. On Monday, April 25, 1960, they set off. On May 1, in Muang Met, a Lao and Kmhmu' village between Ban Phoua Xua and Muang Kassi, a patrol of guerrillas met Mario Borzaga and his young companion. It was as they left the village that they were taken. They tied the priest's hands and forearms behind his back. The young catechist shouted: "Do not kill him, he's a very good priest, very kind to everyone. He does only good things." They would not believe him: they decided to kill them without further ado, but quietly, without witnesses, a little distance from the village. A former soldier recounts: "We forced them to dig a hole. It was I who shot them. Without waiting, we covered them with earth."

Fr. Mario Borzaga left a spiritual testament of great value. He had written. "There is nothing other to do than to believe and to love." Just before making his perpetual oblation in 1956, Mario described in his journal the dream of happiness that he had for his life: "I have realized my vocation: to be a happy man, even in the effort to identify myself with the crucified Christ."

In Laos, Catholics are a small minority, some 45,000 or 0.7 per cent in a population of 7.1 million people. The situation of the Church in Laos remains tenuous. The government tightly controls religions and does not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The relations between Church and government authorities are especially difficult at the local level.

- original version published by AsiaNews.IT (updated)

## *O Lord our God,*

*You granted the 6 Oblate Martyrs of Laos,  
the audacity to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom  
in all circumstances.*

*They gave up their lives in Union with the life of  
Jesus who died for us on the cross.  
In this way the people of God in Laos  
were able to grow strong and joyful amidst adversity.*

*O Lord,  
give us the courage to follow in their footsteps  
and let the coming generations know the example  
they left. Through their intercession,*

*O Lord,  
grant us now the favour that we ask for,  
trusting in your mercy, namely...  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

*Amen*

Frs. John Flynn,  
Matthew Gaughren,  
Superior, Patrick McArdle,  
Matthew Clarke, Leith 1897

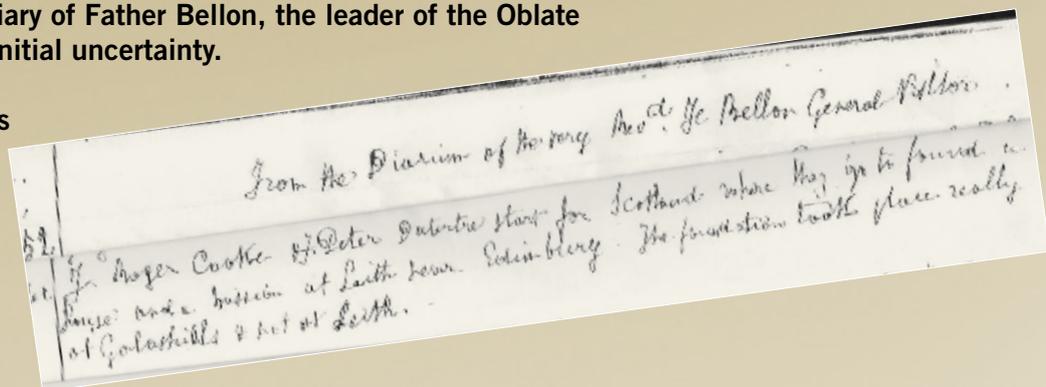
# From the Provincial Archives

## Leith and The Catholic Mission In Scotland

In 1852, the Oblates were invited by Bishop Gillis to establish a mission centre in Scotland and Fr. Cooke and Fr. Dutertre travelled to Leith in November 1852 to review where a possible mission centre might be established.

As it happened, the Oblates' first Scottish mission went to Galashiels in the Borders. This extract from the diary of Father Bellon, the leader of the Oblate mission at the time, shows the initial uncertainty.

But the pressing needs of Leith's 2000 or so Catholics could not be denied and Father Noble OMI arrived to take over the mission there in 1859. He was soon joined by the Holy Family Sisters.



[Extract from 'Diary of the House of Novitiate, Lys Marie, Sicklinghall, England (1852-1866)', in Codex Historicus, Sicklinghall. Ref. B.10]

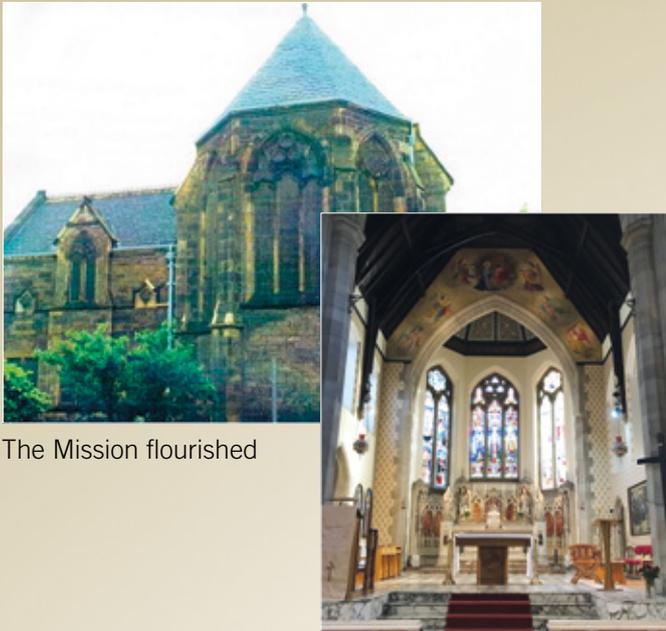
## The Scottish Mission

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Catholic population in Scotland was very small – about 70,000 – and they were mostly to be found in the Highlands. But following the Famine in Ireland in 1846, Irish emigration to Scotland increased dramatically. Those people seeking work and shelter fled into the cities and industrial ports and centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh. As a result of this movement the 'spiritual needs of the Catholics were brought to the attention of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda by the then Vicars Apostolic, one of who came to Rome to plead the cause...' (Reilly).



## The Foundation of the Mission in Leith

Scottish secular priests had begun the revival of a Catholic mission in the ancient port of Leith between 1827-1859. In November 1847, Fr. Thomas Carlyle had been appointed by the Bishop as resident priest. In 1848, he purchased the Balmerino House and grounds as the site for a church and schools. Mass was first celebrated in the Assembly Room and on 25 March 1852 Bishop Gillis laid the first stone of a new church, designed initially by A. W. Pugin, whose son E. W. Pugin and J. A. Hanson completed the church design. The church was dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea. Fr. Archibald McDonald said the first mass in the new church.



The Mission flourished

Interior of church

## Schools

In 1859 the existing temporary school accommodated 170 pupils. The Sisters together with Fr. Noble, Superior, Fr. Ring and Leith parishioners helped to raise funds to enable the building of new school accommodation for 300 to 400 children. By 1881, the school had average attendance of 120 boys, 110 girls and 220 infants. By 1897, Fr. O'Carroll, Superior, furthered the school accommodation. School numbers continued to grow with enrolment standing at 800 pupils in 1902. A new school was built in 1910 under the direction of Fr. Callan, Superior, at a cost of £10,650. Prior to a new system being introduced in May, 1930, the school had remained under the care of the Sisters.

In November 1937, Leith Mission was canonically established as a parish.  
(De Mazenod Record. (1938, p.50).



First Communion 1931 Leith.  
Fr.J. Ryan, Teacher, Maud Clarke, Fr.B. O'Reilly

## Parish Life and Activities

A flourishing community life within the Parish was quickly established with associations, guilds, societies and sodalities being established. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Guild of the Sacred Heart, the Catholic Young Men's Society, the Hibernian Football Club, the 'Boys' Guild and Fr. Ring's Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, the Women's Sodality and the Legion of Mary enabled an enriching of religious and social activity to take place.



Fr. Joseph Gorman, and Football team during his first period in Leith Fr.B. O'Reilly

Later in the 1960s, more concentrated pastoral activities took place such as, the Over 60s Club, the Theatre Circle, the Bible Circle and a new youth club, the Stella Maris Youth Club, established in 1987. New parish structures were established and inaugurated by the Archbishop under the Parish Renewal Programme in 1987. In 2004, the 150th anniversary of the parish was celebrated with a Mass of Thanksgiving by Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien.

– Catherine Mullan, Oblate Archivist

# Did St. Eugene and Karl Marx rub shoulders?

**You may perhaps pass through London sometime and wander around Trafalgar Square and adjacent Leicester Square. If so, you will be following in the footsteps of St. Eugene – and of Karl Marx!**

Not only was Karl Marx in London at the very same time as St. Eugene, but he was also staying in rooms in the same neighbourhood. It was a neighbourhood that attracted foreigners of slender means. Both Karl and Eugene fell into this category.

They might have chanced to rub shoulders, - Karl making his way to the British Museum and Eugene becoming acquainted with the city.

Travelling incognito as he made his way north to visit the newly-founded Oblate mission in England, and accompanied by his trusted disciple Fr Casimir Aubert, Eugene lodged in a third-floor one-room apartment in the Sablonière Hôtel. It was situated on the East side of Leicester Square at nn. 30-31 and was demolished in 1869. The dates of his stay were 18-22 June 1850. Eugene's days were fully employed. He was guided around the city by Fr Casimir Aubert. He met the 'celebrated Newman and the Oratorians who serve a chapel where I said Mass.' This would have been at 24 and 25 King William St., Strand, where Newman had founded a house in 1849, not far from the Sablonière Hotel. Among his visits was one to the East End of London. Here the plight of the poor awoke in him the desire to found an Oblate mission in that part of London. There was no Oblate mission in London at this time. The mission in Tower Hill would come in 1865.

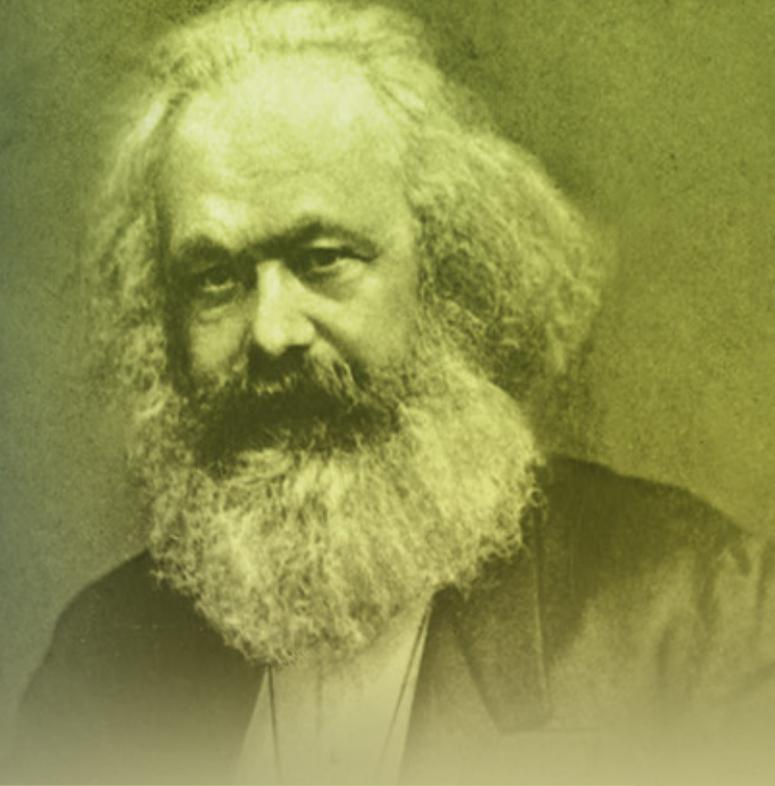
Karl [1818-1883] was travelling with his wife Jenny and their children, an impoverished political refugee fleeing from the 'reactionary' regimes then in power on the continent of Europe. Before settling for a while into a very poor three-room flat at 28 Dean Street, Soho, he stayed in the German Hotel at nn. 1-2 Leicester Street, which is just off the North side

of Leicester Square, between April and May 1850 and possibly into June. Unable to pay his bill he was then ejected and moved to Dean Street, a few streets further away.

Two men of stature, then, but each of them was intent on his own business and oblivious of the other. If they had by chance bumped into each other on the pavement or on the omnibus, would a conversation have been possible between them? They were each of them preoccupied with the same thing: the lot of the poor. They had each come to place no value on personal wealth after knowing prosperity in their early years. But to the one the poor were 'the proletariat', destined to bring about the final revolution and an earthly paradise. To the other they were the neglected beloved of God, destined to inherit the Kingdom of God (Luke 6:20). One founded the communist party and wrote 'the Communist Manifesto'. The other founded the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, preached the 'Lenten sermons' of 1813 and wrote 'the Preface' to the Oblate Rule. A conversation would have been difficult but Eugene, as a missionary in the mould of St Paul, would have been bound to try!

But nothing actually happened! And this chance spatial and temporal juxtaposition of two men on different missions stands simply as an illustration of the field in the Gospel in which grow up side by side both wheat and weeds in silent but implacable competition.

– Michael Hughes, OMI



## Crewe Events

### Lenten Retreat

Friday, 12 April to Sunday, 14 April

Easter lies at the very heart of our faith. St Paul puts it well when he says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain." (1Cor 15:17)

This Weekend of Retreat is an ideal opportunity to enter into the dramatic events of Holy Week and journey with the Lord through his death and to his Resurrection. The Weekend will include reflective inputs on the mystery of Easter, times for prayer and meditation, an opportunity (for those who want it) to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation or talk one-to-one with a trained Spiritual Director and daily celebration of the Eucharist.

£140 Per Person (Deposit £20)

**For information on these and our other events please contact the Oblate Team at:**

Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Lane, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8JS

**Tel:** +44 (0) 1270 568 653 or **E-mail:** [director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk](mailto:director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk) [www.orc-crewe.org](http://www.orc-crewe.org)

### Holy Week Individually Guided Retreat

Sunday, 14 April to Sunday, 21 April

An Individually Guided Retreat is a very special experience providing the opportunity for a person to explore and deepen their personal relationship with God. An Individually Guided Retreat is undertaken in silence, a silence which allows the retreatant to find an inner stillness which better enables the person to hear God speak to them: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) In this inner journey the retreatant is guided by a trained Spiritual Director. Each day the retreatant meets their director and is invited to share, in so far as they want to, their prayer experience. The director will suggest passages of Scripture which might help the retreatant in their personal journey with God.

£475 Per Person (Deposit £20)

### Triduum Retreat

Celebrate the Easter Ceremonies in the context of a retreat. During the three days there will be times of silence and opportunities for sharing. The retreat is open to all.

£195 Per Person



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[www.OblateLourdesPilgrimage.com](http://www.OblateLourdesPilgrimage.com)

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[Return to Contents Page](#)



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